

**Part II**  
**ORGANIZATION AND BUSINESS PROCEDURE**  
**Chapter I**  
**FORM OF GOVERNMENT**  
**Ideals in Organization**

**The Church as a Society.**

The Christian group whose faith and activities have been described in Part I is known historically as the Society of Friends and more commonly as Quakers. The name, Friends Church, has been used by many local Meetings and by certain Yearly Meetings. The choice by early Friends of the term Society, as a name for the group gives a clear indication of their attitude toward organization. The word meant to them a fellowship, a vitally spiritual body held together by spiritual forces freshly operating through each individual, without creed, ritual, or any sacramental administration. The Society of Friends was to be a democratic brotherhood in which there would be but one Master and no intermediary affecting any individual's relationship to God.

**Equal Rights**

Friends recognize the fact that God has endowed each person with gifts or capacities which he/she is to develop and exercise to the extent of their ability. Each member has duties and responsibilities varying in character according to his/her talents and the faithfulness with which each has cultivated them. All have equal rights and privileges in the consideration of the affairs of the body and in reaching conclusions as to courses of action. No appointments made for a particular service confer upon the appointed person or group any degree of arbitrary or final authority. Friends recognize no distinction in the rights, privileges or responsibilities of members because of sex.

**Waiting for Guidance**

The practice of holding meetings for business following a period of worship opens the way for a continuance of the state of religious fellowship experienced during such a period. The right conduct of these meetings, even in matters of routine, is important to the spiritual life of all; they are a part of the organized undertaking to promote the Kingdom of God, and service in them may be rightfully regarded as service for God. The same reverent waiting that operates in the meetings for worship is also helpful in seeking divine guidance and unity of action in the transaction of business.

**Friendly Method**

It is the practice of Friends to give unhurried and sympathetic consideration to all proposals and expressions of opinion. They endeavor to respect an earnest and sincere minority and, if it seems necessary, may postpone action until they have secured more light on the question at issue and have attained a greater degree of unanimity. After due consideration has been given to all points of view, it is the duty of the clerk of the Meeting to weigh carefully the various expressions and to state what he/she believes to be the will of the Meeting.

**Tenure of Office**

In keeping with the Quaker ideals of service and the distribution of responsibility, the Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meetings should not unduly prolong the services of officers and committee members nor give to one person many appointments. In following this policy of rotation in office, Friends can develop the talents of a wider range of members. Where numbers permit, appointment and reappointment for one, two, and three-year cycles should not extend the tenure of office beyond a maximum of six consecutive years. A member may quite properly be reappointed to a given service after a term out of office.

## **The Meeting**

### **At Worship**

The Meeting is composed of resident and nonresident members and consists of the meeting for worship and the meeting for business, including all of the activities and organizations connected therewith. The meeting for worship is a fellowship of all those who find it spiritually helpful to be associated in worship and service and is a united expression of the human longing for vital religious experience.

### **At Business**

The development of these processes of spiritual enrichment involves certain organizational factors such as the activities of officers and committees, matters of finance, group concerns, and the determination of attitudes and policies on subjects of common or public interest. For the care of such matters a meeting for business consisting of the whole membership, known as the Monthly Meeting, convenes each month. If two or more congregations are associated in one Monthly Meeting, each congregation may have a local or preparative business meeting, subordinate to the Monthly Meeting and limited in its authority to purely local matters. For the care of spiritual interests and the promotion of consistent conduct among the members each Monthly Meeting selects elders who, together with the ministers, are specifically charged with these responsibilities in the Meeting on Ministry and Counsel.

### **At Study**

The Meeting shall have concern for the Christian nurture of its members and attenders and shall provide the means of study necessary in every area of concern.

## **Basis of Membership**

### **Member**

Friends receive into membership those whose faith in Christ as a personal Savior is manifest in their lives and who are in unity with the teachings of Christian truth as held by Friends.

### **Junior**

The children of parents who are both Member members are customarily enrolled at birth as Junior Members; other children may be enrolled under special provisions.

## **Rules of Membership Reception by Application**

### **Application**

Application for membership should be made in writing to the Monthly Meeting through the Meeting on Ministry and Counsel. Special application forms may be provided by the Monthly Meeting, if desired.

### **Preparation**

It shall be the duty of the Meeting on Ministry and Counsel to instruct and guide applicants for membership in their search for truth, to ascertain whether they make a sincere profession of faith in Christ and accept the principles of Christianity as held by Friends, and whether they will share in the financial obligations of the Meeting. It shall advise the applicant that regularity in attendance and faithfulness in service are also obligations of membership. After hearing the report of the judgment of the Meeting on Ministry and Counsel, the Monthly Meeting shall act upon the application for membership.

## **Welcome**

The clerk shall then inform the applicant of the action of the Monthly Meeting. If it has been favorable, a committee may be appointed to welcome him/her into membership. Announcement of his/her reception may be made at a regular meeting for worship that all members may have an opportunity to extend a welcome.

## **Minor Children**

Parents and guardians when applying for membership, or when transferring from other denominations, may make application for the enrollment of minor children as Junior Members. Where but one parent is a member, the children may be enrolled as Junior Members upon the request of that parent and the consent of the other. Such requests shall be made to the Meeting on Ministry and Counsel. Other children may be received into Junior Membership upon the recommendation of that body.

## **Junior Members to Member**

Children enrolled as Junior Member to shall be transferred to membership when they shall have given satisfactory evidence of faith in Jesus Christ, have accepted the principles of Christian truth as held by Friends, and have requested transfer to membership. The enrollment of children as Junior Members is an expression of the conviction that children in this fellowship rightfully possess a precious heritage. As the children mature, the Meeting has the important responsibility of encouraging their spiritual growth and preparing them for full membership.

