

**Philadelphia Yearly Meeting - Faith & Practice Revision Group**  
**Proposed Section: “II.B. Faith Reflected in our Organization”**

1 **II. Faith Reflected in Practice**

2 **B. Faith Reflected in our Organization**

3 *In all the affairs of the Meeting community, proceed in the peaceable spirit of Pure*  
4 *Wisdom, with forbearance and warm affection for each other. [Advices II]*

5

6 Introduction

7 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has much the same structure as other yearly meetings of the  
8 Religious Society of Friends throughout the world. The basic group within this structure is the  
9 monthly meeting, which meets to conduct business once each month; a number of monthly  
10 meetings are joined in a quarterly or regional meeting; and a still larger number of monthly  
11 meetings constitute yearly meeting. Though Philadelphia Yearly Meeting conducts some of its  
12 business during the year, it meets once each year in an extended annual session for worship,  
13 business, and opportunities to share information and fellowship.

14 Monthly Meetings

15 Monthly meetings are spiritual communities where Friends gather for worship and fellowship.  
16 These meetings are the center of Friends’ spiritual life and also the foundation of the overall  
17 structure of the Religious Society of Friends. It is through active engagement in their monthly  
18 meeting that Friends find both the comfort of feeling at home and the challenge of growing  
19 spiritually. A meeting offers a place to test leadings and convictions based on a shared  
20 appreciation of individual and corporate spiritual direction. Minutes of concern often rise out of  
21 meeting life, where Friends labor together to discern God’s way for us to work in the world.

22 The monthly meeting is so called because its members meet monthly to conduct its business. It  
23 conducts meetings for worship weekly, or more often, and is a caring community, responsive to  
24 the spiritual, social, educational, and material needs of its members. It may own and manage  
25 property, engage in significant social action, and operate schools or other institutions. It has  
26 sole authority to enroll or release members and to oversee marriages. It may undertake any  
27 action or assume any function consistent with the practices and principles of the Religious  
28 Society of Friends and not specifically the responsibility of some other body.

29 The Individual and the Meeting

30 In describing the relationship of the individual and the meeting, an assumption is made that  
31 each person will be actively involved in the life of the meeting community. Active involvement

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32 typically includes regular attendance at meeting for worship and meeting for worship with  
33 attention to business; service on committees; financial support for the meeting; and other  
34 contributions to the ongoing work and life of the meeting. Active involvement ensures that one  
35 knows others and is known by them. Active involvement contributes to an individual’s spiritual  
36 growth in community.

37 The Religious Society of Friends accepts a variety of vocabularies for the expression of faith and  
38 encompasses a broad range of views on the way faith can be carried into action. Monthly  
39 meetings, with the guidance of this *Faith and Practice* and supplementary sources, have the on-  
40 going task of interpreting those beliefs and standards to prospective and experienced  
41 members. The individual should not hesitate to ask the meeting for such interpretation.

42 A member under the weight of a spiritual or personal concern, or who feels a call to life-  
43 changing social action, may seek the assistance of the meeting in testing this leading. The  
44 member may ask for individual counsel or for a committee of clearness chosen by the member  
45 and/or by the meeting. Persons called to service on such a committee have a special  
46 responsibility to listen carefully, respond out of their own experience, and promote individual  
47 and corporate faithfulness to spiritual leadings. [See p xx for Guidelines for Clearness  
48 Committees in section VI.]

49 Authority lies with the meeting as a discerning body. The individual Friend benefits by testing  
50 his or her direction or leading with the meeting. The individual does well to accept the decision  
51 of the meeting and open him/herself to learning from the process of corporate discernment  
52 and the wisdom that results from this process. The leading may be to undertake an individual  
53 journey, guided by the wisdom of the meeting, or the meeting itself may decide to support the  
54 leading in specific ways, including taking up the work collectively. In either event, the meeting  
55 can be a place for corporate support, spiritual growth and personal transformation of the  
56 meeting’s members and attenders.

57 Nurture of the Meeting Community

58 All members share the responsibility of caring for one another. They support each other’s  
59 spiritual journeys. They participate in the intimate joys and sorrows of birth, marriage and  
60 death. Members facing important decisions receive counseling, as in the case of those  
61 contemplating marriage or those who are facing decisions about the military. At times of  
62 personal distress, the meeting responds with appropriate support, and, if needed, makes  
63 referrals to professional care-givers. A meeting assumes responsibility for helping members  
64 resolve their differences. It responds to the special needs of the young and the elderly, and also  
65 the needs of new members, prospective members, and members at a distance.

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66 Each monthly meeting regularly evaluates its effectiveness in nurturing their members. If  
67 improvement is needed, but it finds itself unable to make such improvements, members may  
68 conclude that the meeting either lacks sufficient numbers or resources to do all that is  
69 necessary or that its numbers have become so great that a sense of loving community is  
70 endangered. In such an event, the meeting may consider a fundamental change as merging  
71 with a neighboring meeting or dividing into two meetings.

72 Responsibilities of the Meeting

73 Friends have found it useful to identify specific duties and responsibilities and assign them to  
74 committees. Committee functions, as described below, follow from the needs of the meeting to  
75 care for: its members (pastoral care); its meeting for worship and the spiritual development of  
76 its members; its property and other resources; and its religious education, outreach and social  
77 action. The work of the meeting’s committees is closely linked. Meeting committees may  
78 occasionally meet together to assess the meeting’s programs and activities, to identify tasks  
79 that have not been completed or done well, as well as to recognize those tasks and activities  
80 that have been successful.

81 The meeting gives attention to the entire range of its activities and the work of its committees  
82 at monthly meetings for worship with attention to business. On occasion, and with reasonable  
83 notice, the clerk may call a special meeting for business. A meeting for business provides  
84 opportunities for members to share information and to worship together as well as to make  
85 decisions. These decisions could relate to the conduct of worship, the care of members,  
86 religious education, the management of property, applications for membership, issues of social  
87 justice, or oversight of institutions. While the day-to-day functions of the meeting may be  
88 delegated to committees or designated officers, the monthly meeting is responsible for all  
89 activities undertaken by its decision or on its behalf. The meeting may authorize the clerk or a  
90 group of appointed Friends to implement a decision, in which case they would report back to  
91 the meeting for business. When good order requires, delegated responsibilities or functions  
92 may be recalled and exercised directly by the meeting.

93 Each monthly meeting appoints a clerk, a treasurer and a recorder, and usually a recording  
94 clerk. An assistant clerk may also be appointed, if needed. All other delegated functions are  
95 normally entrusted to committees rather than individuals.

96 Committees of the Monthly Meeting

97 Members and attenders are expected to serve on committees of the monthly meeting. Such  
98 service is essential in order for an individual to be fully integrated into the life of the meeting.

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99 Acceptance of appointment to a committee entails a commitment to be diligent, loving and  
100 responsive in carrying out the committee’s functions.

