

History of South Central Yearly Meeting

Southwest Conference of Friends – 1940-1960

A small number of members of the Religious Society of Friends (RSOF) moved to university towns and small cities in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas in the 1940s. At the same time, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) sent staff to the area to establish peace and justice programs. Those who were RSOF members came from all the different traditions but when they came together in small groups, often attracting those who were working or volunteering with AFSC, they worshipped in the unprogrammed manner. By 1949 two groups had become established enough to apply for monthly meeting status. Friends Meeting of Austin and New Orleans Monthly Meeting were appointedⁱ that year by Friends Fellowship Council, the precursor to Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC).

Friends and attenders from TX and LA began meeting regionally for fellowship and nurture in the early 1950s. The first planned meeting was in 1954 in the Houston area. By 1955 they had adopted the name Southwest Conference of Friends (SWCF) and invited attenders from meetings and worship groups from the four state area plus some isolated Friends. Friendswood Friends Church, Quakers who established a community in Texas in the 19th century, sent representatives to the early gatherings.ⁱⁱ Some of the same Friends gathered for another annual conference, the second meeting called the Mt. Magazine Conference after its location at a state park in Arkansas.

The members and attenders of the meetings and worship groups involved in SWCF held political, theological and spiritual values different from most people around them. Within the worship group or monthly meeting they found people who shared a commitment to equality, simplicity, integrity and peace. SWCF gatherings provided an opportunity to renew energy through fellowship and worship with a larger group of Friends, to learn about Quaker faith and practice, to connect with the national and international Quaker world and to share the social concerns work of Friends in peace education, civil rights, the death penalty and others. It also provided a way for the few children in each small group to interact and share with other Quaker children, though establishing and maintaining a children's program was a consistent challenge.

Friends from several organizations including AFSC, Friends Committee for National Legislation (FCNL), FWCC and FGC, provided keynote talks and advice in those early years.ⁱⁱⁱ They also provided support as SWCF Friends struggled to nurture the growing number of small worship groups, find resources for teaching First Day School, increase their knowledge of Quakerism and interact with the wider national and international Quaker world. SWCF established a newsletter to assist communication. At times the newsletter was produced and distributed four or five times a year. It carried news of the monthly meetings and worship groups as well as announcements of the conferences.

To quote Ferner Nuhn, a friend from Pacific Yearly Meeting who visited to talk about his yearly meeting's similar origins and organization, "It appeared to me that attenders at the conference were motivated both by a desire to explore freshly the resources of the spiritual life and by sensitive social concerns."

He also observed:

I found Texan and Louisiana Friends a hearty and hard-riding folk, able to sit through almost continuous sessions, and on Saturday evening to go in for vigorous square dancing and other entertainment until a late hour. At twelve-thirty, I was told next morning, I, a visitor from CA, was still the only person, at least among men, who had taken to bed.

A quote from the 1960 Epistle gives us some sense of how Friends prospered:

The Society of Friends in the Southwest is a new movement. Its meetings are made up of Friends from Conservative, Evangelical, Five Years and General Conference and Independent Meetings and of newly convinced Friends. We have found a real sense of unity above our differences. It is our prayer that the same Spirit of oneness will permeate the Society as a whole helping us see beyond old walls.

Several of the Friends who visited over the years had encouraged SWCF Friends to form a new yearly meeting in the area. While the minutes in 1956 say: "SW Conference's objective should be a mixture of retreat, outreach, fellowship, sharing of problems of meetings, and doing business of conference," some SWCF Friends saw the value of a yearly meeting structure that could properly support the establishment of new monthly meetings and appoint delegates to the various Quaker organizations. They encouraged others to consider becoming a yearly meeting.

Hesitancy to move to yearly meeting status came from Friends who wanted to concentrate on fellowship rather than establish an organization whose maintenance would require both time and money. The issue was discussed in 1956, 1957, 1958 and 1959. A small group, a Meeting for Sufferings (MFS), was appointed using an organizational model from Pacific Yearly Meeting. That group explored and developed an organizational structure they felt would serve Friends in the area and encouraged Friends in their monthly meetings to study becoming a yearly meeting. In 1959 the business meeting asked the monthly meetings to review the proposed structure and report to SWCF sessions whether Friends were in unity to approve being a yearly meeting. Unity could not be found in 1960 and the matter was sent back to the monthly meetings with the intent to discuss it again in the fall of 1961.

