

Chapter 13

Varieties of religious service

INTRODUCTION

- 13.01 It is part of our commitment as members of the Religious Society of Friends that we try to live our lives under the guidance of the Spirit. Whatever the service to which we are called, whether it be great or small, our meeting can uphold us in prayer and other ways.

Our service may be in the home, an unpaid job, a vocation or a lifetime's career. For some there will be service in the local meeting, in one of the many roles that help to make our meetings true Christian communities. Some of these are explained later in this chapter. Britain Yearly Meeting itself offers people opportunities for service both as members of staff and on our various Quaker committees.

Personal leadings can be tested in a variety of ways. Other Friends and those with special responsibilities in the meeting will be ready to listen and to encourage. Where important and difficult decisions have to be made it may be appropriate to ask for a meeting for clearness (12.22-12.25).

Quakers have long been involved in a wide range of action rooted in our faith: in the cause of peace and reconciliation, local, national or international; on behalf of oppressed or deprived people; in furtherance of our testimonies to honesty and integrity. The diversity of Quaker activity has been remarkable. In all these areas, however, there have been particular Friends who have felt themselves at certain times to be singled out to act in response to a spiritual compulsion. This we call concern and we distinguish it from those things that we are concerned about.

Matters which we are 'concerned about' are often very important. They might include changing the way that Britain Yearly Meeting

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does something or hoping that it will undertake a particular service. These matters are best brought to our meetings for church affairs and dealt with under our well tested business method, as outlined in chapter 3.

CONCERN: FAITH IN ACTION

The Quaker understanding of concern

- 13.02 Throughout the history of the Religious Society of Friends we have recognised that to anyone may come, at any time, a special inward calling to carry out a particular service. It is characterised by a feeling of having been directly called by God and by an imperative to act.

The ministry which has been carried out 'under concern' is a remarkable record of strength and perseverance in adversity. Many speak of the peace that came to them with the certainty that they were working with God. Recognising concern has also placed an obligation on the meeting which tests and supports it. Friends have on occasion been released from financial considerations and in some cases their families have been cared for whilst they carried out the service required of them.

A concern may arise unexpectedly out of an interest or may creep up on one out of worshipful search for the way forward. It may be in line with current desires and projects or it may cut across them; it may lead to action which is similar to that undertaken by others or it may require a brave striking out into the unknown.

- 13.03 There is a feeling of being right or fitting associated with the experience of concern:

There was from the early stages of our discussion a strong sense of the 'rightness' of what we were talking about. The ideas flowed freely, and although we were not conscious of it at the time, we would say now that we were clearly working under guidance.

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Barry and Jill Wilsher, writing about the origins in 1978 of the Quaker Peace Action Caravan.

- 13.04 Others have spoken of a moment of calling, of an overwhelming sense of love and light, leading to a certainty that they must act:

If you ask me for the important dates they are as follows: meeting for worship several Sundays at Morley, Wilmslow early 1967; Cambridge 22-23 September 1967, at the village of Grantchester where the message came opposite to the war memorial: '*You shall do it and I shall help*'. This message was the driving force. Friends were hesitant; some thought it very emotional, others thought it very moving. Only, I knew that that Power would never allow a failure.

George Murphy writing about the concern which led to the founding of the Bradford University School of Peace Studies in 1973.

Discernment in concern

- 13.05 Achieving clarity about a concern is a particular exercise in discernment. It is a process that begins with considerable private reflection and the asking of some tough questions. Is this a desire that someone else do something or is it really a call to act oneself? Is this concern in keeping with the testimonies of the Society? Is it genuinely from God?

The discernment process is not confined to solitary reflection. As a Religious Society we are more than a collection of people who meet together – we meet as we do because we believe that gathered together we are capable of greater clarity of vision. It is therefore the practice in our Society for a Friend who, after due consideration, believes that he or she has a concern, to bring it before the gathered community of Friends. This is both a further part of the testing process and an expression of our membership in a spiritual community. It is a recognition of mutual obligations: that of a Friend to test the concern against the counsel of the group and that

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of the group to exercise its judgment and to seek the guidance of God.

- 13.06 As a general rule concerns should be brought before a local or, where appropriate, area meeting for church affairs. The concern may, if recognised by that meeting as a true leading, then be forwarded to other meetings for consideration by a wider or more specialised group of Friends. It is not appropriate, however, for concerns to be sent forward automatically to another meeting. One part of the discernment process is judging at what point a concern has been considered by all appropriate bodies. Meetings should beware of the risk of using the process of forwarding concerns to avoid their responsibilities (see 4.19-4.20).