101 Committees serve the monthly meeting not only by carrying on routine designated functions,  
102 but also by doing important background work in preparation for decisions at the monthly  
103 meeting for business. They identify the issues, gather the most useful information, and make  
104 seasoned recommendations for decision by the meeting. When this seasoning work is done  
105 well, the monthly meeting for business is able to focus on the issue at hand and what needs to  
106 be done about it.

107 It is important that monthly meetings clearly express their expectations and define the scope of  
108 authority of officers and committees. When this happens within an atmosphere of trust, the  
109 meeting and its officers and committees are liberated to fulfill their respective tasks without  
110 wasteful duplication and frustration.

111 Committees form the structure of the meeting and are the primary source of the meeting’s  
112 work. Each committee serves the meeting and typically reports its work to the meeting for  
113 business, clearly indicating whether the content and purpose of the report is to provide  
114 information to the meeting, to assist the committee in its consideration of some difficult issue,  
115 or to support a recommendation to be decided by the meeting.

116 The committees most commonly established by monthly meetings are identified below under  
117 the function they perform for the meeting. However, these functions are offered as illustrative  
118 rather than prescriptive.

119 1. **Worship and Ministry.** A committee on worship and ministry has responsibility for  
120 nurturing the spiritual life of the meeting. Those serving on the committee attend meeting  
121 for worship regularly and are comfortable with a variety of religious orientations. They are  
122 seasoned in Friends practice of unprogrammed worship and are good listeners, able ‘to  
123 hear beyond words.’ The committee has special responsibility to nurture the gifts of  
124 members and attenders, with appreciation for the diversity of spiritual gifts. It also has a  
125 role in encouraging those who bring depth to vocal ministry or are hesitant to speak.

126 The committee encourages Friends to take time for study, meditation, prayer, and other  
127 preparations for worship, as these practices provide fertile ground for and openness to the  
128 leadings of the Spirit. The committee can provide loving guidance to those whose ministry  
129 does not appear to come from deep centeredness in the Spirit. They may create  
130 opportunities for meeting members to embrace the different ways that individuals express  
131 their religious experience.

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132 The committee has the responsibility to recognize and address repeated behavior that is  
133 disruptive of corporate worship. The committee, not an individual, makes the decision to  
134 speak for the meeting with a person whose vocal ministry is disruptive. Such intervention is  
135 done with sensitivity and care, understanding how difficult it is to receive such an  
136 admonition. And yet, the committee cannot avoid such confrontation when necessary for  
137 the health and well-being of the meeting as a whole.

138  
139 The committee can exercise leadership in welcoming the contributions of children and  
140 young people in meeting for worship. It may have a special role in recognizing their spiritual  
141 insights and contributions. The murmurings of the very young and the bustle of children  
142 enrich the meeting community.

143 The responsibilities of a committee on worship and ministry thus typically include:

- 144 • Giving counsel—those who are asked to give counsel remember that often the best  
145 service is to be a good listener. When advice is given it is offered in love and grounded in  
146 the Light.
- 147 • Teaching by example—members of the committee teach by example as much as by  
148 precept, and are often chosen for the way in which Friends’ testimonies are reflected in  
149 their lives. As they feel the call to be true to the testimonies, they also help others to  
150 grow in faithfulness to the testimonies. They encourage members and attenders to be  
151 ready and obedient should the leading come to enter into vocal ministry or prayer. They  
152 help members and attenders understand that all who attend a meeting for worship  
153 share responsibility for drawing the meeting together in expectant waiting and prayer.
- 154 • Attending to the needs of the young—the committee makes a special effort to  
155 accommodate the needs of the young. Interest in remaining within the Society of  
156 Friends in later years may well be strengthened by the memory that, as children, they  
157 felt well prepared for meeting for worship and were welcome there.
- 158 • Nurturing vocal ministry and the ministry of stillness—the committee nurtures meeting  
159 for worship by giving appropriate attention to the quality of the vocal ministry and of  
160 the ministry of stillness that springs from centered silence. At times the committee may  
161 need to address those who speak frequently in meeting for worship to help them keep  
162 sensitive to divine promptings, not human habits.
- 163 • Addressing inappropriate conduct—the committee helps the meeting both to rise above  
164 occasional inappropriate conduct by a member or attender and to intervene firmly with  
165 repeated behavior that is disruptive of corporate worship or business.

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- 166 • Representing the meeting on interfaith councils—the committee is often assigned the  
167 task of representing the meeting on interfaith councils or ministeriums, and encouraging  
168 active involvement by the meeting in ecumenical activities.
- 169 • Reporting to monthly meeting—the committee reports periodically to the monthly  
170 meeting for business.
- 171 • Reporting to other meetings—from time to time the committee is invited to share its  
172 work with similar committees in the quarter or yearly meetings.
- 173 • Recognizing those in the meeting who have exhibited gifts of the Spirit or who are  
174 engaged in public ministry—some meetings provide nurturing support for those with a  
175 particular gift in vocal ministry or who have engaged in a form of public ministry such as  
176 serving as a chaplain for persons incarcerated in the criminal justice system. Should a  
177 monthly meeting desire, it may recognize individuals who have notable gifts of vocal  
178 ministry or sensitive care for the spiritual life of the meeting community.

179

180 2. **Care of the Meeting Community and its Members.** Each monthly meeting attends to the  
181 health and vitality of its community as a whole and the individuals that join together to  
182 create this unique congregation. To facilitate this process, monthly meetings generally  
183 appoint a group of people who meet regularly and are responsible for knowing individuals  
184 and families in the meeting and being aware of particular needs, family situations, and  
185 other challenges. In the past those committees were often named the committee of  
186 oversight or overseers. In recent years, Friends have found other names to focus on the  
187 function of this committee, such as care and counsel, care and concern, or pastoral care.

188 Members appointed to the care and counsel committee generally represent diverse ages,  
189 interests, professions, and styles of communication. The committee often considers  
190 sensitive matters, and members of the committee embrace the expectation of  
191 confidentiality, discretion and tact as part of their charge.

192 The care and counsel committee develops ways to support all members and attenders  
193 within the meeting community. Committees find that different approaches are helpful in  
194 attending to the needs of newcomers to the meeting, families with young children, teens a  
195 and young adults, older Friends, those experiencing transitions in family structure or  
196 financial security, substance abuse, or mental illness, and those facing chronic or serious  
197 illness and death. When conflicts arise between individuals within the meeting, the  
198 intervention and support of the care and counsel committee can be a tremendous service  
199 to the meeting as well as to the person involved. In some situations, the committee may  
200 determine that needed care can be carried out to better advantage by Friends not named

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201 to the committee and it may invite that service. This could include professional help such as  
202 that available through the Friends Counseling Service.

