

1 **WORKING DOCUMENT #3**

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3 **South Central Yearly Meeting Faith & Practice Development Committee**
4 **Spring 2015**

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6 **Working Document #3** is the first compilation of the work of the SCYM Faith & Practice
7 Development Committee. The Committee’s intention is to post a readable document on the
8 SCYM website, making it accessible to SCYM Friends for reading, discernment and comment.
9 Note that the lines are numbered to facilitate reference.

10 The F&PDC emphasizes that the present document is a work-in-progress, not to be
11 confused with a finished product. Please note that this document represents the beginning
12 work of a *lengthy* project.

13 Thank you for your patience and your discernment and your input.

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15 *The South Central Yearly Meeting Faith & Practice Development Committee*

16 Committee Members as of YM 2015:

- 17 • Beverly Randolph, Coastal Bend Friends Meeting
- 18 • Carol Balliet, Friends Meeting of San Antonio
- 19 • John Coffin, Little Rock Friends Meeting
- 20 • Bill Wilkinson, Friends Meeting of San Antonio

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23 **Working Document #3 consists of:**

- 24
25 • SCYM Faith & Practice List of Topics
 - 26 • 1. History of RSOF and SCYM
 - 27 ○ Brief History of the Religious Society of Friends (edited from SAYMA F&P)
 - 28 ○ History of South Central Yearly Meeting (from the work of Elizabeth Yeats,
 - 29 Friends Meeting of Austin)
 - 30 ○ Statement on Advices and Queries
 - 31 • 2. Opening to the Spirit
 - 32 ○ What Friends Believe
 - 33 ○ The Monthly Meeting (opening statement)
- 34
35

36 **SCYM – Faith and Practice - A List of Topics**
37 **(draft 11/2013)**

38
39 **Preface – Why a Faith & Practice for South Central Yearly Meeting?**
40

41 South Central Yearly Meeting extends through five states over large geographic distances through at
42 least fourteen ecological regions. The diversity of our physical location is matched by diversity of
43 culture, history, politics, and religion throughout the region, and by wide divergences in population
44 density and language.

45 The Society of Friends is a relative newcomer to this region, forming here in the mid and late 20th
46 Century. Partly due to geography, we forged a distinctive kind of Quakerism, seeking to touch those in
47 isolated communities as well as those in large, dynamic communities of faith while deepening our
48 commitment to values that may seem out of step with our surrounding communities: nonviolence,
49 peace, equality, inclusiveness, gentleness.

50 As we have matured in the faith over the last fifty years, we discovered some of the ways that we
51 are related to each other and to our communities. In order to further strengthen and deepen those
52 relationships, we are now preparing a Faith And Practice, the traditional Quaker form of witness to our
53 faith. Through this, we hope to elucidate who we are within Friends worldwide, to give voice to our
54 distinctiveness and to our belonging in the Society of Friends.

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56 **1. History**

- 57 A Brief History of the Religious Society of Friends
- 58 A brief history of SCYM
- 59 Advices and Queries – a general statement

60 **2. Opening to the Spirit**

- 61 What Friends Believe
- 62 The Meeting for Worship
- 63 Seekers; the spiritual journey
- 64 Silence, prayer and meditation
- 65 Vocal Ministry
- 66 The scriptures, Friends and Jesus
- 67 Continuing Revelation
- 68 The sacraments
- 69 Friends and other Faiths

70 **3. Testifying to the Life of the Spirit**

- 71 The Quaker Testimonies
- 72 Simplicity
- 73 Peace

74	Integrity
75	Community
76	Equality
77	Stewardship
78	Truthfulness – publishers of the Truth
79	The wholeness of creation
80	Inclusion
81	Social justice & civic responsibility
82	Peace and non-violence
83	Family and children
84	Sexuality and the RSOF/SCYM
85	4. Advices and Queries – the specifics
86	See New England YM F&P, New York YM F&P, Pittsburgh’s F&P and SAYMA’s F&P
87	5. Living Together in the Faith Community
88	The Monthly Meeting
89	Meeting as a caring community
90	Care of small and new meetings
91	Meeting leadership – the clerks
92	Recorded ministers
93	Nurturing one’s gifts
94	Being a Quaker today – our personal lives and witness
95	6. Laboring Together in the Monthly Meeting
96	Meetings for worship with attention to Business
97	Friends and decision making
98	When Friends aren’t unity
99	Threshing sessions and other called meetings
100	Committees
101	Committees for Clearness
102	Membership
103	Meetings for marriage
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105	Meetings being laid down
106	Fiduciary responsibilities; property holdings
107	Religious education for adults, young Friends and children
108	Continuing education and spiritual advisement
109	The role of Elders
110	7. Relating to the Larger Community of Friends
111	The Yearly Meeting
112	The Quarterly Meetings
113	Friends’ organizations and educational institutions
114	Wider Quaker Fellowship
115	Friends around the world
116	The Electronic World Community
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1. History

