

FGC Talking Points 2019

Having done significant work to make FGC more financially sustainable over the past two years, Central Committee (our governing board) celebrated the opportunity to turn our attention in the year ahead to strengthening ongoing programs and implementing an institutional assessment focused on addressing systemic racism and fostering faithful inclusion.

Institutional Assessment

In 2017, Central Committee united around the need to undertake an institutional assessment to uncover structural racism within our organization. After two years of work, the Institutional Assessment Task Force's report and recommendations are now available at www.fgcquaker.org/report

As a result of the Task Force's report and recommendations, Central Committee approved the creation of an Implementation Group to guide the transformation of FGC into an anti-racist organization. FGC has committed to confront and heal white supremacy within our organization and among FGC Friends, and to model anti-racism as we support the work of the Implementation Group.

Although structural oppression doesn't diminish the presence of the Spirit in us or the vision of a "great people to be gathered," it does create barriers that are stumbling blocks to full participation by many in our faith community. In dismantling these stumbling blocks, we must tap into the power of the Spirit while acknowledging the truth that structural oppression and systemic racism does spiritual violence to us all. To be faithful in this time we must do more than admit that such oppression and attitudes of privilege exist. We must act to eliminate them if we wish to be fully inclusive in ways that are more than mere words.

Spiritual Deepening

The Spiritual Deepening Library has been updated, expanded, and is now FREE and publicly available for meetings and individuals to use. The Spiritual Deepening Library offers a collection of experiential activities and exercises for small groups of Quakers and newcomers of all ages to explore together, with the goal of building connections with Quaker roots, growing as a spiritual community, and listening deeply to the Light within.

Spiritual Deepening eRetreats build spiritual community online through 4-week sessions on topics such as *Silence and Expectant Waiting*; *Living into Wholeness*; *Aging, Death, and Dying*; *Becoming Patterns & Examples*; and *Understanding and Healing White Supremacy*. Please see the FGC website for upcoming eRetreat dates.

FGC Gathering

The 2019 Gathering (June 30th to July 6th) will be at Grinnell College in Grinnell, IA, with the theme, "Peace in Our Hearts, Justice in the World." Thanks to a generous donation, program fees for children and teens are waived and more discounts and scholarships are available for young adults, families, and teens.

Then, in 2020, the Gathering will be at Radford University in Radford, VA. This site was chosen by the Gathering Site Selection Committee whose composition is now majority Friends of Color. It was documented as part of the Institutional Assessment on Structural Racism that People of Color have often experienced the Gathering sites as unwelcoming or hostile. Because of these experiences, the Gathering Sites Selection Committee was reconstituted in 2016 to be majority of Friends of Color in hopes of addressing this issue. We're thankful to all the volunteers on this committee who spend many hours traveling to find suitable Gathering locations.

Budget & Fiscal Health

We have made strides towards a balanced budget. Our focus now is on communicating with Friends about the quality and impact of FGC's programs, increasing Friends' engagement with FGC, and communicating to Friends and Quaker meetings that their contributions are vital so FGC can do the work that Friends have asked us to do. If you are currently a supporter of FGC thank you! If you aren't, please contribute to support vital and enriching programs.

Other Programs

Welcoming Friend Project is a newer initiative that helps meetings throughout the United States and Canada welcome visitors and newcomers more fully into the life of Quaker meetings, with a specific focus on the unique needs of newcomers from a variety of backgrounds.

QuakerBooks FGC operates an online bookstore, www.quakerbooks.org, which continues to focus on our core services of providing key resources for local meetings, yearly meetings, and individuals with the goal of strengthening the Religious Society of Friends. Beginning in 2018, our inventory has been moved to a fulfillment house, which allows us to enhance customer service and fulfill online and phone orders in a timely manner. QuakerBooks continues to provide consignments to yearly meeting sessions and other events. We depend on Friends' patronage to provide this important service.

Quaker Press publishes new books and pamphlets related to FGC's major goals and programs. Look for new titles in the coming year.

Christian and Interfaith Relations Committee brings Quaker perspectives to ecumenical and interfaith events. It also connects us with faith-based conversations about truth, justice, and reconciliation.

Quaker Cloud offers a user-friendly platform for a monthly or yearly meeting to have a public presence online. The service has undergone a number of technical improvements and uses professional technical support as we seek to provide meetings with an easy to maintain, low cost, and feature-rich website that includes a minute manager and member directory. Approximately 150 meetings/Quaker organizations are now using the Quaker Cloud.

Ministry on Racism empowers individual Friends and Quaker meetings to confront and heal the wounds of white supremacy, challenge racism, and help Friends co-create communities that are more accessible and equitable. Specific projects include the Pre-Gathering Retreat for People of Color and their Families, organizing Friends to attend the annual White Privilege Conference (WPC), and regional gatherings for Friends of Color and their Families.

Friends Meeting House Fund supports Quaker meetings by guiding meetings through the process of securing a loan or grant to buy, renovate, or add on to other structures on meeting house property or to increase the energy efficiency of meeting houses.

These programs and projects are only possible due to the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donors across the United States and Canada. We are grateful for this support. Together we nurture the spiritual vitality of the Religious Society of Friends and nourish one another's lives.