

**Albuquerque Monthly Meeting
as an organization within the
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)**

A working (or draft) paper based on a portion of the *Faith and Practice of Pacific Yearly Meeting*, but modified to reflect Albuquerque Monthly Meeting within Intermountain Yearly Meeting, their history and relationships with other meetings and worship groups as well as their organizational structure.

Where there is conflict by elements of this paper with the reformed structure of Albuquerque Meeting of January 1 2009, please be advised to follow the later and also the forthcoming *Faith and Practice of Intermountain Yearly Meeting*.

The topics are:

Organization of the Society

The Monthly Meeting

Organization

Officers

Committees of the Meeting

Nominating Committee

Worship and Ministry Committee

Oversight Committee (Overseers)

Combined Worship and Ministry and Oversight Committee

Finance Committee

Other Committees

Growth and Change

New Gatherings of Friends

Worship Groups

Preparative Meetings

Establishment of New Monthly Meetings

Laying down a Meeting

Regional Meetings

The Yearly Meeting

The 25 footnotes now in the paper are expected to be decreased substantially by a reworking of the text in the future.

Part IV

Organization of the Society¹

The Monthly Meeting is the basic unit of organization of the Religious Society of Friends. Individuals hold membership in the Monthly Meeting, and that is where the responsibility resides for pastoral care, religious education, and worship.

The members of the Monthly Meetings also constitute Yearly and [Regional] Meetings, each of which includes a number of Monthly Meetings. A typical Yearly Meeting encompasses several Regional Meetings each of which includes a number of Monthly Meetings. [Intermountain] Yearly Meeting as [four Regional] Meetings; [New Mexico Regional Meeting, Arizona Half-Yearly Meeting, Utah Friends Fellowship and Colorado Regional Meeting.²] It also includes [Mexico City Monthly Meeting as an associate meeting which is a member of Pacific Yearly Meeting.] [Several other meetings included in Intermountain Yearly Meeting's current fellowship are; Wyoming Friends Meeting, seeking its way to affiliate with one of its nearby Yearly Meetings; and Rapid City Preparative Meeting under the care of Fort Collins Monthly Meeting.³]

The names of some of these assemblies reflect special aspects in their history; Arizona Half-Yearly Meeting and New Mexico Quarterly Meeting (now Regional Meeting) used these names from the time they were set up by Pacific Yearly Meeting, and which indicate how often they met at the time], not as an indication of hierarchy of authority.

Each Monthly Meeting is at the core of its Regional Meeting and of the Yearly Meeting. The Regional and Yearly Meetings are organized to explore and realize common purposes of Friends and the Monthly Meetings to which they belong. The work of the Yearly Meeting is done largely in its committees, and corporately at its annual gathering. Friends who attend the gathering do not participate as instructed delegates, but as a group of Friends whose views may well reflect the diverse views of the Yearly Meeting as a whole.

There are now over 88 Yearly Meetings across the globe. While many share joint undertakings and communication among them is treasured, there is no super organization of them all. At each year's annual gathering. [Intermountain] Yearly Meeting prepares an "Epistle to Friends Everywhere" for distribution, and reads excerpts from many such Epistles it has received.

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Faith and Practice, A Guide to Quaker Discipline in the Experience of Pacific Yearly Meeting, 2001. P.107-128.

² In some places, this extract has been modified to provide the practices peculiar to Intermountain Yearly Meeting and Albuquerque Monthly Meeting.

³ While the names of the states in which the regional meetings are located are used as their titles, no political boundary is assumed as that for any regional meeting. New Mexico Regional Meeting has a monthly meeting in Texas (El Paso Monthly Meeting), a worship group under the care of Albuquerque Meeting in the Texas panhandle (Amarillo Worship Group) and a monthly meeting in southwest Colorado (Durango Monthly Meeting). Arizona Half-Yearly Meeting has a Worship Group in Hermosillo, Mexico (*check currency*) and Colorado Regional Meeting has the meetings mentioned above.

³ [Text Lost!]

The Monthly Meeting

I am moved to recommend the setting up of Monthly Meetings throughout the nation. And the Lord opened to me what I must do . . .

GEORGE FOX, JOURNAL

The Monthly Meeting consists of a group of Friends who meet together at regular intervals to wait upon God in Meetings for worship and who meet monthly on the occasion of business. In corporate fellowship, Friends experience the most profound realities of birth, and death, marriage and family, community of spirit and concern for other people. A true Meeting in the Quaker sense is a gathering of people that is also an encounter with God. When this divine-human interaction takes place, there is order, unity, and power. If and when this connection fails, Friends wait and pray that “the way may open” once more. The good order of Friends is based on this conception of a “Meeting”.

ORGANIZATION

The purpose of organization is not for its own sake, but to provide the Meeting with the necessary means for orderly and effective operation, with a maximum of freedom, participation, and responsibility. A Monthly Meeting has many functions. It receives, records and terminates memberships. It provides spiritual and material aid to those in fellowship. It oversees marriages, gives care at the time of death, and counsels with members in troubles circumstances. It collects and administers funds for its maintenance and work. Meetings hold titles to property, witness to Friends’ testimonies, and relate to other bodies of Friends and to other organizations with common concerns.

