

## **PART III – PRACTICES OF GOVERNMENT**

### **CHAPTER I – Membership**

#### **Section I – Participating Membership**

- 1. Qualification and Definition-** A participating member of the Friends Church is a person— adult, young adult, or advanced adolescent—who has made a credible profession of faith, and who, either on that profession or by certificate from another Friends church, has been admitted to full membership by the church. Participating members are those who show an active interest in the local church by giving it a major part of their attendance and support. Such members make the church what it is by their ready participation in its activities and services, their genuine interest in its objectives, and their faithful and loyal material support in tithes and offerings (Part II, Chapter I, 4).
- 2. Application for Membership-** A person desiring to be united with a local church may make application in writing or in person to the local or extension church through the pastor, or other members of the Elders Board or Leadership Team.
- 3. Report and Official Action-** It is the duty of the Elders Board or Leadership Team, before presenting the name of an applicant for membership, to ascertain whether the person makes a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, the applicant's sincerity being attested by manner of life, whether the applicant accepts the teachings of Christian religion as held by Evangelical Friends Church – Mid America Yearly Meeting, whether the person will conform to these Practices of Government. Its judgment on these matters is passed on to the local or extension church, which acts to accept or reject the applicant. The clerk notifies the applicant as to the action of the church.
- 4. Public Reception-** Announcement of the reception of new members may be made publicly in a meeting for worship, that all the members may extend to them are welcome.

#### **Section II – Non-Participating Membership**

Those persons who have been participating members of the church, but who currently do not show an active interest in the local church by attendance, financial assistance, correspondence, prayers, or in other ways may be listed as non-participating members.

The Elders Board or Leadership Team should contact individuals personally or by letter, seeking to encourage them to become active, both before and after they are listed as non- participating members. Non-participating members are to be listed on the annual statistical report, except those who are members of an extension church (Part II, Chapter II, Section I, H, 4, a)

#### **Section III – Associate Membership**

1. **Qualification and Definition-** Children born or adopted into the homes of members are, with the consent of the parents, enrolled as associate members. Children of those applying for membership may be so enrolled on their request and with the consent of the parents.

2. **From Associate to Participating Membership-** Persons enrolled as associate members are enrolled as participating members when they have made a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord and have accepted the teachings of the Gospel as held by Evangelical Friends Church – Mid America Yearly Meeting. If an associate member does not make such a profession of faith by the time, he or she reaches the age of 21, upon recommendation by the Elders Board or Leadership Team, and approval by the church, the name is then removed from the list of members.

#### **Section IV – Affiliate Membership**

In situations where persons not Friends (or Friends temporarily located) are actively interested and engaged in the work of a church, such may be admitted to affiliate membership without severing their relations with another denomination or home church. Affiliate members recognize and fulfill the obligation of regular attendance in the services, active moral support of the church and its work, and giving toward its financial program. They may hold offices in the church, subject to the discretion of the local church (Part II, Chapter II, Section 1, B). They are not counted in the annual reports of membership but may be reported separately if desired. Children of such members may become affiliate members also, or at the request or by the consent of their parents, they may become associate members of the church. Affiliate members may be received into full membership when they so desire.

#### **Section V – Transfer by Certificate or Letter**

1. **Among Friends-** When members, or associate members, desire to unite with another meeting, they request their church to issue a certificate of membership. Such a transfer of membership may be initiated by the local church when it deems best to do so. Transfer of membership is not complete until the church accepting the certificate has informed the church which issued it.

2. **With Other Denominations-** When an applicant for membership produces a letter of recommendation from another denomination, the church may receive the applicant on this recommendation or on the person's own profession of faith or may reject the applicant as is judged best. If a member wishes to unite with some other body of Christians, the church may grant to the church of the member's choice a letter stating the member's Christian standing; thereupon the person's membership with Friends terminates.

3. **Transfer of Ministers-** (See Part III, Chapter VI, 3).

4. **Record of Transfers-** The acceptance and issuance of all certificates are to be recorded in the minutes of the churches, and the lists of members corrected accordingly.

(NOTE: Sample membership forms are included in Part V, Chapter V of this *Faith and Practice*.)