South Central Yearly Meeting – 1961-1969

In 1961 about 100 Friends met near Dallas on Thanksgiving weekend.^{iv} The MFS met before the start of the meeting and reported that Austin, Dallas, New Orleans and Oklahoma City Monthly Meetings approved becoming a yearly meeting. They also reported to the larger group that the structure that was adopted in 1959 seemed to be working. MFS recommended SWCF assume yearly meeting status using the title South Central Yearly Meeting of Friends (SCYM). After extensive discussion the following minute was approved:

We, the members of the Friends Southwest Conference, gathered at our 10th Annual Meeting, feel that the way is now open for us to enter into the status of a yearly meeting. Therefore, we, preserving our present organization, joyfully and prayerfully assume a new name: the South Central Yearly Meeting of Friends.

SCYM initially sought affiliation with both FGC and FYM, soon to become Friends United Meeting (FUM). Affiliation with FGC commenced in 1962 but contact with FUM seems never to have been concluded. In addition to sending representatives to FGC Central Committee, SCYM early appointed representatives to AFSC, FCNL, the Associated Committee of Friends on Indian Affairs, and FWCC meetings and triennials. It was in this period that SCYM Friends seem to have been instrumental in encouraging FGC to hold their annual conferences more toward the geographic center of the country.

Major themes in the 1960s were concern for spiritual life on the monthly meeting level and providing opportunities to better understand Quakerism. In order to provide outreach and strengthen spiritual life, SCYM made numerous requests for seasoned Friends to “dwell among Friends in this area for a period of time to give talks on Quakerism”. Speakers and visitors at yearly meeting sessions addressed these issues and some traveling Friends from east coast meetings made visits to monthly meetings, facilitating discussion on religious education and topics of faith and practice.

One issue that Friends struggled with in the first years was whether SCYM and the monthly meetings could affiliate with councils of churches which stated membership was open only to those who “acclaim Jesus Christ, the son of God, as their common Savior and Lord”. Friends agreed to make use of an FGC statement about Friends not having a creed. If the state councils approved of membership from groups lacking a creed, SCYM would appoint representatives. They also drafted the following guidance for appointed delegates to these organizations: “Friends delegates to councils of churches shall have freedom to assent to statements of conscience and shall take opportunity to present Friends’ point of view to such bodies.” Friends were appointed to serve on the Texas Council of Churches, later the Texas Conference of Churches and the Louisiana Church Council.

Peace and social concerns issues dominated much of the work of SCYM in the 1960s. A concern for nonviolence and civil rights arose early. Friends struggled with their role in southern states where segregation was the norm. Sometimes they were annoyed at northern Friends who traveled among them and spoke about racial issues in a way that chastised them, as if SCYM Friends did not acknowledge the racial inequities around them were out of line with Quaker testimonies. Many Friends were active with AFSC and other groups doing civil rights work to address the problem. Others worried that the growing violence and hatred on both sides was counter to the Quaker message.

Meeting in the Dallas area in November 1963 less than a week after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the epistle expressed concern that Friends play a role through the “transforming power of love”, saying:

...at the same time we would testify to the redoubled power of the memory of a Willie Moore, a Medgar Evers, of four little girls in Birmingham, of a president. At this Thanksgiving season it is appropriate to remember and resolve to reinforce the continuing contributions of their memory and their examples to the quickening of the Spirit of those who live to be changed and to bring change.

In 1964 the children raised money for a piano for an African American church in Mississippi as part of a Quaker project to rebuild burned churches.