Throughout the discernment process there should be one overriding principle before the hearts and minds of all: is this individual or group right to believe that this action or service has been 'laid upon' them by God?

- 13.07 'Concern' is a word which has tended to become debased by excessively common usage among Friends, so that too often it is used to cover merely a strong desire. The true 'concern' [emerges as] a gift from God, a leading of his spirit which may not be denied. Its sanction is not that on investigation it proves to be the intelligent thing to do – though it usually is; it is that the individual ... knows, as a matter of inward experience, that there is something that the Lord would have done, however obscure the way, however uncertain the means to human observation. Often proposals for action are made which have every appearance of good sense, but as the meeting waits before God it becomes clear that the proposition falls short of 'concern'.

Roger Wilson, 1949

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Responsibilities of individuals and meetings

To Friends with concerns

- 13.08 Friends with a concern should take counsel from experienced members of the meeting, particularly those who may have a different approach to the problem. Consider setting up, or asking for, a support group of trusted Friends (12.27). A meeting for clearness may also be part of the process of discernment (12.22-12.25). Allow the process to take time and do not rush yourself.

At each stage Friends will try to bring their insights to bear. Be prepared for their comments to cause some soul-searching and possible revisions. Be very clear what you are asking of each meeting (see 13.12-13.14).

Occasionally the process of discernment and adoption does not operate as it should, for we are not perfect and sometimes lose the spirit in the letter. We may lose sight of genuine inspiration in the press of daily events and overcrowded agendas. This may happen at any stage in the process and may necessitate re-presentation or presentation in a new format. It is useful to have a support group (12.27) at moments like this.

The role of the meeting

- 13.09 The importance of the local worshipping group in fostering active concerns cannot be over-emphasised. Where Friends know and trust one another the gifts we all have can be used more fully in obedience to the Inward Light. This is the source from which concerns spring.

The atmosphere of mutual confidence and understanding that fosters concerns also leads naturally to sharing concerns with the meeting. A concern that is brought before a meeting should be considered with the greatest love, kindness and discipline. Much as we like to support our Friends in the things for which they have an unbounded enthusiasm, it is no kindness to recognise as a concern something which has not received the fullest attention possible.

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- 13.10 When a Friend has laid a concern before an area or local meeting, there should be a chance for questioning and elucidation, after which it is normally the practice for the Friend to withdraw while the matter is being considered. If the concern is recognised the Friend may be given a minute with which to go forward.

It may be determined that the concern is not in harmony with the testimonies of our Society. It should be remembered, however, that:

It is with individuals rather than with communities that new truth originates... While corporate guidance is of great value in controlling individual extravagance, it is a source of great danger to the church if it is opposed to a genuine individual concern.

William Charles Braithwaite, 1909

Both individual and meeting should pay heed to the advice: 'Think it possible that you may be mistaken'.

- 13.11 It may not always be possible to give adequate consideration to a concern in the course of a normal area or local meeting for church affairs, or in the course of a regular committee meeting. The option of a special area meeting and/or a meeting for clearness to help work through the issues should be considered (see 12.22-12.25).

- 13.12 The meeting which has considered a concern needs to be absolutely clear whether it is:

- a. recognising a concern seen as religiously valid;
- b. supporting the concern and accepting responsibility for its furtherance, including financial support where necessary (13.18);
- c. adopting the concern as one it shares, whereupon the concern becomes a concern of the whole meeting;
- d. recognising the concern and forwarding it with its support to a more widely representative meeting;
- e. forwarding it because the meeting is unable to reach a decision on the validity of the calling – in this case however it is likely that further preparation and consideration is preferable to forwarding it to another meeting at this stage;

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- f. deciding that the matter before it is not a religiously valid concern.

13.13 Where they are clear that they have recognised a concern, Friends in the meeting will turn their attention to the practical details of its implementation and consequences. It may happen that a meeting recognises a Friend's concern but can see no way in which it can be taken forward or given practical effect at this time. It is then appropriate to hold it over for further consideration when the circumstances are more favourable.

If a concern relates to the corporate life of Britain Yearly Meeting it should be sent forward by the area meeting, either to Meeting for Sufferings or to Yearly Meeting (see 4.19).