A Brief History of the Religious Society of Friends

(edited from Southern Appalachia Yearly Meeting & Association Faith and Practice)

In 1647 George Fox heard a voice speak to him out of the depth of his being: “There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition.” The roving shoemaker, son of a weaver in Leicestershire, England, experienced a sense of relief from his inner struggles, an awareness of being touched by the Divine. He came to recognize that people in every religious tradition can apprehend their own place in the ultimate scheme of things.

Experiences like Fox’s were commonplace in a society marked by the kind of political and social upheaval that would, within two years, bring English radicals to behead their king. Reformers, itinerant preachers, and “seekers” roamed the countryside collecting a following among the many people whose needs were not being satisfied within the existing order of things.

Then twenty-three years old, Fox responded by embarking on a life-long mission of proclaiming what he had experienced. Possessing a personality that gripped the attention and a message that spoke to other people’s needs, he preached in established churches and at other gatherings and religious meetings to seekers, proclaiming a simple, yet radical message: Christ has come to teach his people himself, Christ is available to everyone who seeks him, Christ may be found by searching inwardly for that “Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” His followers, soon numbering into the thousands, called themselves Children of Light and Friends of the Truth. They saw themselves as reviving the faith of the original Christians.

This compelling faith led them to regard all people as equal before God, to worship in silence without the intervention of clergy, and to challenge any practice that violated their principles. They refused to pay tithes to the Church of England, they interrupted church services to witness to their beliefs and to challenge the dogma, they refused to swear oaths, maintaining that truth should be spoken at all times, and they challenged the authority of the King of England by refusing to swear an oath of allegiance, believing that God is the only Authority. In like manner, they challenged the authority of judges by refusing to remove their hats in court as a gesture of obeisance to a worldly power. On one occasion, a judge reminded George Fox that for his lack of respect he should fear the consequences – possibly death. Fox replied that he only quaked for fear of the Lord's wrath – hence the term Quaker.

150 Fox and his co-laborers emphasized equality in a society of aristocrats, simplicity among
151 ostentatious people, peace in a world accustomed to duels and wars, and the necessity to forsake old
152 sins among churchmen who were content to confess them. After the restoration of Charles II in 1660,
153 Parliament enacted laws to silence religious nonconformists and forbid religious gatherings other than
154 those sanctioned by the state Church. Finding themselves at odds with the authorities, the Children of
155 the Light and Friends of the Truth often were thrown into prison.

156 Largely to provide continuing care for these Friends and their families, groups of seekers began to
157 meet regularly to respond to local concerns and sufferings. Very early in the movement, Friends across
158 England began to congregate in large gatherings that eventually became known as the “yearly meeting”;
159 smaller groups met quarterly, and the local meetings became known as monthly meetings. These basic
160 organizational units are still in use.

161 In spite of their sufferings at the hands of the authorities and even at the hands of angry mobs, most
162 refused to deny their faith. Friends continued to attract adherents like Margaret Fell, who organized
163 relief for traveling and suffering Friends, and William Penn, son of an admiral, friend of royalty, and
164 founder of Pennsylvania. Friends had begun immigrating to the New World in search of religious
165 freedom. In Puritan New England, Dutch New Amsterdam, and Anglican southern colonies of Maryland
166 and Virginia, “Publishers of Truth” confronted the same opposition the faithful had experienced in Old
167 England. The strict “saints” of Massachusetts proved most vigorous in their prosecution, for Friends’
168 espousal of freedom from outward regulations struck at the base of Puritan practice. Puritan
169 magistrates ordered Quakers whipped, their tongues bored, their ears cropped, and, in the case of four,
170 including Mary Dyer, their lives forfeited.