203 Some meetings within Philadelphia Yearly Meeting have found it useful to create  
204 subcommittees of care and counsel to attend to special circumstances. Subcommittees  
205 might give focused attention to marriage, membership, youth, or loss and bereavement as  
206 well as other specific purposes. If this is the practice in a particular meeting, the care and  
207 counsel committee weaves together the work of the subcommittee and ensures that the  
208 appropriate work is accomplished and integrated into the whole.

209 The care and counsel committee is intimately involved with membership in the monthly  
210 meeting. The committee establishes a process for individuals requesting membership. The  
211 committee meets with applicants to explore their interest, understanding and personal  
212 spiritual journey. Transfers of membership are facilitated by the committee, and members  
213 who live at a distance or have become inactive are encouraged by the committee to re-  
214 evaluate their membership status. The care and counsel committee maintains a list of  
215 members and active attenders together with their contact information, and regularly checks  
216 this list with that of the meeting recorder.

217 While the care and counsel committee has specific responsibility for the health and vitality  
218 of the meeting community as a whole, one of its important tasks is regularly to invite all  
219 members of the community to join in loving care for each other. Some meetings now have  
220 adopted the practice of establishing circles of care. Each individual is valued and important  
221 to the community as a whole, and each individual provides unique and welcome Light.

222 3. **Religious Education.** Religious education is a lifelong endeavor. It begins in the family, as  
223 parents take responsibility for the religious development of their children. Monthly  
224 meetings have a special responsibility to bring children under their care into full  
225 participation in the life of the Meeting and into an understanding of the faith and practices  
226 of Friends.

227  
228 Meetings are expected to offer religious education programs for young and adult members  
229 and attenders, drawing on the many resources available through the yearly meeting,  
230 Friends General Conference, and other Quaker and religious organizations. A thriving First  
231 Day School is important to the life of the meeting. Religious education programs can also  
232 include study groups, conferences, retreats, service projects, and libraries.

233

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- 234 **4. Outreach.** By extending a welcome to people in the community and interpreting our faith to  
235 them, we practice a traditional form of Quaker ministry. In larger meetings, an outreach  
236 committee can assist in the care of seekers, attenders and new members, helping to include  
237 them in the life of the meeting and encouraging them to join in membership.  
238
- 239 **5. Peace and Social Justice.** Meeting members may feel a responsibility to address a variety of  
240 issues in their community, state, nation, or world. Common ways of giving life to these  
241 leadings include:  
242
- 243 • Planning and carrying out service projects as corporate activities of the meeting.
  - 244 • Maintaining a committee to address peace and social justice issues. This committee  
245 may recommend particular actions to individuals and to the meeting itself as a  
246 corporate body.
  - 247 • Encouraging members to participate in the work for social change of established  
248 Quaker organizations, such as the American Friends Service Committee or Friends  
249 Committee on National Legislation, or other bodies, or independently to pursue  
250 leadings to engage in social actions consistent with Friends’ testimonies. Members  
251 who appear to be moved by a genuine prompting of the Spirit may be supported in  
252 leadings that not all share.
  - 253 • Supporting a member or members in seeking assent to a particular expression of  
254 social concern by their quarterly meeting or the yearly meeting.
  - 255 • Contributing services or financial support to help free a member to pursue a social  
256 concern as a ‘released Friend.’  
257
- 258 **6. Property and Finance.** Monthly meetings may hold and maintain real property; hold and  
259 maintain trust funds; solicit, maintain, and disburse operating funds for their own purposes;  
260 and raise money for a quarterly meeting, yearly meeting, and other such bodies as they may  
261 decide to support. These tasks and responsibilities are entrusted to a treasurer, trustees,  
262 and, if needed, committees charged with such functions as property maintenance,  
263 graveyard management, fundraising, and investment management. The books of those  
264 holding funds are audited at least annually, usually by a committee of meeting members.  
265
- 266 **7. Records.** A recorder maintains the records of births, adoptions, deaths, marriages, divorces  
267 and changes in membership. The recorder, or another person or committee specially  
268 designated, periodically publishes a directory of members and persons associated with the  
269 meeting.  
270



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271 Minutes of monthly meetings for business, when approved, are recorded on acid-free  
272 paper, appropriately bound, held in safekeeping, and, when no longer required for current  
273 reference, deposited in one of the Friends’ historical libraries at Swarthmore and Haverford  
274 Colleges. Records of other meeting bodies may be treated similarly, if desired. Some  
275 monthly meetings are now using digital technology to record their minutes and other  
276 appropriate documents.

277

278 **8. Nominations to Service as a Meeting Officer or Committee Member.** Monthly meeting  
279 officers and committee members are given substantial autonomy within their areas of  
280 responsibility, so their wise selection is essential to the meeting’s welfare. The nominating  
281 committee bears the important responsibility of discerning the gifts of meeting members,  
282 recommending the right people for service to the meeting as an officer or committee  
283 member, and seeing to their replacement at appropriate intervals by others equally well  
284 qualified. To provide for a broad sharing of the nominating functions, meetings are  
285 encouraged to specify short terms for nominating committee members, and to choose an  
286 ad hoc naming committee to nominate people to serve on the nominating committee. At a  
287 minimum, a nominating committee can offer:

- 288 • A procedure for the identification, recruitment, training, and rotation of clerks. The  
289 office of assistant clerk or recording clerk is often used as a training ground for the  
290 meeting clerk.
- 291 • A roster of officer positions and standing committees of the meeting with job  
292 descriptions and numbers of members needed in each committee.
- 293 • Where warranted, a plan for the staggering of terms and the regular rotation of  
294 members serving in various offices and committees.
- 295 • A reporting procedure which permits the meeting to weigh nominations  
296 thoughtfully before final approval.

297 Guidance of Meeting Affairs

298 The clerk conducts the meetings for business and, with the assistance of a meeting secretary or  
299 assistant clerk, sees to the management in good order of the affairs of the meeting. The clerk  
300 carries out the instructions of the meeting on all matters pertaining to the accomplishment of  
301 its business. In addition, the clerk is often in the best position to identify weaknesses or failings  
302 in the committee structure and function, and to initiate corrective action. The preparation of an  
303 annual self-evaluation (see p. xx for the Monthly Meeting Checklist in Section VI) is supervised  
304 by the clerk and provides an occasion for assessment and correction as needed.

305 Volunteers and Paid Staff

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306 Friends have been reluctant to deviate from the tradition of volunteerism that has marked the  
307 Religious Society of Friends from its beginnings. Volunteers, as they work together for the  
308 meeting, often find their religious lives mutually strengthened, their sense of community  
309 deepened, and their commitment as members affirmed. These dividends of volunteerism  
310 diminish when volunteers find themselves overcommitted. Some meetings have found  
311 themselves strengthened spiritually when they have employed staff to perform a few essential  
312 functions, such as child care, general secretarial work, and maintenance of buildings and  
313 grounds.