When service abroad in any capacity is proposed, early consultation with the relevant committees of Britain Yearly Meeting is imperative. Consultation with the Friends World Committee for Consultation and appropriate yearly meetings may also be necessary.

It has already been noted that meetings that support a Friend's concern will sometimes assume the financial responsibility for the concern. Whether or not this is so, they may also consider offering other forms of help such as the use of a car, offers of childcare or the setting up of a support group of people close to the Friend or concern (see 12.27).

When a concern has run its course, consideration should be given to how this may be recognised and acknowledged. A meeting that has supported a concern should be informed when it is seen to be right to lay that concern down. Celebration for the right ending of what was rightly begun may be appropriate.

See also 4.06 & 4.19-4.20

Minutes and finances

13.14 When a Friend applies to a meeting with the object of taking a concern to a more widely representative meeting, any minute agreed

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should be addressed to that meeting and a copy forwarded without delay to its clerk. A copy should also be given to the Friend or Friends presenting the concern.

When such a concern has been supported or adopted by an appropriate body other than the area meeting, it is the duty of the clerk of the supporting or adopting body to send notice at once to the clerk of the area meeting of which the Friend is a member. Giving such information promptly enables the area meeting to enter with understanding into the Friend's concern, and to offer whatever support seems appropriate (see 12.27).

- 13.15 When an area meeting has encouraged any Friend to apply to Meeting for Sufferings for support in service, it is the duty of the clerk to give notice to the Recording Clerk without delay to enable, where possible, advance notice to be given to members of Meeting for Sufferings.
- 13.16 Minutes should, when appropriate, make clear the nature and probable duration of the intended service. If long-term service is intended suitable arrangements should be made, by means of a corresponding committee or in other ways, for interim reports to the meeting issuing the minute.
- 13.17 When a concern is fulfilled the Friend should return the minute to the meeting which has supported the service and the meeting should record the return of the minute.
- 13.18 If financial help is needed when a Friend travels in the service of the Society, it shall normally be given by the meeting supporting the service. If the service is by invitation the inviting meeting shall normally give it.

THE LISTED INFORMAL GROUPS

- 13.19 The listed informal groups are independent groups through which Friends may share common interest, seek affirmation or carry out

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witness. The groups are seen by their members as arising from their Quaker faith and provide a way in which conviction and witness can be explored and developed outside our formal structures – but perhaps returning to them when the concern has been tested by action or reflection.

The informal groups at present in action within and around the Society are all concerned, in one way or another, with the renewal of Quaker tradition and insight or with the application of these to contemporary issues in a way that is inspired and guided by our perception of God's leadings. If this is so, then their credentials are established, and whilst the activities of individual groups may seem to some odd or eccentric – in some cases even inappropriate – their intent must be accepted as striving to seek new light. We need to remember that spiritual development for many of us entails trips along cul-de-sacs, and that these sometimes, surprisingly, turn out to be highways. Whatever the outcome in any one instance, the courage to explore them with an open but not uncritical heart is a hallmark of both spiritual and intellectual integrity.

Hugh Valentine, 1982

The recognised listed informal groups are listed annually in the *Book of meetings*, and the criteria for recognition may be obtained on application to the Recording Clerk. Being independent bodies outside the structures of Britain Yearly Meeting, the listed informal groups have no right of communication by minute with them.

Groups using the name 'Quaker' or 'Friends' in their title are reminded of the responsibility to uphold our testimonies, and that care is needed in case the work and witness of the group is understood to be part of the yearly meeting's corporate activity when it is not.

OTHER FORMS OF SERVICE

13.20 Within our meetings there are many tasks which need to be performed and many responsibilities to be taken. This volume has

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details of many of these. For instance clerkship is dealt with in chapter 3 and eldership and oversight in chapter 12. What follows is a fuller description of some of the more specialised forms of service.

TRAVELLING IN THE MINISTRY AND INTERVISITATION

- 13.21 Travelling to visit and worship with Friends, both within our yearly meeting and beyond, is greatly to be valued. It helps to bind together the family of Friends. London Yearly Meeting endorsed its value in 1925:

We should take an interest not only in our own particular meetings, but also in other adjacent meetings, especially if they are few in numbers or otherwise in need. The visitation of another meeting in the spirit of Christian fellowship is an act of service, even if unaccompanied by any words of spoken ministry. When carried out under right concern it may bring encouragement and refreshment both to those who visit and those who are visited.