A Meeting’s organization evolves with its needs. At first, a small Meeting may be able to act as a “committee of the whole”. As it gains strength and experience, it should select appropriate persons and committees to carry out specific responsibilities such as the religious education of children. A combined Ministry and Oversight (or Ministry and Counsel) Committee should be formed promptly. If the meeting holds titles to its Meetinghouse or other property, it should be incorporated.

OFFICERS

Ministry in word and act, responsibility for the good order and material needs of the Meeting, visitation, faithfulness in testimonies; all these things, in the measure of the Light that is given, are the responsibilities of persons in the Meeting. For practical reasons Monthly Meetings appoint members to serve as its officers for definite terms of service, using a nomination process described below. A good officer is one who, while assuming a particular responsibility, seeks to engage the resources of the Meeting in the task to be done.

The *Clerk* presides at the business sessions of the Meeting, prepares or bears responsibility for the minutes of its proceedings, and carries out the instructions of the Meeting to accomplish its business⁴. He or she may be assisted by a *Recording Clerk* who assists with drafting minutes, an

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See p. 136, *Faith & Practice of Pacific Yearly Meeting*, 2001, for qualifications and role of a Presiding Clerk

Alternate Clerk, who presides when the Clerk is unable to serve, and a *Corresponding Clerk*, who handles Meeting correspondence.

Most Meetings appoint a *Recording Clerk* who can make faithful, concise and accurate records of the minutes of action, as discerned and stated by the Clerk. The Recording Clerk puts the Meeting's insights and minutes of exercise into written words but he Clerk bears ultimate responsibility for the completeness and accuracy of the Meeting's minutes⁵.

The *Treasurer* is responsible for maintaining and disbursing the Meeting's funds, and giving regular reports to the Meeting. A financial professional should periodically review the Meeting's accounts⁶.

The *Recorder* (or *Recorder/Archivist*) keeps faithful and accurate membership records on forms provided by the Yearly Meeting. Such records include vital statistics pertaining to the member and his or her immediate family, whether or not they are all members of the Meeting⁷. The Recorder promptly notes any changes relating to the membership, such as births, deaths, transfers, releases, or marriages. At the request of the Yearly Meeting Statistical Clerk⁸, the Recorder completes a questionnaire regarding the Monthly Meeting, and files a copy of this report in the permanent records of the Monthly Meeting.

The Recorder/Archivist also takes proper care of other important records of the Meeting. The officer responsible for current minutes and record books may retain them. All others should be preserved, together with important correspondence and legal papers, such as deeds, conveyances, and trusts, in durable and legible form, and in a permanent repository, protected from fire and loss⁹.

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6 See p. 138, *Faith & Practice of Pacific Yearly Meeting*, 2001, for Minutes of Action and Exercise

7 In Albuquerque Monthly Meeting, financial receipts and disbursements are performed by a professional accountant who prepares such reports as the Treasurer may require. The Treasurer periodically negotiates the costs of this service which provides a continuous history of the Meeting's accounts while changes in the holding of the office of Treasurer occur over time. A periodic review of the books and accounts is provided on request of the Treasurer by a small group of persons appointed by the Committee on Ministry & Oversight. See *Friendly Audits*, Elizabeth Muench, available from through the Friends General Conference Book store, quakerbooks.org

8 See p. , *Draft Faith & Practice of Intermountain Yearly Meeting*, 2006.

9 In Intermountain Yearly Meeting, this function is performed by the *Historian/Archivist* with the questionnaire sent to meetings and worship groups by the Treasurer of the Yearly Meeting in the first month of the calendar year with the notice of the per capita assessment and other financial obligations, *Draft Faith & Practice of Intermountain Yearly Meeting*, 2006, p ().

See Appendix IA: Recommendations for Monthly Meeting Records, *Faith & Practice of Pacific Yearly Meeting*, 2001.

COMMITTEES OF THE MEETING

Each Meeting decides which committees are necessary to carry out its business and concerns. Most Monthly Meetings find a Ministry and Oversight Committee and a Nominating Committee essential. Other standing committees often include Religious Education, Finance and Budget, Peace and Social Order, Property, and Hospitality. *Ad hoc* committees are sometimes useful for a particular project or concern. When a committee no longer serves its purpose, it should be laid down.

Committee conduct business in the same manner as a Monthly Meeting. Waiting on the Spirit to find direction in their operation and unity in their decisions. It is important that members of committees and clerks especially, attend Meeting for business regularly to assure smooth coordination between committees and the Meeting.

A written charge to each committee enables a Monthly Meeting to be clear both about what it expects of its committees (and officers) and the limits of the delegated authority. Such clarity and communication within an atmosphere of trust allows Meetings, officers, and committees to fulfill their respective tasks without wasteful duplication and frustration.

Members of committees should be selected according to their abilities and concerns. Meetings customarily appoint experienced and capable members of the Religious Society of Friends to the Worship and Ministry Committee, the Oversight Committee, the Nominating Committee, and as Clerks of most committees. The purpose is to assign those responsibilities to persons of spiritual depth who are familiar with Friends' faith and ways of organizing and conducting Meeting work. Serving on a committee allows Friends to engage in the life of the Meeting. New attenders learn Quaker decision-making process, and all committee members have an opportunity to deepen relationships and to develop their gifts.

