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Introduction

The Live Oak Friends Meeting Handbook is our best attempt, based on the discernment and experience of Friends, to set down guidelines for sharing the life and work of the meeting. These guidelines are merely human devices designed to aid us in living in a way that points to Truth. Followed legalistically with no opening to the Light, these guidelines will certainly result in strife and discord. Followed with love, always checked and revised by the continuing revelation of the Light as discerned by the meeting, these procedures will assist Friends to live in the Life that takes away the occasion of all strife.

Live Oak Friends Meeting began in 1954 with a small group of worshippers that met together in homes. As we grew, we began meeting in larger spaces until we built our own Meetinghouse in the late 1990's. We have developed from a group that could do business as a committee of the whole to a group that works together through functional committees that report to—and are guided by—our Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. In that process, we seek the guidance of Spirit to insure that our decisions and actions honor the fundamental Quaker belief that there is "that of God in everyone." We strive to remain mindful of this, listening, looking for and responding to 'that of God' in each other as we worship together, conduct business together, do committee work together. We try to test our leadings and decisions against the Quaker testimonies of integrity, equality, simplicity, peace, community and stewardship. We also consult Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice for guidance when we are unclear about how to proceed.

We have often had cause to remember how blessed we are by the continuing presence of Friends who have been with the Meeting from its early days. From time to time we have been able to ask these Friends about meeting practice and about the origins or purposes of particular procedures. This common understanding was tried and tested as we worked together, alongside those who were not part of our community, to construct a new Meetinghouse. Because of the challenges we lived through during this effort, we came to a lived understanding of the importance of clear processes and procedures to the peace and unity of our community.

As times and situations change, we recognize that this Handbook will need revision. Nominating Committee is currently in charge of shepherding the various committees and others in keeping the Handbook up to date with current policies and practices. More details can be found in the Nominating Committee description in the Committees chapter.

We unite with the spirit of those elders of our religious society who met together at Balby in 1656 and concluded their epistle of advices with the following postscript:

“Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all, with the measure of light which is pure and holy, may be guided; and so in the light walking and abiding, these may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.”

Life of the Meeting

Members and Attenders

Members and Attenders are the heart and life blood of the meeting. It is they who:

1. Contribute to the spiritual growth of LOFM, the actual work of the Meeting, and the financial or in-kind enhancement of the Meeting. People are encouraged to contribute according to their gifts. Many people may not be able to contribute financially at this time in their lives and this must be respected. Just by attending and participating in Meeting for Worship people are contributing, and giving of time and talents is as valuable as giving money.
2. Attend Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, participate in finding spiritual unity in decision making and work toward building the blessed community.
3. Share in the work of committees.

Patience and appreciation of the differing gifts, needs and expectations of long term and short term members and attenders is vital. Houston is full of people that come for school or short term employment and find a spiritual home with us, only to move on when their job or school is over. They bring a liveliness and energy we appreciate. Long term members maintain our traditions and systems, and can help to involve short term members wherever possible in that process.

Meeting for Worship

The meeting for worship is the heart of every Friends Meeting. At Live Oak Friends Meeting we practice *expectant worship*. It is a time to become still, quieting the restlessness of the mind and tensions of the body. In this way, we seek to open ourselves to receive Divine guidance, to experience the presence of that which is holy, and to be informed or led by it. Each is aided by the seeking of others, so that worship becomes a corporate experience.

Friends approach the Meeting for Worship confidently, believing that God speaks directly to us, revealing Divine Will and guiding those who listen. Each worshiper becomes a listener ready to receive God's message, which may come in the silence or in spoken words. The Divine manifests Itself to individuals in many ways.

Worship requires discipline of mind and heart, and heeding the Holy Spirit over and above our worldly concerns. Daily meditation and prayer, study of the Bible and other writings of spiritual inspiration, and striving to live each day in harmony with the Divine will help to prepare minds and hearts for the consciousness of the presence of God in worship.

With diligence meet together, and with diligence wait to feel the Lord God to arise, to scatter and expel all that which is the cause of leanness and barrenness upon any soul; for it is the

Lord must do it, and he will be waited upon in sincerity and fervency of Spirit;...and let none be hasty to utter words, though manifest in the light in which ye wait upon the Lord; but still wait in silence, to know the power working in you to bring forth the words, in the ministration of the eternal word of life to answer the life in all. (Stephen Crisp, 1663)

Meeting for Worship with a Concern for/Attention to Business

The Quaker way of doing business is fundamentally non-authoritarian. Those who clerk are not in a position of authority in the strict sense, although they are usually respected persons, but rather they are there to guide the discussion, to see that all are heard, that the shy ones speak up, that the talkative are made mindful of the limits of time and patience, to be aware of ‘unspoken’ points of view, and sensitive to persons in meeting for whom an issue is particularly important, making sure that they are heard. Neither voting nor consensus is used in the Religious Society of Friends to reach decisions. Rather, Truth is sought in an issue, and it is believed that this is best discerned through reaching something called ‘the sense of the Meeting’. The sense of the Meeting does not equal unanimity, nor is it necessarily that everyone agrees.

One person does not know the whole truth; many come to meeting with minds leaning in one direction, only to be swayed by new information, a different point of view, or a change in heart. Each has different talents and propensities that we bring to meeting. All are valuable. One Friend may be an expert in financial or legal matters and the rest of the meeting may rely heavily on that person’s opinion in this area. That person’s opinion may hold less weight in other areas. Thus through an inclusive process of community discussion, acceptance of each person's point of view as an honest expression of that person’s truth, and faith that ‘way will open’, even in what appears to be difficult and seemingly intractable circumstances at the outset, it is believed by Quakers that ultimately a position will be made manifest in the body, which resolves the issue at hand.

Arguing and debating are contrary to this process, for they are the manifestations of personal willfulness on the one hand, and purely mental activity on the other. Personal opinions and insights are indeed welcomed, as are logically reasoned presentations and intelligent suggestions. However, the sense of the Meeting is not reached by these processes alone, but is rather reached by faith in the Spirit, through the ‘inner Light in others, God manifest in us,’ that what is best for the community and God’s purpose, will eventually emerge.

The term ‘Sense of the Meeting’ refers to the point in a Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business at which there is a very strong sense that a decision has been reached. The ‘Sense of the Meeting’ is discerned by the Meeting Clerk after discussion of an issue. Many if not all present can usually sense when this point has been reached. The clerk has the responsibility to discern the moment when a decision seems to have been reached, articulating what the decision is, asking the Meeting if that is indeed the direction that it wishes to go, and finally, composing a minute which records the decision. Members generally signify their agreement by nodding heads or saying ‘approved’. The

sense of the Meeting may be reached very quickly on simple matters before the Meeting. It may also take a very long time when concerns or competing points of view are raised by others or even one person. When it is clear that unity is not present, the issue may be laid over to another time, referred to a committee for further research or seasoning, or a threshing session to further explore the issue may be called. *REFERENCE: Howard Brinton, FRIENDS FOR THREE-HUNDRED YEARS, chapter on Decision Making in the Religious Society of Friends.*

Children at Meeting

What do we teach in LOFM Children's First Day School?

Note: This document is not meant to be a procedures guide, nor are its contents "written in stone". Rather, it was written to reflect the general approach and practices that we currently strive to follow through the LOFM Children's Religious Education Committee. We envision that new families with children might ask "What is your Children's First Day School program like? What do you teach? What can I expect for my child's experience at LOFM?" We hope this document will give at least an overview in answer to those questions.

Introduction/Philosophy

In the children's program at Live Oak Friends Meeting, our primary desire is to have children and families feel welcome and comfortable in our community, as we believe this feeling of acceptance and belonging becomes an important foundation for learning more about Quakerism and enjoying active participation in the community. We strive to help each child feel known and valued as an individual, and to promote relationships amongst the children and between adults and children that are caring, friendly, and mutually respectful. As First Day School teachers, members of the Children's Religious Education Committee, and other "Friendly Adult Presences", we try to model Quaker values and processes as we interact with the children. These may manifest in how we welcome new children into their classes or childcare activities, how we invite children to share and listen to each other's experiences and perspectives, and how we solve problems or address conflicts that may arise. We hope that over time, children who attend our program will come to learn about Quakerism in an experiential way, through a combination of formal instruction, formal and informal community-building activities, participation in worship with their families and the rest of the community, and development of friendships with other children in the meeting.

Selection of Teachers

Teachers in the LOFM Children's First Day School program are typically adults within the Meeting who have an interest in working with the children and have sufficient experience participating in the Meeting to understand the basic tenets and testimonies of our faith and model these in their work with the children. It is desirable if teachers also have some knowledge of Quaker history and the Quaker world beyond our local meeting, but one does not need to be scholar or expert in order to make a valuable contribution as a First

Day School teacher. Indeed, the qualities of warmth, enthusiasm, dependability, resonance with Quaker values, interest in working with children, and willingness to learn are probably most important. We have had wonderful teachers in this program who were young adults, older adults, parents of young children, parents of grown children, and adults without children. Some were raised as Quakers themselves but many were not. Sometimes those who volunteer to teach come with a particular leading to teach about a specific theme or skill – such as knitting caps for babies in hospitals as a service project, or working on a garden to learn about ecology and stewardship of the earth. Other times those who are teaching feel more comfortable following a set of lessons that provide a ready made structure for the semester or the year. Because we are a small program, there is plenty of opportunity for discussion and support for someone who wants to teach but may not have done so before. While we do not follow a prescribed curriculum each year, the committee offers guidance and assistance to ensure that the teacher’s style and content are a good fit for our Quaker community and for the developmental level of the class.

Considering Children’s Developmental Levels

We recognize that from infancy through high school age, children have very different needs and capabilities. We typically structure our program to meet children’s needs by dividing into groups roughly based on age and grade level. In addition to our nursery, where we provide babysitting for infants and young toddlers, we typically have classes for older toddlers and preschoolers, for elementary children, for middle schoolers, and for high schoolers. Depending on the numbers of children and teens enrolled and the maturity levels of individual children, some levels may be combined or separated to create groups that will work best together.

Teachers working with our youngest group understand that toddlers and preschoolers often have short attention spans and need opportunities for active play and hands-on activities. In this group children may listen to a brief story, enjoy nature outside, express themselves through an art project, or play with developmentally appropriate toys. As they engage in these activities they have opportunities to practice making choices, taking turns, communicating with each other, learning about the natural world, expressing their curiosity and creativity, and being part of a warm, friendly community. They may be introduced to basic concepts such as helping, sharing, taking care of plants and animals, and solving problems peacefully, that begin to prepare them for more formal introduction to Quakerism later on.

Our elementary class(es) often combine activities such as reading stories, playing cooperative games, doing art activities, participating in service projects, and sharing personal experiences related to lesson topics. These children are starting to become familiar with Quaker terminology such as “testimonies”, “that of God”, and “Meeting for Worship”, and are typically introduced to famous historical and current Quakers. They are at an age where they can begin to learn about and discuss what it means to be a Quaker. We also teach that there are many ways to connect with God or the Spirit, rather than just one right way, and that while we have our own traditions and practices, there is wisdom to be found in many other religions, and we respect and affirm people of all faiths.

For middle schoolers and high schoolers, we often have a special focus on making First Day School topics and discussions relevant to the tweens' and teens' "real lives" and everyday situations. Thus, while continuing to teach about Quaker history and practices, or more general religious topics, teachers may include discussion of a Quaker approach to challenging daily life situations at school, home, or in the community. The children might learn about complex current events here in Texas, in the United States, and around the world, and how Quakers are responding or might respond to these real life dilemmas and moral issues. In the past, these age groups have interviewed individual members of the Meeting community who have been involved in social causes or other Quaker activities. They have visited other places of worship to compare the experience to that of a Quaker Meeting for Worship. They have read and discussed books or watched and discussed documentary videos. They have worked on service projects such as fundraising within the community for a cause, planting trees on the property, and collecting and sorting supplies for the homeless. These older groups of children often connect with each other as a group and value time to "hang out" together as part of their social experience of First Day School. We strive to include their input and interests when designing their curriculum for the year.

Curriculum:

At LOFM, we have not chosen a unified curriculum structure for our program. It has been our practice to discuss amongst the teachers and committee members, during the summer months, how the teachers feel led to structure their class's curriculum for the year. Thus, there is a lot of flexibility and opportunity for teachers to choose a direction which they feel would be of value to their class and for which they have some affinity and desire to pursue. At the same time, there is somewhat of an informal vetting process whereby teachers' ideas are often shaped and enhanced by group input, brainstorming, and raising of any issues of concern. There are also several core areas that we generally agree to be important to include in children's experience of First Day School over time. Not all of these will be covered by every class every year, but over several years we expect that children will have exposure to the following broad topic areas.

Quaker History: In order to begin to understand what being a Quaker means, it is valuable for children to learn about where Quakerism comes from, who some of the important historical Quaker figures were and are, and what events in the world shaped the evolution of our various branches over time. Younger children may start this work by learning about George Fox, Margaret Fell, John Woolman, and others who have played an important role in the emergence and spread of Quakerism, as well as challenging the social, political, and religious mores of their times. Older children and teens may go into more depth in studying certain individuals, may focus on a particular time period in Quaker history, or learn about a particular issue associated historically with Quakers such as the abolitionist movement, prison ministry, relations with Native Americans, or Conscientious Objector status within the military.

Quaker Testimonies & Values: In addition to the most basic belief that "There is that of God in everyone", Quakers traditionally identify 5 (or sometimes 6) core "testimonies": Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, and Equality (sometimes Stewardship or

Sustainability is added). While Quakers do not have a creed that one must affirm or believe as a requirement for membership, these testimonies are often considered to represent common core values with which most Quakers resonate and strive to follow, to the best of our abilities, within the parameters of our lives. These 5 or 6 testimonies provide an abundance of opportunities for First Day School lessons and activities that help children and teens understand the meaning of these values and how they have been espoused and practiced by Quakers over time and in today's world. We understand that different branches of Quakerism, and individuals within each branch, may interpret the testimonies in somewhat different ways (for example, there are some meetings and individuals that do not affirm acceptance of Gay/Lesbian relationships although some may find this inconsistent with the testimony of Equality; there are some Quakers who have served in the military although some may find this inconsistent with the Peace testimony). At LOFM, many of us are of a socially liberal persuasion and our teachings to the children are generally consistent with an inclusive, affirming, broad-minded approach.

The Bible: We recognize that while Quakerism, as envisioned and founded by George Fox, has a definite Christian basis, individuals and families within our Meeting community may relate to the Bible in different ways. Some may place more emphasis on the New vs. Old Testament, and some may view the Bible as one of a number of important holy books. We may find it meaningful as a source of spiritual comfort, moral guidance, documentation of Judeo-Christian cultural heritage, and/or as a collection of historical and allegorical religious stories that provide a common core of cultural knowledge. Therefore, we do not teach children that there is one correct way to view and use the Bible (i.e., as the direct word of God, or as a collection of moral stories). However, we seem to agree that it is useful and important for our children to develop some familiarity with biblical characters and stories from both the Old and New Testament. Thus, our Children's First Day School classes often include some coverage of parts of the Bible, often including discussion of how the events, characters, and story have relevance for us as Quakers living in the world today.

Exposure to other Religions: Quakers believe that there is "that of God in everyone". In practice, this means that we affirm that there are many ways, rather than one right way, to worship and to seek connection to the Spirit. We teach our children that Quakers engage in particular practices (such as silent worship, vocal ministry, not having designated clergy) because these are our preferred ways of seeking spiritual connection and engaging in worship. Other religions within our country and around the world have developed different practices and conventions to express their beliefs and seek connection with a higher power. While we strive to help our children understand the value and spiritual richness of Quakerism that has led us to choose to be Quakers (or to be attenders at a Quaker meeting), we also encourage them to be curious, questioning, and open to learning about other cultures and styles of worship. We recognize that as our children grow into adolescence and young adulthood, it will be up to them to make choices about remaining a part of the LOFM community, seeking out another Quaker meeting, exploring a different kind of religious community, or not being part of one at all. Sometimes families choose to do this kind of exploration after being part of our LOFM community for a while. Sometimes parents may continue to attend meeting while their

children do not, or vice versa. We endeavor to have our Children's First Day School program be a welcoming, consistent presence for children, whether they attend regularly each week or less often. Our approach to other religions may manifest in our curriculum in different ways, such as by taking field trips to visit other places of worship, inviting someone from another religious tradition to come talk to our children's classes, reading stories from other religions and cultures, and talking about how to explain to peers what Quakerism is in comparison to sects more familiar to their classmates. We may also discuss issues of tolerance and intolerance that can arise when religions teach that theirs is the one and only "right" way to believe.

Children's Worship

The Children's Worship aspect of our program is an attempt to bring all the children together and engage them in a brief or extended worship-related activity (as opposed to a curricular lesson or service activity). Part of the goal of these times is to expose children, in a developmentally appropriate way, to Quaker practices of sitting in silence and "centering down", which can be challenging for both adults and children! At times we have used activities that help focus children's attention and promote calmness by engaging the senses – watching glitter settle to the bottom of a water jar, listening for the sounds of nature, or feeling a smooth stone or shell in one's hand. At times we have done a walking meditation, practiced "holding someone in the light", or made drawings on paper in response to music or visual imagery. We have also used Children's Worship as a time for brief personal sharing and community-building as we listen quietly and respectfully to each other. It is challenging to develop activities that "work" for children from preschool age through high school. We continue to seek the best ways to make this a meaningful and enjoyable experience for the children, and consider this aspect of our program to be an ongoing "work in progress".

Resources

Teachers in our Children's First Day School classes have drawn from a variety of sources to plan lessons and activities. Some of these include:

1. Doctor Seuss for First Day Schools, edited by Barbara Caldwell, Lynne Brick, Donna Sweeney. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1989.
http://www.quakerbooks.org/doctor_seuss_for_first_day_schools.php
2. "Sparklers" or Sparkling Still: A Quaker Curriculum for First Day School or Home Use for Children Ages 3 through 8. FGC Quaker Press:
http://www.quakerbooks.org/sparkling_still_pdf.php

Clearness Committees

There are many reasons for using a clearness committee. The most common and well known are clearness committees for membership and marriage. Clearness committees can also be used to discern clearness on any question or decision facing a member/attender, or to discern clearness for the Meeting itself.

For each clearness committee, there should be clarity beforehand on:

1. What is the question for which we need clearness? For membership and marriage, it is relatively clear. For a decision or struggle facing a member, some time should be spent determining what the question is. It should be a question for which clearness is genuinely sought - not a question that the person has already decided the answer to (and is seeking validation for), or a question too ambiguous to answer. It may be, if the question is sufficiently unclear that a clearness committee should be convened to seek clarity on what the question is before convening a clearness committee to try to answer it!
2. Who is seeking the clearness? For example, in questions of marriage and membership, both the applicant(s) and Meeting are seeking clearness - the applicant that s/he is clear to join/marry, and the Meeting that they are clear to take the membership/marriage under their care. In other cases it may be a matter that concerns only the member and the Meeting is trying to help the member attain clearness on the question.
3. Who is convening the committee? Normally, Care and Concern will choose a convener. The convener is responsible for all preparations for the meeting(s), clerking the meeting(s), and notifying Care and Concern of the results of the meeting(s).
4. Who are the members of the committee? Normally, Care and Concern will choose the members of the committee. The applicant(s) are certainly invited to indicate who they would like to be on the committee. It is best to get a mix of perspectives and backgrounds. It is also best to choose members who don't already have a strong opinion on the question being considered. The members should be people that the applicant(s) can trust and be comfortable sharing openly with. The members should also be comfortable sharing their experience freely and openly with the committee and the applicant(s).

The following are responsibilities (except as noted) of the convener of the clearness committee.

1. Schedules initial meeting with applicant(s), preferably in their home.
2. Clarifies with applicant(s) the purpose and function of the committee prior to the initial meeting (see above).
3. Distributes appropriate pamphlets, queries or other information to committee members and ask the committee members to read these materials to prepare for the meeting. This helps to prepare them for the committee process, as well as think about questions to ask the applicant(s).
4. Schedules a pre-meeting for the committee (without the applicant(s)) for the

- committee to discuss and agree on the roles, queries, and format of the clearness committee meeting.
5. Schedules the clearness committee meeting with the applicant(s) and committee with agreement on time, location.
 6. Opens and closes meeting for clearness with applicant(s).
 7. Schedules timely follow-up meeting with committee members to discern clearness.
 8. Reports findings of the committee to the applicant(s) and the Care and Concern Committee Clerk.
 9. Coordinates any subsequent meetings with applicant(s) as well as any subsequent meetings (or any other necessary actions) of the committee in order to achieve clearness.