In 1965 Live Oak Meeting suggested, and the meeting approved, sending a telegram to

President Johnson, who lived in Texas where they met, asking for a meeting to discuss the Vietnam War, an effort that wasn't laid down until 1968. SCYM supported all forms of draft and military resistance in 1968, questioning how much Friends also were contributing to war through taxes, jobs and investments. In 1969 an AFSC office opened in San Antonio to do draft counseling, peace education and call attention to the conditions in the local jail. From its early days, Friends in SCYM approved minutes to oppose the death penalty and the implementation of loyalty oaths.^v

Until 1967 the SCYM structure included a Meeting for Sufferings (MFS), a small executive group made up of officers and representatives from some of the larger meetings. This group met to season the business of the yearly meeting and help arrange yearly meeting program at the start of yearly meeting sessions and usually before the spring Mount Magazine Conference^{vi} or at another time in the spring. In 1967 MFS was laid down and other bodies in SCYM took on their tasks at different times including the clerks, a Continuing Committee and Representative Meeting.

In the late 1960s SCYM approved sponsoring the spring conference. SCYM Friends continued to meet twice a year, for annual sessions for business and fellowship at Thanksgiving, and a session for fellowship and spiritual sharing at Easter, each meeting usually preceded by a Representative Meeting to deal with some of the business.

The business meeting early discussed various Friends practices including encouraging worship groups to come under the care of a monthly meeting. SCYM established a procedure for visitation to worship groups before bringing the appointment of a monthly meeting to the floor of the business meeting. Two new monthly meetings and a preparative meeting were welcomed during this period.^{vii}

In the 1960s the committee structure was in flux. Various committees in addition to nominating and budget came and went including: a yearly meeting program planning committee, a youth committee, a ministry and council committee that was in place only during yearly meeting sessions and a committee to bring forward practice and procedure.

From its early days SCYM was challenged to support worship groups and isolated Friends. The geography of the area is large. The monthly meetings struggled to meet the needs of their own members and attenders. Friends often expressed disappointment that they were mostly unable to the care for far flung Friends. The diversity of views and practices within the yearly meeting presented challenges as well. For instance, without a shared faith and practice document, monthly meetings continued to approach issues around membership differently, sometimes making it difficult to know which Friends should be counted in the yearly meeting statistics.

There were 204 members of the yearly meeting when it formed and the number increased throughout the early years, though early statistics don't seem to be available. The number of people attending SCYM sessions also grew steadily. In 1965 there were 160 attending with 62 under college age. The newsletter continued to spread news of Friends around the yearly meeting between sessions and a directory was printed most years to facilitate communication.

SCYM – 1970-1979

The 1970s were a time for growth in the monthly meetings and worship groups, largely

because of an influx of seekers. Many seekers first came to meeting attracted by the peace and justice work of Friends. Frequently they came as a result of getting involved in an AFSC work camp or program. Many newcomers were comfortable with unprogrammed worship and found like-minded Friends a welcome source of personal support. They embraced the testimonies on peace, equality, simplicity, integrity and community, celebrating the acceptance of a wide spectrum of belief and the lack of religious hierarchy in Quakerism.

Most newcomers to meetings had little experience with the RSO as a religious entity with traditional practices and structures. Some were escaping other religious bodies that no longer reflected their beliefs and questioned all traditional religious practices and structures. They often acted as catalysts to encourage the examination of traditional Quaker ways of organization. SCYM Friends, many of them convinced Friends themselves, embraced these new attenders to yearly meeting, including them in all aspects of yearly meeting work. Old and new Friends struggled to understand the value of some traditional practices and to establish new ones more fitting to the times and the geography of SCYM.

SCYM Friends were active locally in a variety of social action movements in the 1970s including civil rights for African Americans, Native American issues, support for those in prison for opposition to war, amnesty for Vietnam War resisters, support for farm worker's rights and concern for ending the proliferation of nuclear power. The meetings grew through the work on draft counseling and anti-war activities.

Major themes at yearly meeting sessions reflected these concerns and also included living simply as the Quaker way of life, opposition to the newly reinstated death penalty and disarmament. SCYM passed many minutes stating the body's position and support for the meetings and Friends doing this work. Uniting in action proved harder. Though Friends mostly found sincere unity on these issues, the vast geographical area, broken into five states, prevented united action on most concerns.