314

315 Funds, Property and Burial Grounds

316

317 **1. Meetings and Economic Resources:**

318

319 The guidance offered Friends in the disposition of their own economic resources applies equally  
320 to the exercise of economic power by meetings. Meetings as well as individuals can act, in the  
321 words of John Woolman, so that “to turn all the treasures we possess into the channel of  
322 Universal Love become the business of our lives.” Meetings are encouraged to review regularly  
323 their policies and practices to ensure the socially responsible investment of endowments and  
324 working capital, ecologically responsible management of real property, caring management and  
325 equitable compensation of employees, and socially responsible use of the power to purchase  
326 and consume. Meetings are advised to seek expert advice, when needed, in the areas of finance  
327 and accounting, labor and employment practices, and property and real estate.

328

329 **2. Financing Monthly Meeting Activities:**

330

331 Monthly meetings have broad discretion in the raising, custody, and spending of money. They  
332 are encouraged to conduct their affairs so that money for routine operating budgets is raised  
333 from the current generation, without undue reliance on the generosity of past members. They  
334 are also encouraged to take care that their fund-raising activities spread the burden of financial  
335 support suitably among members and regular attenders.

336

337 Broad decisions about the raising, custody, and spending of money are policy matters affecting  
338 the entire meeting community. Such broad decisions could include the development of a long-  
339 term financial plan that attends not only to the physical needs of the meeting’s property, but  
340 also to the financial support for members who are in need and to the support of Friends  
341 testimonies. It is expected that recommendations regarding the meeting’s budget and finances

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342 will be seasoned by the Finance Committee or other appropriate body within the meeting and  
343 that decisions will be made at the monthly meeting for business, rather than by a less  
344 representative body.

345  
346 Good order includes the keeping of careful financial records and a regular audit of the monthly  
347 meeting accounts, including the accounts of all meeting committees and programs, by a  
348 committee of the meeting appointed for that purpose. The auditors should report to the  
349 meeting for business, and the substance of the audit report should be recorded in the minutes.  
350 Monthly meetings may encourage institutions under their care to employ professional auditors,  
351 and ask that the audit report be a part of the institution's periodic reporting to the meeting.

352  
353 Monthly meetings are encouraged to utilize the investment management services of the  
354 Friends Fiduciary Corporation for their endowment funds. Meetings are expected to review and  
355 monitor their investment principles and performance on a regular basis, and to establish their  
356 own "social responsibility" criteria for the investment of endowment funds not placed in the  
357 hands of the Friends Fiduciary Corporation.

358  
359 Monthly meetings holding endowment funds established by gift or bequest should take care  
360 that the income is put to the uses specified by the donor.

361

362 **3. Real Property of Meetings:**

363

364 Property endows its possessor with power. Meetings are encouraged to use the power  
365 inherent in their real property to enrich the spiritual life of the meeting, to enhance the  
366 integrity of the natural world, and to contribute to the welfare of the surrounding community.  
367 Meetings are encouraged to carry adequate insurance to cover loss, replacement and liability.

368

369 Four options are available for formal ownership of meeting real property. Legal counsel should  
370 be consulted before making a choice. Property may be:

371

- 372 1. Held in the name of an unincorporated meeting.
- 373 2. Held in the name of an unincorporated body of trustees appoint by the meeting. The  
374 meeting must take care that the board of trustees is kept in existence by the timely  
375 replacement of trustees lost through resignation, disability, or death.
- 376 3. Held in the name of an incorporated meeting.
- 377 4. Held in the name of an incorporated body of trustees appointed by the meeting.

378

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379 Options 3 and 4 require at a minimum the adoption of bylaws, the holding of annual meetings  
380 of the corporation, and the election of directors. Those meetings and elections should follow  
381 Friends’ procedures to the extent possible under state law. Directors need to be sensitive to  
382 the desires of the meeting as they carry out their statutory responsibilities.

383

384 The Friends Fiduciary Corporation of Philadelphia no longer undertakes the role of formal  
385 holder of record of properties of active monthly or quarterly meetings.

386

387 **Burial Grounds**

388

389 Monthly meetings and their successors have a responsibility in perpetuity to maintain burial  
390 grounds and memorial gardens in good order, and to devote to their upkeep any income from  
391 perpetual care endowments in the charge of the meeting. A committee of the meeting may be  
392 empowered to authorize interments of bodies or ashes or scatterings of ashes, keep accurate  
393 records of the location of the interred, and maintain the grounds. It is expected that the  
394 procedure for recording interment or scatterings of ashes will be consistent with the procedure  
395 for recording burials.

396

397 Friends have traditionally expressed their commitments to simplicity and the equality of all  
398 persons by discouraging the use of elaborate grave markers. Graves are ordinarily marked by  
399 plain stones that bear only the name of the deceased and dates of birth and death. When  
400 opening a new section of a burial ground, meetings may wish to require that stones be flush  
401 with the ground to facilitate maintenance.

402

403 **Membership**

404

405 Within Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, it is the practice for monthly meetings to maintain records  
406 of their members. In the past, meetings automatically recorded as members (called ‘birthright’  
407 Friends) all newborn children whose parents were members; but this practice is inconsistent  
408 with the goal of a Religious Society of Friends made up of members by mature conviction  
409 and so this practice has been abandoned.

410

411 **The Meaning of Membership**

412

413 The monthly meeting is the final authority in all matters concerning membership. A person  
414 joining a monthly meeting becomes thereby a member of a quarterly meeting, the yearly

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415 meeting, and the Religious Society of Friends. There is no membership in Philadelphia Yearly  
416 Meeting other than membership in a particular monthly meeting.

417  
418 Membership establishes a mutual commitment between members and their monthly meeting.  
419 On the one hand, membership commits the monthly meeting to provide a spiritual home for its  
420 members and corporate support for their efforts to live in harmony with the faith and practices  
421 of Friends. Many meetings establish scholarship funds for members to attend workshops,  
422 retreats and other opportunities for spiritual nurture, as well as scholarships for members’  
423 children to attend Friends schools. Meetings also support members faced with difficult,  
424 potentially life-changing decisions by helping to form clearness committees that can assist  
425 members in their discernment process. Meeting support may also extend to aspects of a  
426 member’s life that could interfere with full and active participation in the meeting, such as  
427 economic insecurity or other personal challenges. But most importantly, the meeting provides  
428 regular opportunities for corporate worship and other activities that enable the meeting to be a  
429 genuine community of faith for its members.

430  
431 On the other hand, membership commits the members of the meeting to live in spiritual unity  
432 with each other and to engage as fully as possible in the life of the meeting. Specifically, this  
433 means regular participation in meeting for worship, meeting for worship with attention to  
434 business, and the work of the meeting and of its committees. It also entails giving time, skills,  
435 and material support to the meeting and its activities such as religious education, pastoral care,  
436 and witness to the broader community. In Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, responsibility for the  
437 full range of monthly, quarterly and yearly meeting activities rests with the membership.

