



Yearly Meeting of the  
Religious Society of Friends  
(Quakers) in Britain

## Topic 1: Nominations

### Introduction to this draft text

This draft material reflects the current thinking of the **Book of Discipline Revision Committee** on how our new book should sound. It is not final but offered for comment. We hope that Friends will provide feedback to help us shape future drafts.

These drafts aim to describe the principles behind our current practice clearly and concisely. They do not try to include detail. They are drafts of the core content which will eventually be accompanied by supplementary material – this can include handbooks, practical guides, and other things which are helpful but do not need to be approved by Yearly Meeting.

In writing these drafts we have needed to make some decisions about language and style. Friends use many different terms for the Light, the Spirit, God, or whatever you call it. We have chosen to use a small list of terms and usually to stick to one term per topic for clarity. We have aimed to keep sentences short and easy to read. We have considered questions about the formality of the text, whether it sounds friendly and welcoming, and what vocabulary to use. Our goal has been to speak plainly and explain these topics peer to peer, as friends.

It would be useful to receive feedback on:

- How these drafts feel to you as a reader
- Anything which seems especially helpful
- Any parts which are jarring, confusing, or difficult to read
- What you would hope to find in the supplementary material for these topics

We will welcome responses to the four points above, but please don't send detailed drafting/redrafting suggestions on the texts at this stage!

We are also circulating an audio version of both texts, which you can access online through our webpage [Revising Quaker faith & practice | Quakers in Britain](#). This is one of the ways we intend to make the text more accessible. If you listen, we'd also like to know what you think of this audio version.

We welcome responses from individuals or groups of Friends.

If you can, please use our online form to send your responses:

<https://forms.quaker.org.uk/bdrc-comment-on-draft-text/>

Or, if you need to, you can send your responses to:

Michael S Booth (BDRC secretary) at [gfp@quaker.org.uk](mailto:gfp@quaker.org.uk) or by post to:

BDRC,  
Friends House  
Euston Road  
London  
NW1 2BJ

Please can you send responses on this topic by 31 May 2023.

The text in this document is offered to you by members of the Book of Discipline Revision Committee. We look forward to reading and hearing your reactions to it.

Yours, in Friendship

Catherine Brewer, Rosie Carnall, Co-clerks and Michael Phipps, Assistant Clerk  
Book of Discipline Revision Committee

## **1.00 Nominations: How we appoint people to service in different roles**

### **1.00.1**

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

### **1.01 Introduction**

In this chapter we explain what is involved in Quaker nominations processes, and why we use these processes.

Through these processes, we seek to make appointments to roles in a way that builds up our community, uses everyone's gifts, and shares authority and responsibility widely.

Our meetings are alive because we are all involved in upholding and running them. The work of keeping our meetings is shared: we share duties, work, responsibility, power and authority amongst our members. We all have a part in deciding what really needs to be done and who will undertake the necessary work for a set period of time. This discernment lies at the core of the nominations process. It helps the Quaker community fulfil its ministry.

### **1.02 Identifying Individuals' Gifts and Talents**

#### **1.02.1**

To be without an ordained clergy is not to be without either leadership or ministry. The gifts of the Spirit to us include both. For us, calls to particular ministries are usually for a limited period of time, and those gifts pertain to the task rather than the person. In one lifetime a person may be called to a number of ministries.

London Yearly Meeting, 1986

We all have gifts which can be developed and used to serve the divine purposes. We all need to be ready to be called to take our part in upholding our meetings. We can also be called to work in the wider world. When we feel called to a role we should consider it with open hearts and minds. Are we being led to this by the promptings of love and truth? Each person explores their leadings individually, but we also explore them collectively. It is the responsibility of our Quaker communities to help each of us to discover our gifts and how to develop them.

Our nominations process is part of our understanding that there is that of God in everyone, with the eternal possibility of growth through faithfulness and service. We

are equal before God, but each of us brings distinctive gifts and insights which can be used for the spiritual growth of individuals and meetings, for the service of our communities, and for the wider world. We have a broad understanding of 'gifts'. Gifts can include talents such as communication or generosity, professional and life skills like cooking and book-keeping, and spiritual attributes such as wisdom or a deep prayer life. Throughout life, gifts and their right use can change. The obvious choices (appoint the accountant as treasurer and the school teacher to run children's meeting) may not be those which speak to the spiritual needs of the individual or the community. We need to think widely and deeply about each person's gifts to discern how they can best serve this community at this time.

#### 1.02.2

I can well remember the first time that I was approached to give service in my local meeting, though it was nearly thirty years ago. The person who asked me was a Friend for whom I had a healthy respect and she explained carefully the process that had suggested that I was the right person to join the Catering Committee. I had never come across a similar process anywhere before. I remember clearly too how I felt – a sense of belonging, of being fully accepted, with something to contribute to a community I had tentatively joined as a battered spiritual refugee. I had found my place.

Each time I am asked to do something for Quakers I am filled with apprehension about the challenge but know from experience that I can trust the discernment that suggested my name. I have found that I will be given what I need. Each appointment confirms and strengthens my feeling that I belong to the Religious Society of Friends.

My hope is that when I can no longer take on active roles that I will still grow through the service of upholding, supporting and encouraging those who do.