- 13.22 It should be remembered by all who visit Friends in other yearly meetings that great sensitivity is required. Each yearly meeting is autonomous and each has its own tradition and practice. Do not think yourself a fount of all knowledge just because you are from Britain Yearly Meeting. Our understanding of Quakerism grew out of the experiences of Friends in the history of these islands. Our assumptions are bound up with our culture, heritage and history. All yearly meetings have changed their practice over time and now have a variety of traditions as well as the history of the country in order to communicate fully with the Friends you are visiting. Quaker committees concerned with work overseas may be able to give advice and guidance to Friends visiting meetings abroad that will increase the usefulness of their visits.

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Travelling in the ministry

- 13.23 This will usually be preceded by the testing of a concern and its recognition by the area meeting to which the Friend belongs. Everything in the previous sections 13.05-13.18 will apply. The Friend concerned may have been given financial support by the sponsoring meeting. Pastoral support has in the past been provided by Friends travelling in pairs, sometimes a younger Friend with an older. There may be circumstances where this practice is still helpful. The minute recognising the Friend's concern should be short enough to be read out after a meeting for worship.
- 13.24 Friends hoping to travel abroad in this service will be well advised to consult with the relevant committees of Britain Yearly Meeting and with the Friends World Committee for Consultation. After the concern has been recognised, the Friend should contact the yearly meeting(s) within which they intend to travel and be guided by their advice. As noted above it is important to remember that all yearly meetings are autonomous and that traditions and practice vary widely.
- 13.25 It is vital that Friends hoping to travel in the ministry test their concern thoroughly; we may be reminded of the practice of John Woolman, who travelled in the ministry extensively:

Having been some time under a religious concern to prepare for crossing the seas in order to visit Friends in the northern parts of England, and more particularly in Yorkshire, after weighty consideration I thought it expedient to inform Friends at our monthly meeting at Burlington of it, who, having unity with me therein, gave me a certificate. And I afterwards communicated the same to our quarterly meeting, and they likewise certified their concurrence. Some time after, at the General Spring Meeting of Ministers and Elders, I thought it my duty to acquaint them with the religious exercise which attended my mind, with which they likewise signified their unity by a certificate, dated the 24th of third month, 1772, directed to Friends in Great Britain.

Travelling in the ministry and intervisitation

- 13.26 That Quakers could be called to the ministry other than in meeting for worship on Sundays was a new thought to us when, in 1967, a dear American Friend asked us whether we felt we had such a call. Its full significance did not strike us until later; the itinerant or travelling ministry had been the lifeblood of the Society of Friends in its earlier days and had continued into the beginning of the twentieth century. We served our apprenticeship with Lewis and Sarah Benson, travelling mainly in North America. We tried to catch some of their eagerness to bring to everyone the freshness of the message, their humility, their spirituality and their concern to gather all people to Christ, their Teacher. We soon found ourselves travelling with others or alone in Ireland, Scotland, France, Germany and Denmark as well as nearer home, while others ventured as far as Kenya and Australia. What drove all of us was a Christian message that needed to be shared wherever the door opened within or outside the Society of Friends.

Arthur and Ursula Windsor, 1994

- 13.27 We should be prepared to receive someone sent by another Quaker meeting with as much care as we send someone to travel in the ministry.

It is not enough to send foreign Friends into small groups of Friends who will listen politely to their visitors: they should first know their visitors' culture and tradition in order to receive them with open minds and hearts. Friends in London Yearly Meeting need to discover where they stand individually. As we often do not know the personal theologies of members of our own meetings, how can we prepare our own Friends to listen to others? Yet we must. If Friends world wide are to be a world family of Friends we have to learn to hear and to understand each other.

Quaker World Relations Committee, 1992

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Types of minutes

- 13.28 A Friend released for service, under concern, by her or his meeting is provided with a minute of liberation. This will normally be written by Meeting for Sufferings (see 13.15).

A Friend travelling on Friends' business, or to perform a particular, limited service is provided with a travelling minute. This may be provided either by Meeting for Sufferings or by the area meeting. Such a minute may be endorsed by the welcoming meeting.