#### **Section VI – Resignation and Forfeiture**

1. **Resignation-** Resignation of membership may be submitted in writing to the presiding clerk of the church. The church may then exercise its discretion as to accepting it.
2. **Uniting with Another Denomination-** When a member has united with another religious body which functions as a denomination, information concerning the fact authorizes the church to remove that person's name from the list of members; the church should inform the person of its action.
3. **Forfeiture-** Members who move away from any Friends church should correspond with their churches through their Elders Board or Leadership Team. In case no communication has been received from a non-participating member for a period of three years, the church, having made reasonable effort to get in touch with the member, at its discretion, may instruct the recording clerk to remove the person's name from the list of members.

## CHAPTER II – Pastors and Other Christian Workers

### Section I – Duties and Privileges of Pastors

1. **Initiation of Pastoral Service-** The initiative in arrangements for the pastoral ministry is taken by the local Elders Board or Leadership Team (Part II, Chapter II, D), which, after due consultation with the General Superintendent, reports to the local church for its action. The local church, when satisfied with the report (to include an agreement on terms of financial support), extends the call. It is suggested that the local church formulate a written understanding with the pastor regarding the length of service, whether it is for one year, for a specified term of years, or for an indefinite time. It is of mutual benefit for churches and pastors to plan for longer terms of service. When a call has been accepted, the clerk of the local church shall so notify the General Superintendent.

When a new pastor comes from another Friends Yearly Meeting and when the person's membership and ministerial standing have been accepted, the church should request the Yearly Meeting leadership to issue a minister's certificate.

2. **Pastoral Care-** Pastors must carry on their labor in harmony with the principles of the denomination and agreeable to the provisions of this book of *Faith and Practice*, taking care that opportunity be afforded in all meetings for worship for the free exercise by members of the congregation of any gifts for service which the Lord may have conferred.

The pastor and the Elders Board or Leadership Team share the responsibility for the spiritual care of the flock. The pastor may fulfill his or her part by carrying on, in addition to pulpit ministry, a program of systematic calling in the homes of members and other attenders, by individual counseling, by giving attention to the sick and bereaved, and by helping the needy in the name of the church. A pastor should, moreover, endeavor to encourage the departments of the church, such as the Sunday School and the Friends Youth, by presence and counsel. The pastor is an advisory member of all the committees appointed by the church and exercises necessary supervision over their activities, lending incentive and encouragement when needed and giving advice and instruction for the proper functioning of these agencies. The pastor may assist them further by presenting special messages (or giving way for an invited speaker to do so) on the special phases of their work. Pastors should not in any sense dominate the work

of the church but should strive to bring every officer, committee, and team to full activity and efficiency, with each reaching and maintaining complete responsibility for the performance of its duties.

3. **Unrecorded Pastors-** In cases where it seems advisable for a church to employ as pastor a person who has not yet been recorded, or for the Yearly Meeting Elders Board to approve such a person for a special ministry, the presiding clerk of the Yearly Meeting, upon recommendation by the Chairperson of the Elders Board and the General Superintendent, issues to such pastor year by year an Annual Certificate. This certificate authorizes the pastor to fulfill the usual functions of a minister, including the performing of wedding ceremonies when proper arrangements have been made with the civil authorities.

4. **Performance of Marriage Ceremonies-** One who has been recorded as a minister of the Gospel has all the rights and responsibilities usually pertaining thereto including the performing of wedding ceremonies. The minister should exercise discretion in using the powers of performing wedding ceremonies, giving adequate counseling to those being married. In the use of such authority, and any other which involves legal procedure regulated by civil law, pastors must be careful to observe strictly all demands of such law.

5. **Annual Report of Pastoral Activities-** Every pastor employed within the Yearly Meeting sends an annual report, on a blank provided for the purpose, to the General Superintendent. Pastors make all the required statements concerning their work and activities.

6. **Continuation or Termination of Pastoral Service-** The pastor may be called for another year or term of service at the discretion of the local church; this should be done not less than three months before the close of the pastoral year.

When possible, termination should coincide with the close of the pastoral year. Pastors feeling that their work is done may terminate this relationship by written notice at least three months in advance. If the local church feels dissatisfied with the pastoral relationship, the Elders Board should meet with the pastor to discuss grievances. At their discretion, the pastor may be asked to be absent while the final decision is being reached. If a pastor's services are no longer required, the pastor should be given written notice at least three months in advance.