Judith Thompson, 2016

### **1.03 The nominations process**

The nominations process can be complex. It might be pictured as a machine with four moving parts:

- the Spirit which leads
- the appointing body which asks someone to serve
- the nominations process which finds someone who might be able to serve
- the individual who is asked to serve.

Appointing bodies should be clear about what tasks really need to be done, why they need doing, and how best to divide up the work of supporting our meetings. It can help to review regularly the way we organise ourselves. The appointing body should consider with clarity and common sense whether a post, group or committee is still needed or can realistically be sustained. We should not live beyond our means

financially and we should not attempt to live beyond our means in terms of time or strength.

## **1.04 Discernment in Quaker Nominations**

Appointing people to serve in roles in our meetings is a process of co-operative discernment. It requires an open mind and close attention to each other and to the Spirit. Appointments are made by the whole meeting, but many Quaker communities use nominations committees or groups to help with the discernment process leading up to an appointment. At other times, a nomination for a specific role can be taken from those present in a meeting or when someone volunteers.

A good nominations process:

- Involves the whole meeting in sharing responsibility for appointing people to take on work and for managing how it is done.
- Has clarity about what work is needed, why and for how long.
- Is rooted in worship, waiting on the Spirit.
- Is based on knowledge of the present skills and future potential of members and attenders.
- Helps our communities become more diverse and inclusive.
- Recognises present and future needs of the meeting.
- Has a deep understanding of Quaker principles.
- Makes provision for record keeping, safeguarding and other aspects of good process as relevant.

Nominations are an important part of our way of working. Appointments are made as a collective decision, as in all Quaker business, and everyone involved in the appointing body carries responsibility for them. Nominations work is not simply finding people to fill roles. We are following the leadings of the Spirit to grow both the meeting and individuals. We seek to understand the gifts and potential of everyone in the community. It is helpful to identify people who might grow through the service and bring fresh perspectives to the task, not only those who are already experienced in Quaker work.

### **1.04.1**

Where the committee is discerning the actual name to nominate ... trust becomes difficult. Sometimes the pattern of names that comes out is suspicious to some Friends – the same names being cycled through the 'more important' roles, and limited opportunities for meaningful service to other Friends, or those newer to our community. Sometimes there is a strong but frustrated desire to serve that burns in a particular Friend, and the committee seem to be unaware – or uncaring. Sometimes the committee tells the Meeting that they could not find someone willing and able to serve, but a Friend is sat thinking 'I could do that, and they never asked me'. It is important to remember the important role of nominations in bringing people more fully into participation in our community."

Sam Barnett-Cormack, "Understanding and Trusting Quaker Nominations",  
Openings blog, 27 November 2017

Those making nominations need to take time for reflection. Ideally, a nominating body will learn about everyone in the community, not just those who are able to be present on a particular occasion. This allows for the consideration of the whole community and its present and future needs, for consideration of Friends' gifts and potential gifts, for encouraging the timid to undertake service in the knowledge that they will be upheld by others in the meeting, and for giving those who have worked hard time off from Quaker roles.

### **1.05 Who makes the appointment?**

A nominations group or committee does not have the power to appoint anyone: that rests with the appointing body which asked them to find a name or names for a particular post. This process grows out of our understanding that power must not lie in the hands of one group or person. Shared power, with each role defined by both a description of the task and a time limit, gives authority to the post holder within the limits of the role.

In their work, nominations bodies need to have both openness and honesty, and complete confidentiality within the group. They need to be well grounded in Quaker ways. They need sensitivity in approaching those who might be appointed for service, and tact where reappointment for a second term is not felt to be right. Keeping confidential minutes of decisions can be helpful for future nominations groups to understand what decisions have been made and why.

### **1.06 When things don't work out**

However prayerful and careful the appointment process has been, there will be times when an appointment does not work out as hoped. In dealing with this, meetings will need tact and sensitivity because the circumstances that lead to this situation will be many and varied. It is at the discretion of the appointing meeting to end an appointment at any time if it is necessary to do so.

#### **1.06.1**

The great aim of a Christian community is to enable its members to know what their gift is and then to enable them to exercise it to the glory of God. This may sometimes involve a prolonged and perhaps painful exercise before some members come to accept that the gift they have to offer is not the one they thought.

New life from old roots, 1965

Friends who are unable to continue in their appointed role should ask to be released from service by the appointing meeting, who should usually agree to this request.

#### **1.06.2**

I would never have dreamed of volunteering for most of the posts for which I have been nominated. Usually, on being approached about a nomination, my response has been to doubt my capabilities and to wonder why on earth they would think of asking me. Of course, it may be that hard-pressed nominations committees have to 'take what we can get'.... But I would also like to think that sometimes they have identified some potential in me that could be encouraged to develop through taking on a new role within the Quaker community. This is confirmed to me by the fact that I can't think of a single Quaker 'job' that I have regretted taking on; even though some were extremely challenging, I have always felt enriched by the experience overall. The support of the Friends whom one hopes to serve is crucial in this process; when I have felt upheld by the meeting, I have been able to trust that, with God's help, I will manage to be 'good enough'.

Towards the source, 2014