

Our Wider Ministry
Friends General Conference Representative Report
From Charley Earp to
Illinois Yearly Meeting 2011 Annual Sessions

Friends,

Ministry has come to be a focal point in my walk as a Friend. FGC describes itself at times as a “service organization” and that has some truth, however, that word seems inadequate to me. FGC is the work of hundreds of Quakers coming together in a wider ministry on behalf of our Yearly Meetings and other affiliates. We don’t just give efficient service, but worshipful ministry.

FGC’s program of reshaping itself as a more focused, less top-heavy organization continued in earnest this year. We completed the reshaping of our program committees, which had become unwieldy and costly. In place of seven “ministry cluster” program committees, a new Committee to Nurture Ministries was created. Underneath this umbrella, subcommittees are being shaped in line with our ministry goals adopted in 2009, which are:

1. Nurture meetings and worship groups.
2. Provide resources and opportunities for meetings, Friends, and seekers to experience the Light, the living presence of God.
3. Help meetings guide Friends to discern the leadings of the Inward Teacher and to grow into ministry.
4. Transform our awareness so that our corporate and individual attitudes and actions fully value and encompass the blessed diversity of our human family.
5. Work to grow and sustain a vital, diverse, and loving community of Friends based on a shared search for unity in the Spirit.
6. Articulate, communicate, and exemplify Friends’ practices, core experiences, and the call to live and witness to our faith.
7. Promote dialogue with others, sharing with them our corporate experience of Divine Truth and listening to and learning from their experience of the same.

Details are being worked out and at present three subcommittees within the CNM have been formed to focus on the themes of “Growing, Transformation, and Deepening.” Roughly speaking, the subcommittee for Growing focuses on outreach and education, Transformation focuses on Youth, Racism, & Diversity, while Deepening will care for Traveling Ministries, supporting YM clerks, and couple enrichment. The specifics will be discerned and changed as Way Opens.

One special change is that the committee on which I’ve served since my first Central Committee, the Christian and Interfaith Relations Committee was moved from the ministries cluster to the Administrative cluster, in light of our care for permanent ecumenical relationships and obligations of FGC.

Another big change this year was the retirement of Bruce Birchard as General Secretary. Bruce had served since October, 1992, and we all were sad to see him leave, but also rejoicing in his new stage of life. We know we haven’t seen the last of Bruce.

Barry Crossno of Dallas, Texas, was named the new General Secretary. There is a full interview with Barry on FGC’s website.

I strongly urge Friends to consider substantial contributions to FGC. We are winding down our capital campaign and falling short of our goals. This is not a surprise and many changes, including difficult reductions in staff have been made to adjust our expenses. We are on a good path, but there is still much work ahead to reach a more secure situation.

A letter from the clerk of the General Secretary Search Committee.

Barry Crossno
Dear Friends,

With deep appreciation and excitement I am pleased to announce that Barry Crossno of Dallas Friends Meeting will be the next General Secretary of Friends General Conference. On the evening of Friday January, 28th the General Secretary Search Committee recommended Barry to the FGC Executive Committee as their finalist. This recommendation was received and approved with a spirit of enthusiasm and great joy.

Quakerism caught Barry's interest when one of his professors at the University of Dallas described it to him. He attended his first Quaker meeting at age 28 and began attending off and on for three years. He moved to Taos New Mexico and started regularly attending meeting there, supported by a Friend who intentionally spent time with him exploring Quakerism more deeply. Through this experience he became clear that he was a Quaker and started down the Quaker path. After moving back to Dallas he was inspired to work with members of the Dallas Friends Meeting to provide Quakerism 101 workshops, which helped them welcome newcomers while also strengthening their spiritual grounding. He has shared much of his thoughts and concerns about Quakerism in his sporadically updated blog, The Quaker Dharma. While still a member of Dallas Friends Meeting, he is currently sojourning at Pendle Hill.

Barry's path through the professional world has been similarly diverse. He was an executive at two computer recycling firms, worked as the only Quaker at the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana (Buddhist) Tradition, he raised money for two different art institutions, and, most recently served as the Development and IT Manager for Pendle Hill.

He has been deeply involved with FGC as a member of the Quaker Quest Travel Team, the Advancement and Outreach and Development committees as well as serving since 2006 on Central Committee. He will begin serving in his new position during the summer of 2011.

The General Secretary Search Committee was blessed by the number of strongly qualified candidates that expressed interest in this position and is grateful to all who have been involved in the process: the volunteers, the applicants and the staff.

In the light,

Rich Van Dellen
Clerk, General Secretary Search Committee