Friends should note that transfer from the status of Junior Member to Member is not an automatic one, but is made by the action of the Monthly Meeting upon the conditions listed above. The continuance of mature men and women as Junior Members is an indication of the failure or neglect of the Meeting in one of its most important functions.

## **Resident Members**

Resident members are those members of a Meeting whose residence is of geographical nearness to the Meetinghouse to allow them to be present regularly for participation in the worship, business, work and fellowship of the Meeting.

## **Non-Resident Members**

Non-resident members are those members of a Meeting whose residence is beyond the Meeting's geographical limits or vicinity, such that the distance from the Meetinghouse makes impossible their regular participation in the worship, business, work and fellowship of the Meeting.

## **Affiliates**

Monthly Meetings may, at their discretion, accept as Affiliates, students and other persons residing temporarily within their limits. Such affiliation constitutes a sojourning fellowship, and is not to be included in statistical reports. While such persons may be granted the standing of Affiliates during their sojourning relationship within a Meeting, they are not in the same status as members. They are not considered members of the Quarterly Meeting nor of the Yearly Meeting, nor have they the right to participate in the business of these bodies nor in Monthly Meeting business matters relating to these superior Meetings. The affiliation automatically ceases when the Affiliate leaves the limits of the Meeting.

## **Reception and Transfer by Certificate or Letter**

### **Transfer**

Members removing to the limits of another Monthly Meeting should request the transfer of their membership to that Meeting. At the discretion of the Monthly Meeting, certificates shall be issued for such

members if requested; or in default of such request, when the Monthly Meeting deems it best to do so. Such certificates shall be accepted by the Monthly Meeting to which they are addressed, unless sufficient reason shall appear to the contrary. In every case the Monthly Meeting receiving a certificate shall inform the Meeting which issued it, of the action taken thereon. A certificate of membership shall be issued only to a Monthly Meeting and shall be sent to the clerk thereof.

### **Joining Other Bodies**

If a member in good standing wishes to unite with some other denomination, the Monthly Meeting may grant a letter of recommendation. Upon official acknowledgement of its receipt, his/her membership with Friends shall cease.

### **Church Letters**

When an applicant for membership brings a letter of recommendation from another denomination, the Monthly Meeting may exercise its judgment in regard to receiving him/her on this recommendation. All certificates and letters should first be presented to the Meeting on Ministry and Counsel.

### **Records**

The acceptance and issuance of all certificates and letters shall be recorded in the minutes of the Monthly Meeting, and the list of members shall be changed accordingly. Removal certificates for recorded ministers shall include a statement to the effect that they are recorded ministers.

### ***Discontinuance of Membership***

#### **Resignation**

Resignation of membership shall be made to the Monthly Meeting in writing. The Monthly Meeting may exercise its discretion in accepting a resignation.

#### **Forfeiture**

When any member shall have united with another denomination without having requested a letter of recommendation, the Monthly Meeting, upon receipt of such information, shall remove the name from its list of members and inform the member of its action.

#### **Discontinuance**

A member removing beyond the limits of the Monthly Meeting should correspond with the Meeting and contribute to its support. Monthly Meetings should correspond with absent members. If no information has been, or can be, received from a member for a period of three years, the Monthly Meeting, at its discretion, may remove his/her name from its list of members.

#### **Dismissal**

When any member habitually neglects attendance at Meeting, fails to contribute to its support, and is generally inactive in the work of Friends, the Monthly Meeting, after due consideration, may remove his/her name from its list of members.

#### **Junior Members Discontinued**

If a Junior Member, after reaching mature years, has shown no interest in becoming a member, he/she may, upon recommendation of the Meeting on Ministry and Counsel, be dropped from the records by the Monthly Meeting.

## **Dealing with Offenders**

### **Disownment**

All formal complaints against a member shall be introduced to the Monthly Meeting by the Meeting on Ministry and Counsel. The Monthly Meeting shall appoint a committee to confer with the offender. It shall, in a spirit of love and tenderness, endeavor to lead the member to a state of mind and heart that will result in restored fellowship with the Meeting. If the exercise of due care and forbearance shall be of no avail, the Meeting shall execute a minute of disownment and furnish the offender with a copy of the same. The membership records shall be corrected accordingly.

### **Review Committee**

When an offender is dissatisfied with the decision of the Monthly Meeting, he/she may, within two months, file an appeal with that body to the Quarterly Meeting for a review of the case. If the Quarterly Meeting upholds the decision of the Monthly Meeting, the offender may appeal to the Yearly Meeting through the Quarterly Meeting. The decision of the Yearly Meeting shall be final.

### **Hearings**

When a case is reviewed before a superior Meeting, a committee of three shall be appointed to represent the Meeting from which the appeal is made.

## ***Guidelines for Continuing Membership***

In order that membership may continue to be a vital experience, each individual is encouraged to carry on a continual process of re-examination of his/her faith.

The historic "Queries" (questions for spiritual examination) have served this purpose in the past and it is recommended that they continue to be the guidelines by which one determines the basis for continuing membership in the Society of Friends.

Elders of the Meeting shall counsel with persons desiring membership and shall deal lovingly and firmly with Friends whose life and witness may hinder the fellowship of the Meeting.

Membership should be regarded as a life-long matter only for those who maintain close ties with the local meeting and share in its ministry, outreach and support.

This Electronic Version of Faith and practice contains the changes made to Part II, Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the 1977 edition of Faith and Practice. These changes were approved July 22, 2000 at the Yearly Meeting session at Hiwassee College at Madisonville, Tenn.