

Friends Meeting of Austin

Getting Down to Business

Quakerism 101

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business (MWAB)

- Was formerly called Business Meeting
- Meets in a spirit of Worship to consider items presented by Committees.
- Does not make decisions but seeks to discern way forward in the spirit of Unity in the Spirit.
- Seeks UNITY in the “Sense of the Meeting”.
- Does not operate based on majority rule or consensus. Consensus is the product of an intellectual process. Sense of the Meeting is a commitment of faith.
- The Spirit as discerned by the group is the final authority.

Quaker Time

- Quaker processes take time. We allow sufficient time for Spirit to work among us.
- We can not allow ourselves to be hurried.
- A sense of urgency or pressure can quickly erode a process of deep seeking.
- We don't impose a deadline for reaching a conclusion. If Unity is not reached in one Meeting, the matter is laid over for "seasoning".
- If the matter under consideration requires clarification, it is usually returned to the referring committee.
- MWAB does not create new options or engage in extensive editing.

MWAB Customs

- We come to MWAB in a prayerful, open state of mind, so that we may be open to the Spirit.
- We observe silence between individuals' contributions.
- Silence acts as a brake against monopolizing the meeting through rhetorical display, appeal to emotions or other means.
- During meeting, we strive to keep ourselves open to others' positions.
- No matter how much we think truth is on our side we must consider the possibility that we may be mistaken.

MWAB Customs continued

- We should not speak until recognized by the Clerk.
- We normally speak once only on a subject unless responding to a direct question or giving factual information.
- We speak plainly. We do not speechify, hector or attempt to filibuster.
- It is appropriate to speak with conviction or with passion, but not with prejudice.
- We may express contradictory views, but do not argue with one another in meeting.
- The meeting should never become a debating club. Having spoken once to the issue, we must trust that if further valid points occur to us, others will raise them.

Why is it Called *Meeting for Worship* with Attention to Business??

- The entire meeting from the initial silence to the final handshake is regarded as worship.
- 'Quaker business' is a general term which covers items such as membership, finance, the concerns of individual Friends in relation to the Society and its work, as well as relations with other organizations.
- Quakers value process over product, action or outcome. We respect each other's thoughts, feelings and insights more than expedient action. The ***process*** of business meeting yields more "results" than the outcomes themselves
- The “right conduct “of Business Meetings, even in matters of routine, is a vital part of the worship experience.

Role of the Clerk

- The Clerk is the servant of the meeting. He or she is a Friend appointed to this task but is otherwise without special status.
- The Clerk prepares the agenda and may summarize agenda items when introducing them.
- An Assistant Clerk sits at the table to help to read out relevant information and assist the Clerk in recognizing those who wish to speak.
- During discussion, the Clerk may pull together and summarize feelings which are being expressed.
- He or she can act as a shaper of discussion, encouraging silent or reluctant Friends to participate. The Clerk can also remind Friends when they are speaking at too great length.

Role of the Clerk continued

- When the Clerk feels that the Sense of the Meeting has reached unity on an item he/she will :
 - Ask the Recording Clerk to write in accurate and precise words a “Minute” which express the sense of the meeting for that item.
 - The Recording Clerk will then read the proposed Minute.
 - A period of silence will follow.
 - The Clerk will then confirm that the proposed Minute fully encompasses the Sense of the Meeting.

Recording Clerk continued

- The Recording Clerk produces and distributes a record of every MWAB including all approved Minutes and supporting materials. (At FMA this is the monthly Friendly Notes.)
- Friends have historically placed great importance on keeping records.
- You can find copies of Friendly Notes dating back to July 1999 on www.austinquakers.org under Community: Documents

Committees are the Core of the Quaker Community

- Membership in the Religious Society of Friends involves continuing commitment. Membership also implies giving service through committees.
- The Nominating Committee considers persons for Committee positions using the talents and resources of all members and attenders.
- Committees conduct business in the same manner as does a Monthly Meeting, waiting on the Spirit to find direction in their operation and unity in their decisions.
- It is important that committees keep minutes of their meetings and report to the Monthly Meeting regularly.
- All action of committees in the name of the Meeting is subject to approval by the Monthly Meeting.

Two Committees Provide Pastoral Care

- The function of the Worship and Ministry Committee is to foster and strengthen the spiritual life of the Meeting by nurturing the Meeting for Worship and the spiritual growth of individuals in the Meeting.
 - The committee seeks to deepen the spiritual lives of the individuals in the Meeting and to encourage their varied gifts for ministry and service, whether through vocal ministry, teaching, and counsel, or through aesthetic, social, and practical ways of expression.
- The Care and Counsel Committee is responsible for the care of the membership and of the corporate life of the Meeting.
 - In providing this pastoral care, the committee is concerned with the more outward aspects of building a fellowship in which all members find acceptance, loving care, and opportunity for service .

FMA Committees Are The Core of the Meeting

Committee Pages

Adult Religious Education

Care and Counsel

Colombia Ministry

Community Life

Community Relations

Finance

First Day School

Friendly Communications

House and Grounds

Library

Nominating

Peace and Social Concerns

Stewardship

Worship and Ministry

FMA Groups Put our Spiritual Life Into Action

Community Groups

Adult Young Friends

Anti-Racism Awareness Group

Circle of Light

Death Penalty Committee

Earthcare Witness

Resources Committee

Web Project

Quakerism 101

How Quakers are Organized

- Monthly Meetings – the basic unit; meets weekly for Worship; monthly for Business; e.g. Friends Meeting of Austin.
- Quarterly Meetings – a group of several Monthly Meetings; typically meets four times per year; e.g. Cielo Grande Quarterly Meeting.
- Yearly Meetings – a group of several Quarterly Meetings; typically meet once per year; e.g. SCYM, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, NEYM.
- NOTE: There is no hierarchy – each “set” of Meetings functions independently.

How Quakers are Organized

National and International Organizations:

- AFSC American Friends Service Committee
- EFC Evangelical Friends International
- FFAD Fellowship of Friends of African Descent (may be a different name now)
- FCNL Friends Committee on National Legislation
- FGC Friends General Conference
- FJ Friends Journal
- FUM Friends United Meeting
- FWCC Friends World Committee for Consultation
- QUF Quaker Universalist Fellowship
- FLGBTQC Friends for gay lesbian, bi, trans and queer concerns
- QUIP Quakers United in Publication
- NRCAT National Religious Council Against Torture
- Quaker Earthcare Witness
- Pendle Hill