Though authority remained in the monthly meetings, questions of practice and procedure came forward increasingly at yearly meeting business sessions and SCYM began to play a role in interpreting issues of practice such as membership. Some of the monthly meetings selected to follow faith and practices of other yearly meetings; others looked to SCYM leadership for the guidance and interpretation that once had come from FGC and FWCC visitors and other, mostly eastern, experienced Friends.

As SCYM took on more areas of responsibility to nurture the monthly meetings and worship groups between yearly meeting sessions, Friends recognized that more committees were needed. Several times different forms of a year-round ministry and oversight committee were established to provide support to the monthly meetings, worship groups and isolated Friends. These committees were asked to help discern the definition of membership, especially of young people, and explore the practice of recording ministers at the yearly meeting level.

SCYM program for and supervision of young people at yearly meeting was not always well organized in the 1970s. At the same time the 1970s were a time when young Quakers everywhere were looking at alternative styles of living and challenging the values and actions of their elders. Tension about the role of the yearly meeting in the lives of young people led to some better program planning for the high school group at yearly meeting sessions. Many Friends expressed hope that interim program could be developed by SCYM so that young

people could gather between meetings, build community and deepen their Quaker identity.

Questions arose about the use of SCYM funds. Were Friends living simply so that there would be more funds for SCYM social justice and peace work? Was access to funds preventing some from full participation? There were discussions about covering the expenses of delegates appointed by SCYM to Quaker organizations. In an attempt to make it possible for all to serve, a fund was established for delegate travel. Also, Friends began to consider ways to subsidize the yearly meeting sessions so that more young people could come.

Friends were challenged through the 70s and early 1980s in sharing the responsibilities to plan and carry out two annual sessions in a wide geographic area. The clerks, whose main concern was the business meeting, continued to be responsible for securing conference facilities and the planning and logistics of the adult program including inviting speakers. Some years clerks even arranged the children's program. At times these responsibilities were distributed to a monthly meeting, especially when yearly meeting sessions were geographically near to a monthly meeting. For a time in the 1970s SCYM had a committee for a young people's program which led to a yearly meeting program committee but these committees seemed to come and go.

Despite these logistical challenges, the minutes and epistles record that Friends genuinely enjoyed and appreciated SCYM sessions as a time to meet with like-minded people, worship, and share about Quakerism and their social concerns and actions. However the attendance dwindled, and there was no spring conference some years. SCYM continued to meet for yearly meeting sessions at Thanksgiving for most of the decade, making the switch to Easter in 1979.

At the end of the decade there were over 300 members in SCYM and two new monthly meetings. The number of people at yearly meeting sessions was smaller during these years than in the 1960s and a smaller number of newsletter issues seem to have been published most years.

SCYM 1980-1989

In the early 1980s some Friends recognized that it was difficult for clerks to take major responsibility for all aspects of planning yearly meeting sessions and that attendance was down. The yearly meeting sessions seemed to lack program for all ages that met the needs of the growing number of families. An adhoc committee was formed which brought back ideas about the need for better communication and intervisitation between meetings as well as the suggestion that a Continuing Committee be established with responsibility for planning yearly meeting sessions.

Soon after quarterly meetings were established as a venue for Friends to gather more often and experience Quakerism beyond their monthly meeting or worship group. The four quarterly meetings were geographically determined and some met as many as three times a year. For many Friends quarterly meetings involved less travel than coming to yearly meeting and provided a more manageable size group in which to worship, share with others about Quakerism and build community. Quarters were seen as replacing the half yearly conference.

Eventually, Continuing Committee was laid down and the quarterly meetings were tasked with revolving responsibilities for program planning for yearly meeting sessions. The quarters reported to representative meeting in the fall, where Friends helped discern the

appropriateness of the program plans.

In the 1980s SCYM was greatly strengthened by the presence of FGC Field Secretaries. One Friend from Dallas Meeting served for about a year starting in 1982, followed by a couple from East Texas who served for most of the rest of the decade. The purpose of the field secretaries was to travel among the meetings listening for and addressing expressed needs such as First Day School, vocal ministry, understanding the Quaker message, spiritual growth, sharing spiritual lives and Quaker means of solving conflicts. They provided materials and presented or arranged for others to present programs. They connected SCYM Friends to the wider Quaker world through FGC and played a crucial role in helping SCYM mature and grow.