171 Through William Penn, however, a new start was possible. Although Rhode Island, New Jersey,
172 Delaware, and North Carolina welcomed Quakers, and even permitted them to serve in high
173 government positions, it was not until Pennsylvania was founded that a Quaker government was formed
174 in the New World. This land was given to William Penn by Charles II to discharge a debt the king owed to
175 Penn’s father. Penn’s “holy experiment” was built upon Quaker principles, and it became a haven for all
176 peoples, regardless of their religious beliefs. All dealings with the Indians were by treaties that benefited
177 both parties. While Quakers governed Pennsylvania, strife between the settlers and the Indians was
178 settled by recourse to the terms of society. The colony prospered.

179 In a short time, however, Quakers were in the minority, and events leading up to the French and
180 Indian War brought the holy experiment to an end in 1757. Although the Pennsylvanians were not

181 affected by the early troubles, since they had good relations with the Indians, nearby states were in the
182 throes of the war. The population of Pennsylvania wanted to side with other colonists against the
183 French and their Indian allies. Quakers in government were put into an untenable position: they could
184 not support war, and they could not deny the citizens representative government. Most resigned from
185 the Assembly rather than assent to preparations for war.

186 This act of withdrawal from public life was followed by withdrawals in other areas as well. In the
187 eighteenth century, Quakers became a separate and peculiar people whose life centered increasingly in
188 their own communities. Wearing distinctive clothing, using the familiar “thee” and “thou,” and adopting
189 more rigid rules of behavior, Friends entered what has been called a “Quietist” period. Not only were
190 fewer people convinced of the validity of the Quaker way, but some members found themselves
191 disowned if they violated the letter of the rules. Public witnessing of the Truth faltered as Friends
192 withdrew into their communities.

193 The reformer, John Woolman, a tailor of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, vigorously carried on the
194 search for truth by traveling widely among Friends and insisting that they consider slavery and war taxes
195 in the Light. He slowly moved his fellow believers to adopt a testimony against slavery in 1774. Even so,
196 these moves, principled and consistent as they were, only served to illustrate the separateness of
197 Friends from their fellow citizens. By the end of the American Revolution, the number of Quakers in the
198 United States had dropped from more than 50,000 to below 40,000.

199 The Revolution had a lasting impact on Friends. Some members who had been disowned during the
200 war for joining the patriot cause or pledging allegiance to the new government gradually drifted back,
201 but a group of “Free Quakers” maintained a separate existence until the 1830s. By this time, the
202 revolutionary stress on equality produced tension between those who wanted to maintain a tight rein
203 on the Society and those who stressed the liberty offered by the inward working of the Spirit; the former
204 centered in urban areas, the latter in rural. The two trends surfaced with bitter fury at Philadelphia
205 Yearly Meeting in 1827 when those called liberals or Hicksites, named after Elias Hicks, separated from
206 the urban Orthodox Friends that emphasized the Scriptures and evangelical beliefs. Before long, most
207 yearly meetings witnessed similar splits, some complicated by court battles and physical struggles over
208 property. In the 1840s theological debates further split Friends when New England farmer John Wilbur
209 insisted that the Hicksites had de-emphasized the “Inward Christ”; these Wilburites became those
210 known today as Conservative Friends.

211 Other divisions resulted from the westward movement after the Civil War. Some Friends found
212 themselves caught up in the frontier revivals that obliterated denominational differences in the western
213 territory. Most western meetings began to adopt practices characteristic of Protestant churches - paid
214 pastors, programmed services, hymn singing, even creeds. Many Friends from this newer tradition
215 joined to form Five Years Meeting, now Friends United Meeting (FUM), centered in the Midwest. These
216 heirs of the Orthodox tradition began to divide in the 1920s in western yearly meetings where
217 evangelicals predominated. From this influence Evangelical Friends International (EFI) emerged.

218 In 1900, Friends General Conference (FGC) grew out of an association of unprogrammed yearly
219 meetings concerned with social and educational issues. Today FGC's mission is to nurture the spiritual
220 life of approximately 35,000 Friends by means of an annual gathering, religious education, publications,
221 and visitation. SCYM is affiliated with it.

222 In spite of divisive tendencies, in 1917, at the time of World War I, Friends joined together to create
223 the American Friends Service Committee as an outlet for wartime service for Quaker conscientious
224 objectors and as an instrument of relief to victims of the war. As time went on, the Service Committee
225 won wide recognition and support for its relief work and its activities in the fields of race relations,
226 public education, overseas economic development and advocacy for those who suffer from natural
227 disaster, wars, famines, and oppression. It continues to seek ways to strengthen the forces of peace and
228 disarmament and endeavors to offer a moral and religious perspective on world affairs. In 1947, AFSC
229 with its British counterpart, the Friends Service Council, received the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of
230 Friends.

