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 isolated 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 has become 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, there are three Quarterly Meetings within North Pacific Yearly Meeting:

- Willamette Quarterly Meeting (WQM), covering Oregon, southwest Washington, and southern Idaho;
- Pacific Northwest Quarterly Meeting (PNQM), covering Washington (apart from the southwest corner) and northern Idaho;
- Montana Gathering of Friends (MGoF). The Sheridan (WY) Worship Group 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. An important function of a Quarterly Meeting is to hear informal reports on activities from constituent groups and, at its spring session, to receive their more formal State of Society Reports (see Chapter __, The Monthly Meeting). It is in this informal and formal sharing that Friends become aware of the state of the spiritual life within the Quarter.

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 for the condition of its constituent groups, strengthening and supporting them. It is responsible for nurturing new or isolated 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 __, 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 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 brings a recommendation to the Quarterly Meeting’s Meeting for
Business for approval. The Quarterly Meeting reports the establishment of the new Preparative or
Monthly Meeting to the Yearly Meeting.

Among other functions, 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.

[[Question for NPYM Friends: Do the paragraphs above reflect your understanding? What else does
your Quarterly Meeting do?]]

Quarterly Meeting Officers and Committees. 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. 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 Committee on Ministry and
Oversight 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’s Ministry and Oversight Committee, or a designee, serves on the Friend-in-Residence
Committee of the Yearly Meeting.

[[Changes reflect current NPYM job descriptions.]]

* Specific structures and procedures vary among Quarterly Meetings. Each Quarterly Meeting in NPYM maintains a handbook describing its own
particular practices.

Formation of Quarterly Meetings. A Quarterly Meeting may be established upon Yearly Meeting
approval 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 up 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.

[[Questions for NPYM Friends: The first sentence above says QMs are established by YM approval of a
request. Does the YM approve a new QM, or accept it, or simply acknowledge it? How do you understand
the process of creating a new Quarterly Meeting?]]

[[Re: the last sentence in the paragraph above, do we have any examples of associations or gatherings
other than QMs? If none, can we delete this sentence?]]

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Some questions for discussion around Quarterly Meetings
in NPYM’s Faith & Practice

From NPYM Friends and the Committee on the Discipline

• What body, if any, has oversight and care for a Quarterly Meeting? What happens when a Quarterly
  Meeting doesn’t seem to be functioning well?

• How were Quarterly Meetings within NPYM formed in the past? How was MGoF recognized as a
  Quarterly Meeting? Does the Yearly Meeting accept a new Quarterly Meeting as an established fact?
  Or approve its formation?
• Is there additional information about your Quarterly Meeting that we need to add?
• What is missing from this material that you would find valuable for Quarterly Meetings?
• What books, pamphlets, articles, or other resources can you recommend consulting about Quarterly Meetings?