Committees serve the Monthly Meeting not only by carrying on routine delegated functions, but also by doing important background work in preparation for decisions at the Monthly Meeting for business. They examine designated matters in depth, identify the issues, gather the most useful information, and make seasoned recommendations for decision by the Meeting. When this is done well, the Monthly Meeting in session is able to focus quickly on the matter at hand.

It is important that committees keep minutes of their meetings and report to the Monthly Meeting regularly. In bringing a matter to the Meeting for business, the committee should supply concise background and a clear description of the response it wants from the Meeting, such as a draft minute. All actions of committees in the name of the Meeting are subject to approval by the Monthly Meeting.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

I CORINTHIANS 12:4-7

The Nominating Committee is a small committee that must be representative of the Meeting and familiar with its members and attenders. It is selected by a small *ad hoc*¹⁰ committee who nominates individuals to serve overlapping terms on the Nominating Committee. They need to be discerning in judgment and tactful in manner, and at the same time bold, giving opportunities to younger Friends and to those more recently arrived, and encouragement to those who underestimate their own potential for service. The great responsibility for this committee cannot be too strongly stressed.

A Nominating Committee is given the task of discerning how the gifts of members and attenders may best serve the Meeting. Like all committees, the Nominating Committee meets in worship seeking divine guidance, The committee starts with a clear idea of the Meeting's needs regarding officers, committee membership, and other responsibilities. Their goal is to appoint the best-qualified persons while developing and using the resources of the whole Meeting; the younger and newer as well as the older and more experienced people. A Nominating Committee tries to understand the qualifications needed for each individual appointment and the need for a committee to function well together as a whole. However, the list of vacancies is only a tool. The desire to fill all vacancies should not distract the committee from its task of discernment.

Meeting responsibilities or jobs should rotate among Friends so that new approaches can be practiced and individuals have an opportunity to develop different gifts. Many gifts are latent. A particular appointment may enable one Friends to exercise unsuspected abilities. Another Friend may be overburdened by being appointed to serve beyond his or her capacity and experience. It requires great discernment to know the right moment to ask a particular Friend to undertake or to lay down a particular task.

Nominating committees do not appoint. They bring their nominations to the Meeting for business to be held over one month for the Meeting's final approval. During the intervening month, members must have the opportunity to express any doubts directly to the Nominating Committee, while carefully recognizing that of God in each person. A member of the Nominating Committee may wish to meet with an objecting member to understand a concern. When the objection demonstrates a lack of unity around that specific nomination, the Nominating Committee should ask a different person to carry out the task. No member should press unduly to have a particular person appointed or not appointed.

The duration and scope of each appointment should be explained to all who are asked to accept nomination; the approach should not be made casually or acceptance taken for granted. To avoid misunderstandings about the tentative nature of the nomination prior to its approval by Monthly Meeting, initially it is best to ask members and attenders whether they would consent to serve if appointed by the Meeting. At times it may seem impossible to find someone to serve. Nominating Committee should not feel obligated to fill vacancies that remain after the committee has concluded faithful discernment.

Sometimes, following thoughtful consultation with Overseers, an appointment may need to be ended ahead of schedule or an appointed Friend may request release from service. A particular concern arises when a committee member's presence on a committee could prevent another person's access to that committee. In such a case, the committee member should be advised to

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In Intermountain Yearly Meeting, a *Naming Committee* is appointed directly from among those persons present in the Meeting for business.

resign. Nominating committees should not hesitate to bring problems back to the Meeting for guidance and practical help. Loving and tender care are essential.

Responsibility for an appointment does not end when it is made. Having been fully involved in making appointments, the Meeting must support and uphold those carrying out the tasks.

In the course of its work, the Nominating Committee may see cause to consider the laying down of a committee and should report this to Oversight for forwarding to the Meeting for business.

WORSHIP AND MINISTRY COMMITTEE

The Worship and Ministry Committee customarily consists of members of the Religious Society of Friends of varied ages, genders and gifts and who are known to be faithful in worship and sensitive to the life of Spirit. It includes both Friends inclined to speak in the Meeting for worship and those less inclined to do so. It also includes Friends who are acknowledged as spiritual elders, to whom persons go instinctively for understanding and loving care. The function of the committee is to nurture the spiritual health of the Meeting community.

The first responsibility of the committee's members is to deepen their own spiritual lives and their preparation for worship. When they are grounded in the Spirit, committee members can recall that they are but vessels of the Light among many other vessels. Then they can better trust that the power of God may work through all persons in the Meeting and beyond. Committee members' concern for the Meeting throughout the week, the promptness and reverence with which they approach the Meeting for worship, and their faithfulness to the guidance of the Spirit, are the most effective ways they may deepen the quality of worship. By deepening their own experience of worship, and by their regular presence at Meeting for worship, committee members contribute to the corporate experience of a centered Meeting for worship.

CARE FOR THE MEETING FOR WORSHIP: The Worship and Ministry Committee meets regularly to keep the Meeting for worship under constant review, prayer and care. Committee members should nurture the Meeting for worship by giving appropriate attention to the quality of the vocal ministry and the ministry of stillness that springs from the centered silence. They should encourage all Friends to give adequate time to study, meditation, prayer, and other ways of preparing themselves for worship. Members' concerns about worship are directed to this committee for prayerful consideration and action. At times, the committee should open its meeting to all to share experience, search for insight and nurture the spiritual health of the Meeting for worship.