231 In the 1930s, representatives from meetings around the world organized the Friends World
232 Committee for Consultation (FWCC) to address the concerns and needs of Friends throughout the world.
233 FWCC now concentrates on bringing together Friends from different countries and varying traditions. It
234 partially supports the Quaker United Nations Office. Cooperation has continued, demonstrated by the
235 uniting of several yearly meetings that included both Hicksite and Orthodox elements.

236 Out of faithfulness to the Friends Peace Testimony, in the midst of World War II the Friends
237 Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) opened its doors as the first religious lobbying group in
238 Washington, D.C. FCNL seeks to bring the concerns, experiences, and testimonies of Friends to bear on
239 policy decisions in the nation's capital. Cooperating with this effort is the William Penn House, a site for
240 seminars and conferences in Washington, D.C. where Friends gather to address the many concerns they
241 have for their society and the world.

242 The deepening awareness of the need for Friends to act corporately in the world has continued to
243 spawn new organizations. Quaker House is a military counseling resource center. Right Sharing of World
244 Resources (RSWR) addresses the interrelated problems of poverty and materialism. Quaker Earthcare
245 Witness (QEW) (formerly Friends Committee on Unity with Nature) works to integrate concern for God’s
246 creation into the beliefs and practices of the Religious Society of Friends. Friends Peace Teams is an
247 outreach of our peacemaking. Some organizations carry out our testimonies of community and equality
248 such as Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns (FLGBTQC) and Friends of
249 Color.

250 As Americans became more mobile in the mid-twentieth century, Friends from diverse backgrounds
251 worshipped together, rediscovered their common heritage, and proceeded to form meetings where few
252 Quakers had been previously. It is from these roots that South Central Yearly Meeting emerged as a way
253 to acknowledge the journey together as Friends and support one another in effort to know each other in
254 “that which is eternal,” and in the wider community of Friends.

255 **A Brief History of South Central Yearly Meeting**

256 (From Liz Yeats' Brief History)

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

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

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

281 Friends from several organizations including AFSC, Friends Committee for National Legislation
282 (FCNL), FWCC and FGC, provided keynote talks and advice in those early years.ⁱⁱⁱ They also provided
283 support as SWCF Friends struggled to nurture the growing number of small worship groups, find
284 resources for teaching First Day School, increase their knowledge of Quakerism and interact with the

285 wider national and international Quaker world. SWCF established a newsletter to assist communication.
286 At times the newsletter was produced and distributed four or five times a year. It carried news of the
287 monthly meetings and worship groups as well as announcements of the conferences.

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

292 He also observed:

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

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

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

302 Several of the visitors encouraged forming a new yearly meeting in the area. While the minutes in
303 1956 say: "SW Conference's objective should be a mixture of retreat, outreach, fellowship, sharing of
304 problems of meetings, and doing business of conference," some SWCF Friends saw the value of a yearly
305 meeting structure that could properly support the establishment of new monthly meetings and appoint
306 delegates to the various Quaker organizations. They encouraged others to consider becoming a yearly
307 meeting.

308 Hesitancy to move to yearly meeting status came from Friends who wanted to concentrate on
309 fellowship rather than establish an organization whose maintenance would require both time and
310 money. The issue was discussed in 1956, 1957, 1958 and 1959. A small group, a Meeting for Sufferings
311 (MFS), was appointed using an organizational model from Pacific Yearly Meeting. That group explored
312 and developed an organizational structure they felt would serve Friends in the area and encouraged
313 Friends in their monthly meetings to study becoming a yearly meeting. In 1959 the business meeting
314 asked the monthly meetings to review the proposed structure. Unity could not be found in 1960 and the

315 matter was sent back to the monthly meetings with the intent to discuss it again in the fall of 1961.

316 **South Central Yearly Meeting**

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

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

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

332 Major themes in the 1960s were concern for spiritual life on the monthly meeting level and
333 providing opportunities to better understand Quakerism. In order to provide outreach and strengthen
334 spiritual life, SCYM made numerous requests for seasoned Friends to “dwell among Friends in this area
335 for a period of time to give talks on Quakerism.” Peace and social concerns issues dominated much of
336 the work of SCYM in the 1960s. A concern for nonviolence and civil rights arose early. Friends struggled
337 with their role in southern states where segregation was the norm. Sometimes they were annoyed at
338 northern Friends who traveled among them and spoke about racial issues in a way that chastised them,
339 as if SCYM Friends did not acknowledge racial inequities as out of line with Quaker testimonies. Many
340 Friends were active with AFSC and other groups doing civil rights work. Others worried that the growing
341 violence and hatred on both sides was counter to the Quaker message.