In certain situations, an immediate removal of a pastor may be required, due to failures in morals, spiritual values, or integrity. In such instances the local Elders Board or Leadership Team and/or the Yearly Meeting Elders Board may take such action for the good of the local church and all parties involved. Care should be given to provide a redemptive ministry to the pastor involved and to care for finances for a reasonable period of time to allow for adjustments to be made.

## **Section II – Other Christian Workers**

1. **Appointment-** The Elders Board or Leadership Team may from time to time recommend, and the local church may appoint if it sees fit, members who are not ministers to perform some special types of service for the church. These may include assistant pastors, parish workers, musical directors, vocal or

instrumental musicians, youth workers, or helpers for any other service which contributes to the spiritual programs of the church.

2. **Liberation and Recommendation-** When a Christian worker as defined above feels led, and an opportunity has been offered, to perform some special type of service temporarily outside his/her own local church, the worker presents the concern to the Elders Board or Leadership Team. If this board unites in the concern, it recommends to the church that a certificate of its unity and approval be granted. If the church concurs, it may grant the certificate, affirming the worker's good standing and usefulness in the church and commending that person to the fellowship of those among whom he or she will labor.

3. **Special Speakers-** Local meetings should exercise care in allowing persons to speak in their meetings, even though they may represent themselves as being involved in some form of ministry. Care should be taken to make certain that those who are members of other meetings or Yearly Meetings are in good standing with their meetings. In relation to those who are not Friends, care should be exercised to determine if these have the approval of the proper authorities of their own church. A special caution should be noted in relation to persons who denounce the church or teach contrary to Friends' belief and practice.

### CHAPTER III – Dealing with Offenders

Under normal conditions problems arising from dealing with offenders are handled originally on the local level by the appropriate committee. Care should be taken to examine thoroughly all facets of the problem in a spirit of Christian love. Where local conditions make such action necessary, the Superintendent should be called upon for counsel in dealing with any disorder or insubordination which may arise. The Elders Board of the Yearly Meeting, with the assistance of the Superintendent, are authorized to take action as necessary. The following sections explain the manner in which appeals may be made.

#### Section I – Ministers

1. **Grounds for Investigation-** When there is evidence that a minister has lost the gift in the ministry or usefulness in his or her station, or no longer represents Evangelical Friends Church – Mid America Yearly Meeting in the ministry or is not in harmony with the doctrines and practices of Friends as stated in this book of *Faith and Practice*, a person's right to retain recognition as a minister is brought into question.

2. **Initiation of Action-** Action requesting that a minister be investigated may originate in the local Elders Board or Leadership Team, Area Elders Board, by the General Superintendent or the Yearly Meeting Elders Board. Action originating in the local body is forwarded to the Yearly Meeting board.

3. **Investigation and Final Action-** The Yearly Meeting Elders Board, or a committee appointed by them, then investigates the case and reports its findings at the earliest opportunity. If the Elders Board and the General Superintendent, after laboring with the minister in question with love and prayer, find the charges are sustained, the Yearly Meeting Elders Board approves the person's deposition from the ministry. The Certificate of Recording is immediately and indefinitely suspended and surrendered. A record of the action is filed in the Yearly Meeting Elders Board minutes, and the person's name deleted from the list of recorded ministers without further action. The action shall be reported to the Yearly

Meeting. Appeals may be made before the Elders Board or before the Yearly Meeting as outlined in Section III below.

## **Section II – Erring Members**

1. **Causes for Action and Preliminary Measures-** Any member who fails to live a consistent moral life, who is guilty of disorder or of conduct unbecoming to a Christian, who habitually neglects attendance of meetings for worship without reasonable excuse, or who denies the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion, is dealt with in love and prayer by the local Elders Board or Leadership Team. It is the local church leadership’s responsibility to take the initiative in such a case.
2. **Formal Complaints and Further Dealings-** When the board has exercised proper care without avail, it lodges with the church a formal complaint in writing against the erring member. It must be evident that the board members have conferred with the member in love to seek to show the error and to lead the erring member to repentance and confession, that he or she may be reclaimed from their erring way and restored to fellowship with the church.
3. **Final Action-** If the exercise of due care and forbearance proves to be without avail, the offender maintaining a willful course or continuing to neglect meetings for worship (the latter for a space of three years), the church executes a minute of disownment, and the clerk furnishes the offender a copy thereof and reports to the next business session of the church that this has been done.