Committee members should encourage those who show promising gifts and lovingly guide those who speak unacceptably, too often or for too long. They should endeavor to open the way for those who are timid and inexperienced in vocal ministry and should encourage all Friends to listen with tenderness. In trying to be helpful, they should not assume superior wisdom, trusting instead that all are sharing in the search for guidance.

CARE FOR THE MEETING FOR WORSHIP FOR BUSINESS: The Worship and Ministry Committee's responsibilities include nurturing Meeting for Worship for Business. At least a few members of this committee should be present at every Meeting for business. The committee considers

prayerfully how to contribute to the Meeting's discernment of Truth. It works with the Presiding Clerk to develop his or her skills and to create a worshipful and faithful Business Meeting.

CARE FOR INDIVIDUAL LIVES: The committee seeks to strengthen the lives of the individuals in the Meeting by helping individuals discern and develop varied gifts for ministry and service. Committee members encourage vocal ministry, teaching and counseling, along with aesthetic, social, and practical modes of expression and regular spiritual disciplines. The Committee can support individual spiritual growth by circulating appropriate literature and arranging for study groups, spiritual sharing groups and retreats.

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE (OVERSEERS)

The Oversight Committee customarily consists of members of the Religious Society of Friends with experience, empathy, good judgment and discretion. The committee assumes leadership in maintaining a caring community, helping all members to find their right roles as nurturers of each other. It may share tasks with other committees. In order to care for all members and attenders, it is important that members of this committee represent the varied make-up of the Meeting. New members should join the committee prayerfully, with an alert willingness to be of service. The committee should meet regularly and carry on its work in a spirit of dedication and love.

The primary responsibilities of the Oversight Committee are as follows:

Members of this committee have a special responsibility for taking a personal interest in the spiritual and physical welfare of each member of the Meeting.

The committee considers requests for membership, and transfer and withdrawal of membership.

It considers requests from persons who wish to be married under the care of the Meeting. It sets up clearness committees for the purposes of membership or marriage, or when otherwise requested by a member or attender¹¹.

It ensures that an accurate list is maintained of all members and regular attenders of the Monthly Meeting, including mailing addresses and telephone numbers.

It offers emotional care and practical assistance at the time of death in a family.

It is concerned for the nurture of the religious life of children and young people, for their participation in the Meeting, and their preparation for membership.

It tries to be of help reconciling differences among people of the Meeting.

It endeavors to welcome newcomers and attenders, to respond to inquiries about Friends, to promote the Meeting's interests to prospective members, and to make clear to them the interest of the Meeting in their joining its fellowship.

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See p. 139, *Faith & Practice of Pacific Yearly Meeting*, 2001, for Clearness and Clearness Committees. Albuquerque Monthly Meeting is finding it useful to provide three types of clearness committees, Clearness, Support and Caring, each given goals specific to its mission.

It encourages visitation and fellowship within the Meeting and seeks to assure that those who are ill, troubled, or in material need receive visits, spiritual listening and support, and other assistance.

It oversees funds available to assist members and active attenders.

It encourages Friends to attend Yearly Meeting [and Regional Meeting] sessions and other gatherings of Friends, advising on possible financial assistance for this purpose.

It keeps in touch with related committees and may form sub-committees charged with specific responsibilities (e.g., marriage or a fund for special needs).

Sometimes a problem may be too complex and beyond the capacity of a Meeting to handle. In such cases, professional help should be sought. Committee members need to have knowledge of professional resources in the wider community. Even when it is clear that professional help is needed, the Meeting may still offer practical assistance such as meals, child care, or transportation.

COMBINED WORSHIP AND MINISTRY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Some Meetings maintain two separate committees (one for Oversight and one for Worship and Ministry), others combine them into one Ministry and Oversight Committee (sometimes called Ministry and Counsel). Whether one committee or two, they should try to assess the Meeting's programs, avoid duplication, identify tasks undone and done poorly, and recognize those done well. They should report their activities and concerns regularly to the Monthly Meeting. In consultation with the Meeting community, one of the committees oversees the preparation of an annual State of the Meeting report to the Quarterly and Yearly Meetings¹². They share oversight of other committees of the Meeting, with a special concern for good order. Either committee may turn to [Regional] or Yearly Meeting Ministry and Oversight Committees for assistance as needed.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Monthly Meetings must have income in order to pay for space (rent or maintenance), communication, outreach, insurance, educational materials, and other items. The procedures for securing the income are unobtrusive. The Finance Committee may send an annual letter to members and attenders, describing the broad budgetary picture and suggesting an average "share" per contributor. Such a letter always explains that actual contributions may be less for some and more for others, depending on personal circumstances.

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See Appendix 1B: *Faith & Practice of Pacific Yearly Meeting*, 2001, for Advices for Preparing the State of the Meeting Report

Other duties of the Finance Committee include maintaining orderly accounts and expenditure procedures, advising the Monthly Meeting on financial aspects of its affairs. In Meetings without a Finance Committee, the Treasurer may carry these responsibilities¹³.