In a report to FGC in 1984 a field secretary characterized SCYM as follows:

...almost all of our people are convinced Friends, many of them having joined only recently and having experienced only the meeting they are currently attending. ...The Society of Friends [in SCYM] is young, vibrant and frequently without a core of experienced Friends. Some meetings find this a concern. Others find it a joy and freedom.^{viii}

In the same report she also expressed that it was imperative to build ties between east and west to, “learn to walk together with our differences, that we appreciate and take advantage of what each has to offer.” After several years as field secretary, she saw SCYM sessions as “not just a yearly event” but the gathering of a large family^{ix} though in 1988 she reflected that both on the monthly and yearly meeting level, “being a family is not all sweetness and light.”^x

The FGC field secretaries played a part in keeping several struggling monthly meetings from laying themselves down. Their ability to visit widely in the yearly meeting meant they could help find resources to address conflicts between members, especially in some of the smaller, more isolated meetings. As they traveled, they listened and worked with yearly meeting committees and other Friends to bring the resources needed to SCYM. The Field Secretaries provided a connection between the monthly meetings and individuals, helping Friends network, hear each other and act together across distance.

It was during the 1980s that the idea arose for an SCYM Quaker retreat center, eventually called Quakerland, in the Texas Hill Country. Land was donated by Friends and a yearly meeting house structure with dormitory space and small conference facilities was carefully planned and built on this land using funds raised by SCYM. Friends in Hill Country Monthly Meeting coordinated the work but Friends from all over the yearly meeting, including Young Friends, were very much involved. Several work gatherings were held, drawing Friends from all corners of the yearly meeting.

According to one Friend, the work on Quakerland created more than a retreat center; it created deeper community in the yearly meeting. He says:

While the dream was intact, Quakerland was a major element in the life of the yearly meeting with fund raising, work parties and retreats. It was a dream and a wish that united us...

Friends envisioned Quakerland would be used for retreats and small meetings but for many in SCYM it was far from home. Maintenance fell to a few people in the area. SCYM struggled with how to support land ownership and property management within its organizational

structure.

Partly as a result of the desire to hold land for Quakerland, in 1984 it was decided to incorporate SCYM. This was accomplished in the next few years along with gaining tax exempt status. Other new SCYM programs were established. In 1983 the SCYM decided to establish the Kenny-Kloepfer Scholarship Fund to send Young Friends to Quaker schools. The book table continued to provide Friends with Quaker related materials. Photo albums of yearly meeting activities were added to the SCYM archives, housed in the Friends Meeting of Austin library.

Funds spent on delegate travel, a large part to the budget, were often questioned. At these times, Friends considered the matter in business sessions, agreeing that sending delegates was important because delegates brought back information and skills, connected SCYM to the wider Quaker world and provided a different voice within Quaker organizations from those in more established yearly meetings. Friends affirmed continuing to fund delegate travel to the best of the yearly meeting's capacity each time these concerns surfaced.

With each monthly meeting categorizing members in its own way, questions about membership continued to come to the floor of business meeting. SCYM set up a committee to explore membership in the early 1980s. By the end of the 80s, an advisory minute on handling children's membership was approved. That minute provided many choices for the monthly meetings. Also, in 1985 guidelines for admission of new monthly meetings were approved.^{xi}

Many SCYM meetings declared Sanctuary for Central American refugees or were heavily involved in supporting them. The yearly meeting minuted its support of individual Friends and meetings involved in this work. SCYM offered spiritual and financial support to the Sanctuary workers under indictment in Arizona, especially a member of the Lubbock TX worship group.

Individual SCYM Friends traveled to Central America to do work in refugee camps and among the poor. SCYM provided spiritual and financial support to two Friends who did this work for many years. The meeting approved minutes opposing military aid to the region and corresponded with other yearly meetings asking them to oppose deportation of Central American refugees. Other minutes during this time expressed concerns about domestic budget cuts and their effect on the poor and displaced, particularly Native Americans. Minutes were passed supporting the establishment of a National Peace Tax Fund and a nuclear arms freeze.