Letter of greeting

- 13.29 This is a letter issued by a meeting to one of its members or long-term attenders who is going to travel amongst Friends in other parts of the world for reasons not immediately connected with the service of the Society. In this case the local, area or general meeting may give the Friend a letter of introduction, signed by the clerk, to take with them. Such a letter is not a minute of authorisation for a particular service and care should be taken to avoid suggesting that it is.

Intervisitation

- 13.30 We urge Friends, when staying away from home during holiday or on business, to attend a meeting for worship if there is one within reach. Such attendance may well have the effect of strengthening the meeting, and of helping Friends who were hitherto strangers to know one another.

1925, 1994

When visiting meetings in another yearly meeting be careful not to be a burden. Remember the caution in 13.22.

Travelling in the ministry and intervisitation

- 13.31 For over 35 years I have been visiting meetings other than my own. For the last 15 years monthly meeting has given me a travelling minute which is returned annually with its endorsements. I have visited the smaller meetings in my own monthly meeting; I have visited nearby meetings in other monthly meetings and thus kept contact with neighbours who might easily be strangers; when further from home I have sought out smaller meetings which might be encouraged by a visitor, and I am sure that the two or three present have been so encouraged. I have attended special occasions such as the reopening of a refurbished meeting house and rejoiced with those who rejoiced.

The words of John Woolman are in the travelling minute: 'A concern arose ... that I might feel and understand their life and the Spirit they live in, if haply I might receive some instruction from them, or they be in any degree helped forward by my following the leadings of Truth amongst them'. John Woolman's hopes have been abundantly fulfilled for me.

Richard Schardt, 1994

- 13.32 At the very small recognised meeting where I am a member – we have been as few as two at meeting for worship – we welcome visitors from other meetings, whether casual or regular, and look upon them as a source of enrichment. We understand that we in turn can give from our quietly gathered meeting.

Ingrid Williams, 1994

WARDENS

- 13.33 As Friends, we cannot separate our religious calling from our practical work for the kingdom of God. As Friends concerned for wardenship, we make our contributions in the local community to those who come to our meeting house. We appear to offer our facilities, but in fact we offer our love.

Quaker Home Service conference on wardenship, 1981

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- 13.34 The aim of wardenship is to provide a warm and welcoming atmosphere within the meeting house, to create conditions conducive to worship and to offer a service to the community. Wardenship should be seen as an integrated part of Quaker life and worship, and a responsibility which is shared by the whole meeting. There are unique opportunities for outreach. Many demands are made of wardens who are regularly available; these range from requests for financial and practical support to appeals from those with deep emotional, social or spiritual needs. Wardens acquire a fund of knowledge about the meeting and its place in the neighbourhood and can often help the meeting with initiatives in outreach.

Wardens and meeting houses

- 13.35 Wardens are appointed to look after some of our meeting houses. In many cases they also live on the premises. The appointment is normally made by the area meeting, as the primary meeting for church government, but for practical purposes this responsibility is sometimes delegated to a local meeting or to trustees. Wardenship in its present form is a recent development among Friends and arises not for its own sake but from our desire that our meeting houses be more widely used for the benefit of the communities in which they stand.

Just as our meeting houses vary from those in a busy city centre or new town location to historic Brigflatts or Jordans, so their use varies from those which are open throughout the week to a wide range of community groups and commercial lettings, to others where there is little use except for meetings for worship. Consequently the work and conditions of employment of wardens vary enormously.

Employment of wardens

- 13.36 The employing area meeting and the local meeting concerned should be quite clear about the terms of employment. Wardens are usually provided with accommodation in or adjacent to the meeting house,

Wardens

but a few are non-resident. Some see wardenship as a service they wish to give, perhaps on early retirement; others regard it as a very worthwhile form of employment. Some wardens are paid as full-time employees, others on a very part-time basis; some receive free accommodation only, whilst others (usually where there is little work involved) make a contribution towards the rent, heating, and other costs. Wardens may also have other employment.

Employing meetings and wardens are reminded that there are laws detailing the formal rights and responsibilities of both employers and employees. Quaker Life can provide up-to-date information.

There must be a clear job description which is reviewed regularly. Advertisements should be comprehensive and interviews thorough. A policy of equal opportunities is appropriate. It is essential that the warden or wardens have written terms and conditions of employment linked with a suitable written agreement covering the accommodation provided. Time off and adequate holidays should be agreed and consideration given to pension needs. Rehousing on completion of service requires careful consideration before appointment.

