

## **Saint Louis Friends Meeting Structure**

*Compiled by Warwick Daw, fall 2013*

One aspect of unprogrammed meetings like St. Louis Friends Meeting is that we have no paid staff or clergy for our organizational functions. This means that those functions fall on our members and attenders to carry out. Our exact structure may be seen as an act of continuing revelation, as we have made a number of changes back and forth over recent years and further changes are likely.

We meet as a whole congregation once a month to conduct the meeting's business in a worshipful manner. In the ideal, this is a meeting for worship, with members speaking from the spirit into the silence, listening to others and leaving a worshipful silence between speakers. This meeting is presided over by the **Clerk** of the meeting. We also have an **Assistant Clerk**, who can take over when the Clerk is absent, and is also considered the likely next Clerk. The **Recording Clerk** takes minutes at the Business Meeting. In keeping with our belief that all are equal before God, the Clerk is seen as more of a moderator than a leader. When several people wish to speak, the clerk will call on each in turn until everyone who wishes has been given an opportunity to speak. We expect to be able to find "unity" on issues before taking action – this is discussed in greater detail in the Q101 lesson 3 from Durham meeting. Ultimately, all authority to make statements or take actions on behalf of the Meeting lies with the group as expressed in the Meeting for Worship for Business.

In keeping with good stewardship of all our time, we try to keep Business Meetings efficient. We endeavor to "season" issues in smaller committees before bringing them to business meetings. If an issue is taking a great deal of time to resolve in Business Meeting, it may be referred to a committee for further "threshing" and "seasoning" before being brought before a subsequent business meeting. Alternatively, if an issue seems relatively uncontroversial, the final decision may be delegated to a committee. We have several standing committees, which include:

**Ministry and Caring:** Seeks to strengthen the quality of the meeting for worship and for pastoral caring for the physical and spiritual needs of members and attenders; consults with those facing religious or personal problems; ministers to those individuals within the Meeting during times of special need, such as marriage, births, deaths and other losses and transitions. This ministry is often carried out by ad-hoc clearness committees, which may include both members of Ministry and Caring and other members of our community.

**Advancement and Communication:** Formerly two separate committees, this committee is responsible for the growth of the meeting by planning events (e.g. the Quakerism 101 class), providing resources for spiritual growth (e.g. the literature table), publicizes the meeting (e.g. Oversees the web site and Facebook page), and facilitates communication within the meeting (e.g. oversees the calendar, directory, e-mail announcements and newsletter). Several people who take on specific tasks are ex-officio members of this committee.

**First Day School:** Oversees the religious education of young Friends in the Meeting, finds volunteers to teach First Day School. This committee has a key role in ensuring that young Friends have a safe, supportive environment in the Meeting. The spiritual education of our children is a community responsibility.

**Adult Religious Education:** Arranges for programs, forums, courses to help members and attenders learn more about Quaker faith, history, spirituality, and practice, or other topics as desired.

**Finance and Fundraising:** Until recently, this was two separate committees. Oversees the financial stewardship of the Meeting. Finds creative ways to raise money for the Meeting and for other charitable organizations within the wider community by planning events such as the Holiday Bazaar, yard sales, rental of the meetinghouse, etc. The meeting's **Treasurer** is an ex-officio member of this committee.

**Ministry to the Outside World:** Our committee that oversees the projects we take on and addresses how we as a meeting express our testimonies to the wider community. Other meetings often call a committee with a similar function the "Peace Committee." Ministry to the Outside World is currently focused on our Winter Outreach project to give St. Louis area homeless people shelter in the cold weather.

**Property:** Oversees the physical maintenance of the meetinghouse and the furnishings and systems within the building. Oversees the housecleaner and Groundskeeper, as well as hospitality functions (renting the building and arrangements for out-of-town guests).

**Landscaping and Grounds:** Maintains landscape and grounds of meeting property through their own efforts and by organizing work days.

**Kitchen:** Prepares coffee and snacks for hospitality after worship, sets up monthly potlucks and cleans up after, prepares monthly birthday celebrations, maintains kitchen and pantry supplies, is responsible for cleanliness in kitchen and of dining tables.

**Library:** Acquires, catalogs and maintains the materials kept in the Meeting library.

**Nominating Committee:** This committee is responsible for identifying people to serve on all the committees and in the officer positions. Each year, this committee communicates with each member and attender of the meeting to find an appropriate place for that person. The nominating committee compiles a slate of candidates, which is then submitted to business meeting for approval. The Nominating committee itself is nominated by a separate Committee to Nominate the Nominating Committee.

In addition to these committees, ad-hoc committees can be constituted by business meeting to address specific issues.

Each of these committees requires a Clerk, who conducts the committee meetings as the Clerk of the meeting conducts Business Meeting. In addition to the committees and committee clerks, there are several officers and representatives, including:

Clerk (of the meeting)

Assistant Clerk (of the meeting)

Recording Clerk

Treasurer (we also currently have an Assistant Treasurer)

Membership Clerk (we have a committee of two doing this currently. This position maintains the meeting's membership records and reports annually to the Yearly Meeting on membership and attendance.)

Blue River Quarterly Representative

Illinois Yearly Meeting Continuing Committee Representative

In addition to presiding over business meeting, the Clerk is primarily responsible for “breaking” Meeting for Worship every First Day – that is starting the handshakes that close meeting. If the Clerk is not there, the duty falls to the Assistant Clerk and then the Clerk of Ministry and Caring. On rare occasions, when all are absent, the Clerk will ask someone else (most likely a member of Ministry and Caring) to close meeting.

There are several “boards” that have specific areas of oversight:

The Board of Directors: this committee rarely meets, and is not really a Quaker structure, but rather a committee we have to comply with Missouri law. We need to have people officially designated, but it would only meet under extreme circumstances (not sure such circumstances have ever occurred?).

Secondary Educational Fund Trustees: Oversees investment of a small fund set aside for the establishment of a Quaker School.

Fund for Suffering:

Project Lakota:

### **The picture beyond our Monthly Meeting**

Our Monthly Meeting is part of **Illinois Yearly Meeting** and **Blue River Quarterly Meeting**. The Yearly meeting owns a yearly meeting house in Central Illinois, where members from all Monthly Meeting gather each summer for our Yearly Meeting. This meeting includes numerous workshops and programs. On-site accommodations include camping, rustic cabins, a bunk-house for high school teens, and several rooms in a house. Between the annual Yearly Meetings, the Yearly Meeting Conducts business via Continuing Committee and several standing committees with specific areas of oversight. For example, the Youth Oversight Committee oversees programs to bring high school teens together from across the yearly meeting. These programs are called “Quakes” and take place in the Fall, Winter and Spring. For the past several years, St. Louis Monthly

Meeting has hosted the Fall Quake for Illinois Yearly Meeting. Blue River Quarterly comprises the meetings of Illinois Yearly Meeting that are outside the Greater Chicago Metro area. Quarterly meetings are so named because originally they met once in each quarter of the year (the quarter in which the yearly meeting occurs, the meeting was usually held in conjunction with yearly meeting). Our Quarterly Meeting currently has “fall” and “spring” meetings – the last “winter” meeting was in 1962. While Quarterly Meetings are smaller than yearly meetings, both are great opportunities for wider Quaker fellowship and spiritual reflection.

A Partial list of other Quaker Organizations our Members are active in (some from time to time):

Friends Peace Teams  
Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)  
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)  
Friends World Committee for Consultation

We also send representatives to outside organizations – this list is currently under revision, but has included:

Interfaith Partnership  
Near South Side Network  
Coalition Against Police Crimes & Repression  
Instead of War Coalition  
Project COPE