A visitor to yearly meeting in 1988 observed that community was the main issue and that Friends in SCYM were "not enamored of business or discipline" but hungry for fellowship. Notable was the need to make yearly meeting sessions easier for young parents by providing a consistent program that not only cared for the children but taught about Quaker faith and practice.

That was the first year that Young Friends had held their own business meeting. Another visitor, who had been an SCYM member, noted the programs for junior yearly meeting and Young Friends seemed to be well planned. He remarked that "proper space...for Young Friends" had been provided and "the integrity of its boundaries were respected." The same Friend advised future visitors to SCYM to "relax, take your shoes off, set a spell. Y'all come back."

In 1986 the Field Secretary wrote in her report:

We are creating a new thing here, an entity which has never existed before. There has never been a yearly meeting developed out of our particular personalities

under our particular circumstances. Other yearly meetings have either long since past this stage or not arrived there yet. In the coming years, we in South Central have the privilege to participate in this coalescing of a new entity. We can either let this new vision, that is becoming reality, happen to us or we can actively enhance that happening.

Attendance at yearly meeting increased over the decade as did the membership of SCYM which stood at almost 400 in 1989. SCYM had welcomed seven new monthly meetings, two preparative meetings and a worship group in the 1980s. The newsletter continued to bring news of meetings but slowly switched to being more centered on the business and fellowship of the yearly meeting. Annual printed proceedings and directories also helped Friends stay in touch.

SCYM 1990-1999

These years were characterized by long and extra business sessions at yearly meeting each spring as Friends struggled with issues including the future of the Quakerland property, writing a faith and practice, approving a procedures manual, clarifying the role of the Representative Meeting, discerning membership requirements for Friends serving on SCYM committees, providing year round youth program, and issues of decision making and trust around playing the Underground Railroad Game.

In 1992 Quakerland continued to be a challenge to maintain and use and Friends decided to turn over the property. In 1994 SCYM established a committee to discern if Quakerland should be an intentional community. The yearly meeting approved this move and established a Use and Development Committee which recommended that the yearly meeting convey the property to the Friends Quakerland Community in 1997. This was done with enthusiasm and the community continued to be under the care of the yearly meeting until several years later they established a separate non-profit.

In the late 1980s SCYM established a committee to look into writing a faith and practice. In the early 1990s the committee proposed advices and queries as a first step in the process of approving a faith and practice. The yearly meeting asked Friends to use these in their monthly meetings and reflect comments back to the committee. At the same time, the yearly meeting asked the committee to consider alternatives to SCYM writing its own faith and practice. Consultation about the need for and the content of a faith and practice seemed difficult without a great deal of expense for travel. In 1993 the writing of a faith and practice was laid down.

A procedures manual was assembled over several years and approved in 1995. It was descriptive, not proscriptive. Friends used the manual and found it very helpful in carrying out the work of the yearly meeting. A committee was established to continually revise the manual, keeping it current as new minutes were approved effecting SCYM procedures. That effort proved difficult for a committee and a 1999 version of the manual reveals it was already very much out of date.

The responsibilities of Representative Meeting (RM), which met in the fall each year to do SCYM business and coordinate yearly meeting planning, were questioned. Friends were concerned that important decisions be made by the larger group of Friends gathered in

meeting worship for business at yearly meeting. After some consideration RM's responsibilities were limited, reserving approval of the final budget, annual assessment and nominating report to yearly meeting business sessions. The need for good communication through the newsletter and monthly meeting representatives was noted. The structure of RM included representatives from every monthly meeting, the officers and committee clerks, but all Friends were welcome to attend. While some saw this time of mostly business meeting sessions a chance to renew Quaker energy and serve SCYM, RM sessions were often small and the tasks left to only a few Friends.

A Ministry and Oversight Committee (M&O) had been established in 1985 and charged with overseeing the worship at yearly meeting sessions and nurturing the meetings, particularly the smaller meetings and worship groups, year round. Especially after the field secretaries were no longer available, that committee struggled to accomplish all its responsibilities. In 1994 they took on the extra task of supporting an Earlham School of Religion student whose project was to do ministry in SCYM. When this project was concluded in 1995, the report affirmed the value of this traveling Friend's work and that of the small committee that supported him saying:

...seeds have been planted. In the months and years to come they will grow and blossom – in our meetings and in our yearly...