342 Until 1967 the SCYM structure included a Meeting for Sufferings (MFS), a small executive group
343 made up of officers and representatives from some of the larger meetings. This group met at the start of

344 yearly meeting sessions and usually before the spring Mount Magazine Conference^v or at another time
345 in the spring. In 1967 MFS changed its name to Continuing Committee (CC).

346 CC proposed SCYM sponsor the spring conference which was approved. SCYM Friends began
347 meeting twice a year, for annual sessions for business and fellowship at Thanksgiving, and a session for
348 fellowship and spiritual sharing at Easter, each meeting proceeded by a CC meeting to deal with some of
349 the business. CC changed in membership and purpose over the years but its central role was preparing
350 the business for the yearly meeting business sessions.

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

358 The 1970s were a time for growth in the monthly meetings and worship groups, largely because of
359 an influx of seekers. Often seekers first came to meeting attracted by the peace and justice stance and
360 work of Friends. Most newcomers to meetings had little experience with the RSoF as a religious entity.
361 Some were fleeing other religious bodies that no longer reflected their beliefs. Many newcomers found
362 themselves very comfortable with unprogrammed worship and like-minded Friends a welcome source
363 of personal support. They embraced the testimonies on peace, equality, simplicity, integrity and
364 community and became some of the most active members. Newcomers brought with them new, fresh
365 ideas and questions that influenced the growth of SCYM Quakerism, encouraging the examination of
366 traditional Quaker practices. SCYM Friends embraced these new attenders, many of whom soon became
367 members, and Friends quickly included them in all aspects of the yearly meeting work.

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

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

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

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

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

392 It was during the 1980s that the idea arose for an SCYM Quaker retreat center, eventually called
393 Quakerland. Land was donated by Friends in the Texas Hill Country. A yearly meeting structure with
394 dormitory space and small conference facilities was carefully planned and built on this land using funds
395 collected by SCYM. Friends in Hill Country Monthly Meeting coordinated the work but Friends from all
396 over the yearly meeting, including Young Friends, were very much involved. The property was used for
397 retreats and small meetings but for many in SCYM it was far from home. Maintenance fell to a few
398 people in the area. SCYM struggled with how to manage land ownership and management.

399 A visitor to yearly meeting in 1988 observed that community was the main issue and that Friends in
400 SCYM were “not enamored of business or discipline” but hungry for fellowship. Notable was the need to
401 make yearly meeting sessions easier for young parents by providing a consistent program that not only
402 cared for the children but taught about Quaker faith and practice. That was the first year that Young
403 Friends had a business meeting. Another visitor, who had been a member of SCYM, noted the programs
404 for junior yearly meeting and Young Friends seemed to be well planned. He remarked that “proper

405 space...for Young Friends” had been provided and “the integrity of its boundaries were respected.” The
406 same Friend advised future visitors to SCYM to “relax, take your shoes off, set a spell. Y’all come back.”

407 In 1986 the Field Secretary wrote in her report:

408 *We are creating a new thing here, an entity which has never existed before. There has never been a*
409 *yearly meeting developed out of our particular personalities under our particular circumstances. Other*
410 *yearly meetings have either long since past this stage or not arrived there yet. In the coming years, we in*
411 *South Central have the privilege to participate in this coalescing of a new entity. We can either let this*
412 *new vision, that is becoming reality, happen to us or we can actively enhance that happening.*

413 Attendance at yearly meeting increased over the decade as did the membership of SCYM which
414 stood at almost 400 in 1989. SCYM had welcomed seven new monthly meetings, two preparative
415 meetings and a worship group in the 1980s.

416 In 1992 Quakerland continued to be a challenge to maintain and use and Friends decided to sell the
417 property. In 1994 SCYM established a committee to discern if Quakerland should be an intentional
418 community. The yearly meeting approved this move and established a Use and Development Committee
419 which recommended that the yearly meeting convey the property to the Friends Quakerland
420 Community in 1997. This was done with enthusiasm.