OTHER COMMITTEES

As a meeting grows, it will be necessary to add other committees such as Religious Education (both Children and Adult), Peace and Social Order [or Peace and Social Concerns], and, perhaps, a Committee on Environmental Concerns. A Building and Grounds or Property Committee may be necessary, even if the meeting is using rented facilities. Other committees in Monthly Meetings of Intermountain Yearly Meeting are: Board of Trustees or Corporation Board of Directors, Hospitality, Long-Range Planning, Outreach, Fellowship, Right Sharing, Library, Membership Guidance, Communications, Bereavement and Scholarship.

Growth and Change

[Intermountain] Yearly Meeting is concerned that all who are moved to worship God after the manner of Friends may be able to do so. Worship Groups, Preparative Meetings and new Monthly Meetings enable the Religious Society of Friends to grow, change and effectively embrace both newcomers and experienced Friends who require a new location in which to worship.

NEW GATHERINGS OF FRIENDS

Friends' testimony on community urges that Meetings should be small enough to enable members to know each other well. Existing Monthly Meetings are encouraged to create new Worship Groups when the membership becomes too large to permit a true sense of community, or when it is more convenient for those members living at a distance from the meeting place. New Meetings may also be formed through the development of Worship Groups or Preparative Meetings. Where no Friends Meeting exists, individual Friends and those drawn to Friends' ways should meet together for divine guidance. In due time they may be gathered into a Worship Group which comes under the care of a Monthly Meeting.

WORSHIP GROUPS

A Worship Group is a gathering of persons who meet regularly for worship after the manner of Friends and who desire to be identified with the principles and practices of the Religious Society of Friends. Such a group may organize independently or it may be set up with the encouragement of a Monthly Meeting and other near by interested persons. Meeting for worship may be their only activity for an indefinite period of time. Some Worship Groups are large from the beginning or they grow rapidly, and undertake additional activities such as shared meals, reading, study or discussion groups, service projects, religious education, public witness or worship-sharing groups.

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Albuquerque Monthly Meeting is incorporated and granted a charter by the State of New Mexico. Its Articles and By-Laws specify specific duties and responsibilities for a Board of Directors appointed by the Meeting. The Finance Committee includes the Board of Directors of the Meeting's corporation on matters affecting the physical and fiscal assets and liabilities of the Meeting.

Worship Groups need to be mindful of the danger of attempting too many things during their initial enthusiasm or having a few individuals carry all the responsibility and thus risk exhaustion and disillusionment. Members of a Worship Group should be dedicated to the leadings of the Light and devoted to the growth of the Spirit. This goal will help them through discouraging times and setbacks that are bound to occur. There may be times when only one or two meet for worship at the appointed hour. It is worthwhile to persevere at this times, not only for those few in attendance but for those unable to attend, so that they may be upheld in the Light and all come to know the comfort of an ongoing Meeting.

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

MATTHEW 18:20 RSV

As an independent Worship Group develops, it should seek the care and guidance of a nearby Monthly Meeting. In so doing, it establishes an {official}¹⁴ relationship with the Religious Society of Friends, providing an avenue for individual membership, which comes only through a Monthly Meeting. Monthly Meetings, in turn, should seek out, visit, and assist new Worship Groups. When no Monthly Meeting is able to take the Worship Group under its care, this relationship may be established through the appropriate [Regional Meeting] or through [Intermountain Yearly Meeting] (when no Regional Meeting is available. Their Ministry and Oversight Committees will assume the duties normally performed by a Monthly Meeting¹⁵.

Each Worship Group need organize only to the degree that is right for it at a particular time. It should, however, organize sufficiently to nurture the interests and concerns of its participants, including children and to provide an avenue for contacts with other Friends groups and with the wider body of the Religious Society of Friends, both of which can enrich the life of a Worship Group. Usually a *Correspondent* serves as a convener of the group¹⁶. Communications from Monthly and [Regional] Meetings and other Friends' groups or organizations should be

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{official} seems inappropriate in this context. Suggest [formal] or no modifier here. -tsc

¹⁵

Worship Groups under the care of Albuquerque Meeting are: Gallup Worship Group, Socorro Worship Group, Amarillo Allowed Worship Group, and the East Mountain (allowed ?) Worship Group. Historically, Worship Groups set up under the care of Albuquerque Meeting are El Paso Monthly Meeting, Las Cruces Monthly Meeting, Gila Monthly Meeting, and Durango Monthly. Lubbock Monthly Meeting was a Worship Group under the care of Albuquerque Meeting and after transfer, became a Monthly Meeting in South Central Yearly Meeting. ClearLight Worship Group (Taos) was set up as a second Worship Group in Taos by New Mexico Quarterly (now Regional) Meeting and placed under the care of Albuquerque Meeting, then following the laying down of the first Worship Group, transferred, at its request, to the care of Santa Fe Friends Meeting. From time to time, Worship Groups have spontaneously appeared usually in areas where fellowship is a felt need; e.g. North Valley Worship Group, South Valley Worship Group (both now dormant) and the East Valley Worship Group. Very informal gatherings of Friends are being encouraged by Albuquerque Meeting's Overseers in various portions of Albuquerque identified by their ZIP-codes or as may combine adjacent ZIP-code areas.