Membership

(More details about membership can be found in membership chapter) The applicant writes a letter to the Meeting Clerk asking to be considered for membership. The Clerk will ask Care and Concern to assign a convener and committee members for a clearness committee. The convener will then make the necessary arrangements with the applicant and the clearness committee. Prior to the clearness committee meeting itself, the applicant should be provided with a copy of Faith and Practice and asked to read it thoughtfully in the Light of the commitment he is contemplating.

The applicant should understand that this is a process for determining clearness for both the applicant and the Meeting - whether the applicant is truly clear to join, and whether the Meeting is clear to accept him/her into membership. Applicants may normally be nervous at the prospect of being "rejected" but ideally both the applicant and the committee will seek clearness together and arrive at the same conclusion, whatever it may be.

Suggestions to committees interviewing applicants for membership (adapted from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice):

1. Does s/he believe that God endows every human being with a measure of His own divine spirit, which, if followed, will lead into all Truth?
2. Does s/he understand that Quakerism is rooted in Christianity?
3. To what extent is s/he familiar with and sympathetic to the historic testimonies of Friends, such as non-participation in war, simplicity of living, and human brotherhood?
4. Has s/he any reservation regarding testimonies or other matters included in the queries?
5. Does s/he impress you as a person of integrity?
6. To what extent does s/he feel himself already a part of the Meeting fellowship distinct from formal membership?
7. To what extent do members acquainted with the applicant feel that s/he is in spirit a member?
8. Does s/he feel that the Meeting for Worship strengthens his/her spiritual life?

9. Does s/he understand his/her responsibilities for regular attendance at Meeting for Worship, for supporting the concerns of the Meeting, and for sharing in its work, as well as supporting it financially? Does s/he realize his/her responsibilities for attending Meetings for Worship with Attention to Business, including the sessions of quarterly and yearly meetings?

10. Is s/he familiar with and understanding of the method of the Meeting for Business?

11. To what extent is s/he familiar with the wider family of Friends beyond the local Meeting?

12. If s/he has up to this time been a church member, why does s/he wish to change?

If s/he previously has had no membership in any church, why does s/he wish to join Friends?

13. What is the attitude of the other members of his/her family toward his/her joining?

14. Does s/he realize that s/he is asking to join a group that does not accept the final authority of any person or creed, but which individually and collectively trusts to the continuing revelation of Light and Truth?

Additional questions:

1. How would s/he handle a disagreement with the Meeting? How has s/he handled discord and conflict in other communities?
2. What is it about Friends that attracts him/her?

Traditionally, Care and Concern arranges for a small gift to each new member (a copy of Faith and Practice, or other Quakerly book, or a subscription to Friends Journal).

Marriage Under the Care of the Meeting

The applicants should understand that this is a process for determining clearness for both the applicants and the Meeting - whether the applicants are truly clear to marry and whether the Meeting is clear to take their marriage under their care. Applicants may normally be nervous at the prospect of being "rejected" but ideally both the applicants and the committee will seek clearness together and arrive at the same conclusion, whatever it may be.

(From Jan Hoffman, Pastoral Care Newsletter, May 1995) *The call to commitment is not limited to two individuals. The question for the couple is: "Are we called to a covenant relationship with each other?" The question for the meeting is: "Are we clear to take this marriage - this whole relationship - under our care?" The question is not, "Are we clear to take the wedding or ceremony under our care?"*

The couple should write a letter to the Meeting Clerk requesting marriage or other commitment under the care of the Meeting. Care and Concern will then assign the convener and members for the clearness committee. The convener will then make the necessary arrangements with the couple and the committee.

Consider whether children and other family members should be included in the clearness

process. It is often a good idea to meet separately with each applicant prior to meeting with the couple. Normally, at least one of the couple should be a member of the Meeting.

Questions to consider in the clearness process:

1. Are we aware that the care and concern of our marriage by the Meeting involves the continuing concern for our life together and the values established in our home?
2. Will we welcome the continuing concern of the Meeting?
3. Is the couple compatible regarding spiritual and religious beliefs.
4. Has the couple addressed any financial issues?
5. Has the couple discussed their jobs and how their marriage might impact them and their working.
6. Are there any previous marriages or relationships and has the couple sought clearness concerning them.
7. Has the couple considered children and other family issues?
8. How will the couple handle conflict and do they have plans for conflict resolution.

In December of 1995, Live Oak Friends minuted their appreciation for diversity in our community and recognized the Light in all sincere, loving, supportive relationships in which faith, hope, love and truth abide. Upon request, Live Oak Friends Meeting will recognize same-gender marriages through the same careful process we customarily use to arrive at clearness for marriage for any couple who wish to unite under our care.

Personal Discernment

(The following is adapted from Jan Hoffman, twelfth month press, "Clearness Committees and their Use in Personal Discernment")

When a person is unclear on how to proceed in a concern or dilemma, s/he can request a clearness committee from Care and Concern Committee to help reach clarity. The committee in this case is not making a decision or dealing directly with the problem. The person seeking clearness writes up a question in advance and provides it to the committee members. (It is helpful to include any relevant background information as well).

The convener will arrange the time and location of the first meeting. (It may be necessary for the committee to hold a pre-meeting in preparation for the meeting with the focus person.) The meeting should open with a period of silent worship. The focus person will then provide a brief summary of the question or concern.

During the next period, the committee members will ask the focus person questions for clarity. The clearness committee is not there to provide advice, judgment, criticism or wisdom. The committee should ask honest, probing, caring, challenging, unloaded questions to help the person reach clearness. The focus person is always entitled not to answer any of the questions.

At the end of the question period, well before the end of the session, the convener

should ask the focus person how s/he wishes to proceed. The possibilities are:

1. Meeting for Worship, during which anyone may speak out of the silence
2. Asking more questions
3. The committee is asked to give advice

Through this process, the focus person may reach clarity. S/he should agree with the committee on the next steps if any. Sometimes another meeting may be needed. In some cases, several meetings may be necessary in order to reach clearness. Some actions may have been agreed to and need to be carried out before the next meeting or perhaps some more information is needed before further action can be taken. Any actions agreed upon should be recorded in writing for clarification. It may be that only one meeting is necessary.

Membership at Live Oak Friends Meeting

The purpose of these guidelines is to facilitate the process of admitting a new member, respecting the applicant and focusing serious, worshipful attention on the process. A clear process imparts to the applicant a sense of loving and attentive care from the meeting. Hopefully, the process will also serve to deepen the experience and make it meaningful to the applicant. It is important that the applicant consider the personal meaning of membership, and understand the strength of commitment that is expected of members of the Meeting. Membership should never become ritualistic or lightly held for any Friend.

Membership in the Religious Society of Friends is held through membership in a monthly meeting, and is the sole responsibility and privilege of the monthly meetings.

Many yearly meetings have published their own book of procedures, known as a Faith and Practice. Our yearly meeting has just begun writing a Faith and Practice and, although it officially adheres to the Faith and Practice of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, it refers to those of many different yearly meetings as needed. This document draws on writings from the Faith and Practices of several yearly meetings. It is intended as a guide to the membership process to enable those seeking membership, and as an informative statement of the procedures used by Live Oak Friends Meeting. As the spirit leads, adjustments are made.

BIRTHRIGHT MEMBERSHIP

Membership by birthright is an historic concept and is no longer granted by Live Oak Friends Meeting.

CONSIDERING MEMBERSHIP

1. Although Friends are often first attracted to meeting through finding unity with the Christian principles by which Quakers are known best by the outside world, the essence of Quakerism is in our form of worship, our belief in personal revelation, and our reliance on the experience of the Divine alive within us. It is the conviction of an applicant that the Inner Light exists within every creature, and in its ability to inform us how to live, that most defines Quakerism. The essence of membership is in the belief in truth through revelation; all commonality of principles and testimonies of Friends flow from the experience of the Light Within.

2. An applicant for membership should be familiar with the Meeting and its members on a spiritual and a practical level. This step should be given ample time. While an attender, the applicant should have attended meeting for worship regularly, participated in Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, and participated on a committee.

3. The applicant should be familiar with the basics of the history of Quakerism and

have become familiar with Quaker principles and practices. It is recommended that a Friend considering membership should have read the Faith and Practice of a yearly meeting. Faith and Practice of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting is a good one with which to start, although many Friends find inspiration in those of other yearly meetings as well.

4. Friends should not aspire to have reached a spiritual destination before being “worthy” of applying for membership; it is not a reward for a job well done. Rather, it is a milestone –perhaps even only a beginning –on their spiritual path. In the best of circumstances, membership aids in the conveyance along the way to spiritual growth and understanding.

5. When a person has become convinced that the Quaker form of worship is the way to find their true spiritual path and is ready to make a commitment to living in supportive fellowship in the community, they should consider requesting membership.

6. The applicant begins the process by writing a letter to the Meeting requesting membership and delivering it to the Clerk of the Meeting. This letter will be read aloud at a Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. The letter can be short or long, but often Friends use this opportunity to clarify, both for themselves and for the Meeting, why they have decided to become a member. The Clerk of the Meeting can use his/her discernment as to when to read the letter, and whether to read it in its entirety or excerpts from it.

7. An applicant should complete the commitment they might hold in another religious community before they request membership in the meeting. While there may be individual exceptions, applicants are expected to give up their membership in other religious communities when they become a member of the meeting.

8. When a couple or a family apply for membership together, individual clearness or clearness in a group can be arranged. Individual letters are preferable, but joint letters have been accepted. It is at the discretion of the Care and Concern Committee what is requested as an appropriate clearness process.

9. When the applicant(s) have young children, they can specify in their letter of request whether or not they are seeking associate membership for their children. Associate Membership is not automatically granted.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEMBERS

1. Faithful attendance and participation at Meeting for Worship. The Worship and Ministry Committee reminds us that our physical presence is not enough. As members, we also have a responsibility to share whatever measure of Light we are given.

2. Faithful attendance and participation at Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. Participation can come in many forms: expressing affirmation of others, asking questions to attain clearness, or expressing our misgivings even when near unity seems apparent. It is all the light within the group that illuminates the best way forward.
3. Service on committees by joining one or more committees, attending meetings, participating in the work of the committee.
4. Financial contributions for support of the meeting, which can also include in-kind donations of services or supplies.
5. Involvement in regional and yearly meeting activities, including attending Bayou Quarterly and South Central Yearly Meetings.
6. Members who are not active in meeting are responsible for contacting the meeting annually to update their contact information and desired membership status.
7. Members are responsible for notifying the meeting when they have found, and become a member of, another spiritual community so that their member record can be closed. They can either resign their membership or request a transfer to their new community.

PURPOSE OF THE CLEARNESS COMMITTEE FOR MEMBERSHIP

1. For the monthly meeting to become familiar with the applicant's knowledge and acceptance of the tenets of Quakerism.
2. For the applicant to ask questions about Quakerism and become more clear whether membership in the Society of Friends is an appropriate choice for their spiritual path.
3. Applicants should discuss any misgivings they might have, and be honest about any tension they feel over perceived incongruities between their personal convictions and those they believe to be more mainstream in the meeting. Beliefs and practices learned in the religion(s) of their childhood may hamper an adult's spiritual growth, especially the change from an external or judgmental God to the concept of an Inner Light. Other kinds of spiritual practices may have been beneficial to the individual's growth and compatible with Quaker beliefs and practices. These are topics for discussion with the Clearness Committee.
4. When accepting this applicant into membership, the Meeting is agreeing to accompany this person in their spiritual walk. The committee should discern if the Meeting community can meet its responsibilities to this applicant with love and care.

5. Meeting representatives should be forthright in outlining the expectations the Meeting has of its members, such as participation in committees, etc.

MEMBERSHIP PROCESS FOR NEW MEMBERS

Before Recommendation to Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

1. The Clerk of Care & Concern should acknowledge the receipt of the letter of request as soon as he/she receives it from the Clerk of the Meeting [within a few days] and outline to the applicant the membership process and timeline that will be followed. The membership process will probably take 3--5 months.

2. At the next meeting of the Care & Concern Committee, the letter should be read and a clerk for the Clearness Committee appointed.

3. Clerk of the Clearness Committee for Membership starts the clearness process by:

- a. Obtaining a copy of the membership packet from the Clerk of the Care and Concern Committee. This packet includes the documents required to record a new member [Information Sheet, Membership Log, and Membership Form] and list of sample questions for use by the clearness committee.

- b. Starting a Membership Log on which to track the progress of the membership process. This is one of the documents which should be delivered to the Records Clerk at the end of the process.

- c. Asking the applicant if there are Friends they would like to have on their clearness committee. Although this request does not imply a commitment to include these Friends on the committee, the clerk can consider it in the selection of the committee.

- d. Identifying the Friends who will serve on the committee.

- e. Giving the applicant the information form to fill out; retrieving the completed form; distributing copies of the completed information form to everyone on the committee.

- f. Ascertain whether there will be Associate Memberships involved in the process.

First time at Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

—Clerk reports request for membership

1. After a letter requesting membership is received by the Clerk of the Meeting, the Clerk announces the letter has been received at the next Meeting for Business. It is at the Clerk's discretion whether to read the letter aloud, or to refer the letter to the Care and Concern Committee first. The letter is then referred to the Care and Concern Committee.

2. This first time contact with Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business alerts the entire community to the beginning of a period of discernment for a pending membership.

3. At the next meeting of the Care and Concern Committee a Clerk of the Clearness Committee for Membership is selected. The clerk should contact the applicant within seven days of the Care and Concern meeting and ask the applicant(s) for requests of particular Friends they would like to have on the clearness committee. [Friends serving on membership committees must be members of the Religious Society of Friends.]

4. The Clerk of the Clearness Committee should give the applicant a draft form of the LOFM official membership form and the LOFM information form to fill out. These should be returned to the Clerk of the Clearness Committee during the time of preparation for the Meeting for Clearness.

Second time at Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

—Clearness Committee is identified

1. [If letter has not be read aloud previously] The Clerk of Care and Concern reads the letter requesting membership and informs the community of the name of the Clerk of the Clearness Committee. If the letter has been read previously, there is just a report that a Clearness Committee has been formed and names the clerk of that committee.

2. Friends who wish to have input in the discernment process should give that input to the Clerk of the Clearness Committee.

3. The Clerk of the Clearness Committee selects a committee of three to five members, including at least two that have participated in meeting for several years.

4. The Clerk of the Clearness Committee should communicate the purpose of the clearness meeting to all participants ahead of the meeting, with suggested questions and a description of the style of the meeting. The applicant's letter and the information form should be made available to all the committee members. These documents should be considered part of the archive and treated with discretion; members of the committee should not allow public access to these documents.

5. The Clearness Committee should meet with the applicant(s) before the next Care and Concern meeting if possible.

6. The Meeting for Clearness with the applicant should meet in a place free of distraction and conducive to focused worship. Ample time should be allowed for centering and worshipful consideration for each applicant. Although there is basic information to be asked in a clearness committee, and documents are available with sample questions, there is no required list of questions. It is important that the Clearness Committee meet as many times as needed and not assume that one time is standard. Three or more times may be appropriate.

7. Following the Meeting for Clearness with the applicant, the Clearness Committee meets alone, without the applicant, to jointly discern whether to recommend approval of the application.

8. The Clerk of the Clearness Committee reports the committee's recommendation in writing to the Care and Concern Committee. Either this report, or a letter of recommendation based on this report, is prepared for Care and Concern to report at the next Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. This letter or report should include information that supports the committee's recommendation and tells something about the spiritual background of the applicant; not a biography, but something that informs the community about this person's new commitment to the community. Occasionally, a committee will have new insights into a Friend that would help the new member be better known in the community. However, care should be taken not to share anything shared in the Clearness Committee that could have been said in confidence.

9. The Clerk of the Clearness Committee should notify the applicant of the recommendation before it is presented to Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

Third time at Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

—**Care and Concern Committee reads the recommendation document** in its next report to Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

1. A recommendation for membership should be seasoned by the Meeting for at least one month. During that time, any concerns about the recommendation should be communicated to the Clerk of the Clearness Committee. Although it is best if issues of concern are brought to the Clearness Committee before the recommendation, the seasoning process still allows for further consideration.

2. If there are substantive questions about the applicant's preparation for membership, the Clearness Committee can mentor the applicant and/or meet as needed to resolve these questions.

3. Under exceptional circumstances, memberships have been accepted without the customary seasoning period.

4. All documents related to the process should be delivered to the Records Clerk for the member's permanent record. They should not remain with the Care and Concern Committee.

Fourth time at Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

—Approval for Membership

1. The recommendation of the Care and Concern Committee having been seasoned, new members are accepted through the consideration of the Meeting for Worship

with Attention to Business, and a formal Minute recording the action is approved.

2. The Minute recording the new membership should include the actual date when membership was approved, as well as the Minute number.

TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

1. Memberships received from other meetings

- a. The applicant requests a letter of transfer from their current meeting be sent to the Clerk of LOFM.

- b. First time at Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business--Upon receipt of this letter, the clerk either reads it or provides it to the Clerk of Care and Concern to include in their report to Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

- c. LOFM does not require a clearness committee for transfers of membership, however, the letter of transfer is referred to the Care and Concern Committee for consideration of the standing of that member in the meeting. A recommendation for membership in the receiving meeting is based on clarity that the member is in good standing in the home meeting.

- d. The Clerk of Care and Concern provides an Information Form and a Membership Form to the transferring applicant, to be returned to the Care and Concern Committee. Sometimes another member of the committee becomes the contact for the process.

- e. The request for transfer is considered at the next meeting of the Care and Concern Committee. After consideration, and receipt of the information forms from the transferring Friend, approval for a minute of receipt of the transfer is given by the Care and Concern Committee to Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

[A cautionary note: it is good practice to have clear communication with the meeting from which the transfer is occurring. Membership is being extended on the basis of the applicant's good standing in that meeting.]

- f. Second time at Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business the Meeting acts on the recommendation of the Care and Concern Committee by approving a Minute of Transfer. The current practice has been to not require seasoning of this minute; it can be passed immediately.
- g. A letter notifying the previous monthly meeting of LOFM's acceptance of the applicant as a member is then sent by the Clerk of the Meeting.

- h. Copies of all relevant documents are delivered to the Records Clerk.

2. Memberships removed by transfer

- a. A letter of request for transfer is sent to the Clerk of LOFM by the applicant.
- b. The letter is referred to the Care and Concern Committee for consideration of the standing of that member in the meeting. A recommendation for membership in the receiving meeting is based on clarity that the applicant is a member in good standing in the home meeting.
- c. The Clerk writes a letter of recommendation for membership to the receiving meeting and reads it aloud in Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.
- d. A formal minute is passed, recording the date, the meeting to which the Friend is transferring, and the yearly meeting with which it is affiliated. The Minute is often included in the letter of recommendation to the receiving meeting.
- e. Copies of all relevant documents are delivered to the Records Clerk.

WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS

1. Friends can offer a transfer member who is new to the community an informal meeting with a small group of Friends. It would provide a personal time to get acquainted with each other, and would allow the meeting to make clear the expectations it has of its members. Details could be given about committees, how to donate, quarterly and yearly meetings, the web page, etc.
2. A welcoming for the new member is held at the rise of Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business as soon as practical. The Care and Concern Committee coordinates this event with the Hospitality Committee. It is an appropriate time to present the membership gift.
3. A gift of a book or magazine subscription is made. Currently we are gifting both new members and transfers into meeting a book of current interest about Quakerism. The Care and Concern Committee chooses and buys these books. They are then signed and presented on behalf of LOFM by the Clerk of the Meeting.

MINUTES OF MEMBERSHIP

1. It is best to pass separate minutes for each individual, even if a couple is applying together. They are separate members with separate histories in the meeting.
2. The minute recording membership should include the full name of the applicant, a sentiment of welcoming into the community, and the date the membership becomes effective [usually the date of that day].
3. For memberships received from other Quaker meetings, the minute should include

the basic information as above, but also the name of the transferring meeting and the yearly meeting with which it is affiliated, if applicable.