438  
439 Attenders

440  
441 Friends meetings are often visited by people from other religious backgrounds or with no  
442 religious ties. Meetings welcome all visitors; continuing attention is given to those who return  
443 frequently. Such attention includes providing these regular attenders with spiritual support and  
444 guidance as they seek to learn more about Friends’ faith and practice. Regular attenders may  
445 be encouraged to attend business meetings and, at the discretion of the monthly meeting, to  
446 serve on committees. These individuals can then become familiar with Friends’ particular  
447 approach to worship and the conduct of meeting business, as well as the organizational  
448 structure, finances, and witness of the monthly meeting. Regular attenders are invited to  
449 attend sessions of quarterly and yearly meeting and the annual summer gatherings of Friends  
450 General Conference. Meetings provide regular attenders with a copy of Philadelphia Yearly  
451 Meeting’s current *Faith and Practice*, and with information about the major spiritual writings of

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452 Friends, about the history of Friends, and about such organizations as the American Friends  
453 Service Committee, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Quaker Voluntary Service, and  
454 Friends World Committee for Consultation.

455  
456 Those attenders who participate regularly in meeting activities, especially meeting for worship,  
457 and who demonstrate a growing understanding and appreciation of Friends’ faith and practices,  
458 and of the responsibilities of membership, are encouraged to apply for membership.

459  
460 Membership is a major commitment to participate in a particular community of Friends, and  
461 full participation in two religious bodies at once (including two monthly meetings) is usually  
462 impractical. Except in unusual circumstances, applicants who are members of another religious  
463 body are expected to give up that membership as they prepare to join the meeting, formally  
464 advising the other organization of their intent to join the Religious Society of Friends, and  
465 endeavoring to obtain a letter of release from their previous religious affiliation.

466  
467 Children

468  
469 All children from birth to maturity need to feel themselves full participants in the fellowship of  
470 the meeting, to be nurtured in their spiritual development and their understanding of the faith  
471 and practice of Friends, and to be guided and encouraged in preparation for Quaker adulthood.  
472 The meeting should sympathetically help children prepare for the decisions they must face,  
473 such as those regarding peer pressure, cultural conformity, and military service. As they  
474 mature, if they have received this care from their meeting, they will become increasingly  
475 conscious of the full meaning of the responsibilities of membership in the Religious Society of  
476 Friends and be ready to make their own decision regarding membership. Growing up in a  
477 meeting offers children an extended religious family. It is the meeting’s joyful responsibility to  
478 provide an atmosphere of care, love, and recognition—in short, a spiritual home—for all young  
479 people in the meeting, regardless of their membership status or that of their parents.

480  
481 Monthly meetings are encouraged to respect parents’ sense of what is best for their children  
482 regarding membership. Some Friends believe the process of nurture of the young toward  
483 mature conviction is aided by a child’s sense of belonging fully to a Meeting, a sense that  
484 comes only with membership. Other Friends believe the process is aided by a status of  
485 associate member that calls for a child to make an assertion of mature conviction when  
486 ready to do so. Still others believe that any form of involuntary membership limits a child’s  
487 freedom to choose. But parents will need to make a conscious decision regarding which option  
488 they wish to adopt regarding the membership status of their children, from birth to age 21.

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489

490 A person may apply for membership in a meeting at any age, following the procedure set forth  
491 above. In the case of younger applicants, it may be desirable to ascertain the support of the  
492 parents or guardian. Meetings are urged to show a loving flexibility which recognizes the  
493 uniqueness of each person's spiritual growth. Some people are spiritually ready for  
494 membership early in their lives; others are ready only as adults.

495

496 Either on their own initiative or in response to an inquiry from the meeting, parents who are  
497 members may, at the time of their child's birth or adoption or later:

498

- 499 1. Request membership for their child;
- 500 2. Request associate membership for their child;
- 501 3. Not request any enrollment for the child.

502

503 If the parents are members of different meetings, the parents decide which meeting records  
504 the child. When only one parent is a member, children may be recorded upon the request of  
505 one parent and with the permission of the other or, under unusual circumstances, upon the  
506 request of one parent. Where there is only one legal parent, that member may request  
507 membership or associate membership for the child. Meetings are urged to recognize the  
508 diversity of family patterns and be sensitive to the concerns of all involved.

509

510 Parents requesting membership for their child are expected to raise the child as a Friend in a  
511 meeting community. The parents and the meeting can then help the child to grow gradually  
512 into the responsibilities of membership, and encourage the child to take on specific  
513 responsibilities—such as service on a meeting committee--when ready. The meeting has an  
514 obligation to those recorded as members at a young age to ensure that as they reach adulthood  
515 they will thoughtfully consider their own commitment to membership.

516

517 Many meetings with Philadelphia Yearly Meeting offer associate membership for children, with  
518 the full responsibilities and privileges of membership up to adulthood, with the age to be  
519 determined by the meeting. For yearly meeting statistical purposes associate members will not  
520 be recorded as such after their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Associate members, when they are led, may  
521 request full membership. The monthly meeting is expected to encourage associate members  
522 nearing the age of 21 to apply for adult membership. In this, as in all matters regarding  
523 membership, monthly meetings establish their own policies regarding the membership of  
524 children.

525

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526

527 Sojourning Members

528

529 Friends may attend a monthly meeting because they have moved temporarily into its vicinity,  
530 but may not wish to give up membership in their home meeting, to which they expect to return  
531 eventually. In such a case, Friends may ask their home meeting to send a letter requesting to  
532 be accepted as sojourning members of the meeting in their temporary location. Sojourning  
533 Friends may fulfill all functions that they are willing to undertake and that the host meeting  
534 sees fit to assign to them. However, they are not counted in the statistical reports of the host  
535 meeting. Their sojourning membership ends when they leave the area of the meeting where  
536 they have sojourned. Its clerk should then notify their home meeting. Those who continue as  
537 sojourning Friends for an extended period may be asked to examine their reasons for remaining  
538 in that status, and to consider a transfer of membership instead.

539

540 Joining other Religious Bodies

541

542 If members wish to leave the Religious Society of Friends and join some other religious body,  
543 they are expected to notify their monthly meeting. The monthly meeting may give them a  
544 letter stating their good standing in the Religious Society of Friends. When they have been  
545 received in membership by another religious group, their membership with Friends shall cease.

546

547 Membership Records

548

549 Accurate information on the membership status of each active member is kept by the recorder  
550 of each monthly meeting and shared with the quarterly meeting and yearly meeting as  
551 requested.

552

553 Some persons may wish to retain membership in the Religious Society of Friends even though  
554 they have not been active in any monthly meeting for many years. At its discretion, a monthly  
555 meeting may carry inactive persons on its membership rolls. Long-term nominal membership is  
556 generally discouraged, however, except when active meeting participation is not possible  
557 because of poor health, residence far away from any meeting (so that transfer of membership  
558 or sojourning membership is not feasible), or some other compelling factor.

