

PART II
ORGANIZATION AND
BUSINESS PROCEDURE

CHAPTER 1
Form of Government

Ideals in Organization

The Church as a Society 1. The Christian group whose faith and activities have been described in Part I is known historically as the Religious 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 “Religious Society” as a name for the group gives a clear indication of their attitude toward organization. The term 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 Religious Society of Friends is a community of believers in which there is but one Master and no intermediary affecting any individual’s relationship to God.

Equal Rights 2. Friends recognize the fact that God has endowed each person with gifts which are to be developed and exercised to the extent of one’s ability. Each member has duties and responsibilities varying in accordance with the member’s talents and the faithfulness with which the member has cultivated them. All have equal rights and privileges in considering and in deciding the courses of action to be taken by the meeting. 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.

Waiting for Guidance 3. The practice of holding meetings for business following a period of worship opens the way for continuation of the religious fellowship experienced during such a period. 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. The right conduct of these meetings even in routine matters is important to the spiritual life of all. Such meetings are a part of the organized undertaking to promote the Kingdom of God. Service in them may be rightfully regarded as service for Him.

Friendly Method 4. 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. Each Friend should be certain that the expressed concern and comments are led by the Spirit of God. 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 is believed to be the will of the meeting.

Tenure of Office 5. 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.

Basis of Membership

Active Members 1. Friends receive into active 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. Membership is seen “primarily in terms of discipleship. It implies a sense of responsibility . . . a sense of commitment . . .” and “a willingness to be used by God.”¹

Associate Members 2. The children of members are automatically enrolled at birth as associate members. Other children may be enrolled under special provisions. The enrollment of children as associate members is an expression of the conviction that children born into this fellowship rightfully possess

¹Church Government, *London Yearly Meeting* (1968), 831.

a precious heritage. Children and youth have a unique interest in and claim upon the church, and it should earnestly seek their spiritual well-being and development. Friends thus express the belief that by proper encouragement and guidance on the part of parents, teachers, ministers, and elders, their children and youth may be led to a voluntary acceptance of that relationship with Jesus Christ as set forth in this book of *Faith and Practice*.

Affiliated Members 3. Monthly meetings may accept as affiliated members, students and other persons temporarily attending the meeting. Such membership constitutes a sojourning fellowship and is not to be included in statistical reports. Such membership automatically ceases when the affiliated member becomes inactive unless requested otherwise.

Monthly Meeting

At Worship 1. The monthly 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 those who find it spiritually profitable to be associated in worship and service and is a united expression of the human longing for vital religious experience.

At Business 2. 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.¹ For the care of spiritual interests and the promotion of consistent conduct among the members, each monthly meeting selects elders

¹ See New Meetings in the following chapter.

who, together with the recorded ministers and invited recorded ministers, are specifically charged with these responsibilities in the Meeting on Ministry and Counsel.