4. Likewise, removal of memberships by transfer to other meetings should have the name of the receiving meeting and its yearly meeting.

5. When a Minute is passed recording the withdrawal or transfer of membership from LOFM for any reason, the Clerk of the Meeting should send a copy of that Minute to the former member.

SOJOURNING MEMBERS

Friends may attend a monthly meeting because they have moved temporarily into its vicinity, but may not wish to give up membership in their home Meeting, to which they expect to return eventually. Their desires in this regard should be set forth in a minute from their home Meeting. Such Friends are listed as Sojourning Members of the Meeting they attend. Sojourning Friends may fulfill all functions that they are willing to undertake and that the host Meeting sees fit to assign to them. However, they should not be counted in the statistical reports of the host Meeting. Their sojourning membership ends when they leave the area of the Meeting where they have sojourned. Its clerk should then notify their home Meeting. Those who continue as sojourning Friends for an extended period should be asked to examine their reasons for remaining in that status, and to consider a transfer of membership. --quoted from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

“Friends have a particular responsibility to bring children under the loving care of the meeting. Friends should be sensitive to the needs of these young people, nurturing their spiritual well-being and helping them grow into mature and concerned members.” --- from New York Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice.

To this end, Live Oak Friends Meeting children can become Associate Members of the meeting, either by the request of a parent, or by their own request. Live Oak Friends Meeting has chosen to break with the historic precedent of allowing only the children of adult members to become Associate Members. When a family regularly attends Live Oak Friends Meeting, parents can request Associate Membership for their children. Additionally, the children themselves can apply for Associate Membership for membership, with their parents’ permission. We feel this practice allows children who are growing up in our meeting with a strong Quaker identity to normalize their relationship to the meeting, whether or not their parents have chosen to make a membership commitment. It may also support and encourage these Young Friends to actively consider their personal commitment to adult membership.

Applications for Associate Membership from a child whose parent is not a Member will be considered with love and respect by the Care and Concern Committee on a case by

case basis. All Associate Memberships will be minuted by Meeting for Business.

Although we encourage the children of our community to become members, Associate Membership does not bestow any additional rights or responsibilities that do not also belong to all of our children. It also does not automatically translate into adult membership. It may, however, at some later date, provide useful documentation of their life long association with the Religious Society of Friends for those Young Friends who are concerned with military registration or service.

1. Live Oak Friends Meeting does not assign associate membership as a birthright. Parents desiring to have their children recorded as Associate Members need to request associate membership.

2. Associate membership is available to Friends under the age of 22 years. It is often requested for the children of adult Friends applying for membership in the Religious Society of Friends. It can be requested for children of any age up to 18 years of age. It should be a consideration for those children born into the meeting, as their associate membership can be recorded at the time their birth is recorded. The same is true for when a child is adopted; a request for associate membership recorded at the same time of adoption would mark the arrival of the child into the community, an important historic event for the meeting records.

3. Older Quaker children can request full membership if they are led. They go through the same process as for all membership requests. It is important that Young Friends are made aware of both the importance of full membership and the process which is used to apply. They should be encouraged, as they graduate from high school, to consider their status as an Associate Member or as a young attender, and whether they are ready to assume the responsibility of membership.

4. Associate Membership concludes at the end of the year in which a Friend turns 22 years old. It is at this time their status will be changed to an adult attender if they have not chosen to become a full member.

5. Associate Members or their parents can request the discontinuance of their membership for any reason. If a family leaves the community it is appropriate for the Records Clerk to inquire of the member or their parents whether to discontinue the membership. This process is at the discretion of the Records Clerk and does not necessarily follow the more formal procedure used in the case of adult members.

RESIGNATION FROM MEETING

RELEASED AT YOUR OWN REQUEST

There are many reasons Friends lose interest in the Meeting. Hopefully, once someone has

become a member they continue to grow in the Spirit and participate in the community, but the reality is, sometimes they don't. For whatever the reason, when this happens, and a Friend is no longer interested in fulfilling their responsibilities as a member of Meeting, or they no longer self-identify as being of the Quaker faith, it is important that they not continue in their membership as a vestigial relationship. We encourage Friends to be clear about their desire to be a member of Live Oak Friends Meeting and to act appropriately.

1. When a Friend wants to resign their membership, they write a letter stating their request to the Clerk of the Meeting.
2. That letter is referred to the Care and Concern Committee for consideration. Although there is no further required process at this time for resigning, it has been discerned that when someone leaves the community, it is always worth a moment of reflection. After consideration by the committee, the resignation can be presented to the Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business to be read aloud and recorded in a formal Minute.
3. Although not required, it is recommended that the Care and Concern Committee contact the person resigning and offer their support. A Clearness Committee can even be convened.
4. Under some circumstances, particularly when a member appears to have religious beliefs that are in conflict with their membership in the meeting, the meeting can ask for their resignation.
5. When a member joins another religious group, they are deemed to have resigned from the meeting and are removed from membership. The Clerk of the Meeting can provide a letter of recommendation and conveyance to the new religious community to the person concerned. This action will be recorded with an official minute that includes the name of the institution and the date.
6. A letter of acceptance of a resignation should be written by the Clerk of the Meeting to the Friend who has asked to be released. This letter should be read in Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

RELEASE BY THE MONTHLY MEETING

1. Live Oak Friends Meeting has chosen to follow the process for release from membership as stated in the New York Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice, July 31, 1998 edition, as follows: "After having made sustained and diligent efforts to reclaim the commitment of those Friends who have lost touch with the meetings, monthly meetings may discontinue their membership. Before taking that action, the meeting should have sent letters of loving inquiry to such members at least once a year for a period of three years. Having received no satisfactory replies, the monthly meeting clerk may make a minute discontinuing membership and so inform the persons concerned."

----New York Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice, 1998 edition.

2. “The clerk of the Meeting should promptly send written notice of this action to the individual. Such notice should also remind the released individual that an appeal to quarterly meeting is possible; in such a case the quarterly meeting may be able to play a mediating role. It is, however, the monthly meeting’s responsibility to make the final decision.” ----PYM Faith and Practice 2002 edition

3. “Some persons may wish to retain membership in the Religious Society of Friends when, over a period of many years, they are not active in any monthly meeting. At its discretion, a monthly meeting may carry inactive persons on its membership rolls, while recognizing its obligation to report them as part of the basis for financial assessment by the quarterly and yearly meeting. Long-term nominal membership is generally discouraged, however, except when active Meeting participation is not possible because of poor health, residence far away from any Meeting (so that transfer of membership or sojourning membership is not feasible), or when some other compelling factor is present.” ---PYM Faith and Practice 2002 edition

DISOWNMENT

Although disownment of members is rare, Live Oak Friends Meeting reserves the right to take action if and when the need arises. In such a situation, the procedure to be followed is stated in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice, 2002 edition:

1. “In the case of a Friend whose actions seem out of harmony with the standard of conduct appropriate to the Religious Society of Friends, the Meeting, primarily through the overseers, may seek to renew the commitment of the member to Friends’ practice. If these efforts fail, and if the overseers* believe that they can accomplish nothing (*At LOFM, the traditional Oversight Committee has been renamed the Care and Concern Committee. Members of that committee are the “overseers” to which this passage refers. further, they should report this to the monthly meeting, which may appoint a special committee to make further attempts to reach a satisfactory solution.)

2. “If all these efforts are to no avail, the monthly meeting should take steps toward removal of the Friend from membership. The overseers or a special committee should present in writing a proposed minute recommending such action. When the minute is received by the monthly meeting, a copy should be given promptly to the person involved, and action should be deferred to a future meeting. Friends toward whom the monthly meeting has acted in this way should be advised that they may explain their position to the monthly meeting in person or in writing.” --PYM Faith and Practice, 2002.

3. “If the monthly meeting subsequently believes that the membership of the Friend in question should be discontinued, the minute of removal should be adopted and the Friend notified of the action and of the potential mediating role of quarterly meeting.” --
---PYM Faith and Practice, 2002.

RECLAMATION OF MEMBERSHIP

“A person whose membership has been ended either by resignation or by action of the monthly meeting, and who desires to rejoin either the same or a different monthly meeting, may do so by following the procedure outlined earlier for application for membership.” -----PYM Faith and Practice 2002 edition

MEMBERSHIP RECORDS

1. Personal records of members include:
 - a. All documents concerning membership or transfer application: Membership Log, Membership Form, Information form, letter of request, letter of recommendation, letter of transfer.
 - b. Other documents that are collected throughout the activity of the Friend in the life of the meeting.
 - c. Relevant pictures.
 - d. Writings and articles either published or provided by the applicant to the archive.
 - e. Memorial Minutes and obituaries.
2. The Records Clerk maintains the personal files of all members, active or inactive.
3. When members leave the meeting, living or dead, a copy of the Membership record of that former member is sent to the archive at Swarthmore College.

Committees

LOFM has no paid staff or minister. It is said that Quakers abolished the laity, that we are all ministers, and there are many ways to minister. Committee work is one of those ways. We use the everyday word “committee” to refer to a Quaker form of ministry. Committee

members volunteer their time and gifts to address dimensions of community life. Committee meetings are opportunities for practical and spiritual discernment. They begin and end with a period of silent worship.

It is through the various committees that the work of the meeting gets done. It is also a way to build community as committee members get to know each other more deeply and participate more intentionally in the life of the Meeting. There are many committees that invite us all to be active with their charges, like Property,, Communication and Outreach, Adult and Children’s Religious Education.

Committee members share in the responsibilities and tasks of the committee, including attending meetings, participating in the decision-making, and supporting the decisions and actions of the committee. Committee decisions, like those at Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, are sought through spiritual exercise, worshipful activity, and are a ministry to the meeting. It is as important in a committee meeting as in Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business to remain open to the possibilities provided by the Light shared by the other members instead of being attached to a particular outcome.

Members/attenders should serve on no more than three committees to avoid overwork and burnout. It is important to allow all members and attenders the opportunity to serve on committees according to their gifts and interests, therefore it is also important that committee members rotate off the committees regularly. A normal term for a committee might be 2-3 years, although any given person’s term might be shorter or longer. If someone has been on a committee longer than 2-3 years it would be good to consider rotating off and allowing someone else to rotate on.

Committees shall refer to the LOFM Handbook for guidance, and review/update their description including concerns and responsibilities of the committee; how members are placed on the committee; terms of service for clerk and members; interfaces with other LOFM entities, as needed.

Role of Committees

1. Committees should have a "roster" of members, maintained by the Committee Clerk and validated by the Nominating Committee. (This list can be maintained with the LOFM directory.)
2. It is suggested that evening committee meetings be kept to 90 minutes to respect members’ daily work schedules.
3. Lengthy documents should be disseminated to committee members for study before the committee meets.

4. Some committees may need co-clerks to reduce the workload on the clerk.
5. Committee clerks are encouraged to disseminate committee tasks to individual members and hold them accountable for the performance of these.

Sub-Committees

Often a committee will establish sub-committees to help manage its responsibilities. The committee itself may establish the sub-committee, or Nominating Committee may request its establishment, or Nominating may recommend changing an existing committee to a sub committee of a different committee for the following reasons:

1. Allows for fewer committees and more efficiency in handling LOFM business.
2. Subcommittees can be formed to accomplish a particular task and bring a recommendation back to the group.
3. Decisions can be seasoned and handled within the larger committee without coming to Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. (if so delegated by Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business).
4. The sub-committee can be part of a “community” with related issues and concerns.

Often “sub-committees” are very small groups or individuals that need to be part of a larger group for important decision making and seasoning. The larger committee provides this necessary aspect of Quaker business process.

Committee/sub-committee relationship:

1. The sub-committee is part of the larger committee and at least the clerk (or other designated representative) should attend the committee meetings, bringing status reports and other issues and concerns for seasoning as necessary.
2. Normally, the sub-committee reports to Meeting for Business as part of the larger committee’s report. The larger committee should include reports/status from all its sub-committees in its report to Meeting for Business.
3. In the event the sub-committee needs additional resources, the larger committee should be its first stop in seeking those resources (e.g., budget or people)
4. As with all Quaker decision making, it needs to be decided what types of decisions can be delegated to the sub-committee, which decisions need to be made in the larger committee, and which decisions should be brought to Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

Committee Charges and Functions at LOFM

Adult Religious Education

reviewed 8/2022

PURPOSE

Organize and oversee the curriculum and agenda of Adult First Day School focusing on study of Quaker ways of living and worshiping, spiritual growth, and exploration of our Quaker heritage.

SPECIFIC TASKS

1. Meets during summer to plan the fall programming and meets at the end of fall semester to plan the spring programming.
2. Gathers ideas from the Meeting at large.
3. Determines programs that would meet the spiritual needs and interests of the Meeting.
4. Schedules First Day topics including leaders/presenters.
5. Announces Adult Education schedule at Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business and Meeting for Worship.
6. Posts Adult Education schedule information on the LOFM website.
7. Oversees presentation of topics by various leaders/presenters by discussing the presentation with the speaker regarding content, time limitations, handouts, group characteristics, and allocating time for discussion and questions.
8. Offers services for duplication of handouts to the leaders, if necessary.
9. Calls leader/presenter two weeks before scheduled meeting to confirm.
10. Makes necessary arrangements for DVD player, easel, LCD projector, etc.
11. Introduces the speaker, if necessary

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

1. Worship and Ministry: to ensure that the Adult Education program addresses the Meeting's spiritual needs.
2. Children's Religious Education: Coordinates schedule and programming with Children's Religious Education Committee.

Care and Concern

Updated 10-05-2021

PURPOSE

Care and Concern is responsible for Meeting by attending to the general well-being and functioning of the Meeting as a whole; in addition it meets the needs of members and attenders; helps those who have specific special needs such as the perplexed, the grieving, the sick, the aged and the geographically isolated; helps facilitate the resolution of issues within the Meeting; and it receives requests for membership and marriage under the care of the Meeting.

COMPOSITION

Members of the Care and Concern Committee must be members of Live Oak Friends Meeting, and should have a longstanding commitment to the community and have the trust of the Meeting. Membership on the committee is expanded by invitation of the committee. In addition to at-large members, the Records Clerk and the Clerk of the Meeting are Ad Hoc members of the committee. Care and Concern Committee meetings are only open to members of the committee and invitees.

SPECIFIC TASKS

Oversight Responsibilities

1. Provides Pastoral care and counseling of members and attenders. This includes: attending to personal concerns of meeting attenders, the smooth functioning and coordination of the various meeting committees, and the organization of clearness committees.
2. Supports and assists committees whose responsibilities are interrelated (e.g., Communication and Outreach, Worship & Ministry, Religious Education)
3. Sets up Care Committee for the Clerk of the Meeting.
4. When difficulties arise in the meeting community, is responsible for making sure 'Gospel Order' (see "Glossary" section of Handbook) is followed in their resolution before the "Conflict Resolution" process is invoked.
5. Assists in facilitating resolution of issues within the Meeting. When difficulties go beyond solution by 'Gospel Order', such that the life of the Meeting in general is seriously impaired, initiates a process known as 'Conflict Transformation Process' (see "Conflict Transformation" in Appendix of Handbook)

Community Responsibilities

1. Assures the continuing support and inclusion of members with special needs.
2. Develops and strengthens commitment to Meeting by working with Worship and Ministry and Communication and Outreach committees on activities such as: Friendly 8's, Homecomings, worship sharing groups.

Communication Responsibilities

1. Reviews the directory and contacts Friends who have not been seen at meeting recently.
2. Activates the telephone tree.
3. Keeps track of those Friends who might need assistance in case of a general emergency, like a hurricane.
4. Keeps contact with those in meeting who do not use e-mail.
5. Attends to contact with distant members

Administrative Responsibilities

1. Receives and acts on requests for membership, and works with the Records Clerk to ensure recording of births, deaths and marriages in the Meeting community, and to encourage any other documentation of Meeting business that is required by the Records Clerk.
2. Organizes clearness committees for membership and marriage as well as

- those requested by F/friends on issues of concern to them.
3. Oversees marriage ceremonies.
 4. Organizes and coordinates memorial services and other significant events in the life of the Meeting, working with Worship and Ministry and Hospitality Committees.
 5. Records births, memberships, memorials, and marriages
 6. Nominates members of Nominating Committee (normally, one per year to serve a three-year term). The recommendation for members of the Nominating Committee should be reported in the Care and Concern report and not included in the roster of officers and clerks put forward by the Nominating Committee. This procedure ensures that the Nominating Committee is not populating its own committee. It is expected that this report would be given the same month as the Nominating Committee report.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

No designated responsibilities, although every committee member takes on specific duties/tasks as required, as well as the following specific tasks:

Clerk of the Committee

1. Regular clerk duties
2. Receives the Records Clerk report, makes sure the Worship and Ministry Committee also receives it.
3. Facilitates sending the memorial minutes and the birth announcements to the SCYM Worship Oversight Committee, the SCYM Recording Clerk, and the LOFM Representative to SCYM in a timely manner before Yearly Meeting.

Care Committee Liaison

1. Pays attention to members and attenders who may need help.
2. Receives requests for Care Committees for health or other concerns.
3. Brings possible Care Committee needs to Care and Concern.
4. Contacts potential members of Care Committee once approved by Care and Concern.
5. Follows up with clerk of Care Committee to find out status and results.
6. Reports to Care and Concern Committee for final action/report.

Clearness Committee Liaison

1. Receives requests for clearness committees (membership, marriage, personal concerns).
2. Contacts potential members once approved by Care and Concern.
3. Reports to Care and Concern Committee for final action/report.

Interaction Liaison [representatives to other committees]

1. Communicates on a regular basis with clerks of committees with which Care and Concern has close interactions (especially Communication and Outreach,

- Hospitality, Property and Religious Education) to assess their needs and concerns.
2. Facilitates as way opens, open and active communication among members and attenders.
 3. Keeps abreast of the activities of the Communication and Outreach Committee in integrating new people into meeting.
 4. Works with Communication and Outreach and Hospitality to coordinate baby and new member welcomings, Friendly 8's, and honoring first-day school teachers each year.

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

1. **Worship & Ministry:** Meets at least once annually with Worship & Ministry to plan and write the 'State of the Meeting' report.
2. **Nominating Committee:** Reviews and provides consultation with Nominating committee regarding the annual slate of recommendations for clerks and committee members prior to the slate being submitted to Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. This would also apply to mid term replacements. A joint meeting with Nominating is highly recommended to promote clear communications.
3. **Communication and Outreach:** Provides guidance and support, coordinates updating the directory, especially removing inactive members/moving people to archives.
4. **Hospitality:** Seeks assistance from Hospitality concerning marriages, memorials, and other events.
5. **Children's Religious Education:** Supports Children's Religious Education in helping resolve issues that arise in any aspect of First Day School that impinges on the spiritual growth of our children; encourages participation of the children and their role in worship. Encourages the Meeting community to involve the children in the spiritual life of the Meeting by ensuring intergenerational activities and assumption of Meeting responsibilities by the children that are appropriate for their age and development

Telephone Tree Convener

1. Keeps list(s) updated of who wants to be called.
2. Initiates the telephone tree when requested to do so by Meeting Clerk or Clerk of Care and Concern.
 3. Telephone Tree Convener must be approved by Care and Concern Committee

Children's Religious Education

updated 08/2022

PURPOSE

The GOAL of the committee is to insure that LOFM children develop a deep and abiding awareness of the Light within themselves and others, and that they learn both

intellectually and experientially the ways of Quakers in the Meeting and in the larger community. SPECIFIC AIMS of the committee are:

1. To oversee both spiritual education and physical care for the children
2. To oversee the adequacy of resources for and safety of the children
3. To foster the children's integration into the Meeting and the larger community.