- 13.37 Work which is rightly the responsibility of office holders and members of the meeting should not be left to wardens, and wardens should not be appointed to those offices which could give rise to a conflict of interest: clerk, assistant clerk, treasurer or managing trustee. There should be clear guidance as to who is responsible for lettings. Ex-officio attendance at premises and wardenship committees is a frequent and helpful practice. Care must be taken to respect the privacy of wardens during their leisure time and not to make unreasonable demands upon their services. Their private accommodation should not be considered as an extension of the meeting house.
- 13.38 Wardens should not be asked to accept conditions of accommodation and work which most Friends would not tolerate personally. Casually made appointments can lead to misunderstandings and unintended exploitation. Meetings employing a warden are urged to consult with Quaker Life, to ensure that good practice is observed in their meeting.

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Support for wardens

- 13.39 Wardens and meetings benefit from the provision of good support. This may be provided by premises committees, wardenship committees or a link Friend or Friends. The needs of the warden should be considered by the employing meeting and reviewed on a regular basis. Wardens may obtain help from Quaker Life, which organises regular national and regional conferences and specialist training courses, provides a consultancy and information service, and makes a handbook available. (See also 12.27 *Support groups*.)

Resident Friends and caretakers

- 13.40 Much of the above applies also to resident Friends who give general oversight to meeting houses with few outside users, and to caretakers, whose work is often confined to cleaning and preparing rooms for meetings, opening and closing the building and caring for the garden.

LIBRARIANS AND LIBRARIES

- 13.41 Area meetings are required to keep under regular review the maintenance and use of libraries in local meetings (see 4.10.r); they should encourage any meetings which do not have their own library to establish one. The running of the library, however, remains the responsibility of the local meeting. Most local meetings appoint a librarian, who will need the support of the meeting and a budget for the purchase of books. In some meetings this task is shared by a number of Friends. Some area meetings draw their librarians together from time to time to share their experience. Help and advice are also available from the Library Committee of Quaker Life.
- 13.42 A well-stocked and organised library is a powerful aid to the life of the meeting and its outreach. The books can represent a resource for learning about the Religious Society of Friends, about Christianity, the Bible, other world faiths and the social issues of our day. New

Librarians and libraries

books can stimulate and challenge as we continue our religious education.

Librarians will find many ways of making the books within their library accessible to Friends and attenders. Some meetings publish reading lists and reviews of recently acquired books in their newsletters. Others will introduce new acquisitions at a local meeting for church affairs or in the notices after meeting for worship. The librarian should be familiar with the contents of the library and be prepared to offer recommendations to those wanting to use it. Book boxes can be obtained from the Quaker Bookshop at Friends House and are a good way of encouraging Friends to enlarge their reading. Other resources than books are available and useful, and librarians may wish to consider including these.

Where there are physical limitations, such as when meeting for worship is held in rented accommodation, imagination and a determination to share our discoveries of helpful books will suggest ways in which the problems may be alleviated.

TREASURERS

- 13.43 People who perform this task for meetings do a great service. Their work often receives scant attention from other Friends, but without them we could quite simply not operate. They will need to be familiar with numbers but neither accounting skills nor a computer are necessary. More important is sensitivity in helping each member and attender to give what is appropriate, allaying feelings of guilt whilst informing them of the need for money both at a local level and for our central work.

The treasurer is a servant of the meeting, advising and helping but leaving decisions to the meeting itself.

- 13.44 Every meeting which holds funds or handles money should appoint a treasurer, who should be in membership (3.24.i). Some meetings find it helpful to appoint an assistant treasurer or 'collector' to encourage and assist Friends in their giving. More details can be found in chapter 14, *Finance*.

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Whilst continuity and experience are important in financial matters, the appointment of a treasurer should be reviewed triennially and the length of service should not be unduly extended. It is good practice for a meeting to plan ahead for the timely release of its treasurer, possibly appointing an assistant who will prepare to take over the task.

A handbook is available and advice can be sought from Quaker Finance & Property at Friends House. Area meeting treasurers are entitled to attend the Annual Conference of Treasurers (14.16-14.17).

PRISON MINISTERS, VISITORS AND CHAPLAINS

13.45 In the early days of the Quaker movement many Friends were imprisoned for their beliefs. Many Friends were imprisoned in this century too, as conscientious objectors to military service. Perhaps because of this there has been a continuing concern for prisoners and the conditions in prisons, exemplified in the work of Elizabeth Fry (see 23.98-23.100), which is continued by others to the present day. The section that follows explains the terms used and the procedures to be followed. It also offers advice to all Friends about supporting those who do this work.