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In Intermountain Yearly Meeting, Convener denotes the person coordinating the activities of the Worship Group with those of the Monthly Meeting having its care and with Yearly and Regional Meetings. Another person in the Worship Group is appointed as a *Contact* when the Conveyor is likely not to be conveniently available. It is important that contact information be shared in a timely fashion with the Monthly Meeting, and with the Yearly and Regional Meetings whenever changes occur.

addressed to the Correspondent [Convener and Contact] who is responsible for sharing them with the entire group¹⁷.

Applications for membership, requests for weddings, or other such formal actions must be taken to the Monthly Meeting to which the Worship Group is related. When a Worship Group feels it is ready to organize and conduct its own business in the manner of an established Meeting, it should consider requesting Preparative Meeting status.

PREPARATIVE MEETINGS

A Preparative Meeting conducts its Meetings for worship and business under the care of a Monthly Meeting to which it reports regularly¹⁸, while it is preparing to become a Monthly Meeting. It may originate when a Worship Group asks to be advanced to the status of Preparative Meeting, or when a group of experienced Friends, who wish to organize as a Preparative Meeting, ask to be recognized as one¹⁹.

The overseeing Meeting should appoint a committee to provide continuing care and counsel when the Preparative Meeting is established. A Preparative Meeting requires a Clerk, a Treasurer, and a Ministry and Oversight Committee. Other committees may evolve in the manner of a Monthly Meeting. It should hold a Meeting for business regularly and should regularly send a copy of its minutes to the overseeing committee.

A Preparative Meeting may not receive members, hold weddings, or otherwise act formally as an established Meeting. Such actions are brought to and carried out through the Monthly Meeting to which it is related. Friends participating in a Preparative Meeting are urged to hold their membership in the overseeing Monthly Meeting.

Ideally, Worship Groups and Preparative Meetings should look forward to becoming Monthly Meetings, through growth and development under the grace and power of God. The step of becoming a Preparative Meeting provides opportunity for members to gain experience as a Friends community. There may be circumstances in which it is desirable for a Worship Group or a Preparative Meeting to continue indefinitely as such.

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In Intermountain Yearly Meeting, Worship Groups join with Monthly Meetings in their responsibilities for and on behalf the Yearly Meeting. This connection appears to be unique to Intermountain Yearly Meeting among Yearly Meetings everywhere as the usual arrangement has the Worship Groups reporting to the Monthly Meetings having their care and through the Monthly Meetings to the Regional and Yearly Meeting. Similarly, both the Worship Groups and Monthly Meetings, together, are responsible for New Mexico Regional Meeting and its fellowship. New Mexico Regional Meeting may serve its Meetings and Groups in seasoning concerns to go before the Yearly Meeting, and, with various offices and committees of the Yearly Meeting, may find it expedient to receive duties and responsibilities from the Yearly Meeting on behalf of its Meetings and Worship Groups.

¹⁸

Albuquerque Meeting appoints a contact from the Meeting's Overseers to each Worship Group under its care to whom the Worship Group may turn for counsel and guidance, including arranging for attenders wishing to come into membership, clearness for marriage, holding of weddings, arranging memorial meetings for deceased persons, and other fellowship activities

¹⁹

Under the care of Albuquerque Meeting, El Paso, Las Cruces and Durango Monthly Meetings each progressed from Worship Group and Preparative Meeting status prior to becoming Monthly Meetings. Gila Monthly Meeting skipped being a Preparative Meeting with the encouragement of New Mexico Regional Meeting due to its enthusiastic beginnings as a Worship Groups.

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW MONTHLY MEETINGS

A Preparative Meeting (or, occasionally, a Worship Group) becomes a new Monthly Meeting when a [Regional Meeting] recognizes it as such, [or, as the Monthly Meeting related to the Worship Group and the Yearly Meeting together recognize it as a Monthly Meeting as guided jointly by their Committees on Ministry and Oversight]. When a Preparative Meeting feels ready for independent existence as a Monthly Meeting, the Preparative Meeting sends a letter to the Clerk of the overseeing Meeting stating these facts and asking that its request be forwarded to the [Regional] Meeting. If the overseeing Meeting concurs, it forwards this request to the Ministry and Oversight Committee of the [Regional] Meeting and suggests names of four or five Friends for a visiting committee. This committee should include one or two members of the Monthly Meeting committee that has had the Preparative Meeting under its care, along with suitable and experienced Friends who have not been closely associated with the Preparative Meeting.

The visiting committee meets with the prospective Meeting, making sure its members are aware of the responsibilities of a Monthly Meeting. Plenty of time, care and deliberation at this stage may prevent complications later. The visiting committee should attend Meetings for worship and for business and visit with individuals from the Preparative Meeting. The following topics should be explored.

APPLICATION: If the Preparative Meeting has not done so earlier, it should write a statement telling why it wishes to become a Monthly Meeting and why it feels ready. It should provide a complete list of names and addresses of its participants, and indicate the Meetings in which individuals hold their memberships.

SPIRITUAL CONDITION: Does the Meeting function under divine guidance? Is the Meeting for worship the center of its life? Are Meetings for worship held in the spirit of expectant waiting and communion with God?