TASKS

1. Develops and implements a children's First Day School calendar.
2. Maintains a current roster of the children in the meeting
3. Finds teachers for and oversees Children's First Day Classes.
4. Trains First Day School teachers or helps find them support when needed.
5. Maintains an archive of curriculum materials.
6. Oversees the content and conduct of the First Day School so that it reflects Quaker values and principles, and the values of Live Oak Friends Meeting.
7. Plans special activities for the community specifically targeting children. Past examples have included the Lake Somerville camp out, Christmas craft projects, the spring play, and berry picking.
8. Hires and supervises paid Child Care worker
9. Coordinates childcare for families attending the 10:30 Meeting for Worship and/or the Adult First Day Class.
10. Advocates for the children and their program requirements in issues of importance like scheduling, safety, and planning the future of LOFM.
11. Promotes children's involvement in community activities and ensures children's needs are considered in their planning.
12. Facilitates children's service projects.
13. Facilitates and encourages participation by our Young Friends in the wider Quaker Community events.
14. Serves as a resource for parents in the Meeting for information and support on issues concerning the Meeting, like behavior in Meeting.
15. Organizes and re-supplies activity materials.
16. Maintains (procures, cleans, organizes, stores, repairs, etc.) children's toys and play equipment.
17. Implements and monitors compliance with the LOFM Children's Safety Policy in coordination with other members of Meeting as specified in the policy (policy is posted on the website as well as in policy section of this handbook).

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

1. Peace & Social Action Committee: Coordinates children's involvement with service projects and the Peace Festival.
2. Hospitality Committee: makes cooperative decisions about use of the Little House and helps attend to issues around crumbs and spills.
3. Library Committee: works together to obtain and maintain materials & books for curriculum use. Cooperates on sharing space & the storage and filing of archives.

4. Care & Concern Committee: provides and updates a roster of children for their reference for acknowledging the children's birthdays and sending Christmas cards as well as general care for & recognition of individual children.
5. Communication and Outreach: coordinate welcome and orientation of new or visiting families to meeting.
6. Planning Committee: consults on long range planning and projects needs for the accommodation of children's needs
7. Property: consults about play areas and equipment, safety and maintenance in the Little House and yard. Work together to make optimal use of our limited space.
8. Worship and Ministry: Addresses concerns about children in worship.

Communications and Outreach

Updated 08/2022

Vision: Let our lives speak the testimonies of simplicity, integrity, equality, and peace, in a way that reaches throughout LOFM and out to a diverse group of people

Mission: Nurture attenders and newcomers and provide information to them and the general public about Quakers and Quakerism in general and Live Oak Friends Meeting in particular.

SPECIFIC TASKS

1. Facilitate internal communications within the meeting via website, web calendar, e-newsletter and social media accounts
 - a. Define responsibilities and authority for making decisions about website content and establish procedures for submitting and publishing content
 - b. Maintain up to date information on website that is inviting to seekers and useful to members/attenders
 - c. Facilitate creating and distributing weekly e-news
 - d. Maintain good communications with Meeting Clerk, committee clerks, and Records Clerk to ensure secure and timely archiving of minutes and other documents
2. Welcoming newcomers
 - a. Train and schedule greeters for 10:30 AM Meeting
 - b. Maintain the guest book
 - c. Mail/email a welcoming message to local newcomers within a month of their first visit
 - d. See that someone responds to their questions about Quakers and activities at LOFM
3. Maintain and provide informational materials to newcomers in English and Spanish
 - a. Maintain an attractive display of basic Quaker information and newcomer

- materials in the Mott Room
 - b. Maintain an electronic file in C&O's google drive of the newcomer information materials developed by LOFM.
 - c. Handle the logistics of printing and distribution of above as needed
 - d. Ensure that a current electronic file of the material is available to the general public on the LOFM website.
 - e. Order, provide, and collect funds for informational materials (brochures, pamphlets, books, etc.) for the greeters table and the Pendle Hill Publication display
 - f. Maintain bulletin board displays in Mott Room
4. Offer information about Quakers and LOFM to the greater Houston community
- a. Maintain list of appropriate media contacts that can be used to publicize LOFM events
 - b. Promote information about LOFM and support LOFM events, communications, and activities in local print and broadcast media and on the Internet (Website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
 - c. Develop a list of Friends who can speak on general topics regarding LOFM and Quaker beliefs and practices
 - d. Respond to requests from the community for presentations
 - e. Provide and staff informational displays several times a year at community events
5. Name tags and LOFM members/attenders directory
- a. Produce/update name tags on request
 - b. Coordinate the addition of names to the directory with the Listkeeper

Additional Committee members

- a. **Web Steward** is a member of Communication and Outreach, and maintains website <http://www.friendshouston.org>
- b. **Listkeeper** is a member of Communication and Outreach and maintains an up to date directory.
- c. **Google Workspace Administrator** is a member of Communication and Outreach and manages the Google Workspace

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

1. Care and Concern – liaison with records clerk to maintain up to date directory
2. Worship and Ministry – review spiritual content of documents
3. Hospitality – help coordinate refreshments for local events, docents if needed
4. Property – coordinate any structural or grounds concern.
5. Children's Religious Education – creativity and participation in events
6. Adult Religious Education – share planned activities, help plan activities
7. Peace and Social Action – updates and coordination on planned outreach efforts
8. Others as need arises/way opens

Listkeeper

Updated 8/2022

1. Ensures that the directory and mailing lists, including members-attenders@friendshouston.org are kept up to date.
2. Notifies SCYM list of changes and additions on an ongoing basis.
3. Shares updated LOFM directory periodically throughout the year with active members and attenders.
4. Verifies SCYM list is accurate prior to Yearly Meeting (work with SCYM lists clerk on updating the SCYM directory).
5. Coordinates with Records Clerk to be sure coding is correct for membership and that the directory is accurate.

Google Workspace Administrator (admin)

created 8/2022

1. Maintain/update as needed roles and logins for @friendshouston.org emails for committee clerks and officers of meeting and their related Google drives and Google groups.
2. Update email forwarding for committee clerks and officers as needed.
3. Maintain and update LOFM e-communication data sheet which is stored in Admin drive.
4. Orient new committee clerks and officers to Google Workspace as needed.
5. Set up usage agreements for @friendshouston.org email usage, and Google Drive usage. For example:
It's agreed by signing below that the use of the ___@friendshouston.org be for the benefit of the ___ committee or Live Oak Friends Meeting as a whole. Any use should reflect the values and decorum of Live Oak Friends Meeting. Any personal use for personal communications or file storage, illicit, pornographic, sexual, profiteering, as well as dehumanizing, bullying, personal or personal business promotion or advertising is prohibited. Violations will be documented, archived and deleted from its Google Workspace location after warning the poster and possible termination of their access to LOFM Google Workspace.
6. Perform annual access reviews (list who has access to each Google drive and get sign off when owner-committee clerk reviews and attests that this is correct; review usage agreements).
7. Assist committee clerks, when needed, to update their Google Groups for committee group email and access to the committee's Google Drive.
8. Monitor Google drives' disk usage. Communicate with owner-clerk when usage changes dramatically or nears drive or Workspace limit.
9. Maintain backup for all online features with a second person with login for the friendshouston.org Google Workspace, friendshouston.org website, houstonquakerskyspace.com website, site hosting and domain name accounts.

Web Steward

updated 8/2022

- (1) Specific tasks include web design and adding content as requested by committee clerks
- (2) Maintaining online list of email addresses for committee clerks and officers
- (3) Periodically reviewing website to ensure that links and pages are functioning as intended

Finance

updated 8/2022

PURPOSE

The Finance committee oversees that the financial obligations of the Meeting are met and that excess funds are invested wisely.

The Finance Committee oversees the treasurer, financial transactions, assets, obligations, and insurance. Finance communicates information to the Meeting, makes recommendations, and collaborates with other committees.

SPECIFIC TASKS

1. Reviews Meeting financial status monthly and reports to the Meeting periodically.
2. Examines accounting yearly.
3. Develops and maintains financial policies and procedures for the Meeting.
4. Provides information and recommendations to Meeting on financial questions.
5. Reviews and recommends insurance policies.
6. Stewards Meeting investments and funds
7. Minds the schedule below.
8. Finance Committee names an individual as our registered agent to the Texas State Government for the purposes of receiving occasional communications from the Texas Secretary of State

TERMS AND MEMBERS

1. Members serve a three year rotating term, the clerk rotates yearly from committee membership
2. Members of the committee should be members of the Meeting.
3. Treasurer is ex-officio member (but does not participate in rotation to Finance Clerk)
4. Recommended characteristics of appropriate Finance Committee members:
 - a. Able to understand and manipulate numbers and currency
 - b. Able to read, understand and provide feedback on financial reports
 - c. Good sense of financial processes and procedures (from managing own money or another organization's)

SCHEDULE

The Finance Committee has certain responsibilities throughout the year:

- 1) Monthly:
 1. Review bank statements with treasurer.
 2. Report to MFB any unusual activity or anticipated activity.
- 2) January:
 1. Send out donation acknowledgement letters to LOFM donors.
 2. Verify that treasurer has:
 - i) Submitted W-2 and 1099s to employee(s) and contractors (lawn care, cleaning, AC maintenance, etc.)
 - ii) Submitted 941 (Payroll tax report).
 - iii) Paid payroll tax.
 3. Renew insurance.
 4. Present budget for approval at Monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.
- 3) February
 1. Review year-end financial statements and overall health of Meeting finances.
- 4) March
 1. Welcome new members and/or clerk. Manage access to website and Google workspace.
- 5) May
 1. Annual examination of prior year's books.
 2. Verify that treasurer has made transfers to the different funds (endowment, long-term maintenance, etc.) in the accounting.
- 6) October
 1. Prepare next annual budget (step 1)
 - i) Distribute year-to-date annual budget spending to Monthly Meeting
 - ii) Ask all committee clerks for proposed adjustments.
 - iii) Draft appeals letter and get recipient list from records clerk.
- 7) November
 1. Prepare next annual budget (step 2)
 - i) Draft new budget and communicate with clerks.
 - ii) Finalize and send appeals letter (usually the Monday after Thanksgiving).
 2. Request insurance quote for next year.
- 8) December
 1. Revise and distribute next annual budget to Monthly Meeting
 2. Verify that treasurer has made annual contributions to outside organizations.

Hospitality

Updated 8/26/2018

Mission

The **mission** of the hospitality committee is to coordinate and facilitate a warmth among

members, attenders and guests that allows all to participate in providing hospitality to each other and to newcomers, in peace and love.

This is how Friends offer hospitality, a ministry familiar to us all. In the course of it we learn to know and care for each other. Everyone who attends Meeting is welcome to join us in this joyful service.

1. In order to fulfill the committee mission, the committee
 - a. Facilitates the preparation of beverages and snacks suitable for children and adults on the first, third, fourth, and fifth (If there is one) Sundays of the month. They are served in the Woolman or post function room.
 - b. On the second Sunday there is a potluck that happens without management, served in the Little House, and eaten there and outdoors in good weather. The committee provides beverages and may contribute food.
 - c. On the third Sunday, when attenders stay late for Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, more and heartier food is available, usually sandwiches
2. Meeting members and attenders contribute food
3. The committee buys the rest as well as beverages, using funds from the Hospitality budget
4. The committee facilitates
 - a. Storage or disposal of leftovers.
 - b. Washing the used cups and dishes and putting them away.
 - c. Composting wet garbage and putting them in the bin.
 - d. Scattering stale bread and cake without icing for the birds.
 - e. Putting recyclables in the bin, and when it is full, bagging them and putting them in the Houston recycle bin.
 - f. Sweeping the floor.
 - g. Consolidating the trash and put it out in the Houston trash bin.
 - h. Taking the linens and dishtowels home to wash them when needed.
5. The committee helps with memorial services and other events, when requested.
 - a. The committee coordinates
 - i. Calling prospective attenders to ask them to bring food
 - ii. Helping attenders set it out and clean up the post-function room after the event as described above.
6. The committee
 - a. Helps find overnight accommodations for traveling Friends among the Meeting's members and attenders
 - b. Monitors non-disposable items, like tableware, so that they are distributed according to need between the Meeting House and The Little House.
 - c. Monitors paper towels, toilet paper, and trash bags, buying large quantities so that not only are the needs of the meeting met, but also those of events held in the Meeting House or the Little House. These purchases are

covered by the budget of the Property Committee

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

1. Children's Religious Education- the committee responds to children's events and their hospitality needs
2. Adult religious education-the committee provides hospitality as requested
3. Care and Concern- the committee responds to new member celebrations, memorial services, and other requests.
4. Communication & Outreach-it provides hospitality for Outreach activities if requested
5. Property-the committee buys supplies for the Meeting House and the Little House and charges them to the Property budget. The committee lets them know if there are problems concerning the buildings and grounds.
6. Hospitality responds to requests from the Clerk and other committees when appropriate.

Library

reviewed 1/2023

The Library Committee maintains and updates the collection of media materials. This includes evaluating donated materials for suitability for the collection; purchasing new materials; cataloging acquisitions; selecting materials for the book cart and other displays; publicizing the library collection; encouraging reading as a way to spiritual growth for the meeting; and developing ways to increase access to the collection

Nominating

Updated 10/2021

Vision:

Discern and nurture member/attender gifts and interests so that they can best thrive on their personal spiritual journey while they also help the meeting grow into the beloved community.

Mission:

Provide continuity and growth to the Meeting by inviting and encouraging individuals with various gifts and interests to share them with the Meeting community for the mutual benefit of both.

SPECIFIC TASKS

1. Meet regularly to discern the gifts and interests of our members and attenders, discern the needs of the Meeting and its committees, and match individuals' gifts and interests with these needs.
2. Consult with all current committee clerks and individuals with other appointed

positions early in the nominating process as to their desire to continue to serve. If not willing to serve, solicit suggestions for potential new nominations. Begin proceedings early enough to have sufficient time to handle any issues or conflicts that may arise. Inform committee clerks (incoming and outgoing) of nominations affecting them before the presentation is made to Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. This all requires maintaining a list of current committee clerks.

3. When seeking to fill a position, discuss the responsibilities and expectations of the position with possible candidates to ensure the best choice is selected (gifts, skills, experience, willingness) and that the nominee understands and accepts the job responsibilities of the position.

4. Present to January Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business a roster of recommended committee clerks and other appointed positions for a first reading. After a second reading in February and approval of the Meeting, committee clerks and other appointed positions begin serving the Meeting in March. List of appointees:

Meeting Clerk (2 year term)
Associate Meeting Clerk (2 year term)
Records Clerk
Adult Religious Education Clerk
Care and Concern Clerk
Children's Religious Education Clerk
Communications & Outreach Clerk
Google Workspace Administrator
List keeper
Web Steward
Hospitality Clerk (inactive committee)
Library Clerk
Peace & Social Action Clerk
Planning Clerk (inactive committee)
Property Clerk
Docent Coordinator
Scheduler
Worship & Ministry Clerk
Finance Clerk (1 year term)
3-year rotating, year 2

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3-year rotating, year 1
1 year non rotating

Treasurer
<i>(below Nominating members recommended by Care & Concern Com.)</i>
Nominating Clerk (1 year term)
3 year rotating, year 2
3 year rotating, year 1
1-yr, non-rotating
Past clerk

Bayou Quarterly Representative
SCYM Representative (3 year term)
SCYM Nominating Committee (3 yr term)

Trustees
Clerk of Meeting
Associate clerk
Immediate Past Clerk
Treasurer
Trustee at large (6 year term)
Trustee at large (6 year term)
Trustee at large (6 year term)

5. Recommend appointment of committee clerks for one year and clerk of Meeting and associate clerk of Meeting for two years. It is generally expected that a clerk will serve only two years before rotating out of the position for at least one year. However, this is not a hard and fast rule. Nominating can ask a clerk to continue to serve more than two years.

6. Conduct informational announcements and other activities at least quarterly to raise awareness of committee service opportunities, particularly for newer attenders and those not yet having served on a committee.

7. Oversee the maintenance and updating of the LOFM Handbook. Encourage committees and officers to keep their committee description and other parts of the handbook under their committee's oversight up to date. Meeting approval is needed for

a change in structure and elimination or addition of substantive function. Those changes not needing meeting approval should be reported to meeting through a report at Meeting for Worship With Attention to Business or the e-newsletter. After changes are approved, they will be sent to Communication and Outreach for updating website handbook and hard copies.

Supporting individuals in their ministry to the Meeting

1. Gather information from individual members and attenders through a survey or other process at least annually to discern gifts and interests including indicating which committees or positions they may feel led to serve.
2. Seek to help new or underutilized people become connected to and grow with the Meeting.
3. Express appreciation to outgoing and continuing clerks and other officers each year for their services.

Providing oversight and assistance to committees

1. Help clerks fill committees if needed, both at the beginning of the cycle and throughout the year, pass potential committee members' names along to committee clerks.
2. Provide resources and support for clerks throughout year (e.g. informative articles, workshops, resource people, and listening/help with problem solving).
3. Appoint a nominating committee member as liaison to each LOFM committee.
4. Get feedback from the committee clerks and members on their needs and concerns and help address them. Associate Clerk, Care and Concern Committee, and Meeting Clerk also have a role in this process.
5. Find replacements for clerks who resign or otherwise need to be replaced during the year.
6. Identify ways that committees can be restructured or reorganized to best serve the Meeting. Discern whether a committee needs to be laid down or a position should go unfilled (in the case of nobody with the right gifts/interests available) and bring those recommendations to Meeting for Business.
7. Appoint ad-hoc committee(s) when Meeting for Business sees the need.

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

Care and Concern: Members of Nominating are recommended by Care and Concern and approved by Monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. If a member of

Nominating resigns, Care and Concern will select a replacement to recommend for approval by Monthly Meeting.

Finance: Nominating nominates all the members of Finance Committee, not just the clerk.

Communications and Outreach coordinates updating of the Handbook online when any changes are made.

TERMS AND MEMBERS

Three of the members serve three-year terms and at least one additional member serves a one-year term. Each of the three-year committee members rotates into the position of committee clerk during his or her final year on the committee. The immediate past Clerk of the Meeting may become an ex-officio member of Nominating for up to two years but does not participate in the rotation to Clerk of Nominating.

Peace and Social Action

Updated 7/19/2021

PURPOSE

The central action of Peace and Social Action committee is to help channel the Meeting in applying the Quaker testimonies of peace and equality out into the world.

SPECIFIC TASKS

1. Acts as liaison between the Meeting's individual members and what is being done in the greater city, country, and world communities. In the past has included letter writing at potluck and other campaigns, legislation alert, and world news specific tasks
2. Manages the "external contributions" budget: makes recommendations to Meeting on how this budget should be used. Normally distributed to like-minded organizations such as AFSC, FWCC, FCNL, FGC, etc.
3. Provides workshops for Adult and Children's' Education (e.g., workshops on cultural sensitivity, guest speaker on death penalty)
4. Provides information and consciousness-raising about social problems and spiritual solutions
5. Ministers to and helps promote the groundwork of spirit necessary for service work, and strengthens the service culture in LOFM
6. Assists in coordinating the Meeting's community service projects as Spirit leads.

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

1. Children's Education: Conveys Quaker values and information about social problems and spirit-led service
2. Treasurer: Assists in determining Meeting's financial contributions to pertinent outside groups

Planning

reviewed 9/16/2018

PURPOSE

Develops and maintains a 3-year plan regarding meeting facilities, including a budget, by working with all committees before presenting the plan to Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

SPECIFIC TASKS

1. Represents LOFM's needs and best interests in protecting, preserving, and guiding aesthetics, use, and development of the property, grounds and buildings.
2. Makes sure facilities meet the needs of the Meeting, Quaker testimonies, and the Meeting's aesthetics guidelines by worshipfully evaluating needs, considering the appropriateness of furnishings and fixtures, developing plans, and making recommendations to Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.
3. Is the "guardian" of the Turrell sky space in terms of maintenance, usage and how it is described by the Meeting.
4. **Note that all committee clerks are automatically considered members of Planning.**

Property

Updated 6-21-20

PURPOSE

Oversees that the property and grounds of the Meeting House and Little House are maintained and aesthetically pleasing.

SPECIFIC TASKS

1. Ensures that we meet municipal codes and regulations as necessary.
2. Oversees telephone/internet arrangements, including voice mail and messaging. (Outreach records and is responsible for the greeting and picking up the messages.)
3. Oversees maintenance of landscape and grounds. Purchases and budgets any necessary materials.
4. Takes the trash out regularly, or as needed.
5. Repairs and maintains buildings, property; purchases and budgets any necessary supplies and foreseen/scheduled and unforeseen repairs and maintenance.
6. Maintains keys and copies of keys
7. Monitors individuals who open or close Meeting House and Little House.
8. Oversees cleaning the Meeting House and Little House by a housekeeping service.
9. Purchases and budgets any necessary supplies.
10. The Scheduler operates independently but is a part of the committee. The committee provides backup and problem-solving for the scheduler's work.
11. The Coordinator of the Docent Committee is also a part of the committee. The committee provides backup and problem-solving for the Docent Committee's work.

