
Quarterly Meetings

A quarterly meeting is a cooperative association of two or more monthly meetings in a given geographical area and is composed of Friends from its constituent monthly meetings, preparative meetings, and worship groups, as well as interested persons within its area who are remote from any established Friends group.

Traditionally a quarterly meeting met four times a year. A regional meeting which met twice a year was called a half-yearly meeting. It is the practice in North Pacific Yearly Meeting to use the term “quarterly meeting” for any regional meeting composed of monthly meetings, regardless of how often it meets.

At the time of publication, three quarterly meetings constitute North Pacific Yearly Meeting:

- Willamette Quarterly Meeting (WQM), covering Oregon, southwest Washington, and southern Idaho;
- Pacific Northwest Quarterly Meeting (PNQM), covering northern Idaho and most of Washington;
- Montana Gathering of Friends (MGOF). The worship group in Sheridan (WY) is formally unaffiliated but often meets with MGOF.

The purpose of a quarterly meeting is to strengthen the life and fellowship of meetings and other Friends groups in the area and to provide a link in transmitting business and other information between them and North Pacific Yearly Meeting. A quarterly meeting contributes in many different ways to the growth of the spiritual life and fellowship of its meetings and other Friends in its area, including children, Junior Friends, and Young Adult Friends. A quarterly meeting session itself contributes by providing religious fellowship, a wider variety of ministry during worship than individual meetings usually experience, and programs which provide for consideration of the deeper interests of the Religious Society of Friends. Quarterly meetings hear informal reports on activities from constituent groups and, at a spring session, receive their more formal State of Society reports (see Chapter 5, “The Monthly Meeting”). It is in this informal and formal sharing that Friends become aware of the state of the spiritual life within the quarterly meeting.

Outside its regular sessions, the quarterly meeting contributes by developing programs for its young people, by arranging for retreats and other gatherings, and by encouraging and coordinating intervisitation throughout its area. The quarterly meeting may act as a fiscal agent for other events or activities (for example, WQM’s Men’s Retreat or PNQM’s Silent Retreat).

A quarterly meeting provides an opportunity for considering and acting upon concerns from individuals and meetings and forwarding those approved to Annual Session or the appropriate standing committee of the yearly meeting. It also addresses issues which pertain to all Friends but for which there may not be sufficient concern or energy in any one individual meeting. A quarterly meeting is concerned with strengthening and supporting its constituent groups. It is responsible for nurturing new or remote gatherings of Friends. When a sponsoring monthly meeting is clear that a worship group or preparative meeting under its care is ready to become a monthly meeting (see Chapter 6, “New Gatherings of Friends”), it brings its recommendation to the quarterly meeting. In a spirit of tenderness and welcome, the quarterly meeting’s Ministry & Oversight or Ministry & Counsel

Committee establishes a visiting committee to meet with the worship group or preparative meeting and with the visiting committee from the sponsoring monthly meeting. When all are clear that the new group is ready, the Ministry & Oversight Committee or Ministry & Counsel Committee brings a recommendation to the quarterly meeting's meeting for business for approval. The quarterly meeting reports the establishment of the new monthly meeting to the yearly meeting.

The quarterly meeting is also the appropriate body to consider a request from a monthly meeting whose members believe it should be laid down or united with another meeting. After one of its monthly meetings was laid down, the Montana Gathering of Friends, advised by NPYM's Ministry & Oversight Committee, has taken on some functions of a monthly meeting.

To carry out its responsibilities, a quarterly meeting meets regularly, appoints necessary officers and committees, and conducts its business in the usual manner of Friends.¹ It collects and administers funds as needed, derived from an annual assessment of local meetings, based on their numbers. It may appoint an Interim or Continuing Committee to help plan for its sessions and act for it between sessions. The quarterly meeting Ministry & Oversight Committee or Ministry & Counsel Committee is composed of experienced and spiritually sensitive Friends. This committee nurtures the spiritual life of Friends of all ages, contributes to the care and counsel of meetings and worship groups, and advises on the good order and spiritual life of the quarterly meeting sessions. The clerk of each quarterly meeting Ministry & Oversight Committee or Ministry & Counsel Committee, or a designee, serves on the Friend-in-Residence Committee of the yearly meeting.

Formation of Quarterly Meetings. A quarterly meeting may be established upon yearly meeting acceptance of a request from two or more monthly meetings or a request from a quarterly meeting which wishes to be divided into two such meetings. The yearly meeting may also initiate setting off a new quarterly meeting. In any of these cases, the yearly meeting appoints a committee to assist in the organization, and receives the recommendation of that committee before recognizing the quarterly meeting. Where geographical expanses or other circumstances warrant, the formation of associations or gatherings other than quarterly meetings may prove helpful.

¹ Specific structures and procedures vary among quarterly meetings. Each quarterly meeting in North Pacific Yearly Meeting maintains a handbook describing its own practices.