421 In the late 1980s SCYM established a committee to look into writing a faith and practice. In the early
422 1990s the committee proposed advices and queries as a first step in the process of approving a faith and
423 practice. The yearly meeting asked Friends to use these in their monthly meetings and reflect comments
424 back to the committee. At the same time, the yearly meeting asked the committee to consider
425 alternatives to SCYM writing its own faith and practice. In 1993 the writing of a faith and practice was
426 laid down.

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

431 CC was laid down and Representative Meeting (RM) took on its responsibilities, meeting each fall
432 halfway through the year. Friends were concerned that important decisions be made by the larger group
433 of Friends gathered in meeting worship for business at yearly meeting. After some consideration RM’s
434 responsibilities were limited, reserving approval of the final budget, annual assessment and nominating

435 report to yearly meeting business sessions. The need for good communication through the newsletter
436 and monthly meeting representatives was noted. The structure of RM included representatives from
437 every monthly meeting, the officers and committee clerks, but all Friends were welcome to attend.

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

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

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

452 The issue of membership was re-visited in 1996 when Friends labored to discern where they found
453 themselves with the requirement that Friends appointed to both of these new committees were to be
454 both members of SCYM and the RSoF. The 1996 minutes record their thoughts on membership and the
455 making of rules:

456 *Friends voiced concerns and cautions regarding: opportunities for gifted service that might be lost;*
457 *paper membership; responsibilities of membership such as fiscal; not joining the RSOF as a matter of*
458 *conscience. Friends also: voiced faith in the work of YM Nominating Committee, expressed the*
459 *importance of membership in the World Wide Community of Friends, asked that guidelines simply help*
460 *us identify Friends that can best minister to us as a YM community...*

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

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

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

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

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

483 This request came to RM which minuted the need for young Friends to continue planning their own
484 activities and was sent to the mms for discernment. Since there was so little time before yearly meeting,
485 the clerk decided not to allow Friends to play the URR Game in 1997. This raised questions which led to
486 several areas of concern; about the clerk’s role, about the role of youth in making their own decisions
487 about their program, and about the need for Friends to explore issues of racism beyond their positive
488 history as part of the underground railroad. A long session took place at yearly meeting 1997 to look at
489 these issues. At times there were angry words and some Friends were disrespectful of others. A
490 committee was appointed to look at the clerk’s role in the yearly meeting and the MO was asked to
491 assist in a yearly meeting wide study of our Quaker process of discernment.

492 Early in the decade SCYM appointed a representative to Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns and in
493 1992 Friends celebrated yearly meeting members who had died of AIDS by creating a square for the
494 Names Project Quilt. Many monthly meetings struggled with the issues around same gender marriage

495 during the 1990s. Several same gender couples were married under the care of SCYM monthly meetings
496 and in 1999 SCYM endorsed the marriages of individuals under the care of monthly meetings without
497 regard to gender, assuring that same sex marriages would be respected throughout the yearly meeting.

498 Members of SCYM continued to work in Central America. The yearly meeting created the
499 Committee for Volunteer Service to help those doing this ministry and later SCYM endorsed and
500 supported Friends Peace Teams when it was established and took this work under its care.

501 Boeger Fund

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

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

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

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

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

522 SCYM 2000 onward

523 In 2000 there were 370 members^{xi} of the yearly meeting and two new monthly meetings and three
524 new worship groups. YM 2002 there were 226 attenders at YM, 166 adults and 60 children.

525 2000s social concerns minutes

526 • 2001 – Reaffirms Friends’ historic opposition to the death penalty, supports legislation ending
527 the execution of minors and encourages monthly meeting’s work toward abolition

528 • 2001 – Support of the 42-day fasting vigil of Jeff Moebus to protest the School of the Americas

529 • 2002 – Support of conscientious opposition to war taxes

530 • 2004 – Request forestalling the use of the death penalty when issues of innocence remain
531 unresolved

532 • 2004 – Supports “Friend of the Court” brief for Austin Ethical Society in a freedom of religion
533 case dealing with how far a state can go in seeking to determine the nature of what constitutes a
534 religious body

535 • 2004 – Affirms same gender marriage and right of all married couples to same legal privileges
536 and rights.