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

1. Hospitality: Interacts with Hospitality for planning events.
2. Property: openers and closers are monitored by the Property Committee
3. Finance: coordination regarding budgeted and unbudgeted expenses
4. All Committees: Works with all committees to make sure the physical space meets their needs.

Docent Coordinator

updated 5/2023

Live Oak Friends Meeting House is also a James Turrell Skyspace art installation open to the public at planned times and available for special events. As such, docents, coordinated by the docent coordinator, oversee all public events at LOFM and events when the Skyspace is planned to be open.

The coordinator enrolls and trains new docents in procedures for opening and closing the roof, light settings, arrangement of benches, etc. The coordinator also keeps docents informed of changes in procedures. A docent is expected to be present anytime the roof is opened, including meeting events as well as rental events, so docents also serve as hosts for rental events.

The coordinator draws up a schedule that includes opening and sunset times and assigns docents to specific dates. Each docent gets a reminder early in the week, so that the coordinator can arrange substitutions if necessary. The schedule of opening times and sunset is posted on the Houston Quaker Skyspace website, <https://houstonquakerskyspace.com/schedule/>.

The coordinator also arranges for special or private events in addition to Friday evenings and first Sundays.

The docent coordinator should be knowledgeable about Quakers, Live Oak Friends Meeting, James Turrell, and our Skyspace and be able to share the information with visitors. Details about the Live Oak Friends Meeting Skyspace can be found in the policy section of the handbook under Memorandum of Understanding about the Skyspace Between Artist, James A. Turrell and Live Oak Friends Meeting and including Agreements and Directives and Elements and Specification.

The coordinator receives reports of problems with roof or lighting and collaborates with property committee to plan repairs.

Currently the docent coordinator serves on the property committee.

Scheduler (Calendar Keeper)

Updated 2-16-13

1. Interacts with groups both within and without the meeting who wish to use the Meeting facilities.
2. Keeps a schedule of activities and events for the use of the Meeting facilities.
3. Prevents scheduling conflicts.
4. Provides periodic updates to Meeting for Business regarding use of the Meeting House by groups within and outside the meeting.

TERMS AND MEMBERS

There should be an understudy or assistant to the Scheduler to help with these responsibilities and aid in successful transitions from one scheduler to another.

Worship and Ministry

Updated 7/2021

PURPOSE

1. Nurture the spiritual life of the Meeting in the manner of Friends.
2. Foster the quality of connection to Spirit in the various regularly scheduled Meetings for Worship, called meetings and threshing sessions to help Meeting develop clarity and come to unity.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1. Both members and attenders can serve on this committee.
2. Attend committee meetings and participate in decision making process.
3. Foster spirit led eldership through modeling and counseling. In other words, mentor others in sharing the fruits of the Spirit.
4. Participate in the various committee tasks described below.

COMMITTEE TASKS

1. Promote an environment conducive to worship, considering the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of worshippers; and support all meetings for worship as needed.
2. Shepherd vocal ministry, encouraging speaking loudly enough for all to hear, leaving time between messages so they can be taken in by the listeners, and gently guiding those who outrun their Guide by speaking too long or inappropriately.
3. Plan and conduct retreats and other events to enrich the spiritual life of the Meeting.
4. Hold in the Light the Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business by sitting worshipfully near the clerks.
5. Coordinate with Care and Concern Committee to draft the Spiritual State of the Meeting report for approval by Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business and then send to South Central Yearly Meeting by the time requested.
6. Create or review brochures and other informational documents for members,

attenders, and visitors.

7. Periodically review this handbook entry for accuracy and completeness.

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

1. Care and Concern—help with pastoral care concerns, clerk Memorial Meetings and Meetings for Marriage as needed
2. Communication and Outreach—Create or review informational brochures and website content about Quakerism for the general public, post committee minutes to the Worship and Ministry section of the website, update that section as needed.
3. Nominating—provide input on committee needs for new members or clerk, provide any handbook revisions for approval and inclusion into handbook.
4. Property—Help create signage for Meetinghouse and grounds to convey Quaker testimonies.
5. Religious Education—Support the leaders of Adult and Children’s religious education in providing Quaker processes and content.

Overview of Being a Committee Clerk

updated 8/2022

A committee clerk shepherds committee members and attenders through discerning, planning, and implementing the leadings of the committee’s members, within the committee’s purview, and helps the committee fulfill the committee’s responsibilities, as described elsewhere in the *Handbook* or asked by Meeting to take on. A clerk does this by holding regular meetings, or as needed; setting agendas with input from the committee; serving the committee by helping it discern issues; seeing that committee actions are implemented; communicating with committee members and the Meeting; and seeing that minutes of the committee’s actions and discernment are kept.

The work of committees cannot be separated from a spiritual understanding of how Quakers do business. We take seriously the claim that, in our meetings for church affairs, including committee meetings, we are trying to align ourselves with God’s purposes. Therefore, we want to cultivate a general approach of working with and in the Spirit. The Clerk is instrumental in facilitating that movement within the group but is not alone in doing that, it is the responsibility of all in attendance.

Setting the stage: The clerk’s attitude and approach can be crucial to how committee meetings function. These can be a helpful set of attitudes and practices to work for:

1. Listening well both to what is said and what is not said, making sure all are heard
2. Openness - not having preconceptions; being flexible about what comes
3. Ensuring respect for and appreciation of others, which includes being clear about the time allocated and the information anticipated for their item on the agenda
4. Grace and humor
5. Sharing the agenda, created with input from committee members and others with business or concerns to bring, prior to the meeting. Inviting Spirit’s input can

help.

6. Be mindful of our Quaker process and discipline, including silent worship at beginning and end and as indicated during the meeting.

All these are part of everyone's spiritual discipline. All contribute to the process of discernment - using intellect, emotions, prayer - to judge what is right and how the Spirit (and/or energy) is moving in the meeting. It is also important to be organized, a good communicator, and anticipate timing. Quaker testimony is that these apparently secular things are also sacred.

Seeking decisions: Making a decision takes listening to all sides of an issue, pacing and pausing sufficiently so that Spirit is allowed to guide friends. Then the clerk may surmise the Sense of the Meeting and speak it to see if F/friends concur, reject or revise the clerk's summary. Sense of the Meeting hears the opinions and concerns and then moves beyond those verbal expressions to hear the Spirit of the concern and seek to find what is right for the group. The process of reaching the Sense of the Meeting often involves discarding "baggage," allowing time and space for hearing the doubts and questions about a subject and for the Light to enter and reach beyond the surface of things. A clerk's ability to discern the sense of the meeting is important, and others present are welcome to help.

Checking the progress: One of the purposes for asking the meeting to listen to a draft minute is to enable Friends to hear where discernment has gotten to and to contribute to its development. Remember that the divine spirit "presides," with the clerk and members together working to ensure good discipline or right ordering for that to be clear. Voicing a draft minute encourages further discernment of what is Spirit conveying. Sometimes an issue needs more time for discernment—the process is often of greater value than the outcome.

Follow up: Ensure that accurate minutes are kept that reflect the decisions made/actions to be taken and oversee the implementation thereof, including communicating with others, making sure that people are properly informed of decisions, keeping a list of action items or issues laid over for another time, bringing issues and requests to Monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business as needed and periodically reporting to Monthly Meeting the committee's work.

Additional duties of the clerk:

1. Reviews and becomes familiar with committee responsibilities as outlined in LOFM handbook.
2. Works with committee members to generate committee goals for the year.
3. Coaches/mentors committee members to take on new and different responsibilities, to grow in integrity and responsibility.
4. Understands the difference between committee "members" (who participate in the decision-making processes of the committee) and "resource people" (who may be called upon from time to time to provide information, skills or work to the committee), and "visitors" (members/attenders of meeting who are interested in understanding more about the work of the committee or providing input or feedback to the committee).
5. Schedules and conducts committee meetings regularly and sends out

notices/agendas to committee members to be sure everyone remembers.

6. Make sure minutes are distributed to members of the committee, reviewed at next meeting and stored in the committee's Google Drive. See Appendix for desired format for minutes.

7. Provides a draft minute for action if the committee is making a recommendation to be minuted by the Meeting for Business. Ensures that any recommendations are clearly stated as such, and provides background as to the work that was done leading up to the decision in order to make it as simple as possible for the Meeting for Business to act on the recommendation(s).

6. Works with committee members to write annual committee report for State of Meeting report in December.

7. Proposes committee budget to Finance Committee. Guides committee to stick within budget. Proposes budget amendments throughout the year as necessary.

8. Monitors and maintains the committee's Google Workspace (Shared Drive) and the committee's membership in its Google Group, with the help of the Google Workspace Administrator. This entails a file review and archiving annually and updating the committee Google Group as membership changes. The committee's Google Group is used for email distribution and Google Workspace (Drive) access.

9. Attends semiannual clerks' meetings or selects a representative to attend.

10. Plans for committee continuity

a) Prepare/orient a replacement - work with Nominating as needed to identify

b) Ensure that the succeeding Clerk understands the responsibilities in clerking the committee by passing-along records and discussing current issues/problems and pending or upcoming action items. There may be a committee notebook describing monthly responsibilities and resources useful to the committee's work to pass on to next committee clerk, or these may be stored in the committee's google drive

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

1) Treasurer/Finance Committee: Proposes and manages the committee budget in conjunction with the Treasurer.

2) Nominating Committee: Notes any "orphaned" responsibilities and raises awareness of them to the appropriate entity: the Nominating Committee, or another committee.

3) Records Clerk: Provides a summary of activities, minutes, decisions at the end of each fiscal year to the Records clerks.

TERMS AND MEMBERS

For some committees (e.g., Finance, Nominating) the clerk and members normally serve for a "term" - this is part of the role expectations when the clerk assumes the role. In the event the clerk chooses not to complete his/her term, s/he should work with Nominating to find a suitable replacement. Other committee clerks serve indeterminate terms, it is wise to rotate out of the clerk role to encourage new life and leadership in the committee.

LOFM Officers

In addition to the committees and their clerks, there are officers who serve the meeting in specific capacities, Clerk, Associate Clerk, Records Clerk, Treasurer, and Trustees. Officers review the following descriptions every two years prior to change of person occupying role for any desired revisions. The revised description in its entirety is then forwarded to Nominating for review before updating this Handbook.

Meeting Clerk

updated 8/2022

1. Generates agenda for Monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business in the Light and in consultation with the committee clerks and other people who have business.
2. Presides at the Monthly Meeting: facilitates information sharing and decision-making; discerns the sense of the Meeting; calls for periods of worship and reflection as needed. Ensures that accurate minutes are kept (by the Associate Clerk) that reflect the sense of the Meeting.
3. Oversees the implementation of the decisions of the Monthly Meeting; e.g., correspondence, makes sure that people are properly informed, keeps a list of action items from Monthly Meeting.
4. Acts as spokesperson or representative of the Meeting: e.g., clerking memorial meetings, meetings for worship for marriage, acting as a representative of the Meeting with non-LOFM organizations (if not otherwise delegated), signs marriage licenses; handles mail addressed to the Meeting and brings it to the attention of the appropriate parties; interfaces with the wider community.
5. Calls (twice-yearly) committee clerks' meetings for information sharing, discussion of issues, and any needed decision making
6. The clerkship of the Meeting is primarily an administrative and facilitative role – not pastoral care or problem solving. The Clerk can refer problems to the appropriate committee if needed. Normally problems should be raised by individuals directly to the person or committee involved, or to the Care and Concern Committee.
7. The clerk normally serves as president of the corporation in the capacity of Clerk of Meeting, properly announces the annual corporate meeting held during a Monthly Meeting, announced at least 30 days prior by email, at rise of meeting, and on the bulletin board in the meeting house. The clerk is also named a trustee of the

corporation.

8. The clerk of Meeting is asked to serve for two years following service as clerk of Meeting in the role of trustee of the corporation.
9. The clerk of Meeting generally serves as secondary signatory on the Meeting's bank accounts, the primary signatory being the Meeting treasurer.
10. The clerk of Meeting oversees or performs, with the assistance of the Communication and Outreach Committee, an annual data access review. The review is to include who has write privileges or logon credentials to any meeting or corporate account. This includes bank accounts, investment accounts, any online accounts to access these fiduciary accounts, Google Workspace drives and groups and corporate email addresses, google calendars, the <https://friendshouston.org> website, and the Skyspace site, <https://houstonquakerskyspace.com/>
11. If the clerk has not attended a Clerking Workshop at Pendle Hill or Friends General Conference, or equivalent, during their term as associate clerk, or before, it is offered by the meeting for the clerk's development to attend and be reimbursed by the Meeting for reasonable expenses.
12. Friends are asked to keep in mind the weighty duties of the clerk and to hold the clerk in the light and to support carrying out those duties.
13. The clerk has the prerogative to assemble a support committee to serve both in a consultative capacity and to help the clerk with executing issues not needed to be brought before Monthly Meeting. The committee may consist of the Associate Clerk and the immediate past clerk but may also have one or a few other committee members. The clerk will set the schedule for regular meetings of the support committee and have the prerogative to use the committee's help between regularly scheduled meetings.

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

1. Care and Concern:
 - a. Clerk of Meeting is an ad hoc member of Care and Concern Committee.
 - b. Care and Concern, as well as Meeting clerk, has the authority to activate the telephone tree, and send "mass" e-mails to Meeting members/attenders.
 - c. Care and Concern will normally set up a care committee for the Meeting clerk, to provide support to the clerk during his/her term.
2. Nominating: Nominating Committee is available to provide support for the clerk upon request, especially in preparation for committee clerks' meetings; and as needed.

TERMS AND MEMBERS

Meeting clerks normally serve two years.

Associate Clerk

updated 3/17/2024

The position of Associate Clerk may be filled by a single person, or a group of people. The Associate Clerk:

1. Supports the clerk and assists as needed and able in addressing the responsibilities of clerk as described above.
2. Stays up to date with Meeting business.
3. Substitutes for clerk as necessary in Meeting for Business, committee meetings and other functions.
4. Maintains a collegial working relationship with the clerk.

TERMS AND MEMBERS

The Associate Clerk is a member of Live Oak Friends Meeting. The Clerk of Meeting is normally filled by a person who has served as Associate Clerk.

Recording Clerk

Updated 3/17/2024

The duties of Recording Clerk may be performed by an individual drawn from a group of past Clerks of the Meeting and others and is coordinated by a member of that group. The Recording Clerk serves as secretary during the annual corporate meeting of Live Oak Friends Meeting.

1. Records the minutes at Meeting for Business. The “minutes” consist of a record of the discussion and agenda, and also the actual decisions that are minuted by the meeting, as well as a list of action items taken (what the action is, who is responsible, and date expected for resolution). The minutes also include upcoming calendar items. The minutes should include the name of the meeting (Live Oak Friends Meeting), the date, the name of the clerk, the name of the recording clerk, and the names of the persons attending.
2. Sends the calendar and other relevant information to the Communications and Outreach committee as soon as possible after the end of the MfWAB so that the calendar and website can be updated.
3. Sends out draft minutes well in advance of the next MfWAB so that they can be reviewed and corrections made to the extent possible before the next MfWAB.
4. Updates the draft minutes with the corrections approved by the Meeting at the next MfWAB, when the minutes are approved, and distributes them appropriately (i.e., posts them to Records Drive as finalized minutes.)

Records Clerk

revised 01/2022

SPECIFIC TASKS

1. Files hard copies and computer copies of meeting records: minutes, notes from

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, contracts, membership application records, roster of members, correspondence concerning transfer of membership.

2. Treasurer's Reports.
3. Meeting correspondence.
4. Meeting and South Central Yearly Meeting (SCYM) directories.
5. Bylaws, charter, articles of incorporation.
6. Deeds and other property records.
7. Maintains State of the Meeting reports (written yearly).
8. Maintains "Minute Book".
9. Records of committee meetings.
10. Maintains roster of membership in Committees, as well as roster of committee clerks (official record).
11. Liaison with SCYM regarding SCYM directory (up to date records as to membership, associate membership).

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

Care and Concern: Serves as ex-officio member of Care and Concern.

South Central Yearly Meeting (SCYM) Representative

1. Attends the November Representatives Meeting and gives voice to Meeting, member and personal concerns in Meeting for Worship.
2. Conducts SCYM business between the annual meetings.
3. Receives communications from the annual meetings.
4. Receives communications from the SCYM Clerk and brings them to the attention of LOFM.

Treasurer

updated 8/2022

PURPOSE

The Treasurer is the steward of the Meeting's Financial Assets and Accounting.

SPECIFIC TASKS

1. Assists the Finance Committee in the preparation of the annual budget. The Finance Committee presents the budget to the Meeting for approval.
2. Manages and maintains the Meeting's accounting and bookkeeping in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles..
 - a. Approves changes to the chart of accounts in conjunction with the Finance Committee..
 - b. Records all financial transactions, including income, expenses, and investments in the bookkeeping system, currently Quickbooks.

- c. Prepares and presents financial reports to the Finance Committee and Monthly Meeting several times each year. These reports should include the Balance Sheet, the Operating Fund Income Statement, and the Fund Balances Report. Income and Expense reports for other funds shall be presented when the activity in a particular fund is high.
 - d. Prepares an Annual Report that includes the Balance Sheet, Income and Expense Statements for all funds for which there have been any transactions, and a Fund Balances Report that shows the year-end balance in each fund, and the changes from the previous year-end. These reports shall be examined by the Finance Committee to determine accuracy, consistency and agreement with statements from banks and financial institutions.
 - e. Prepares the Annual Donations by Donor Report, in January, showing the total of the donations by donor. The Clerk of Finance shall use this report to send a statement to each donor acknowledging the amount of their donations for the previous year. This report is confidential and should only be seen by the Treasurer and those preparing the acknowledgement letters.
 - f. Maintains physical and electronic statements and reports from financial institutions, vendors and donors to document and corroborate the accounting records. Backup electronic copies shall be maintained in separate locations.
 - g. Presents bank statements to the Finance Committee on a regular basis to verify balances and proper handling of funds.
3. Manages and oversees all financial assets, obligations and transactions of the Meeting including:
- a. Deposits of cash and checks received from members, attenders, other donors and renters.
 - b. Payments of all invoices and bills owed by the Meeting in a timely manner.
 - c. Transfers money between bank accounts and financial institutions in accordance with the Meeting's policies.
 - d. Maintains the payroll accounting for our employees, files tax statements and pays payroll taxes as required by the Internal Revenue Service.
 - e. Ensures that the account signatories are changed as appropriate when the Meeting Clerks change.
4. These tasks can be delegated as appropriate in accordance with the LOFM handbook and approval of the Finance Committee.

Trustees

updated 01/2022

The composition of the Live Oak Friends Meeting (LOFM) Board of Trustees will be: Clerk (i.e., President of the Board) Associate Clerk/Recording Clerk (i.e., Vice President of the Board) Treasurer (i.e., Treasurer of the Corporation), Immediate Past Clerk, Trustee At-large (position 1), Trustee At-large (position 2), Trustee At-large (position 3) All trustees must be members of Meeting

Trustees At-large will be nominated by the Nominating Committee and approved by the Meeting for Business. The terms of service will be six years with offset termination dates, one term ending every other year. If a Trustee is unable to complete his/her term, an interim nomination will be made and approved to complete the term; it will not be a new three year appointment. When necessary to keep the membership of the Board at 7 members, a fourth Trustee At-large can be nominated and approved.

FUNCTIONS:

1. Oversight to ensure legal and ethical integrity of decisions of the Meeting made under the procedures set out in accordance with the ByLaws.
2. Oversight to ensure effective planning and refer to the Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business any decisions it sees, from time to time, that are prudent to be made.
3. Oversight of stewardship of Meeting property (both financial and material).
4. Oversight in the maintenance of up-to-date Meeting Articles of Incorporation and ByLaws and minutes of the Board of Trustees to be kept in the Corporate Record Book.

In practice, the Board of Trustees has delegated to the Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business all decisions regarding the management and operation of Meeting. The Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business is supported by the Meeting Committees. The Board of Trustees shall annually ratify said management and operation decisions in the yearly Corporate Meeting held in accordance with the ByLaws.