## **Section III – Appeals**

1. **Filing an Appeal-** When a member who has been under discipline as an offender is dissatisfied with the decision of the church, the member may file with the local church at its next regular session or the one succeeding it, an appeal to the Yearly Meeting Elders Board for a review of the case. The church enters the same upon its minutes, sends a copy to the Elders Board, and appoints a committee of three to represent it in the case before the board.
2. **Procedure Setting Aside the Judgment of the Local Church-** If it is found that the offense has not been correctly adjudged, or that the charge has not been sufficiently sustained, or that by any irregularity in the proceedings the rights of the appellant have been infringed, the board sets aside the judgment of the local church. The ground of the decision is entered upon its minutes, and the local church affected is informed thereof. If the grounds be one of irregularity of procedure only, the local church is at liberty to take up the case again by regular action.
3. **Appeal to the Yearly Meeting-** Should the appellant be dissatisfied with the decision of the Elders Board, he or she may file with the next session or the one succeeding it (but not later), an appeal to the Yearly Meeting for its review of the case. The board enters the same upon its minutes, informs the Yearly Meeting thereof, and appoints a committee of three or more to represent it in the case before the Yearly Meeting or a committee of that body.

4. **Yearly Meeting Action-** The Yearly Meeting appoints a committee, which examines into and adjudges the nature of the offense and the proceedings in the case. It considers fully the statement of the case by the appellant and the testimony of the respondents (the local Elders Board or Leadership Team) and examines also the minutes of the church recording the case. It then reports its judgment to the Yearly Meeting, and the decision of the Yearly Meeting is final. The clerk notifies the appellant of this action in writing and reports the performance of this duty to the next session of the Yearly Meeting.
5. **Appeal by the Local Church-** The local church may appeal to the Yearly Meeting in a case where it may feel aggrieved by the decision of the Elders Board. The procedure is the same as given in paragraph 4 above.
6. **Rights of Appellant-** The appellant has the right to be present during the appointment of the Yearly Meeting committee in the case, and to object to any persons nominated for this committee. The objections are adjudged by the meeting.
7. **Notification of Subordinate Churches-** Every decision on case of appeal is recorded in the minutes of the Yearly Meeting, and the clerk of that meeting forwards a transcript thereof to the church from whence it came, with instructions to enter the same in its own minutes.

## **CHAPTER IV – Marriage**

1. **Its Spiritual Nature-** Since God instituted marriage, His will should be sought prayerfully by those who consider marriage. Minors are to get the consent of parents or guardians prior to marriage. Those who plan to marry should know each other well and realize the responsibility involved in setting up a new home. If marriage is entered properly, it can be a happy, beautiful relationship beyond one's anticipation.
2. **Legal Requirements-** Those who unite in marriage and the ministers who officiate in the ceremonies shall be careful to meet all legal requirements of the state in which they reside, such as the registration of the minister, the securing of the marriage license, the authorization of the ceremony by the minister, the minister's certification of it to those who are wed, and the minister's report to the proper civil officers.
3. **Forms of Ceremony-** Those who wish to unite in marriage may do so according to the traditional Friends custom or in any other way which they may prefer. It is urged that a religious ceremony be chosen above a civil ceremony and that needless ostentation and expense be avoided. The traditional Friends ceremony is as follows:
  - A. Parties desiring to unite in marriage according to the long-standing custom of the Friends should inform the local church of which one or both of them are members that they intend marriage with each other, which church shall enter the proposal on its minutes; and, if either party is a minor, consent of parents or guardians must be given to the church.
  - B. If either party be a member of another local church, the local church where the proposition is introduced should have information thereof, so that the name of the local church may be entered on the record.
  - C. When any one of the members desires to join in marriage with one who is not a member of a Friends church, the same procedure is recommended as when both are members, the local church noting the fact of non-membership on its records.