HISTORY AND EXPERIENCE: How long has the group been gathering? What relations does it have with other Meetings? What geographical area does it serve? Where and when is its Meeting for worship? What is the usual attendance? How many Friends, other attenders and children are in the Meeting? Of the families taking responsibility for the Meeting, how many appear well settled in the area? What are the Meeting's social concerns?

EVIDENCE OF GOOD ORDER: Has the Meeting studied *Faith and Practice* of Pacific Yearly Meeting (and the draft *Faith and Practice* of Intermountain Yearly Meeting)? Does it hold a Meeting for business regularly? How many minutes formed and approved? Are they recorded? Are the functions of Clerk and other officials understood? What committees does it have? Are the functions of the Ministry and Oversight Committee understood? Are these functions being carried out? Are financial matters being handled in an orderly manner? How are the Meeting's officers, Nominating Committee, and other committees selected? How are the children related to the Meeting? Does it understand the importance of religious education programs for children and adults?

If the visiting committee agrees that the Preparative Meeting is ready to become a Monthly Meeting, it prepares a written report, including references to the above guidelines, and presents this report to the next [Regional] Meeting [or, if being visited by a committee formed jointly by the Monthly and Yearly Meeting Committees on Ministry and Oversight it will report to both the Monthly Meeting's Committee on Ministry and Oversight and the Ministry and Oversight Committee of the Yearly Meeting]. The Yearly Meeting's Committee on Ministry and Oversight

will await the action of the Monthly Meeting and forward that minute and its report with its minute to the Yearly Meeting for its consideration.]

The [Regional] Meeting (or [Intermountain] Yearly Meeting upon recommendation of its Ministry and Oversight Committee) has the authority to establish the new Monthly Meeting. Notice of that action is then forwarded to Yearly Meeting which records the new Monthly Meeting as a member of that body. The Meeting functions as a Monthly Meeting as soon as the [Regional] or Yearly Meeting has established it. The Clerk and [Historian-Archivist] of the Yearly Meeting should be notified promptly when a new Monthly Meeting has been established.

The Clerk of the new Meeting should forward to the former overseeing Meeting a list of all who wish to transfer their membership to the new Meeting. Such transfers are usually accomplished automatically without an additional visiting committee. Others who hold their membership in different Meetings are encouraged to transfer promptly to the new Meeting following the usual process²⁰.

The visiting committee should continue its oversight of the new Meeting and be available for consultation for at least a year following its recognition.

LAYING DOWN A MEETING

Changes in meeting participation due to death, relocation, and other causes sometimes make it necessary to “lay a meeting down”. The Meeting itself, or the [Regional] Meeting to which it is related, may initiate this process. In either case the termination of a Monthly Meeting should be carried out thoughtfully, respectfully, and with due regard for the good order of Friends

If a [Regional] Meeting is aware of significant problems which may warrant laying a Meeting down, or if a Monthly Meeting requests clearness about its status, the [Regional] Meeting should appoint a visiting committee to clarify the situation. The committee should be prepared to serve in his capacity over a period of many months, if necessary. If the Monthly Meeting is not part of a [Regional] Meeting [or the [Regional] Meeting is inactive,] the Yearly Meeting [on recommendation from its Ministry and Oversight Committee should appoint the visiting committee. The visiting committee reports its recommendations to the [Regional] (or Yearly) Meeting [by way of the Yearly Meeting’s Ministry and Oversight Committee] for approval.

The visiting committee should consider the Meeting’s viability based on size and activities over the preceding year or two, the frequency and depth of its Meeting for worship, its ability to conduct business and care for its members, and the strength of its work in the wider community.

Before a Meeting is laid down, members must decide whether they wish to continue as a Worship Group under the care of a neighboring Monthly Meeting. If so, they should ask that Meeting for its oversight. Individuals may transfer their memberships to the overseeing Meeting or a different Meeting according to the usual process.

In any case, another Monthly Meeting should be prepared to welcome Friends and attenders from the laid Meeting and to accept their memberships. Both Monthly Meetings should be involved in all discussions prior to the actual laying down.

²⁰

See page 14 9: *Faith & Practice of Pacific Yearly Meeting*, 2001, for Transfers of Membership and Appendix 4c: Procedure for Transfer of Membership.

The [Regional] (or Yearly) Meeting Ministry and Oversight Committee is responsible for overseeing both the details and the process of laying down a Meeting. The Oversight Committee must be confident that minute books, membership and other records, financial assets and real property²¹ have been properly accounted for. Records may be deposited [with the Yearly Meeting's Historian- Recorder who may deposit them in one of the Yearly Meeting's record depositories, as appropriate.] All the Meetings concerned should participate in decisions on these matters.

[Regional] Meetings

[Regional] Meetings of the Religious Society of Friends are gatherings of neighboring Meetings. They can be as small as two nearby Meetings. [Regional Meetings²²] foster intervisitation on a local level, especially with worship groups and preparative meetings. [Regional] Meetings generally meet two to four times a year except at the time of the Yearly [Meeting's annual gathering.] [Regional] Meetings should request recognition by the Yearly Meeting.