LOFM Policies

Child Safety Policy

Approved 2/21/2021

Welcome to Live Oak Friends Meeting's Children's Program

The safety of the children within Meeting is a responsibility of every member of LOFM. The Meeting strives to provide a safe physical environment and adequate adult supervision for our children. To provide supervision needed, it takes broad participation from members of the community, many well known and some not so well known. We will take care to get to know the people who have responsibility for the children and to provide oversight to ensure a high standard of care. We are looking forward to your participation in this service.

As a multi-generational community who treasures the special gifts each individual brings to our whole, we commit to actively protect the children in our care from physical, mental and emotional harm. We want all who come to Live Oak to experience the joy of participating in a safe and trusted environment. Monitoring the quality of care of our children is a primary responsibility of the Children's Religious Education Committee. It is the responsibility of parents to keep communicating with the committee to make sure the child care system is functioning well and meeting Friends needs.

The Children's Religious Education Committee, the Care and Concern Committee and the Clerk of Meeting are available to ensure that any concerns are addressed in a timely and effective manner.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guide lines for all who work with the children of our meeting. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children, protecting children, you, and the mission of Live Oak Friends Meeting. The child safety procedures have been adopted and will be diligently enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

Children's Religious Education Committee
on behalf of Live Oak Friends Meeting

Practices for Safe Engagement with Children and Youth

Live Oak Friends Meeting of Houston is committed to maintaining a positive, nurturing environment that safeguards children and youth and protects all parties from misunderstandings. When creating safe boundaries, it is important to establish what types of interactions are appropriate and inappropriate in order to prevent interactions that

1. may be inherently harmful to children or youth
2. are the type used by child molesters to groom children or youth
3. may create the conditions where abuse can occur more easily
4. may place adults at risk of wrongful accusation of abuse or neglect

Sexual Misconduct includes:

1. Child Sexual Abuse.
2. Sexual harassment.
3. Rape or Sexual contact by force, threat or intimidation.
4. Sexual conduct that is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another.
5. Sexual Malfesance defined as sexual conduct with a ministerial or professional relationship with a client, lay employee with a church member, committee members or lay persons.

Friends observe the following practices when interacting with children and youth under the care of the Meeting.

A. Basic Safety

1. Friends keep the Meeting house a physically safe environment for children and youth by continuously monitoring potential physical hazards and addressing those hazards or requesting appropriate committees such as Children's Religious Education or Property to address them.
2. No child will be left unattended in buildings or in the green spaces during times of children's programs or activities.
3. Parents and guardians must maintain responsibility for supervising their child or youth prior to their joining Meeting activities and after they have been released from them.
4. A statement that sexual misconduct is illegal and will be not tolerated at Live Oak Friends Meeting, will be posted in the Meeting House and the Little House.

B. Non-Discrimination

1. Friends respond to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, culture or socioeconomic status.

C. Affection

1. Friends recognize the following types of positive and appropriate affectionate interactions with children and youth:
 - verbal praise;
 - handshakes, "high-fives," fist bumps, and hand slapping

- brief hugs (where contact is only at shoulder level and above)
- pats on the shoulder or back
- pats on the head if culturally appropriate
- touching the hands, faces, shoulders, and arms
- arms around shoulders
- holding hands during prayer
- holding hands while walking with small children
- sitting beside small children
- kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children

2. Friends do not engage in negative and inappropriate forms of affection with children and youth including:

- inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- kisses on the mouth
- touching bottoms, chests, or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers
- showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas, or other private rooms
- occupying a bed with a child or youth
- any form of unwanted affection
- comments or compliments (whether spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or physical developments (e.g. “You sure are developing,” “You really look good in those jeans”)
- snapping bras, giving wedgies, or similar touching of underwear, whether or not it is covered by clothing
- isolating the child from group activity without parental permission.

D. Individual consultations with children or youth

1. When a Friend needs to have a private conversation with a child, the conversation needs to occur in the corner of the room or just outside the room with the door open and with others in sight.
2. Volunteers or childcare employees should never be alone with a child but must work in pairs to ensure adequate oversight.

E. Discipline and Punishment

1. Friends do not use physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. Physical force or restraint may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or others.
2. Friends do not use harsh language or degrading punishment for behavior management.
3. Friends use positive language such as “Please walk” rather than “Don’t Run”.

F. Alcohol and Drugs

1. Friends do not use, possess, distribute or arrive under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or misuse legal drugs while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children or youth.

G. Addressing Inappropriate Interactions

1. If Friends observe actions that are contrary to these practices, they address the actor in a friendly but direct and immediate manner to address the issue to ensure the safety of the child or youth.
2. If addressing the actor does not correct the behavior, Friends also engage the Clerk of Children's Religious Education, the Clerk of Meeting or a member of the Care and Concern Committee to address the issue to ensure the safety of the child or youth.
3. Upon learning of actions contrary to these practices, Children's Religious Education or Care and Concern will take immediate steps to engage those involved in a friendly manner to ensure the safety of the child or youth and protect all parties from misunderstanding. Disciplinary procedure may range from oral or written concerns to the removal of the individual from contact with the children. Legal steps will be taken if warranted.

H. Reporting Suspected Abuse of Children or Youth

1. The State of Texas requires that individuals report known or suspected abuse or neglect of children or youth to State authorities. If the abuse or neglect occurred within the State of Texas it can be reported to the Texas Child Abuse Hot Line at 800-252-5400 or to local law enforcement. Another reporting option is the National Child Abuse Hot Line is 800-4-A-CHILD (800-422-4453). These numbers as well as those for emergency assistance and the poison center will be posted in all LOFM buildings.
2. Friends will report known or suspected abuse or neglect of children or youth occurring on Meeting property to state authorities as required by state law, and to the Clerks of Children's Religious Education and/or Care and Concern.
3. Upon learning of suspected abuse or neglect of children or youth under the care of the Meeting, Live Oak Friends Meeting will take immediate steps to ensure the safety of alleged victims, and will cooperate with any investigation by civil authorities to the fullest extent appropriate. A Response Committee comprised of the Clerk of Meeting, the Clerk of Children's Religious Education, and the Clerk of Care and Concern will be responsible for all affairs related to the allegation of abuse. The Meeting's insurance company will be notified and legal counsel sought.

Procedures/Policies for Safeguarding Children and Youth

Live Oak Friends Meeting is committed to maintaining a positive, nurturing environment that safeguards children and youth and protects all parties from misunderstandings. This policy is intended to reduce the risk of abuse or neglect of children and youth under care of the Meeting. It applies to any and all Meeting employees and volunteers who work with children or youth while they are under care of the Meeting.

A. Screening and Selection

1. No volunteer will be allowed to work with children or youth until the volunteer has been known to the Meeting for at least six months.
2. Any and all Meeting Personnel who work with children or youth shall be screened and selected utilizing, at a minimum, the following:
 - a. A standard application completed by the applicant that includes an authorization to conduct background checks, provide 3 character references and

includes an acknowledgment that the applicant has received, read, and agrees to comply with this policy. The application will include employment and educational information from the applicant.

b. A criminal background check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years. Criminal background check results must be reviewed by the clerk of Children's Religious Education Committee. Offenses of a sexual or abusive nature disqualify candidates from service.

3. Children's Religious Education Committee may, at any time and at its sole discretion, disqualify any applicant from work with children or youth.

4. Children's Religious Education Committee must maintain confidential personnel files containing the following records.

a. Copies of all applications submitted, including record of the committee's decision to accept or reject applicants.

b. Records documenting completion of required education and training programs.

c. Records of complaints received regarding violations of this policy and actions taken to address those complaints.

d. Records will be kept for 5 years after a volunteer/employee has worked with the Children or Youth. Access to these files is restricted to the Clerk of Children's Education Committee and the Administrator if different.

5. Any youth of meeting who desire to work as a volunteer or employee of the Live Oak Children's program must be at least 14 years of age and go through the same screening process as an adult.

B. Education and Training Requirements

1. Child abuse prevention education and training is required for all meeting personnel who work with children or youth before they start their work with children or youth. Children's Religious Education Committee will select appropriate training material and methods and ensure completion of required training. Training and discussion will include definition of child/sexual abuse, how to recognize sign of abuse and what to do if someone reports they have been molested. Training will be conducted on a regular schedule for all who work with children under the care of the meeting. This training will take place at least once every 5 years for continuing volunteers/employees.

2. Members of the committee responsible for the hiring/selection of people who will work with the children must complete documented training related to screening practices to identify/screen high risk applicants.

3. On-going supervision of people working regularly with children is the responsibility of the Children's Religious Education Committee, with the support of the entire meeting community. Training on abuse prevention will be offered to the meeting community to enhance our ability to protect our members and attenders.

4. Live Oak Friends Meeting's Procedures, Policies and Practices to ensure the safety of children will be posted on FriendsHouston.org and available to the public as well as made available on meeting property.

C. Monitoring and Supervision of Programs

1. Programs for infants and children six years old or younger will have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents or legal guardians or those designated by them. These procedures could include sign-in/out sheets.

2. Every program for children and youth must have established ratios for adults and children and must attempt to comply with those established ratios.
3. At a minimum, two unrelated adults are to be assigned to work together when working with children or youth.
4. Friends are prohibited from being alone with a child or youth or multiple children or youth where other adults cannot easily observe them.
5. Each program will develop age-appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of children and youth using restrooms.
6. When supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing, showering or diapering infants or children, Friends will remain in an area observable by other adults or work in pairs.
7. No activities with children and youth may occur in areas with locked doors. If doors are closed, the room must have windows so activities within the room can be easily visually monitored.
8. Parents or guardians must complete written permission forms before Friends transport children and youth for a meeting sponsored activity.
9. Childcare employees will be supervised by the Clerk of the Children's Religious Education Committee or another designated member of the committee.

D. Modeling of Practices and Enforcement of Procedures and Policies

1. While working with children and youth under the care of the Meeting, any and all meeting personnel agree to:
 - a. model the Meeting's Practices for Safe Engagement with Children and Youth, and
 - b. enforce the Meeting's Procedures and Policies for Safeguarding Children and Youth.
2. Failure to do so could result in prohibition of future service with children and youth.

APPLICATION TO WORK WITH CHILDREN OR YOUTH

This application is required of all persons seeking to work with children or youth under the care of Live Oak Friends Meeting, either as volunteers or employees. Please complete and sign this application. Submit it, with the attached Background Check form to the Children’s Religious Education Committee for approval. We will send you a link or paperwork to have a background check done.

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please list 3 people and their contact information who will provide character references for you. They may not be related to you.

Please list your employment history for the past 7 years

What is your educational

background? _____ **Affirmation**

I understand that I have a moral and legal responsibility to protect children and youth. I commit myself, both in spirit and in action, to each of the following:

- to not abuse or neglect a child or youth;
- to do my best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth under the care of the Meeting;
- to comply with and enforce Live Oak Friends Meeting’s Practices and Procedures for Safe Engagement with Children and Youth;
- to immediately report any observations of any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth to the Clerks of Children’s Religious Education or Care and Concern;
- to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the Clerks of Children’s Religious Education and Care and Concern and to State authorities in accordance with these policies and State laws.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Website/E-newsletter/Google Workspace Policies

Approved 8/2022

Introduction

The new WordPress LOFM website, hosted by InMotion, will be managed by the Web Steward with input from committees and other members of the meeting. There will no longer be a password protected part for private contents, items like the directory and meeting and committee minutes will be managed and shared through Google Workspace.

Website

Website Mission: Communication vehicle to represent LOFM to members and attenders and to the public

Purpose and Guidelines for the LOFM Website

Two fold purpose—outreach and inreach

1. Outreach tool for the larger community curious about our Meeting, what we believe and what we do, and about Quakers in general.
2. Provide information about leasing the space for community meeting, weddings, memorial services, etc.
3. Provide pictures and detailed information about the James Turrell Skyspace and viewing schedule.
4. Provide useful information to members and attenders about opportunities to join in community activities, service on committees and other volunteer activities.

Submissions to website

1. Submissions of information for inclusion on the website can be made by committee clerks to the Web Steward by email to webmaster@friendshouston.org. Any concerns about content or design can be discussed with Clerk of Communication and Outreach.
2. In keeping with its mission and purpose, the website will not be used to promote projects or organizations that are not directly related to the life of the Meeting.
3. Posting links to other websites related to individual committee projects will be considered by that committee and requested by the committee clerk
4. In general, information should be submitted at least two weeks before it is expected to be posted on the site so as to allow time for review and posting.
5. Event submissions should not only have a post start date and time, but a posting conclusion date and time if applicable.

Website Calendar

(comprising clerk's calendar, scheduler's calendar, and PASA calendar)

1. **Submissions/requests to clerk's or scheduler's calendar may be sent to clerk@friendshouston.org, scheduler@friendshouston.org, or outreach@friendshouston.org Submissions to the PASA calendar may be sent to PASA@friendshouston.org. All events held at the Meetinghouse need to be cleared through the scheduler to make sure space is available.**
2. Clerk's calendar is for meeting related events. Events consistent with Quaker values that have meeting member or attender involvement and help to build connections with other community groups are also included on the Clerk's calendar.
3. Scheduler's calendar includes memorial services, weddings, and other outside events/groups using the space.
4. PASA calendar contains peace and justice events of interest to PASA members that may also be of interest to other meeting members and attenders and is in a different color. These events are not usually happening at the Meetinghouse.

Privacy and Security

1. Everyone posting will take precautions to avoid publicly posting any personal information about individuals who attend the meeting such as addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, or other personal information.
2. Members and attenders with access to password protected directories should exercise caution and restraint when deciding whether to provide non attenders with password protected information. No one may share their ID and password to give another access.
3. Email addresses to be used on behalf of the meeting for public communications will be created to use the @friendshouston.org address instead of a personal email address.
4. Because event photos or videos may be posted to social media or website, those who do not want to be photographed should inform the event organizer. For events where children are present, parental consent should be obtained before photos or videos are taken.

Disagreements and Feedback

1. If a meeting member or attender has a concern about a particular post, he or she can address it directly with the Clerk of Communication and Outreach. In the event that the problem cannot be resolved by there, the issue may be taken up by the Clerk and the Meeting as a whole.
2. The Communications and Outreach Committee will review these guidelines periodically to conform them to practices that work for those involved in updating and maintaining the website.
3. Members and attenders are encouraged to give feedback and suggestions regarding the website to the Communications and Outreach Committee.

LOFM E-Newsletter:

Purpose: Provide a regular, secure vehicle to keep LOFM members and attenders aware of upcoming events, Meeting needs, and other important aspects of community life.

Processes:

1. Regular distribution of an emailed newsletter to all interested people, currently using MailChimp.
2. People may request to be added to the list or may sign up themselves using the link on web site home page.
3. There is a link to unsubscribe at the bottom of each emailed newsletter
4. Anyone may submit newsletter items to newsletter@friendshouston.org
5. Newsletter editing and management will be under the care of Communication and Outreach Committee.

Policies regarding inclusion in the newsletter:

1. Newsletter items should be directly related to the life of the Meeting or should have Meeting connection/representation if an outside event.
2. In the interest of brevity and readability, hyperlinks to our own or other websites for more information will be used in place of lengthy descriptions in the newsletter.
3. Newsletter editor will take precautions to avoid publicly posting any personal information about individuals who attend the meeting such as addresses, phone numbers, personal email addresses, or other personal information, unless requested by the person sending the item.
4. In order to include photographs of individuals, each individual in a particular photograph must grant his or her permission for public posting.

Google Workspace

1. Google Workspace provides a secure, easy to use platform for storing documents, archiving and sharing information. Each committee will have its own Google drive for storing committee minutes and the documents of importance to their function. They will be able to set up Google groups as needed and will be in charge of sharing privacy settings.
2. There will be drives for archives and records, managed by Records Clerk; meeting minutes managed by Clerk and Associate Clerk; and the meeting directory, managed by Listkeeper and Administrator. Meeting members and attenders will have viewing privileges.
3. New committee clerks will receive orientation in using their committee's Google

Workspace by the former clerk and/or Administrator.

4. There will be a Usage Agreement for @friendshouston.org email usage, and Google Drive usage. For example:

It's agreed by signing below that the use of the ___@friendshouston.org be for the benefit of the ___ committee or Live Oak Friends Meeting as a whole. Any use should reflect the values and decorum of Live Oak Friends Meeting. Any personal use for personal communications or file storage, illicit, pornographic, sexual, profiteering, as well as dehumanizing, bullying, personal or personal business promotion or advertising is prohibited. Violations will be documented, archived and deleted from its Google Workspace location after warning the poster and possible termination of their access to LOFM Google Workspace.

5. Google Groups offer a useful way to streamline communications within committees and the meeting as well as simplify granting access to a committee's documents. By creating a group containing all the members of the committee, the committee clerk can email everyone with it. Managing access to the committee's drive is also simplified. By giving the group access to the drive, all the members of the committee are granted access.

Financial Policies

Revised 03/09/2023

LOFM accounts for its money in several “funds” – these are amounts reserved for certain specific purposes. The monies are mixed together in the various LOFM bank accounts, so the amounts in the funds do not necessarily correspond to an amount in a certain bank account. The total funds balance should equal the total of the bank accounts and current assets combined.

LOFM Financial Philosophies:

1. Have readily available sufficient funds to cover six months of operating expenses.
2. Operating expenses should be no more than operating income. In other words, live within our means.
3. Set aside money in the Construction Fund for building projects.
4. Set aside money in the Endowment Fund for maintenance of the existing structures on the property. The purpose of this fund is to ensure that the Meetinghouse can be maintained by the Meeting for many decades to come, rather than depending on the financial stability of the Meeting at the moment.
5. Set aside money in the Long Term Maintenance Fund for irregularly occurring big projects.
6. Invest mostly in low-risk financial assets (which means we are unlikely to lose principal, but we will also not get a very high rate of return).
7. Manage our money in alignment with Quaker testimonies.

Current LOFM Active Funds

1. **Operating Fund:** This is the fund that LOFM uses to pay its operating expenses. We also make transfers from the Operating Fund to the other Funds. We expect to pay our routine expenses from our income from charitable donations of members and others and from property rentals. In May 2006, LOFM announced that if the balance of this fund drops below \$25,000, it will stop non-essential spending, and ask the Finance Committee to revise the budget to address the problem. Balances beyond the annual operating budget (about \$65,000 in 2022) provide a cushion. If the balance exceeds 125% of the annual budget, then the Meeting should consider allocating surplus to other funds.
2. **Building Construction Fund:** This is the money that we are saving for our next building project (whatever and whenever that may be). We are also using it to pay for items left over from the last building project, like furnishing the Meetinghouse, or landscaping. We would not want to use this fund to pay for anything that would

be expected to be a normal yearly expense; that should come from the operating fund. Most of this money is left over from previous building projects and some members and attenders have contributed specifically to this fund. For example, monies contributed in memory of Friends have been put in the Building Construction Fund. The meeting has regularly contributed \$1000 from Operating Funds to the Building Construction Fund.

3. **Endowment Fund:** This is the money that we intend for the future maintenance of the Meetinghouse, so that the maintenance of the Meetinghouse does not become a burden on future generations.
 - a. The initial idea was to create an “endowment” for the Meetinghouse, which means that we would accumulate a sum of money and pay for the maintenance of the Meetinghouse from the interest on the money. (We would not permit ourselves to spend the principal, only the interest.) In that way, there would always be money available for the maintenance of the Meetinghouse. If you expect that Meetinghouse maintenance might be \$10,000/year, we might need around \$400,000 for the endowment (at current interest rates) to generate \$10,000/year.
 - b. The fund we have right now is not being used for maintenance at this time.
 - c. The Meetinghouse is relatively new, so it does not need much maintenance. The fund right now only generates a small amount of interest. We have not spent any of the principal since we created the fund. Ideally, we will continue to grow this fund until it generates enough interest to provide for the maintenance of the Meetinghouse.
 - d. The fund was seeded with \$50,000 left over from the Meetinghouse project, and has been growing since then. In May 2006 LOFM agreed to allow itself to spend the interest on this fund when it had reached \$100,000.
4. **Long Term Maintenance Fund:** Money set aside to cover larger maintenance items such as air conditioner replacement, tree removal/planting, or parking lot repair. The Meeting budgets a transfer annually from the operating fund (\$4000 in 2022). Property requests approval for expenditures from Finance and Meeting.
5. **Roof Repair Fund:** Money set aside for maintenance on the retractable roof mechanism. The Meeting budgets an annual transfer from the operating fund to this fund. Property requests approval for expenditures from Finance and Meeting.
6. **Travel Fund:** Provides scholarships for travel to other Quaker meetings and events. Care and Concern Committee approves travel expenditures from this fund.
7. **Fund for Sufferings:** Provide funds for the relief of suffering. It may include funds for specific campaigns as the need arises. It is funded with an annual transfer from the operating fund (\$325 for 2022). This fund originated from the Minute: 2006.07 #1 and is now under the care of Peace and Social Action Committee.