- D. If any objections have been presented to the local Elders Board or Leadership Team, which they shall judge reasonable, they should inform the local church, and a committee should be appointed to investigate and report, when the meeting may dismiss the case or proceed with it, as shall appear right.
- E. If no objection appears, the parties shall be left at liberty to accomplish their marriage according to the Practices of Government.
- F. A committee of two men and two women shall be appointed to attend the marriage, to see that it is properly conducted and make report to the local church.
- G. Local churches shall not, in any case, recognize marriage proceedings under circumstances which would violate the laws of the state in which the marriage is solemnized.
- H. Marriages under the Practices of Government shall be solemnized in a regular weekday meeting, or in a meeting appointed by the local church.
- I. At a suitable time in the meeting the parties should stand up and, taking each other by the right hand, declare to the following effect, the man first: "In the presence of the Lord and before these witnesses, I take thee, D.E., to be my wife, promising with divine assistance to be unto thee a loving and faithful husband, as long as we both shall live." And the woman in like manner: "In the presence of the Lord and before these witnesses, I take thee, A.B., to be my husband, promising with divine assistance to be unto thee a loving and faithful wife, as long as we both shall live."
- J. A certificate is then to be signed by the parties and then it is to be audibly read by some proper person. At the conclusion of the meeting, it should be signed by others as witnesses.

## **CHAPTER V – The Queries** (Checklist of *Faith and Practice*)

These Queries, with the related passages of Scripture, are intended to serve as a reminder of Friends standards of moral and spiritual life. They should be read at least once a year in the local business sessions. Their use can help individuals examine themselves to see if their lives are consistent with Christian principles. Serious consideration of these questions should tend to promote the spiritual welfare of the church as a whole as well as that of individuals.

1. Do you earnestly seek to maintain a life in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you practice the daily reading of the Scriptures in your families, giving time for waiting upon the Lord? Are you watchful not to be unduly absorbed by temporal affairs? Are you careful to avoid places and activities inconsistent with a Christian character? "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30 NIV)
2. Do you love one another as becomes the followers of Christ? Are you careful of the reputation of others? When differences arise do you make earnest efforts to end them speedily? "A new command I give you; Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35 NIV)
3. Do you attend regularly the services of your church and participate in them actively? Do you prayerfully endeavor to minister, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in humble dependence upon



Christ, the spiritual gifts with which you have been entrusted? "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25 NIV)

4. Do you provide for the suitable Christian education and recreation of your children and those under your care, and endeavor to train them for upright and useful lives? Are you thoughtful and careful to supervise their social activities and to guard them against harmful reading and associates? Do you encourage them to read and study the Scriptures? Do you prayerfully seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in your efforts for their conversion and growth in grace? "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4 NIV)

5. Do you abstain from the abuse of alcohol, drugs, and any other substance or behavior that might lead to addiction or dependance? Do you intelligently and lovingly use your influence to minister to those already damaged by such abuses? "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19-21 NIV)

6. Do you consistently practice Jesus' spirit and teaching of love and goodwill to all people? Do you support every Christian movement to do away with war and preparation for war? Do you endeavor to make clear to all whom you can influence and especially our own youth, that war is utterly un-Christian and cannot be reconciled with the spirit of Christ? "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy, without holiness no one shall see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14 NIV)

7. Do you try to observe simplicity in your manner of living? Do you frequently inspect your affairs and settle your accounts? Are you careful to live within your income and avoid involving yourselves in business beyond your ability to manage? Are you just in your dealings, punctual to your promises, prompt in the payment of your debts, and free from defrauding the public revenue? "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness." (Matthew 6:33 NIV)

8. Do you make diligent effort to acquaint yourselves and those under your care with the spiritual and material needs of the world? Do you support by prayer and systematic giving those who are laboring to extend Christ's kingdom, and do you make evident your loving sympathy with them and their service? "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and truth." (1 John 3:17-18 NIV)

9. Do you exercise your rights and duties as a citizen to vote, to fulfill jury duty, and in other ways to bring Christian influence in all levels of government? "Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor." (Romans 13:7 NIV)

10. Do you uphold the doctrinal beliefs of Evangelical Friends Church – Mid America Yearly Meeting and support its ministries? "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them." (1 Timothy 4:16a NIV)

## CHAPTER VI – Ministerial Procedures

Friends believe that only God ordains a minister. His people recognize God’s ordination and record those called and gifted for public ministry. For legal purposes and tax requirements, the term Recording is interchangeable with the term “ordination.”

Friends also believe that ministers may be called by God in a single instant, but they develop over time. They need Godly character, biblical knowledge, and ministry skills to maximize their effectiveness. The local church and its leaders play a significant role in discerning God’s gifting, equipping for ministry and encouraging those called to lifelong calling.