The [Regional] Meetings of [Intermountain] Yearly Meeting have developed in a variety of ways. Their main purposes are to strengthen the life and fellowship of Monthly Meetings and other Friends groups on their area, offer increased opportunities for worshipping together, and to consider spiritual and worldly matters of local and or broader concern. They offer youth an opportunity to build closer relationships. An important aspect of [Regional] Meetings is to hear State of the Meeting reports²³ from Monthly Meetings, Worship Groups and Preparative Meetings throughout the year.

Responsibilities, functions and actions may be referred to [Regional] Meetings by their constituent Monthly Meetings and/or by the Yearly Meeting. These include, but are not limited to recognizing and nurturing new Monthly Meetings, strengthening the spiritual life and fellowship of Meetings and individual Friends (including younger Friends); compiling and sharing State of the Meeting reports; considering and acting on concerns and forwarding those they have approved to Yearly Meeting. [Regional] Meetings may help with preparations for the annual sessions of Yearly Meeting in their area. They prepare and endorse travel minutes and facilitate presentations by traveling Friends. They establish projects to further Friends' concerns at the regional level and committees to administer them. They carry out such other functions as are appropriate to the Religious Society of Friends in their area.

To carry out its responsibilities, a [Regional] Meeting should meet regularly as agreed during the year. It should appoint a Presiding Clerk and committees as needed, receive from Monthly Meetings the funds necessary for its operations, and proceed in general according to the practices

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Financial assets and real property, unless otherwise designated, will become the responsibility of the new overseeing Monthly Meeting as arranged by the Oversight Committee. Financial assets and property not distributed will become the responsibility of the Yearly Meeting. These assets and properties should be held in trust for a potential Worship Group or Preparative Meeting coming into existence in the location of the previous Monthly Meeting.

²²

See footnote 2. for further information on Regional Meetings.

²³

See Appendix I B, *Faith & Practice of Pacific Yearly Meeting*, 2001.

of a Friends Meeting. An Interim or Continuing Committee may help plan for future sessions and act between sessions within agreed upon limits.

[Regional] Meeting should appoint a Ministry and Oversight (or Counsel) Committee composed of experienced and spiritually led sensitive Friends who reflect geographic diversity and who are able to serve as a working committee. The functions of this committee include care and counsel of Meetings and Worship Groups, and overseeing the good order and spiritual life of the [Regional] Meeting sessions. The [Regional] Meeting Ministry and Oversight Committee should be available to its constituent members (both Monthly Meetings and individuals), offering counsel with difficult problems or assistance in other ways²⁴. This might include the process of laying down a meeting.

Appropriate concerns should be brought to a [Regional] Meeting in much the same manner as to a Monthly Meeting. When one or Monthly Meetings have labored with a concern, built up a foundation of essential background information and reached a clear conclusion embodied in a proposed minute, they should promptly forward the minute to the Clerk of [Regional] Meeting. The Clerk may send it to the appropriate committee for presentation to the [Regional] Meeting session. If it approves the minute, the [Regional] Meeting may forward it to the appropriate Yearly Meeting committee for consideration. Committees have the option of consolidating concerns and referring them back to [Regional] and Monthly Meetings for further seasoning, or, finding unity, developing them for presentation to the Yearly Meeting, [Regional] Meetings may initiate action which is specifically relevant to their geographical area.

[Regional] Meetings also create institutions to serve the wider world of Friends and their communities. [Colorado Regional Meeting initiated the operation now known as the AFSC-IMYM Joint Service Projects from which many other Yearly Meetings have derived their own versions. New Mexico Regional Meeting (then Quarterly Meeting) originated the New Mexico area operations of the AFSC. New Mexico Regional Meeting sponsored and held the first local Quaker Youth Pilgrimage in 1984. New Mexico Regional Meeting, on behalf of Intermountain Yearly Meeting, hosted the 1984 Triennial of the Friends World Committee for Consultation at Ghost Ranch.] When a [Regional] Meeting sponsors a corporation(s) to carry out its concerns [(such as establishing a school, or a Quaker retirement center)], it must take legal steps to minimize the financial liability of the [Regional] Meeting for such operations. It is important for Meetings to minute a clear understanding of their responsibility in such relationships.

[Intermountain] Yearly Meeting

The Yearly Meeting comprises the members of its constituent Monthly Meeting as who come together annually to explore and pursue their common concerns. The work of the Yearly Meeting is conducted by its committees and corporately during the annual gathering, which is

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Friends General Conference Ministry and Nurture Committee's *The Wounded Meeting* has relevance here. (See Bibliography in Faith and Practice of Pacific Yearly Meeting, 2001.)

also referred to as the Yearly Meeting session. [The four day session of Intermountain Yearly Meeting is preceded by three days of discussion and special interest groups, committee meetings and generous free time.] While the Yearly Meeting officers and committees broadly parallel those of a Monthly Meeting, additional officers and committees re responsible for the conduct of the annual gathering²⁵.

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See also - D:\07 11 11 Org of the Society Pac YM 2001. Open Office - writer

²⁵

Further discussion of the organization of Yearly Meeting appears in Part VI, *Faith and Practice*, Pacific Yearly Meeting, 2001; in the draft *Faith and Practice* of Intermountain Yearly Meeting, 2006, and on the IMYM website at <http://www.imym.org>.