2024 Live Oak Friends Meeting Handbook

Minute 2006.07 #1 LOFM approves the establishment of a Fund for Sufferings to be administered by the Community Service Committee. The following guidelines will apply to using the monies in the Fund:

- a. Any emergency contributions that the Meeting wishes to make to respond to an urgent need should be considered and approved by the Community Service Committee, and should come out of this Fund.
- b. The Community Service committee can use these funds at its discretion (for projects and "situational" external contributions) subject to the guidelines set down in this minute.
- c. Other committees or groups that wish to undertake a community service project can apply for support with money from the Fund by contacting the Community Service Committee, whose decision it would be to use fund money or not.
- d. Any project which will cost more than \$1000 (and uses money from the Fund) will be reviewed by Finance, and approved by the Meeting.
- e. If more than \$2000 is spent in one fiscal year, the Community Service Committee will bring requests for any additional expenditures to Meeting for Business for approval."
- f. The Community Service Committee will attempt to build up the value of the Fund through contributions.
- g. If the Fund level drops below \$3000, the Finance and Community Service Committees should jointly discuss and agree on a plan to build the value of the Fund back up

Fiscal Year:

Since January 1, 2006, our fiscal year is concurrent with the calendar year (i.e., January 1 through December 31).

Budget:

We set up an operating budget for each fiscal year. The budget is our forecast of what we will spend during the next fiscal year. We try to make the budget fit what our expected income will be. The intention is to try to anticipate what we will spend money on. When we have large unanticipated expenses, we need to modify the budget, and try to figure out where the money will come from.

1. Committees are expected to stay within their budget.
2. Committees do not need to seek approval for expenditures that fall within their budget.

3. If a committee exceeds its budget by over 10% it must get approval from MfWAB for the unbudgeted expenditures and the corresponding budget amendment.
4. Any requests to spend money on an unbudgeted item must first be taken to the Finance Committee, and then to MfWAB for approval. The Finance Committee will advise as to whether the expenditure is affordable, and from which funds the expenditure may be made. It may be that the expenditure can be made from an existing budget category without amending the budget, assuming the category is appropriate for the expenditure and there are funds available.

The following is a summary of the budget categories in the LOFM (operating) budget:

1. Income. This includes building rental income, donations from members, attenders, and others.
2. Expense:
 - a. Fund transfer: money allocated to other funds (for example, \$1000 to the Building Construction Fund). These annual, budgeted amounts are typically recorded at the end of the sixth month.
 - b. Committees: each committee has a budget whose expenses it manages.
 - c. Contributions.
 - I. South Central Yearly Meeting Annual Assessment.
 - II. Other Organizations: AFSC, FGC, FCNL, and others. Peace and Social Action proposes the recipients and the amounts. MfWATB approves these amounts as part of the budget.
 - III. Clerks Discretionary Fund. There is money set aside for the “clerk’s discretionary fund” for the clerk to spend as he/she wishes.
 - d. Payroll: Childcare personnel. (we pay their payroll taxes).
 - e. Property is the single largest category in the LOFM budget. This includes all expenses for maintaining the property: utilities, maintenance, repairs, insurance, lawn care, cleaning supplies, etc.

Donations:

Donations can be earmarked by the donor for specific funds. If a donation is not designated for a particular fund, it goes into the operating fund unless otherwise directed by MfWAB.

Reading and Understanding Financial Reports:

1. What type of report is it?
2. What time period?
3. Income vs. Expense. Also called “Activities”. This report shows the income for the time period, separated into the various budget categories. You can look at this

report to see where we have been spending money (in the period for the report) compared with what we have budgeted. The budget is usually a “whole year” figure, but the actual expense is only year to date, so you might have to extrapolate in your head to see if we are on track with the budget or not. For example, if the budget for an item is \$100, and in two months we have spent \$50, it looks like we might overspend the budget in 12 months. But if you know that those are the only expenses for the year, then we are probably ok, budget-wise. It will depend on the category.

4. Balance Sheet. This report shows the value of the LOFM Assets and Liabilities. Under “Assets” you will see the balances of the checking and brokerage accounts, and our accounts receivable (usually loans to attenders, or advances to members for expenses). We also have listed the purchase value of our fixed assets: the buildings and some possessions (these values have not been depreciated, or updated in some time). Right now we have no “liabilities” but our mortgage was listed there for some time. In the “liabilities and equity” section, you will see a list of numbers specifying where LOFM assets have come from.
 - a. “Meeting House Txf from MHP” is the amount the Meeting House Project transferred from the fundraising campaign for the Meetinghouse construction.
 - b. “Opening Balance Equity” was our net worth when we started using Quickbooks in 1999.
 - c. “Retained Earnings” is the amount of excess revenue that we have retained since then (1999), in every fiscal year that has ended.
 - d. “Net Income” is the amount of excess revenue in the current fiscal year. The total of all these numbers should add to the total of our assets in the balance sheet.
5. Fund Balances. This report shows the current balances in all of our funds. The total of these should approximately equal the amount in our checking and brokerage accounts.
6. Projects: Once a project budget has been authorized by MfWAB with full and clearly defined parameters, the committee shall complete the project and report to MfWAB on its completion. Normally, the project will be given a budget approved by the MfWAB, and the project should complete its task within that budget. Similarly, in a non-budgetary project (which falls within the purview of the committee’s defined responsibilities), once MfWAB has approved and minuted it fully (the how, what, where, how, who), the committee is empowered to undertake the project, complete it and report to MfWAB on its completion.

Annual Examination of Financial Statements Process

(Amended and approved by the Finance Committee 5/18/2023.)

1. Verify that the Balance Sheet that was verified in the previous year's examination matches that shown on the Balance Sheet for the year currently being examined. Compare the balance sheet reports from the previous examination to the balance sheet report for the year being examined. The balance for each account, for example 12-31-2020 as shown on the Balance Sheet for 12-31-2020 that was examined and found to match 12-31-2020 bank statements, should be compared with the 12-31-2020 balances shown for 12-31-20 on the 12-31-21 Balance Sheet.

For example, if the balance shown for the Chase checking account on the 12-31-20 balance sheet was \$45,000.00, it should show the same balance - \$45,000.00 - for 12-31-20 on the 12-31-21 balance sheet.

2. Verify that the Consolidated Income Statement total income or total loss matches the change in Equity between the previous year's Total Equity and the Current Year's Total Equity. This ensures that the income statement correctly reflects the difference between the beginning and ending balance sheets.

3. Verify that the Total Income or Total Loss on the Consolidated Income Statement matches the change in the Total Fund Balance from the prior year's end to the current year's end on the Fund Balances Report.

4. Reconcile accounts on balance sheet with fund balances. This step ensures that the special funds (construction, T-shirts, etc) all add up to the same amounts as the balances in the different bank accounts. This is important since each of the funds do not have separate bank accounts.

5. Reconcile bank statements (All bank statements). Check relative to balance sheets (beginning and end of year). This step ensures that what LOFM's accounting system shows LOFM has is what the banks show we have.

6. Look at all Paypal transactions, receipts, payments and transfers out. Verify that all transfers to the LOFM bank account are reflected on the bank statements.

Reconcile transfers with deposits in account and other appropriate recipients. This ensures that revenue and transfers are coming and going to the appropriate places.

7. Look at large debits and credits in each of the bank accounts. Since there are so many transactions in the operating bank account, we spot check especially large transactions to ensure they are appropriate and correctly recorded. Also look at copies of manual checks to verify the recipients were those recorded in Quickbooks.

8. Recommend spot verify the memo fields of deposited checks to ensure that donors' donations went to the specific fund they requested. If someone wanted to donate to the New Orleans garden fund or construction fund, then respective donations can be spot checked.

9. Log final balance sheet for beginning of examination for following year. The clerk of the Finance Committee, and perhaps other members of the committee that participated in the examination should sign a printed version of the balance sheet attesting that:

“This Balance Sheet, dated 12/31/2021, was examined and found to match or reconcile to bank and financial institution statements. Any exceptions are noted.”

This signed version of the Balance Sheet should be scanned and added to the permanent financial records.

Memorandum of Understanding Regarding the Skyspace

(Approved 07-16-2017)

Live Oak Friends Meeting House, 2000 and Night Space

Between Artist, James A. Turrell and Live Oak Friends Meeting

Part 1: Agreements and Directives

Part 2: Elements and Specification

James A. Turrell transferred the title of two works of art entitled *Live Oak Friends Meeting House, 2000* ("Art Work") and *Night Space* to Live Oak Friends Meeting, Inc. ("the Meeting") in 2001. The intent of this document is to preserve the promises that were made on behalf of the Meeting by those Friends who participated in the creation and acceptance of this gift for the benefit of the Meeting and for future generations.

Part 1: Agreements and Directives is based on the original Certificate of Ownership and documents in the archives of the Meeting.

Part 2: Elements and Specifications of the Art Work defines the important features and specifications of the Art Work.

Part 1 of 2: Agreements and Directives

1. Art Work. The Art Work is a unique and one-of-a-kind piece of art created by James A. Turrell. The Art Work consists of the entire Meeting Room when under the lighting conditions and time of day conditions specified by James A. Turrell as set forth herein and a viewing event is expected by the viewers. The Art Work with the roof closed and the aperture lights on is called "Night Space".

James A. Turrell has approved the Art Work as it existed on the date of transfer. Although the Meeting Room shares all its architectural features with the Art Work, the Meeting Room is not the Art Work at all times and will not be represented as such. The Art Work shall be represented as being the Art Work by James A. Turrell when it is in compliance with the Specifications attached hereto and made a part hereof, including:

- a. the Art Work is in acceptable repair
- b. the furniture in it is set up as prescribed and approved by James A. Turrell
- c. it is a time of day for which James A. Turrell has prescribed light settings
- d. light settings are being used per James A. Turrell's specifications

2. Condition to Transfer. Ownership of the Art Work may be transferred only by the owner of the Art Work giving one-hundred and twenty (120) days written notice to James A. Turrell that it is selling, transferring or assigning its interest in the work to an individual or entity named in the written notice. It is agreed that a condition of ownership's passing to any subsequent owner is that any such subsequent owner must agree in writing to abide by the conditions in this Agreements and Directive (including the attachments made a part hereof). A fully executed copy of such agreement shall be provided to James A. Turrell.

3. Elements and Specifications Not Art Work. The written description of the elements and specifications and the plans, photos, and slides of the Art Work do not constitute works of art and shall not be transferred, assigned or sold as such. A few individuals, as a matter of scholarship or in the process of transfer, assignment or sale of the Art Work, may view these documents.

4. Pictorial Representations. No pictorial representation of the Art Work shall be published through the action of the Meeting without first obtaining the written approval of James A. Turrell. Any photographic representation of the Art Work must be of the highest quality. The Meeting shall use its best efforts to ensure that others respect this provision. Visitors may photograph the room so long as the aperture is not included at all in the pictures. The Meeting owns a set of photographs that have been approved by James A. Turrell that it can sell as either photographs, post cards or sets of slides. Any text referencing or attached to a photo, including postcards, is subject to the approval of James A. Turrell.

If and when the Meeting takes additional pictures of the Art Work, the instructions included in the email from Michael Bond, given on behalf of James A. Turrell, should be followed:

“As far as guidelines James would want photos taken on either the long or short axis. No photos showing the skyspace open or closed from an odd angle, but rather straight on, as in the New York Times. Photos with the benches are OK, too.”

5. Graphic Representation. James A. Turrell owns the copyright of the Art Work and images thereof. No graphic representation or reproduction of the Art Work shall be published through the action of the Meeting without first obtaining the written approval of James A. Turrell. The Meeting will not “commercialize” the Art Work by production of “souvenir” type products (i.e. handouts, T shirts, mugs, etc.)

6. Art Work Non-Exclusive Use. The Agreements and Directive recognizes that the Meeting has other uses for its Meeting Room. In no way should any provision of this Agreement and Directive restrict the Meeting from using the Meeting Room at any time for customary uses. The Meeting cannot be required to show the Meeting Room as the Art Work when doing so would impose on the Meeting's other uses of the Meeting Room.

7. Compliance Required. At all times during the display of the Art Work, the Art Work shall be maintained in compliance with the conditions of this Agreements and Directive, including the attached Elements and Specifications. The Art Work can be exhibited as the Art Work only when in compliance.

8. Governance of Benefits and Burdens. The Meeting, being a small religious community, is of limited means. The Art Work is a material part of the Meeting Room. The Meeting acknowledges any substantial changes to the Meeting Room will materially affect the integrity of the Art Work and could jeopardize its identity as the Art Work. Having committed themselves to the fulfillment of the construction of the Art Work, the Meeting now owns both the joy of its inspiration and the burden of its maintenance. Live Oak Friends Meeting will seek to keep faith with James A Turrell and with their patrons to keep this work available to the public as a ministry of peace and beauty to itself and to the larger community. However, the requirement to keep the Art Work open by paying the expenses of repair and other duties of repair and maintenance in accordance with this Agreements and Directives shall at all times be absolutely subject to the approval of the Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

9. Curatorial Responsibility. The Meeting is required to assume the curatorial responsibility of maintaining the Art Work in prime display condition in compliance with this Agreement and Directive. Should it become necessary, the Art Work must be temporarily closed to public view for the benefit of the Meeting and future generations and returned to prime display condition. If the Meeting continues to present the Art Work in contravention of these Agreements and Directives, James A. Turrell may, upon written notification to the Meeting, have a period of sixty (60) days to either close the Art Work to public display or remedy the condition of the Art Work to bring it into compliance. "Public Display" shall include only those showings specifically scheduled for viewing the Art Work. It does not include customary uses of the Meeting Room and will not prevent the Meeting from continuing to use the Meeting Room for any of its customary uses. It will not prevent the Meeting from renting to public or private groups, so long as viewing the Art Work is not included in the program or the incentives for rental of the building.

10. Integrity of the Art Work at time of showing. In 2001 when the Art Work first began to be shown to the public, James requested that visitors remain outside the meeting room with the doors closed while the roof was opened and closed. Not having seen the mechanical process, the viewer would, hopefully, have a heightened sense of the ephemeral aspect of the sky space itself. This practice quickly became impractical, as it meant herding people around and refusing inquisitive requests to see it. It is not "a rule" for showing the sky space, but it is something to keep in mind as a potential advantage when trying to show the artwork at its best if it can be done graciously.

11. Notices. All notices or other communications required or permitted hereunder will be in writing and will be delivered by hand or sent by overnight courier, registered mail United State Postal Service, acknowledged Federal Express or other similar service to the addresses listed below for each party or at such other address as each party shall designate in a written notice to the other party from time to time. All notices shall be deemed to have been given upon the earlier of the actual receipt by (or tender to and rejection by) the intended recipient or any other person at the specified address of the intended recipient who signs for recipient or three days after sending. No timely response to a written notice in the time specified shall be deemed approval or waiver of objection.

12. Successors. Any reference to the Meeting shall include any successors, assigns or buyers. Any reference to James A. Turrell shall include assigns of which the Meeting has been notified in writing. If the Meeting has not been notified in writing of any successor or assign and provided with the proper contact information for such successor or assign, the Meeting shall continue to give notice to the last known mail contact of James A. Turrell. Any requirement of notice to or approval of James A. Turrell will be satisfied by giving written notice to James A. Turrell with 120 days to make objection or approval. At the expiration of 120 days without objection or approval, approval will be deemed given.

Part 2 of 2: Elements and Specifications of the Art Work

1. The Meeting Room was intentionally designed to be the center of the Meeting House. The symmetry of the building was important to James A. Turrell's vision that worship and other activities in the Meeting Room should be the center of meeting life.

2. Stud Signing Party: A Stud Signing party was held one Sunday after worship when only the wooden structure of the building had been built. Members of meeting wrote prayers and messages on the wooden studs that are now encased in the walls. Our silent prayers.

3. Design of woodwork. None of the woodwork in the meeting house, most noticeably the doors, have cross members that would create a cross- pattern. That was intentional.

4. Porch Roof. The porch roof is intentionally high so that the underside can not be seen out the windows. James wanted a clear view of the natural surroundings without any architectural elements contributing to a sense of “grounding” for worshipers. The width of the porch, given the height of the roof, was engineered so that the summer sun would not hit the windows directly. For the same reason, there are no porch pillars or balustrades. Even looking at the outside of the building there are no utilitarian downspouts for drainage; the gray stone surrounding the porch conceals perforated drainage pipes that collect water cascading from the roof (a French drain) and conduct it to underground drainage that runs toward 25th Street.

5. Windows. James specifically stipulated long casement windows that would open flat against the insets so that they could be opened and give a sense of letting the outside in. He was also sensible of the pleasant, special place that a window casement can be to sit, especially for children. James recalled enjoying jumping in and out of windows similar to these in meeting when he was a child.

6. Plaster walls. Walls must be kept clear of all decoration. Nothing should be hung on walls. As few as possible distractions should be present. The need for safety features required by code and other items, such as security appliances, will be accommodated. These should all be as obscure as possible.

7. Paint. The ceiling and the walls above the cove lighting are to be sprayed or rolled with two coats of pure titanium white, flat latex paint, such as Rosco Supersaturated White base, #6002. Care must be taken to maintain the smooth quality of the surface throughout the piece.

8. Benches. When the Art Work is being shown, the benches should be arranged around a square with a clear space approximately 11 feet 7 inches square in the center. An aisle at least 4 feet wide should run east west, centered on the double doors. This bench arrangement should allow a four foot aisle between the back benches and the wall for wheel chair attenders in keeping with our commitment to equal access and as required by law for allowing equal access. The center of the short benches should be lined up with the edge of the aperture.

9. Care of Benches and Wood Furniture. James A. Turrell has suggested that the meeting allow the benches and other wood furniture he designed for the meeting house to develop a venerable wear and patina, and should not be too vigorously maintained for the purpose of keeping them pristine. Although some elements of the art space require rather meticulous maintenance, the character that develops in well-used furniture - the evidence of an authentic life - he admires and encourages.]

10. Cushions. It was understood at the time of inception that the Meeting expected to have cushions on their benches in the future. It was agreed they would not be built-in cushions, but that removable cushions would be acceptable to the artist. The Meeting agreed that James A. Turrell would be consulted on his preferences for choice of cushions. The cushions for the benches shall be kept in good condition. They may be replaced so long as the fabric or other covering on the cushions is in keeping with the desire to minimize distractions and with fabric as close as possible to the original texture, color and pattern of the original cushions which have been approved by James A. Turrell.

11. Floor. The floor in the Meeting Room shall be maintained in good condition. The flooring

for the Meeting Room shall be an uncovered, wide-plank, heart pine hardwood floor, with the boards running north-south. James A. Turrell shall be notified at least ninety (90) days before the hardwood floor shall be materially altered or replaced due to decay, destruction or wear or other cause. James A. Turrell shall have said notice period to send written notice to the Meeting of objection to the planned replacement along with a statement as to the specific objection. The Meeting shall attempt to satisfy the specific objection to the extent of its means. James A. Turrell shall then be notified in writing of any alternative selected as a result of the Meeting's attempt to satisfy such objection by James A. Turrell. James A. Turrell shall have sixty (60) days after the Meeting's written notice of its attempt to satisfy the objection. Such notices shall continue until the specific objection has been satisfied to the best ability of the Meeting.

12. Aperture. Special attention is required to maintain the ceiling around the aperture, as air currents cause collection of air pollutants and expansion and contraction with temperature changes causes cracks. The aperture shall remain clean, straight and crack free. Care should be taken to make sure that the knife edge of the aperture remains straight during other maintenance tasks. Vegetation in the surrounding areas should be trimmed so as not to encroach on the sight lines of the aperture as seen from the Meeting Room, so long as meeting can legally trim the vegetation. Nothing such as tree branches should obstruct the view through the aperture when sitting in the meeting room.