### **1. Procedures for Recording of Ministers, Certification for Ministers in Training, and Liberation for Special Ministries**

#### **A. Recording of Ministers-**

- 1) Recognizing the Gift: When a member, man or woman, has spoken in the public ministry to the edification and spiritual help of the congregation, the local Elders Board or Leadership Team shall carefully consider whether the person has received from the Head of the Church a gift for ministry. Persons may occasionally speak, even fluently, to edification, or engage in exhortation, or give testimony to their experience, or offer vocal prayer with evidence of spiritual power without having received, necessarily, a gift for ministry. The following guidelines are suggested to help in determining who should be recommended for recording:
  - a) The person should have a clear sense of Divine call upon his or her life.
  - b) The person must have demonstrated gifts in public ministry, such as teaching, preaching, pastoring, evangelism, administration, counseling, and/or other similar gifts.
  - c) These public gifts should have been demonstrated over a sufficient period of time to indicate stability.
  - d) The person must be of consistent moral and spiritual character.
  - e) The person must have emotional stability.
  - f) The person must be showing evidence of developing maturity.
- 2) Encouraging its exercise: If its decision is affirmative, the local Elders Board or Leadership Team then endeavors to encourage the member in the exercise of the gift and to release that person into active service in the ministry.
- 3) Consultation with the Yearly Meeting Superintendent: When the local Elders Board or Leadership Team is thoroughly satisfied that the person under consideration (hereafter called the candidate) has a gift for ministry, it shall consult the Superintendent regarding the significance and process of recording.
- 4) Report to the church: If the local Elders Board or Leadership Team judges that the candidate has a gift for ministry that is worthy of recording, the clerk presents a

recommendation to the local business meeting recommending that the recording process be initiated.

- 5) Action of the church: If the church acts favorably, the clerk sends a copy of the recommendation and a written report to the Area Superintendent and the Area Elders Board. A copy shall also be sent to the Yearly Meeting Elders Board.
- 6) Action of the Area Elders Board: The Area Superintendent, upon receiving the information for recording of a ministerial candidate, immediately requests a copy of the candidate's informational questionnaire from the Yearly Meeting office. The Area Superintendent will arrange for a meeting of the Area Elders Board with the candidate to select a qualified mentor who will meet with the candidate on a regular basis, to give instruction and guidance to the candidate, and shepherd him/her through the recording process. With the mentor's help and supervision, the candidate will work to define or refine his/her statement of faith and philosophy of ministry. He/she will be asked to prepare a written statement of belief in the fundamental and distinctive doctrines of Friends and view of Friends testimonies as recorded in this book of *Faith and Practice*. The Area Superintendent shall request that the candidate have college and seminary transcripts sent to the Yearly Meeting office. The Area Superintendent may also arrange for psychological assessments for the candidate and secure appraisals from those named as references in the informational questionnaire. When all these documents have been received, the Area Superintendent will present the information secured to the Area Elders Board. The Area Elders Board then considers carefully the previous actions of the local Elders Board or Leadership Team and church and all documents submitted, giving attention to character and personality traits, the evidence of a gift and divine call, the candidate's beliefs in Friends doctrines and views on Friends testimonies, the adequacy of the candidate's formal and/or informal education, and the record of service previously and currently being rendered. The Area Elders Board then determines whether or not to bring the candidate under its care by scheduling a personal interview with the candidate. If the Area Elders Board determines that recording is appropriate for the candidate, it will instruct the candidate about the course of action that is needed to proceed (If it determines that recording is not appropriate, it will communicate the reasons for this determination to the local church). The Area Elders Board shall give instruction and guidance to the candidate under its care for a minimum of two years. For a mature person with a proven record of ministerial service, this two-year requirement may be waived with the concurrence of the local Elders Board or Leadership Team, Area Elders Board, and Yearly Meeting Elders Board. At the end of two years, the candidate will be interviewed by the Area Elders Board, who will also solicit input from the mentor. The Board may ask the candidate to continue the mentoring relationship for additional observation, development, and training. If the Board is fully satisfied that the candidate is qualified to be recorded as a minister of the Gospel by the authority of Evangelical Friends Church – Mid America Yearly Meeting, it then recommends the candidate to the Yearly Meeting Elders Board.
- 7) Action of the Yearly Meeting Elders Board: This board, upon receiving the recommendation from the Area Elders Board, has the recommendation and any

other necessary documentation read in the face of a regular board session. If it approves the board's action it recommends the candidate for recording to the Yearly Meeting in session.