559

560 Meetings: Growth and Changes in Formal Relationships

561 1. Worship Groups



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562 When a group of people have been drawn to Friends worship and testimonies but find no  
563 organized meeting nearby with whom to worship, they may form a Friends' worship group. The  
564 worship group can be as formal or as informal as is desired and can assume as little or as much  
565 structure as it feels is rightly ordered. It may not, however, present itself as an official body of  
566 the Religious Society of Friends or act in its name.

567 A facilitator or correspondent may help by maintaining contact among the worshipers,  
568 arranging for the time and place for worship sessions, and issuing whatever publicity the group  
569 may wish. Such leadership is especially helpful when a group draws its members from  
570 scattered communities, experiences a lull in its activities, or decides to broaden its activities or  
571 relationships.

572 Some Friends' worship groups fulfill their purposes by remaining in a temporary state, meeting  
573 seasonally or only briefly. Those that have achieved some permanence may choose whether to  
574 remain informal or to seek a formal relationship with the Religious Society of Friends.

575 The latter choice requires individuals to decide whether to apply for membership in the  
576 Religious Society of Friends or, for those already members, to apply for a transfer of  
577 membership. For the group, the issue, decided in consultation with the regional meeting within  
578 which they reside and with neighboring monthly meetings as appropriate, is whether to apply  
579 to the regional meeting for status as a preparative meeting or as a monthly meeting.

580 2. Preparative meetings

581 Status as a preparative meeting serves as an intermediate step between that of a worship  
582 group and an established monthly meeting. It also serves the needs of a group wishing to have  
583 membership in the Religious Society of Friends but not ready to assume the full responsibilities  
584 of a monthly meeting.

585 A preparative meeting is a meeting under the care of a monthly meeting, reporting regularly to  
586 it, yet holding its own meetings for worship and having its own officers and meetings for  
587 business. Insofar as it wishes, it may have its own committees and financial structure and its  
588 own programs and activities including the holding of memorial meetings or funerals. It may  
589 own property and trust funds. A preparative meeting may not admit members or conduct  
590 marriages under its care or in other ways act as an established monthly meeting.

591 When a monthly meeting, with quarterly meeting approval, accepts the request of a worship  
592 group for status as a preparative meeting of that monthly meeting, it enrolls as its members  
593 those individuals in the group who apply and are accepted. Thereby the monthly meeting  
594 affirms its role as nurturer of these additional members and of this new meeting and appoints a

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595 committee of oversight composed of Friends experienced in worship and business after the  
596 manner of Friends. The monthly meeting should promptly inform the yearly meeting of this  
597 change in status and of the names of the members involved.

598 Given that there may well be experienced Friends and different but valid customs in the new  
599 preparative meeting, an established meeting has much to learn as well as to offer when called  
600 upon to assist a worship group. A tender and sensitive spirit must prevail in this process and  
601 consultations should be grounded in worship.

602

603 3. Changes in Established Meetings

604

605 a. Monthly Meetings: when members of a worship group or of a preparative meeting wish  
606 to form a monthly meeting, they should first consult with the appropriate monthly  
607 meeting and the regional meeting. If it is evident that the group is fully aware of the  
608 responsibilities of an established monthly meeting (See p. xx), a formal minute should  
609 be prepared and forwarded to the monthly meeting. If the monthly meeting approves  
610 this minute, it is forwarded to the regional meeting. When the regional meeting gives  
611 approval, it appoints a committee of oversight to assist in matters of membership and  
612 responsibility for finance and property. The regional meeting should also inform the  
613 yearly meeting of such a change in status along with the names of the members  
614 involved.

615

616 A large established monthly meeting, in order better to meet members’ needs, may  
617 wish to divide; or a meeting, feeling itself to be too small to fulfill its various obligations  
618 of property, finance and spiritual nurture, may wish to become a preparative meeting of  
619 another meeting or to merge with it. The meetings involved should minute their  
620 intentions and seek the approval of the regional meeting. If the proposal is approved,  
621 the yearly meeting should receive prompt notice of the change and of the names of the  
622 members involved.

623

624 b. Quarterly (Regional) Meetings: for reasons such as convenience of attendance, a  
625 monthly meeting may request transfer of affiliation from one quarterly (or regional)  
626 meeting to another. The parties involved should consult carefully and, if the change is  
627 approved by all concerned, the matter should be reported to the yearly meeting or  
628 Interim Meeting for its approval.

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629  
630 Similar consultation and discernment should occur when one or more monthly meetings  
631 wish to form a new regional meeting; or when a large regional meeting feels it right to  
632 divide; or when smaller regional meetings wish to join into one. In such cases a  
633 committee from the yearly meeting should be party to the discussions and assist as  
634 needed. Final approval rests with the yearly meeting.

635  
636 c. Whenever Meetings Merge: when any merger of meetings occurs, all property both  
637 real and fiscal of the bodies involved becomes the property of the newly established  
638 body. Meetings are cautioned to prepare proper minutes to take care of all legal  
639 matters involved in the merger.

640  
641 d. Whenever Meetings Are Discontinued: if the members of a meeting believe it desirable  
642 either to lay it down or to unite with another meeting, they should make their request  
643 to the regional meeting to which they regularly report. If approval is granted, this  
644 regional meeting should appoint a committee to assist in making the necessary  
645 arrangements. In the case of the closing of a monthly meeting, this committee should  
646 arrange for the transfer of individual memberships to another meeting. Notification of  
647 such action should be forwarded promptly to the yearly meeting.

648  
649 In the case of the laying down of a preparative, monthly, or regional meeting, all rights  
650 and responsibilities of property vested in it and all responsibility for records shall be  
651 transferred to the larger meeting of which it has been a part.

652 Sharing Information About Our Meeting with Other Meetings

653 The Religious Society of Friends has always mistrusted church hierarchies, believing that the  
654 path to the Divine is inward for each individual and worshipping group. Friends have kept the  
655 power of decision in religious matters as close to the primary worship group and the individual.  
656 The monthly meeting, accordingly, has a freedom of action and responsibility not given to  
657 either the quarterly or yearly meeting. On the other hand, there are some matters on which a  
658 degree of uniformity among neighboring monthly meetings is essential to the good order of the  
659 Society, and likewise there are some matters that invite attention and support at the quarterly  
660 or yearly meeting level.

661 By virtue of membership in a monthly meeting, Friends also become members of the quarterly  
662 and yearly meeting. All members have the privilege and responsibility to participate in

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663 decision-making, fellowship and worship within each body. Monthly meetings may designate  
664 certain members to attend quarterly or yearly meeting sessions, although all members are  
665 welcome and encouraged to attend.