537 • 2006 – Expressed gratitude for Tom’s (Fox) enduring witness, continuing to be inspired by his
538 testimony to the world as a Friend and as a peacemaker

539 • 2006 – Supports asking Congress to have Coalition Forces in Iraq release the names and
540 locations of all detainees and to inform those in detention of the charges against them

541 • 2007 – Appointed representatives to the Quaker Initiative to End Torture

542 • 2008 – Endorsed the statement against torture made by the National Religious Coalition Against
543 Torture

544 • 2008 – Endorsed and distributed statement against the building of a Border Wall on the US-
545 Mexican border

546 • 2008 – Endorsed sending a representative to Heeding God’s Call: A Gathering on Peace, a
547 conference for the peace churches and other churches about making peace

548 • 2008 – Unites behind a concern for developing ministry to servicemen and women in the SCYM
549 region

550 In 2010, South Central Yearly Meeting approved a Minute to write a Faith and Practice:

551 **YM 10-28** SCYM accepts this report from the ad hoc committee on Faith & Practice. South Central Yearly
552 Meeting further minutes its desire to establish a standing committee to write the SCYM Faith & Practice. This
553 committee will be called the Faith & Practice Committee. Friends who may be led to serve on this committee will
554 please contact the Nominating Committee.

555 This minute led to the present effort.

556

557

558 **Advices and Queries**

559 **Quakers** use the term **Query** to refer to a question or series of questions used for reflection and in
560 spiritual exercises. Friends have used Queries as tools for offering spiritual challenges to the community
561 for much of their history. Queries often take the form of a collection of themed questions that are read
562 at the beginning of a time of worship or reflection.

563 Many yearly meetings maintain a set of basic queries in their books of Faith and Practice to provide
564 guidance on certain issues over time. Individuals often offer queries from time to time to provide a
565 spiritual challenge to their local community of Friends.

566 Advices and queries are not a call to increased activity by each individual Friend but a reminder of
567 the insights of the Society. Within the community there is a diversity of gifts. We are all therefore asked
568 to consider how far the advices and queries affect us personally and where our own service lies. There
569 will also be diversity of experience, of belief and of language. Friends maintain that expressions of faith
570 must be related to personal experience. Some find traditional Christian language full of meaning; some
571 do not. Our understanding of our own religious tradition may sometimes be enhanced by insights of
572 other faiths. The deeper realities of our faith are beyond precise verbal formulation and our way of
573 worship based on silent waiting testifies to this.

574 As Friends we commit ourselves to a way of worship which allows God to teach and transform us.
575 We have found corporately that the Spirit, if rightly followed, will lead us into truth, unity and love: all
576 our testimonies grow from this leading.

577 The Advices and Queries included in this Faith and Practice are offered with the hope that we may
578 all be more faithful and find deeper joy in God's service.

579

580 2. Opening to the Spirit

581 What Friends Believe

582 Quakerism began as a part of the Puritan revolution that convulsed England in the seventeenth
583 century. Like others of their day, the first Friends set out to rebuild the church and to recapture the
584 spirit of primitive Christianity. But these Friends of the Truth were radical in insisting that true religion
585 should be based not on forms, ceremony, ritual and creeds, but on a living experience of the Divine. The
586 experience these early Friends affirmed was a shared experience of the living Seed of God who was
587 present and active in their midst and empowered them to lead lives of obedient discipleship. "The
588 gospel," George Fox wrote, "is a living way, which is revealed within."

589 This emphasis on the primacy of inward experience led to widening differences between Friends
590 and other Christians and ultimately even among Friends. Friends believed that Christ's embodiment in
591 Jesus testified to a new beginning in humanity's relationship with God. The old order based on law and
592 ceremonial observance was done away with, replaced by the direct rulership of God's spirit, the Light of
593 Christ within. Friends believed that professing Christians had forsaken this fundamental reality and
594 slipped back into an old order based on the "shadows" of form. Thus, for Friends, baptism and
595 communion were inward, spiritual experiences unmediated by any person or ritual. These early Friends
596 recognized God's coming among us manifested in the person of Jesus. They also enthusiastically claimed
597 the universal nature of Christ and believed that each human being, regardless of when and where she or
598 he lived, has been touched by the Christ Within. John Woolman called this a universal principle which is
599 "pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from
600 any..." ("Considerations on Keeping Negroes," *Works*).

601 Since Friends believe that the Spirit is actively present among them as teacher, they have always
602 trusted in it to reveal the truth to individuals insofar as they are prepared to receive it. And while
603 Friends do uphold certain principles and beliefs as a corporate body, they do not require adoption or
604 adherence to these as a condition of membership. They do expect that each person be true to his or her
605 own spiritual experience. Friends' beliefs, traditions, and teachings are meant to be testimonies to help
606 individuals discern the leadings of the Inward Teacher in the midst of worldly voices that vie for
607 allegiance.