- 8) **Final Act of Recording:** The Yearly Meeting, no obstacle appearing, takes action in accordance with the favorable report of the Yearly Meeting Elders Board to record the candidate as a minister of the Gospel. It authorizes the presiding clerk to issue a certificate of recording and to notify the local church involved as to this action.
- 9) **Recognition:** The Yearly Meeting Elders Board, in cooperation with the General Superintendent, arranges a recognition service for newly recorded ministers as an integral part of the Yearly Meeting sessions. The local church may also wish to recognize its newly recorded pastor.
- 10) **The Recorded Ministry:** A minister is entitled to the privilege of exercising his or her gift in the ministry, of whatever type it may be, in pastoral, evangelistic, and other fields. A minister may answer a call to such types of service when it has come through proper channels.

**B. Certification for Ministers in Training-** The local Elders Board or Leadership Team may, at times, find it advisable to assist a young person whose gift and call it has recognized, in order that the person may continue preparing for ministerial service without interruption. This may be done, provided the circumstances as described below are such as to apply, by recommending the person to the Chairperson of the Yearly Meeting Elders Board, who is the Presiding Clerk, for issuance of a certificate as a minister in training. Such a certificate is valid only if the member holding it is engaged in schoolwork, theological or other, which contributes specifically toward preparation for the work the person is called to do or is receiving training in service by acting as assistant pastor of an established church, or as assistant pastor in charge of work in a new work supervised by a Friends church, or any combination of these. The certificate is issued for a period of one year but may be renewed at the request of the local Elders Board or Leadership Team, provided the conditions which made it valid are still in effect. When such a person has been employed as a regular pastor and has been recorded as prescribed, or when final action of recording has taken place in accordance with this book of *Faith and Practice*, the certificate as a minister in training is terminated.

Care is exercised by the local Elders Board or Leadership Team to bestow this recognition only upon those who have shown a vital interest and taken part actively in the work of the church and who give evidence of sincerity in regard to the call of God to service.

**C. Liberating for Special Ministries-** When a minister feels called of God to perform ministerial service outside of his or her own area, the following course is to be pursued:

- 1) **Presenting the Concern:** The minister brings the concern before the local Elders Board or Leadership Team. If this body unites in the concern, it recommends to the church that a certificate of its unity and concurrence be granted.
- 2) **Service Within the Yearly Meeting:** If the proposed service lies within the limits of the Yearly Meeting, the church may grant the certificate, defining the nature and the field of service, and commending the minister to the fellowship of the Friends

to whom he or she may minister. In case the time of the local business session is too far distant for convenience, the local Elders Board or Leadership Team, through its Chairperson, who is the clerk of the local church, issues a certificate liberating the minister on behalf of the church; the clerk reports the same at the next regular business session. Special service may be undertaken under the direction of the Elders Board of the Yearly Meeting without the securing of a certificate.

- 3) Service in Another Yearly Meeting: If the proposed service lies within the limits of another American Yearly Meeting and the local church approves, it transmits its certificate of unity and concurrence to the Elders Board of the Yearly Meeting. If the board approves, it endorses the certificate of the local church and liberates the minister for the service in prospect.
- 4) Service Beyond the American Yearly Meetings: If the proposed service lies beyond the limits of the American Yearly Meetings, the local church transmits its certificate of unity and concurrence to the Elders Board of the Yearly Meeting, indicating its own concurrence by endorsement. If the Yearly Meeting also concurs in the service, its clerks add their endorsement and present the certificate to the minister requesting it; the minister then is free to pursue the performance of the service. When a certificate has been duly endorsed by the board and time does not permit consideration by the Yearly Meeting, the certificate is forwarded to the clerk of the Yearly Meeting. If the clerk endorses the certificate, the minister is free to enter upon the service. He/she informs the Elders Board of his/her action in their next session, reporting also the attendant circumstances.
- 5) Power of Endorsement: In every case where a certificate for ministerial service is regularly granted, the presiding and recording officers of those bodies which take action to concur endorse the certificate. In cases of emergency, the signatures of the presiding officers are sufficient.
- 6) Extended Service: When a minister desires to engage in special and extended pastoral or evangelistic service within the limits of another Yearly Meeting, the minister lays the matter before the local Elders Board as for other service. If this committee and the church concur and a certificate is granted, the minister submits it to the Yearly Meeting Elders Board. If, after due consideration, the Board is satisfied that the minister's standing and qualifications offer no hindrance to entering upon the proposed service, the chairperson of the board endorses the certificate, and the minister is free to go. In the performance of this service, he or she must work in harmony with the authorities entrusted with such matters in the Yearly Meeting where the service is performed. In case such service is extended until it becomes indeterminate in length, a transfer of membership is recommended. When the local Elders Board being served becomes satisfied that the minister's services are no longer profitable, it notifies the church of its judgment. If it concurs, the minister is obliged to discontinue all service in that locality. Information of this action is forwarded to the church of which the minister is a member. When a church has enjoyed and profited by the ministry of a liberated minister, a returning minute should be granted, and the certificate returned to the church which granted it. Similar certificates for service by Christian workers (as chaplains and missionaries) may be issued by the appropriate boards.