13. Time of Viewing. James A. Turrell designed the Art Work to be viewed during times of light changes at sunrise and sunset. When direct sun hits the aperture, the aperture is warped due to differential heating and is subject to cracking. Therefore, the roof should not be opened when the aperture is in direct sunlight.

14. Cove lighting. In aperture pieces, only the wall surfaces outside the piece are directly lit. There should be no uneven shadow spots between bulbs in the cove lighting. The lighting should be continuous and of identical color all the way around. When replacing bulbs for maintenance, it is required that bulbs with colors not too different from the others be used. Individual cold cathode tubes should be replaced when their color does not match those of the majority.

15. Light Settings. The light settings are specified on current control panel. These lights shall remain as currently set.

16. Blue Lighting for "Night Space". The blue lights on the underside of the roof must be maintained so that the blue light has a saturation effect. The closed roof shall be shown only when this saturation of blue light is reflecting on the underside of the roof. The blue lights shall be as even as practicable and replacement lights shall be as near as possible to the bulbs as originally specified. "Night Space" will only be shown under conditions approved by James A. Turrell.

LOFM Travel Fund Guidelines – February 2020

Care and Concern Committee Live Oak Friends Meeting, Houston, Texas

The Care and Concern Committee is responsible for oversight and administration of the LOFM Travel Fund established in 2014. That committee works in cooperation with the Finance Committee to make sure the needs of the community can be met.

The Finance Committee is responsible for budgeting \$1000 a year to be transferred from the Operating Budget to the Travel Fund. This is an accumulating fund.

The Care and Concern Committee is responsible for:

1. Receiving requests for money from the Travel Fund. Discernment of how the fund will be dispersed.
2. Encouraging attendance at FGC and Pendle Hill.
3. Ensuring that the beneficiary provides the required report/workshop for the meeting.
4. Keeping the meeting informed of new opportunities for Quaker education and deepening Quaker identity.
5. Stewardship of the Travel Fund, managing the fund balance, and requesting additional funds as the balance gets low.

The Care and Concern Committee will disburse the funds according to the priorities below:

1. Support for the Clerk of the Meeting to attend a clerking workshop is the top priority for use of the LOFM Travel Fund. In service of this priority, the committee has set a goal of maintaining a reserve of \$2500.00 for sending the Clerk and/or the Associate Clerk to a clerking workshop. Assistance for travel by other Friends will be available from the amount in excess of \$2500.00 in the Travel Fund. It is up to the judgment of the Care and Concern Committee whether to spend money that would require the fund to go below \$2500.00, when there is high demand for travel money.

2. The LOFM Associate Clerk may be reimbursed for his/her travel expenses and registration to a clerking workshop (e.g., at Pendle Hill). Associate Clerks can choose to attend a clerking workshop when they become Associate Clerk, or they can wait until closer to the time they become clerk, but we only pay for it once.

3. LOFM delegates to organizations (as minuted in Business Meeting, and documented in the Nominating Report) may receive reimbursement for all travel expenses and registration associated with their responsibilities.

4. Members and attenders may request reimbursement for travel assistance according to the following guidelines:

Guidelines for assistance to Friends using funds to attend events other than Bayou Quarterly Meeting or South Central Yearly Meeting

1. For Quaker religious education, or attendance at a Quaker conference.
2. Clerks of committees or officers can also request up to half the registration for local conferences or workshops related to their committee's responsibilities.
3. Upon approval, up to half the travel expenses or up to \$500 (whichever is less) may be reimbursed.
4. The beneficiary must provide a report or workshop to the meeting, so that the meeting can benefit from the travel.
5. Priority will be given to requests from new Quakers, those who are going for the first time, and those who haven't used the Travel Funds recently.
6. If the Care and Concern Committee supports a request that falls outside of these guidelines, it must be approved by the business meeting.

Guidelines for assistance to Friends to attend Bayou Quarterly Meeting or South Central Yearly Meeting

1. We want it to be as easy as possible to request assistance to go to BQM or SCYM. Requests should be addressed to the Care and Concern Committee for review; every individual of the family can receive assistance.
2. Need for financial assistance to attend an event is the only criterion.
3. Requests need to be made in writing (email is acceptable) to the Care and Concern Committee at least two weeks prior to the start of the event. Requests should be specific as to event, date of the event, how much money is needed for each person, how many persons (in the case of a family).
4. Assistance is available for registration fees only – not for travel or ancillary expenses.
5. LOFM will try to cover whatever part of registration is needed for Friends to be able to afford to attend, but we can not promise to pay the full amount requested. Financial help will depend on how many Friends need help and on the funds available.
6. Money will be paid directly to BQM or SCYM; not to the recipient.
7. Receipt of financial assistance to go to BQM or SCYM does not require a report to the meeting after attendance.

Appendix

Conflict Transformation

A certain amount of conflict is healthy in a Meeting - ultimately, conflict ensures that the Meeting is open to new and different ideas, and that relationships are deepened through true dialogue and understanding. However, it can be a human tendency to avoid the initially unpleasant task of dealing with conflict. The following sections are intended as a guide for addressing conflict within our Meeting.

Avoiding Conflict

We can ensure that we seek the Truth and the Light while still behaving in such a way as to avoid or pre-empt potentially damaging conflict within our Meeting. It is important to be tender - speak truth with love when you have a concern.

Some thoughts:

1. Do not spread misinformation or gossip - make sure that you have the facts correct by going to the original source if feasible.
2. Speak your own truth at the appropriate time and place.
3. Take issues to the correct committee - don't bypass committees with issues that concern them.
4. Allow people (including yourself) to express discomfort and concerns about an issue. Expressing concerns doesn't necessarily mean a person is "against" an issue, or has taken a hard and fast position. Getting all the issues and information on the table will help ensure that the Meeting makes the best decision.
5. Don't use Quaker weapons to stop the dialogue: anger/emotion, threatening (e.g., to leave the Meeting), stating that your inspiration comes from the Light (and by implication, others' doesn't).
6. Stop and think when you have a concern: believe that people are acting lovingly and with good intentions. Then think about what your motives are and be certain to express your concern at the right place and time.

Gospel Order

(as defined by Marty Walton in The Meeting Experience: Practicing Quakerism in Community):

Jesus, as written in Matthew 18:15-17, would have us respond to conflict immediately and differently. If someone offends you, go directly to that person and try to settle it between the two of you. If that does not work, take a friend or two and go to that person and try again to resolve the conflict. And after at least two times of that direct an encounter, if the problem still continues, then take it to the church body.

Gospel order is **not** talking about the problem in the parking lot with people who are "on your side," saying things you did not say in the Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. Gospel order is first of all about discerning your own truth and experience, and, if a problem exists with someone else, honoring your own truth and that of the other

person by going directly to that person with the aim of finding a solution together. How respectful that is of yourself; how respectful of the other person!

LOFM asks that everyone first attempt to resolve conflicts through gospel order: that is, if you have a problem or an issue with someone, or a committee, go directly to that person or committee and attempt to resolve the problem. You may involve a neutral party to help facilitate the discussion. Do not use intermediaries to pass messages or concerns. Do not gossip. If you cannot resolve the conflict, then address the issue to the Care and Concern Committee.

Each individual has a responsibility to state his/her concerns clearly (preferably in writing) so that they can be addressed. State your concerns fairly, clearly, directly, and without an excess of emotion or ego (indeed, if you are in a highly emotional state it may be best to get some emotional distance before trying to state your concern clearly). Be clear about what you want to happen, what you are asking for. Do not blame people, or infer motivations for actions; instead, focus on behaviors and results.

Recognize the distinction between a concern of yours, and a concern of someone else's (that person would need to be the one who seeks resolution). It isn't helpful to intervene or rescue. Do not get involved in things that aren't your business or your job - redirect the concerns to the appropriate committee or person.

When someone comes to you to resolve a difference in the spirit of "Gospel Order," consider the following:

1. Maintain an open mind towards the person's concern without allowing the natural tendency towards defensiveness or self-righteousness to take over.
2. Hear the truth of the person's concern beyond the words used to express them (avoid the tendency to feel attacked or a victim merely because the concern is being raised).
3. Recognize that if you are like most people, receiving negative feedback is very uncomfortable no matter how it is presented.
4. Examine your role and responsibility in the concern - what have I done to help create this concern? What can I do to mitigate the concern? What can I learn from this?
5. If the person is very angry or irrational, you may decline to discuss the concern until the person can discuss the concern rationally. (Although recognize that any concern may be phrased in words that you may not want to hear - that is not necessarily being angry or irrational.)
6. Reach a mutual understanding of each other's reality before trying to resolve the problem. To ensure this, both of you should be able to repeat, in his/her own words, the other's concern to the other's satisfaction.

In many cases, the person will be satisfied just knowing that you have heard and truly understood the concern, and will be able to take it into account in future interactions. In most cases, the concern can be resolved to the satisfaction of both parties (once the mutual realities are understood). Often, a better solution can be found than either party would have been able to devise on their own. Work towards reaching this "win-win"

situation to resolve the problem.

"Beyond Gospel Order"

Everyone should first use Gospel Order to resolve conflicts or problems. If Gospel Order has not worked, the concerned person may address the concern to the committee clerk or the Care and Concern committee (as appropriate). At this point, it is most helpful if the concerned person can put his/her concerns in writing: what the problem is, and what actions are requested. Care and Concern Committee needs to make sure that Gospel Order has been followed. A Care and Concern Committee member or members may be able to help facilitate discussions or problem resolution.

The following outlines a possible process for resolving more complex problems where Gospel Order has not succeeded.

Fact-finding

1. It is probably necessary at this point to determine what the real facts of the situation are. Once the facts are understood as best as possible, we can then move into dealing with the opinions, emotions and a resolution.
2. Often when emotions are running high, there can be fundamental misunderstandings or disagreements on the facts that need to be cleared up.
3. One possible way to gather the facts would be to have a facilitated discussion among the parties involved to identify and record the facts. The facilitator can record what is agreed upon by all parties, and on what points there are disagreements. The facilitator may even be able to help clear up some erroneous assumptions. Often the parties may find that they actually agree on most things, and that there is only a non-material disagreement. This process can help identify where the disagreements are and point to a process for resolving them.
4. If the parties are not able to participate in the joint facilitated discussion, an ad hoc committee could be asked to look into the facts. The committee can record what the undisputable facts of the situation are, identify what the points of disagreement are and whether they are matters of fact or opinion. (Clearly any facilitator or ad-hoc committee should be composed of people without a stake in the outcome of the conflict.)
5. The outcome of this phase of the process would consist of a listing of the undisputed facts, and a catalog of the points of disagreement.

Developing a Plan for Resolution

1. The facilitator or ad-hoc committee (not the involved parties) should develop a resolution approach based on the facts and issues uncovered in the fact-finding phase.
2. There are so many possible ways to proceed here; it is only possible to give some rough guidelines.
3. If the disagreements are identified as being non-material a facilitated

meeting could be conducted between the involved parties to outline the facts of the situation. The goal of the facilitated meeting would be to understand and acknowledge everybody's concerns and ask whether the parties are able to set aside their concerns for the good of the Meeting.

4. Often, the "facts" will uncover an issue that can't be resolved by logic, but rather is purely emotional. For example, someone may be standing in the way of a decision that is right for the Meeting because of personal hurt feelings or personal agendas. In this case, the facilitators can help the person see his/her personal stake in the issue and ask that the individual rise above it for the good of the Meeting. The facilitators also attempt to address, as appropriate, any problematic behavior or relationship problems that may have led to this conflict.

Meeting for Resolution

1. Often a person may agree to stand aside from a decision or issue, but still hold on to some resentment that s/he wasn't listened to or taken seriously. The person may continue to feel strongly that the decision is wrong for the Meeting and not be able to let it go.
2. In other cases, the person may not agree to stand aside, but the Meeting moves ahead anyway in "sense of the Meeting."
3. The issue is not necessarily the quality of the decision itself, rather the validity of the process in which the decision was reached. At issue is also whether or not the dissenters will be able to let it go - e.g., seek forgiveness, offer forgiveness, and learn from the experience.
4. A "Meeting for Resolution" can be useful. This meeting is facilitated or clerked by a non-involved third party. Each party to a dispute is allowed to express his/her hurts and concerns freely and have his/her feelings acknowledged. Everyone is also able to acknowledge, in a non-threatening way, the hurts that they have incurred through other people. Ideally, each party will acknowledge the hurts that s/he caused others, offer forgiveness to the others, and seek forgiveness for him/herself.

Further Actions

Eldering/Censure

The meeting may need to censure certain individuals whose behavior is unacceptable and set limits on their behavior in Meeting. Normally, Care and Concern or Worship and Ministry would be responsible for "eldering." Care and Concern must decide to what extent a person will be censured and what limits will be put on their behavior. Care and Concern must also communicate these decisions appropriately to the person being censured, and also to the Meeting as necessary.

An example of unacceptable behavior would be when someone continually disrupts the Meeting for Worship. Care and Concern would meet with the individual and make him/her aware of how disruptive his/her behavior is. The committee may censure the individual by not allowing him/her to attend Meeting or participate in committees. Censure needs to occur both verbally and in writing. The individual would then be

responsible for contacting the committee at a time when s/he acknowledges the destructive consequences of his/her behavior and agrees to change that behavior. Care and Concern will also inform the Meeting so no one inadvertently undermines the censure agreed upon. In most cases the Meeting will already be aware of the problem and will be relieved to know (and has a right to know) what limits have been set on the disruptive person's behavior. In some cases, Meeting may choose to "release" someone from Meeting

Guidelines for Recording Minutes, May 24, 2010

Scope:

The following applies not just to LOFM Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, but also minutes from LOFM committees.

The fewer formatting features that are used, the better. Use of dots gets messy if there are changes – simple numbering or lettering is better.

Publication of the minutes:

1. The Recording Clerk is responsible for publishing the minutes from Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business (with all attachments) in PDF format on the website.
2. The Recording Clerk must also send all the original electronic files (.doc, .xls, etc.) of the minutes and all attachments to the Records Clerk, who prepares them for the archive and for sending them to the Swarthmore College library.

The format of the minutes needs to include:

1. Left hand margin of 1.5 inches is required by Swarthmore Library.
2. A heading with "Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business Minutes" or the committee (where appropriate), "Live Oak Friends Meeting, Houston, Texas", and the date.
3. Page numbers are useful, but not required, for MfWAB minutes.
4. The Clerk and the Recording Clerk need to be identified by name. It can be at the beginning or at the end.
5. The minutes should mention the date of the last Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business (MfWAB) and the date of the next MfWAB (and if there are any changes in the usual scheduling, or any extra planned meetings). This allows for determination if any minutes are missing.
6. A list of Friends in attendance (first and last names)
7. Formal Minutes should be identified with the year, month, and number: **Minute 2005- 02 #03** would be the third minute recorded at the February 2005 Meeting for Business. It is helpful to set the minutes apart from the rest of the text and highlight them in bold or it would be helpful to use the same format as the Minute Book, which is: no italics, Font Arial size 12, the month in two digits, the Minute title in bold with a colon:

Minute 2017-03 #01: Live Oak Friends Meeting is always spelled out the first time

it is used in the minute.

What to include in the text of the minutes:

1. In addition to official "minutes," a summary of the discussion that leads up to the minute.
2. If there are attachments, mention this in the body of the minutes, and list them at the end of the document.
3. Only use names when it is important to identify someone who has been given a task or needs to be identified.
4. Friends contributing to a corporate discernment should not be identified as individuals.
5. All reports that are made from committees should be summarized in the MfWAB minutes, whether or not they are also provided as an attachment. Although it is useful for paper copies to be provided to the Recording Clerk at MfWAB, it is much more helpful to send the report electronically, preferably ahead of time. It is also very important to send an electronic copy of committee reports and approved minutes to the Records Clerk for the archive.
6. All Care and Concern membership and marriage items must be mentioned in the minutes at which they are recommended and must be recorded as minutes at the meeting where the recommendation was approved. That way there is a record of the seasoning of the decision.

Formal Minutes required for:

1. All membership approvals and transfers of membership. Transfers should include the names of the Meeting and its Yearly Meeting and the actual date.
2. All financial decisions.
3. All decisions that show that Meeting took a stand or made a statement on some issue or thing.
4. All changes in procedure (nominating, clerk requirements, etc.) that affect the official way we do business.
5. Changes in leadership, as in the appointment of a new clerk to a committee.
6. All these things are needed because at the Corporation's official annual meeting, we ratify (or are supposed to have this official meeting of the Corporation to ratify) the business of Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business for the official State-required legal records.
7. Births should include the names of the parents, siblings, and actual date.
8. Deaths should include the actual date.
9. Marriage approvals and the recording of the actual wedding are two separate minutes.

Sample Minutes:

Minute 2005-01 #03 EXAMPLE: As a token of our appreciation, Live Oak Friends Meeting approves the payment of \$35 each to _____ and _____ who are cleaning the meeting house. Polly Clark will present this to them.

Minute 2005-02 #06: Live Oak Friends Meeting warmly welcomes the transfer of

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member Beth Walz from Anchorage Monthly Meeting into membership effective February 27, 2005. Further, LOFM welcomes as Associate Members: Emma, Clara, and Kevin Walz.

Glossary

Advices - Ideals stated as a continuing reminder of the basic faith and principles held to be essential to the life and witness of Friends.

Attender - One who attends and participates in Meeting activities fairly regularly but has not become a Member.

Clearness Committee - A committee appointed to assist a person or the meeting to clarify thinking about a decision or concern.

Clerk - The clerk is the person who facilitates the business and who discerns and states the Sense of the Meeting. The clerk also leads and facilitates the business of a committee.

Consensus - (secular term) A common opinion emerging for a group's thinking together.

Continuing Revelation - The belief that God speaks to people directly today. **Convener** - The member of a committee who is asked to be in charge of the committee meeting (in particular, arranging the logistics of the meeting and ensuring that all committee members are notified).

Eldering - Encouraging diffident or timid Friends to share their gifts with a Meeting, or discouraging and/or questioning an individual's inappropriate behavior and expression of concerns.

Gospel Order - The procedures for Friends business that have been found by experience to facilitate our corporate activities. Specifically, addressing concerns to the person with whom we have them. More detail in the Conflict Transformation section of Appendix.

Leading - An inner conviction that impels one to follow a certain course under a sense of divine guidance.

Minding The Light - Paying attention to the Inner Light.

Minute - A statement of an item of business approved by those in attendance at a given Meeting for Business.

Minutes - Written records of Meeting for Business or Committee Meetings to reflect the actions taken at the meeting.

SCYM - South Central Yearly Meeting. The regional meeting to which LOFM belongs, comprised of monthly meetings from Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma.

Sense of the Meeting - A collective decision on an issue, grounded in spiritual guidance emerging from a Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, described and explained by the clerk in a minute for the approval of the Meeting.

Standing Aside - The withdrawal of an objection by a member who is not able to unite with a proposed minute which enables the Meeting to proceed.

Threshing Session - A meeting held to discuss a controversial issue. At such a session all points of view are heard, but no decision is made.

Unity - Recognition of the truth emerging from a group's corporate search and yielding to the Holy Spirit in its decision-making. It does not require unanimity.

Committee Responsibilities for Handbook Chapters

Handbook Chapter	handbook item	Committee/s
Life of the Meeting	Members/Attendees, Worship, MfWAB	Worship and Ministry (W&M)
Life of the Meeting	Children's program	CREC
Clearness Committees	Memberships, Marriages, Personal Discernment	Care and Concern
Membership	Membership	Care and Concern
Committees	Committee Descriptions	Relevant Committee/nominating
Committees	Clerking Guidelines	Nominating
LOFM Officers	Officer descriptions	Relevant Officer/Nominating
LOFM Policies	Child Safety Policy	CREC
LOFM Policies	website/Google workspace/calendar policy	Communication and Outreach
LOFM Policies	newsletter policy	Communication and Outreach
LOFM Policies	financial policies	Finance

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LOFM Policies	Skyspace MOU	Planning
LOFM Policies	Travel fund	Care and Concern, Finance
Appendix	Conflict Transformation	Care and Concern/W&M
Appendix	How to Record Minutes	Records Clerk
Appendix	Committee Responsibilities for Chapters	Nominating