666 Within its own area of responsibility, each body is autonomous. Friends do not attend  
667 quarterly or yearly meeting as instructed delegates of their monthly meeting but join others in  
668 worship and decisions that respond to the moving of the Spirit in that time and place. Monthly  
669 meetings may adopt and forward minutes expressing unity on issues they wish to bring before  
670 quarterly or yearly meeting for consideration, but such minutes do not limit the freedom of the  
671 body assembled to adopt alternate courses. When presented with an urgent concern or  
672 proposal, whether by an individual under a strong leading or by a group with a powerful sense  
673 of mission, the quarterly or yearly meeting may be tempted to act precipitately. It is helpful in  
674 reaching a rightly-ordered sense of the meeting for the quarterly and yearly meetings to have in  
675 place a procedure for broad prior consideration in monthly meetings of such concerns or  
676 proposals.

677 Monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, and the yearly meeting share the common task of  
678 encouraging and sustaining members in their obedience to the Truth. This makes members’  
679 lives both harder and easier: harder, by the challenge to a higher level of commitment to a  
680 religious calling; easier, by the presence of a supportive structure within which that calling can  
681 be answered.

682 Monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, and the yearly meeting prepare and disseminate various  
683 written reports. Most of these bodies have annual budgets, and committees responsible for  
684 religious education or other matters, which are presented orally and often also in written form  
685 at a meeting for worship with attention to business. These bodies also report informally to  
686 members through newsletters at more frequent intervals. And there is a strong tradition of oral  
687 reporting to monthly meetings of the deliberations and decisions of the quarterly and yearly  
688 meeting.

689 Formerly, monthly meetings would send to quarterly meetings two separate forms of annual  
690 report: an overall “state of the meeting” and a report of the committee on worship and  
691 ministry. And quarterly meetings in turn would submit annual reports on the same two  
692 subjects to yearly meeting, drawing on the reports of monthly meetings. Some quarterly  
693 meetings have restored the practice of asking their constituent monthly meetings to prepare a  
694 ‘state of the meeting’ report; but the other type of annual report has been abandoned. Still,  
695 such reports did help the quarterly and yearly meeting identify situations in monthly meetings  
696 where assistance might have been helpful.

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697 The yearly meeting does ask monthly meetings to provide an annual report of membership  
698 statistics; and it asks both monthly and quarterly meetings to submit a list of current officers.

699 Such sharing of information among monthly meetings, as well as with the quarterly and yearly  
700 meeting, is regarded as beneficial for all those involved..

701 Inter-visitation

702 From the beginning Quakers have experienced and identified themselves as a community that  
703 transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. This has encouraged the offer of hospitality to  
704 traveling Friends, on the one hand, and the confidence of welcome, on the other. Friendly  
705 inter-visitation, whether formal or informal, has for more than three hundred years provided an  
706 important opening for understanding and cooperation in the affairs of Friends and for mutual  
707 ministry and spiritual growth. Friends are encouraged, therefore, as they travel on business or  
708 otherwise, to allow time for visits with meetings or with individual Friends and families in the  
709 regions they may pass through.

710 Letters of Introduction

711 In making such Friendly visits, many have found letters of introduction from home meetings to  
712 be helpful. Such letters usually state the fact of membership, give some indication of  
713 participation and witness in the affairs of our Religious Society, and express such greetings as  
714 are deemed appropriate. Letters are signed by the clerk and duly noted in the minutes. Since  
715 Friends travel for a wide variety of purposes, letters of introduction do not suggest specific  
716 obligations either on the visitor or on those visited and may be issued by the clerk without  
717 formal consideration by the meeting. Such letters are often endorsed by those visited.

718 Minutes of Travel for Religious Service

719 As in the past, Friends today find themselves under a sense of divine leading to travel in support  
720 of an important public witness or to nurture the religious life of Friends' families and meetings.  
721 In carrying out such leadings, they find it supportive to take with them a formal minute for  
722 religious service from their monthly meeting.

723 A monthly meeting should issue such a minute only after the concern has been laid before its  
724 committee on worship and ministry, or other group as the meeting may suggest such as a  
725 clearness committee, and has been favorably recommended to the monthly meeting for  
726 approval. A minute of religious service, signed by the clerk, should state clearly the nature,  
727 scope, and duration of the proposed service and affirm the meeting's support of the Friends  
728 concerned. The monthly meeting issuing such a minute should consider whether it is under an

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729 obligation to ensure, insofar as possible, that the proposed service is not hampered by a lack of  
730 funds or other support.

731 A Friend who proposes to travel under religious concern may find, as have Friends in the past,  
732 that it is a source of strength and comfort to be joined by another Friend who is sympathetic to  
733 the concern and able to give counsel and encouragement.

734 A minute of religious service, especially one that is to be used beyond the bounds of the yearly  
735 meeting, after adoption by a monthly meeting, is usually submitted for approval, endorsement,  
736 and support by the quarterly and yearly meeting.

737 Friends traveling with such minutes are customarily welcomed by those among whom they visit  
738 and invited to lay their leadings before appropriate gatherings. It is also customary for minutes  
739 of travel for religious service to be endorsed at the conclusion of the gatherings by the  
740 person(s) presiding.

741 Upon the completion of the service proposed, a minute for religious service should be returned  
742 promptly with a verbal or written report to those meetings who had earlier reviewed the  
743 concern and minuted their support.

744 Quarterly Meetings

745 Introduction

746 George Fox established monthly meetings in 1666 and also encouraged Friends to gather in  
747 regional meetings. He realized that a more stable and lasting structure was needed than could  
748 be provided by the leadership of a few traveling ministers. Groups of neighboring monthly  
749 meetings within Philadelphia Yearly Meeting have likewise felt strengthened by joining together  
750 in quarterly meetings. These bodies traditionally have met several times a year as occasions for  
751 Friends to support one another through worship and fellowship, and to deal with matters of  
752 regional concern.

753 A quarterly meeting is composed of all the members of its constituent monthly meetings. A  
754 quarterly meeting may be established upon the initiative of monthly meetings in the same  
755 geographic area; or when the yearly meeting approves a request from one or more monthly  
756 meetings; or when a quarterly meeting wishes to divide. With the consent of their constituent  
757 monthly meetings, quarterly meetings may merge. The meetings involved in such cases may  
758 request that the yearly meeting appoint a committee to assist in the organization of a new  
759 quarterly meeting.

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760 Functions and Organization of Quarterly Meetings

761 Sessions of a quarterly meeting, thoughtfully planned, can provide religious fellowship, spiritual  
762 enrichment for Friends, and a forum for cooperation and exchange of information and ideas  
763 among the members of the constituent monthly meetings. Those gathered may develop plans  
764 to deal regionally with broader issues and special concerns and may also season concerns that a  
765 monthly meeting wishes to bring before the yearly meeting. Those named as monthly meeting  
766 representatives should be faithful in reporting to the members of their monthly meeting the  
767 proceedings of such gatherings.

768 Some quarterly meetings within Philadelphia Yearly Meeting have substantial institutions under  
769 their care, are custodians of property, employ paid staff, and have active programs in matters  
770 of ministry and worship, peace and social concerns, and youth.