608 Friends' expressions of their encounters with God have traditionally been grounded in religious
609 experience rather than in doctrine. These experiences have led Friends to use traditional Christian

610 language in fresh ways: “Christ,” then, may refer to the historical Jesus or to the Inward Teacher who
611 enters their lives to lead them toward oneness with God; “the Holy Spirit” may become the loving
612 activity of God within each person’s life and the life of the meeting; “the Word of God” can be heard
613 through the Bible and through the direct expression of the Spirit. Friends strive to listen to “that which is
614 eternal,” seeking to come together “at a place deeper than words.”

615 The same emphasis is evident in Quaker attitudes toward scripture, religious authority, and ministry.
616 Early Friends confronted Christians of their day, charging that they replaced the direct rule of God’s
617 spirit with these human aids and institutions. For Friends, scripture is not the only Word of God but an
618 essential testimony to the true Word of God which continues to be revealed. Scripture and other
619 inspirational writings can be a help or hindrance, depending on whether or not they are read in the light
620 of truth. Likewise, for Friends, religious authority is not in outward uniformity of religious practice but is
621 found individually and corporately through relationship to the Spirit, which some call the living Christ.
622 Ministry is not meant to be a divinely instituted mediation between God and the individual, but a help in
623 guiding people from worldly influences to the true spirit of God.

624 Friends speak often of the “Inner Light” and “that of God in every person” to identify the Spirit that
625 leads them and is experienced directly by them. Their beliefs have attracted to Friends seekers from
626 varying religious and cultural traditions, seekers who have identified, in these universal teachings, parts
627 of their own backgrounds. Friends from whatever tradition have found that they can travel together in
628 similar spiritual paths.

629 Although Friends today vary widely in the language they use to express their religious experience,
630 many still find deep meaning in traditional Christian terms. Other Friends find inspiration in a universal
631 concept of God encompassing beliefs and values from other world religions. Recognizing times when, as
632 individuals, they thought they could control their own destinies but found themselves feeling cut off
633 from the power and healing of God’s love, they may understand “salvation” as the gift which opens
634 them to the Holy Spirit, so that they may act more and more in tune with its leading.

635 Seeking to live centered in the Spirit, Friends hold to ideals of simplicity and honesty in all their
636 doings. To reduce excessive activity, use material things sparingly, and maintain a sense of stewardship
637 toward the resources of this earth is to keep free of encumbering involvements that may hamper life
638 and movement of the Spirit. Friends believe that direct and truthful discourse, tempered always by
639 tenderness, facilitates full communication and understanding. Commitment to a single standard of truth
640 has traditionally led Friends to refrain from judicial oaths. The Religious Society of Friends recognizes

641 that all are called to minister in obedience to the living Spirit, whether through service, preaching,
642 teaching, hospitality, or administration. All ministries are seen as important for the well-ordered
643 functioning of the spiritual body. All Friends have particular gifts and qualities to bring, and all are called
644 to find their place of service.

645 Friends believe in the power of love to evoke the inherent worth of others. We are called to accept
646 and love all persons in spite of transgressions, confrontations, or apparent differences. As members of
647 the human community, we try to recognize that differences spring from varied experiences and that
648 only through love, compassion, and understanding can these differences be reconciled. Violence stands
649 as the ultimate denial of love; peace remains its cherished affirmation. Friends aim toward the
650 transformation of a flawed world into one that would make possible equality, justice and peace for all
651 peoples.

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653 **The Meeting for Worship**

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655 The Monthly Meeting is the "family" of Friends; it is the fundamental unit of the Religious Society of
656 Friends. It consists of a group of Friends who meet together at regular intervals to wait upon God in
657 Meeting for Worship and Meeting for Business. When these are meetings in the true Quaker sense,
658 Friends are "joined with God and with each other," and there is order, unity and power. It is upon this
659 concept of a meeting that the good order of Friends is based. Through the corporate life of a Monthly
660 Meeting, Friends order their lives in relation to God and, through that relationship, to the most
661 profound realities of life: birth and death, marriage and family, community of spirit, and concern for
662 humanity and the rest of God's creation.

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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 A conference begun by Arkansas and Oklahoma Friends that usually focused on spiritual issues.

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

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

^{viii} 1988 report to SCYM, FGC box 58, visitation reports, SFHL

^{ix} 1999 Proceedings, p 7

^x 1999 Proceedings, p 18

^{xi} 2001 Proceedings, p12