The same year M&O came to yearly meeting with a proposal to establish two separate committees, a Ministry and Care Committee (M&C) with responsibility for caring for monthly meetings and worship groups year round and a Worship Oversight Committee (WO) to care for the worship at yearly meeting sessions. They explained that SCYM would be better served by committees with separate roles. This new structure was approved with enthusiasm.

In order to encourage spiritual growth within SCYM in 1996 M&C proposed and the meeting approved establishing the Boeger Fund to provide money for:

1. A Friend to travel to larger Quaker gatherings such as the FGC Gathering or Pendle Hill for study,
2. A seasoned Friend to visit within SCYM for a period of time, visiting meetings and sharing a special ministry...

The proposal for establishing an endowed fund for this purpose had been carefully seasoned for several years under the care of M&C during which RM had suggested the fund be an endowed fund producing its own money for grants. M&C was charged with distributing the proceeds of the fund when it reached at least \$20,000 and careful guidelines for proposals were approved. The Boeger Fund became a valuable tool for assisting Friends to gain and use gifts and skills that assist in spiritual growth of SCYM Friends.

The issue of membership was revisited in 1996 when Friends labored to discern where they found themselves with the requirement that Friends appointed to both of these new committees, M&C and WO were to be both members of SCYM and the RSOF. Concern about this had been voiced by Friends in 1995. The 1996 minutes record their thoughts on membership and the making of rules:

Friends voiced concerns and cautions regarding: opportunities for gifted service that might be lost; paper membership; responsibilities of membership such as

fiscal; not joining the RSOF as a matter of conscience. Friends also: voiced faith in the work of YM Nominating Committee, expressed the importance of membership in the World Wide Community of Friends, asked that guidelines simply help us identify Friends that can best minister to us as a YM community...

Friends recognized they did not want to establish a rule, ...Friends did want commitment to the RSOF.

The minute states it is the “expectation that members of WO and M&C will be members of the RSOF.” Friends agreed that they needed to re-visit the core issue of membership.

Young Friends were supported in their participation in Quaker work camps, first at Quakerland and then in various venues in the southwest and Mexico through the IMYM/AFSC Joint Service Project. Also, Young Friends were supported in attending Youth Quake. The young people and the adults who accompanied them to Youth Quake learned about the diversity beliefs and practices in the wider Quaker world and brought back their concern to explore unprogrammed Quakerism more deeply. There was much longing for and talk about a year round program for Young Friends during this decade. Several attempts were made to establish a position for a year round coordinator, paid or unpaid, and to have retreats for high school Friends.

In 1992 the quarterly meetings were asked to take over planning various parts of the yearly meeting program, rotating the responsibilities for different programs. A proposal to have a yearly meeting planning committee was approved in 1997. This committee was charged with coordinating all the programs at yearly meeting sessions while leaving the primary responsibility for adult program planning to the quarterly meetings.

It became an SCYM tradition in the 1990s to play an intergenerational game at yearly meeting called the Underground Railroad Game. In 1996 an African American Friend from another yearly meeting expressed her concerns that the game glorified the Quaker past while neglecting to reflect the real pain caused by enslavement and the attempts to escape from it suffered by African Americans. She asked whether playing the game was an appropriate way for us to “live out our testimony of equality”. She asked that SCYM Friends reconsider this activity which had become a tradition, especially with the youth.

This request came to RM which minuted the need for young Friends to continue planning their own activities. This request was sent to the monthly meetings for discernment. Shortly before yearly meeting the clerk decided not to allow Friends to play the URR Game in 1997. This raised questions which led to several areas of concern; about the clerk’s role, about the role of youth in making their own decisions about their program, and about the need for Friends to explore issues of racism beyond their positive history as part of the underground railroad.

