

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC)

Visits for International Membership

When a visit for membership is agreed, the International Membership Applications Committee (IMAC) tries to appoint as visitors at least one local Friend and one visiting Friend. The section secretaries are consulted to help in this process. Whenever possible the IMAC tries to appoint visitors who have the same mother tongue as the applicant; otherwise, a language should be chosen which both applicant and visitors can speak with confidence. Failing that, an interpreter will be appointed.

Where applicants for membership are only temporarily resident in an area in which there is no formal Quaker group, and they plan to move to an area with a Friends meeting/church, the IMAC aims to deal with the application in the light of the practice of that meeting/church.

With these needs and the added problem of distance, there can be a prolonged wait before a physical visit can take place. In such cases, consideration is given to holding an electronic visit, using Skype or similar technology.

The visit is carried out in a spirit of worship, with a real sense of sharing with one another, to discern whether the Religious Society of Friends is the right spiritual home in which the applicant can continue to grow. The visitors will also share their experience of membership with the applicant. The visit is conducted with a light touch so that real interpersonal sharing can take place. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers to any of the questions that will be asked.

Topics covered can include when and where the applicant first encountered Friends, what has led him or her to apply for membership at this point, what does meeting for worship mean to the applicant, and the applicant’s approach to Friends’ testimonies, bearing in mind that absolute acceptance of them all is not a requirement for membership. The responsibilities of membership will also be covered, including whether the applicant understands and supports the process and implications of Quaker decision making. The structures of FWCC, and the support available from other IMs, the section and the World Office should also be discussed.

The visitors may also ask about the life situation of the applicant and what links he or she has made with like-minded individuals or spiritual friends, be they Quaker or not, as well as exploring what the applicant has read in the Bible, Quaker journals, other Quaker literature, and other writings.

After the visit, the visitors will send their report to the IMAC for consideration at its next meeting. The committee will consider the report and make a decision about whether to accept the applicant into membership.

When the IMAC makes a decision to accept someone into membership, the Committee appoints one of its members to write a letter of welcome. International Members are encouraged to keep in touch with their visitors and with FWCC through their FWCC section office and through the IM Secretary in the FWCC World Office. They are also encouraged to make and maintain contact with other International Members, in their section and beyond.



FWCC enables Friends to work together by

Arranging conferences and gatherings

Encouraging intervisitation and travel under religious concern

Participating in ecumenical and interfaith events

Sharing information about Friends around the world; publishing bulletins, *Friends World News*, as well as books and pamphlets about Friends in several languages

Facilitating understanding and cooperation between mission and service bodies of Friends worldwide

Maintaining contact with isolated Friends and groups through visits and correspondence

Furthering Friends’ concerns such as racial equality, sustainability, women’s rights, peace, economic justice, racial equality and witnessing in the world

Acting as Friends’ official voice at the United Nations and its agencies

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About the Friends World Committee for Consultation

The Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) helps to transcend the differences among Friends; these differences include language, culture, nationality, and in the emphasis placed on different aspects of our common Christian and Quaker heritage and witness. It is a channel of communication among Friends, helping us to explore and nurture our identity as Quakers so that we can discover and be faithful to our true place in the world as a people of God.

The Sections

There are four sections which range in size from near 160,000 Friends in Africa Section to around 12,600 in the Asia-West Pacific Section. The Sections also differ widely in staff, programme and financial resources. Within the overall aims of FWCC, each Section is autonomous, holding regional gatherings, publishing materials and organizing its own programmes.

Your section office is your first point of contact for matters relating to forming groups and other local issues.

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The World Office

The World Office, which is currently situated in London, England, serves as a centre of worldwide communication for FWCC and its affiliated groups. Nearly all yearly meetings in the world are affiliated to FWCC; their members are the FWCC membership. Cordial contacts are maintained with those yearly meetings that have not affiliated.

The Committee appoints a General Secretary who works from the World Office. In particular, the World Office organizes Plenary Meetings and other world gatherings and consultations, implements Committee decisions and serves the Sections and maintains contact with isolated Friends and worship groups (International Members) throughout the world, as well as the Quaker service bodies. FWCC acts as the representative body of the whole Quaker family in worldwide ecumenical bodies and at the United Nations.

By means of correspondence, publications and staff travel, the office seeks to bring Friends in closer touch with one another and help them to experience the world-wide character of the Society of Friends.