**2. Annual Report of Ministers-** Every recorded minister who is not a pastor, and whose membership rests within the Yearly Meeting, regardless of place of residence, makes an annual report to the Yearly Meeting Elders Board and to the General Superintendent. He or she indicates location and occupation and the exercise during the year of his or her gift in the ministry. If engaged as an evangelist, the minister recounts indications of success in gospel labors and efforts for self- improvement for greater usefulness. All reports are sent to the Yearly Meeting Elders Board and to the General Superintendent in the month before the Yearly Meeting convenes or earlier. The Elders Board examines carefully and individually each report. If any of the reports are unsatisfactory or if no report is sent, the Board or a committee may investigate or take action. The board does as it deems best in each case.

**3. Transfer of Ministers-** Recorded ministers who transfer their memberships between churches within the Yearly Meeting automatically keep their status as recorded minister (this will be noted on their “Transfer of Membership Certificate”). However, a recorded minister who transfers from another Yearly Meeting is received by an EFC-MAYM church only as a member (even if called by the church to be their pastor) until the person’s ministerial credentials can be forwarded to Yearly Meeting Elders Board for consideration. Until official approval has been communicated from the Yearly Meeting to the church, the person shall not be listed as a recorded minister. Once approval has been granted, the person shall be listed as a recorded minister in the local church, quarterly meeting, and Yearly Meeting records.

The procedure for approving credentials of ministerial transfers (from outside MAYM)

- A. The minister shall request a transfer of membership certificate/letter from their home church, along with any ministerial credentials from their home Yearly Meeting offices.
- B. Once the minister’s new home church has received the transfer of membership certificate, and the membership transfer process has been completed, the minister can request a recommendation letter from the leadership team or elder board (it is up to the discernment/discretion as to the length of time of membership before granting this). This recommendation, along with the membership documents and ministerial credentials, should be sent by the clerk to the Chairperson of the Elders Board of EFC-MAYM.
- C. The Yearly Meeting Elders Board and the General Superintendent will review the documents and approve or deny the transfer of ministry credentials. The decision will be communicated to the clerk of the local church.
- D. The clerk, upon receipt of a decision from the Yearly Meeting Elders Board, will present to the church in business session the ministerial status for official action. Upon favorable action, the minister is then officially recognized as a recorded minister of Evangelical Friends Church – Mid America Yearly Meeting.

- E. Notification of this action is sent to the church which sent the transfer of membership and ministerial credentials in order that the minister's name may be removed from its list.

Ministers who transfer their membership to another denomination are entitled to a letter containing a statement of their position in the Friends church. One who transfers and later returns to membership among Friends is not listed as a minister until the full process of recording has been repeated on his or her behalf. A minister of another denomination who becomes a Friend is not received as a minister but may, if the local Elders Board sees fit to initiate action, be recorded.

**4. Voluntary Surrender of Position as a Minister-** Ministers, whether pastors or others, who come to feel that they have fulfilled their call and discharged all responsibilities connected with it, are urged to take steps on their own volition to adjust their relationship to the Yearly Meeting accordingly. This may be done by notifying the local Elders Board or Leadership Team of their conclusion and returning their certificate of recording. The local Elders Board notifies the Yearly Meeting Elders Board. This board reports the entire procedure to the Yearly Meeting; the person's name is then removed from all official lists of ministers.

The same course is urged upon any ministers who find themselves at variance with the doctrinal or ethical standards of the Yearly Meeting or are no longer able to meet the necessary conditions which would be required of one under consideration for recording as a minister.