771 Quarterly meetings maintain a structure of administrative offices and committees. These  
772 include at a minimum a clerk, a recording clerk and a treasurer. There may be committees to  
773 assist the clerk, to plan gatherings, to conduct routine business between sessions, to prepare  
774 the annual budget, and to provide sensitive oversight of programs and staff.

- 775 • A nominating or naming committee nominates the quarterly meeting officers as well as  
776 its appointees to the yearly meeting nominating committee. It monitors the process by  
777 which the quarterly meeting committee members are selected.  
778
- 779 • The treasurer receives, holds, invests and disburses the quarterly meeting’s funds in  
780 accordance with that meeting’s instructions. The treasurer receives the covenants from  
781 its constituent monthly meetings to provide for the quarterly and yearly meetings’  
782 expenses. Auditors, appointed annually, audit the treasurer’s books, submit a written  
783 report to the quarterly meeting, and guide the treasurer as needed in good accounting  
784 practices.
- 785 • A committee on worship and ministry can support the work of monthly meetings  
786 seeking to enrich their worship and thereby enhance the spiritual lives of the members  
787 of the monthly and quarterly meetings. It may also respond sensitively when a monthly  
788 meeting is in need of special nurture.
- 789 • A committee focusing on peace and social concerns can enable members of different  
790 monthly meetings to coordinate more effectively their public witness or service.
- 791 • A committee concerned principally with activities may provide programs such as  
792 retreats, service projects, and workshops for adults and youth.

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- 793       • A quarterly meeting which has a school, health facility, or other institution under its care  
794       appoints to the governing body members with dependable commitment and proven  
795       qualifications. The quarterly meeting entrusts operating responsibility to those  
796       appointed and seeks through legal means to limit the liability for their actions. It has  
797       the obligation to offer encouragement and spiritual nurture to the governing body and  
798       to intervene if the viability of the institution is in question. It maintains a regular  
799       reporting process from the institution to the quarterly meeting that will promote  
800       diligence in management, good stewardship, and regular attention to maintaining the  
801       Quaker character of the institution in all aspects of its policies and operation.  
802       • A property committee or trustees can assume responsibility for property such as  
803       meetinghouses or burial grounds under the care of the quarterly meeting.  
804

805    Guidance and Assistance

806    When a monthly meeting faces difficult problems, needs encouragement, or wishes guidance in  
807    making decisions concerning membership, it may ask for the quarterly meeting’s assistance. To  
808    assure such support, the quarterly meeting may encourage its constituent monthly meetings to  
809    provide it with annual reports based on constructive self-assessment.

810    When a quarterly meeting for whatever reason cannot fulfill its functions of oversight or  
811    assistance, or is unable to receive and forward meeting reports and funds, the condition is  
812    reported to yearly meeting for its advice and assistance. Should a monthly meeting be laid  
813    down, the quarterly meeting assumes responsibility for its assets, including property and burial  
814    grounds.

815    Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

816    Introduction

817    Philadelphia Yearly Meeting was founded in 1681 to provide assistance and oversight for  
818    established and prospective monthly meetings. In its early years it was called the “General  
819    Yearly Meeting for Friends of Pennsylvania, East and West Jersey and of the Adjacent  
820    Provinces.” Its geographical boundaries today are more limited but no more precise. They are  
821    the unplanned result of a series of affiliation decisions by monthly meetings that border other  
822    yearly meetings. From 1827, when the yearly meeting split, until 1955, when the two branches  
823    reunited, two yearly meetings functioned in the same general geographic area and each called  
824    itself the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.



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825 Today Philadelphia Yearly Meeting includes meetings and Friends in parts of Pennsylvania, New  
826 Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland.

827 Annual Sessions

828 All members of its constituent monthly meetings are also members of the Philadelphia Yearly  
829 Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends and are encouraged to attend the annual sessions of  
830 yearly meeting and participate in its deliberations and decisions. Yearly meeting is enhanced  
831 when as many members as possible attend annual sessions, since this assures a larger pool of  
832 wisdom and insight; but such participation is also beneficial for the members and their monthly  
833 meetings.

834 The annual sessions may change in format but include worship, business sessions, and  
835 fellowship. There are also opportunities to share information and concerns from individual  
836 members, constituent meetings, yearly meeting committees, and other Friends’ groups or  
837 organizations in sympathy with Friends. Epistles (public letters) from other yearly meetings are  
838 read and a small group of those attending sessions are charged with preparing an epistle from  
839 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting which is approved before the close of the sessions.

840 Information, insight, and concerns are received in a worshipful spirit and often evoke deeply  
841 felt responses. The yearly meeting may be led to unite in an expression of concern or in a  
842 decision for specific action. Since such expressions or actions speak for the entire membership,  
843 it is helpful if a responsible body—for instance, a working group or standing committee—  
844 carefully reviews any concerns or proposals for action which are to come before the annual or  
845 special session. It is also helpful if materials, including the yearly meeting budget, are provided  
846 well in advance of annual sessions to those planning to attend. The discussion of the budget is  
847 most useful when it explores the spiritual and testimonial implications of budgetary decisions  
848 and elicits and weighs ideas that will influence future budgets. Annual and other sessions of  
849 the yearly meeting can also play a role in providing assessment and oversight through the  
850 reception of and response to reports from committees of yearly meeting.

851 The yearly meeting in annual sessions appoints its officers including a presiding clerk, a rising  
852 clerk, alternate and recording clerks, a treasurer and assistant treasurer, and elders. Current  
853 information regarding the roles, responsibilities, and terms of office for these officers is in the  
854 Nominating Committee Handbook, which is available at the PYM website ([www.pym.org](http://www.pym.org)).  
855 Yearly meeting in session establishes, funds, oversees and lays down any ad hoc committees;  
856 and it appoints or provides for the appointment of committee and ad hoc committee members  
857 and clerks.

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858 When need arises, yearly meeting may ask the clerk of yearly meeting to call special sessions of  
859 the yearly meeting.

860 The yearly meeting in annual and other sessions is supported by a committee to plan proposed  
861 agendas to ensure continuity across all sessions during the year. A sessions planning group  
862 provides a schedule and makes arrangements that will contribute to the care of those in  
863 attendance. During the sessions the clerk and alternate clerks are supported by a committee to  
864 assist the clerk that is chosen by the clerk.

865 **Interim Meeting [The Long Range Planning Group is proposing changes to the PYM structure**  
866 **that would replace Interim Meeting with continuing sessions. These would have a somewhat**  
867 **different role in the life and governance of PYM. The drafting of this section will be delayed,**  
868 **therefore, until following annual sessions in the summer of 2014.]**

869

870 **Committees of the Yearly Meeting [The recommendations of the Long Range Planning Group**  
871 **would significantly alter the nature and functioning of the committees of PYM. Accordingly,**  
872 **the drafting of this section will also be delayed until following the 2014 annual sessions.]**

873