A long session took place at yearly meeting 1997 to look at these issues. At times there were angry words and some Friends were disrespectful of others. A committee was appointed to look at the clerk’s role in the yearly meeting and the MO was asked to assist in a yearly meeting wide study of our Quaker process of discernment. In 1998 Ministry and Care came forward with some guidelines for the clerk, suggestions for any future clerk dealing with a significant decision shortly before yearly meeting sessions.

Early in the decade SCYM appointed a representative to Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns. In 1992 Friends celebrated SCYM members who had died of AIDS by creating a square for the

Names Project Quilt. Many monthly meetings struggled with the issues around same gender marriage during the 1990s. Several same gender couples were married under the care of SCYM monthly meetings, and in 1999 SCYM endorsed the marriages of individuals under the care of monthly meetings without regard to gender, assuring that same sex marriages would be taken under the care of all the SCYM monthly meetings.

Two members of SCYM continued to work in Central America. The yearly meeting created the Committee for Volunteer Service to support those doing this ministry both financially and spiritually. Later, SCYM endorsed and supported Friends Peace Teams when it was established and took this work under its care.

Friends joined in and SCYM supported financially the work with Friends Workcamps International of rebuilding the burned Full Gospel Powerhouse Church of God in Christ in Wichita Falls, TX. Many SCYM traditions started and continued at yearly meetings in the 1990s including a yearly meeting art and craft gallery and a simple meal, in SCYM eating leftovers for Easter Sunday lunch, to provide funds for an organization doing work on hunger or social justice. Friends were involved in planning and staffing the 1993 FGC Gathering in Oklahoma and there was much discussion of the event at yearly meeting 1992 and 1993.

Attendance at yearly meeting varied in the 1990s with 319 attending (84 youth) in 1995 and 237 with (70 youth) in 1999^{xii}. The membership stayed around 385 members.^{xiii} There were two new monthly meetings and two new worship groups; one monthly meeting was laid down reverting to a worship group.

ⁱSee Chronological Listing of Monthly Meetings.

ⁱⁱThe pastor of Friendswood addressed an early gathering of the SWCF and Friends in SWFC attempts at including this group in SWFC. From the start the newly established meetings and worship groups were unprogrammed. Friendswood Friends Church, which was affiliated with Kansas Yearly Meeting and originally Five Years Meeting (KYM) used a programmed worship format. but the relationship between the two groups steadily deteriorated over SWCF's close association with the work of AFSC on peace and civil rights. By 1954 KYM had already removed from FYM and would become part of Evangelical Friends Alliance. The Association of Evangelical Friends began meeting triennially in 1947 to encourage Christ-centered faith among Friends. That organization was terminated in 1970. Meanwhile in 1962 the formation of an Evangelical Friends Alliance was planned; in 1965 its constitution was approved by Ohio (now Evangelical Friends Church – Eastern Region), Oregon (now Northwest), Rocky Mountain, and Kansas (now Evangelical Friends Church – Mid America) Yearly Meetings. (http://www.friendswoodfriends.org/?page_id=31)

ⁱⁱⁱSee List of Southwest Conference of Friends Dates and Themes 1953 to 1960

^{iv} Friends from the following meetings attended: Dallas (30), Oklahoma (20), New Orleans (15), Austin (13), Little Rock (9), Houston (7), Baton Rouge (2), and Memphis (2). A few isolated Friends also were in attendance. (*from the notes of the meeting*) There were 204 members of the yearly meeting when it formed and the number increased throughout the early years. The number of people attending SCYM sessions also grew steadily. In 1965 there were 160 attending with 62 under college age.

^v See Public Testimonies of SCYM Beliefs

^{vi} A conference begun by Arkansas and Oklahoma Friends that usually focused on spiritual issues.

^{vii} See Chronological Listing of Monthly Meetings

^{viii} 1984 report to FGC Central Committee, FGC box 58, visitation reports, SFHL

^{ix} 1986 report to SCYM, FGC box 58, visitation reports, SFHL

x 1988 report to SCYM, FGC box 58, visitation reports, SFHL

xi SCYM Proceedings 1985 p. 21

xii 1999 Proceedings, p 7

xiii 1999 Proceedings, p 18