13.46 A **prison minister** (formerly termed a ‘visiting minister’) is a priest or minister of a recognised religious denomination appointed by the Home Office to a specific institution under the Prison Act 1952 to perform duties of a religious nature inside that particular institution. Quaker prison ministers are included in this definition.

Prison visitors are appointed by the Home Office on the recommendation of the prison governor to befriend a prisoner who has requested visits. Prison visitors have no duties of a specifically religious character. It is important that they are not confused with the Board of Visitors, who have a quite different function.

‘**Quaker prison chaplain**’ is the term used in Scotland in place of ‘Quaker prison minister’. In Scotland, following notification from an area meeting of the name of a Friend appointed as a Quaker prison

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chaplain, General Meeting for Scotland is responsible for providing this name to the governors of all prison establishments in the area meeting area. These Friends then volunteer to serve on a prison chaplaincy team by directly contacting the prison chaplain. To exercise their pastoral responsibility, Quaker prison chaplains in Scotland have to operate in liaison with the official prison chaplaincy team members.

In Scotland 13.49 and 13.50 do not apply.

Quaker prison ministers

- 13.47 A Quaker prison minister has four tasks: to visit and minister to those in prison who have registered themselves as Quakers; to assist the work of the prison chaplaincy; to be a Quaker presence in the prison, particularly in relation to staff; and to be a channel between the prison service and the area meeting, keeping Friends aware of prison issues.

Where it is possible for the Quaker prison minister to arrange an occasional or regular meeting for worship, these can be of great value.

- 13.48 When prisoners are under restraint or punishment, in segregation or in the hospital wing, they will be in particular need of spiritual comfort and reassurance. The Quaker prison minister has a right and duty in these circumstances to visit a prisoner registered as a Quaker, whether in membership or not, whilst a visit from a prison visitor may not be allowed.

Appointment

- 13.49 A Friend is recommended for this service by the area meeting (4.10.s), which then applies to the particular institution for the nomination to be approved and the appointment made, using a Home Office form obtainable from the Recording Clerk.

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- 13.50 If the nomination is approved, the particular institution informs the Quaker prison minister that a formal appointment has been made. The area meeting should then ensure that Quaker Peace & Social Witness is informed of the appointment. This process may take some weeks. Potential prison ministers should be aware that they will be investigated by the Criminal Records Office.

Preparation and support

- 13.51 Quaker Peace & Social Witness can offer a newly appointed Quaker prison minister the benefit of knowledge and experience. In the first instance they will send the handbook for Quaker prison ministers published by Quaker Peace & Social Witness. Conferences are held each year which provide information on aspects of penal affairs, but also offer those attending good opportunity to discuss particular problems and to gain the informed support of Friends working in other penal establishments.
- 13.52 The Quaker prison minister undertakes to bear the area meeting's responsibility for ministering to the spiritual needs of prisoners who are registered as Quakers. Prison ministers have their needs too, and it is very important that the area meeting should support the Friend doing this demanding work on their behalf. The Quaker prison minister and area meeting will probably want to decide amongst themselves how support can best be given (see 12.27) and whether or not it should come from a formally appointed group.

Area meetings will find it helpful to encourage Quaker prison ministers to report on their work once a year.

Prison Visitors

- 13.53 Prison visitors are appointed by the Home Office, or the Scottish Office Home and Health Department, on the recommendation of the prison governor to visit certain prisoners who have asked for visits to be arranged. Their duty is to befriend those they visit. They have no duties of a specifically religious nature and are sometimes

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required to avoid religious topics. Friends wishing to offer this service should approach the governor of the prison where they wish to serve.

Some Quakers are both prison ministers and visitors. The roles overlap and Quaker prison ministers find themselves moving naturally from one to the other.

- 13.54 Going into a prison can be intimidating and it may be difficult to find the right way of communicating with those you meet there. It is often hard to know what to say particularly to those serving long sentences or far from home, but if the preparation of the heart is taken seriously the right words will come. Ministry is giving of oneself and allowing others to give to us; our common humanity enables us to minister. Laughter, too, is part of the healing ministry.

COLLEGE CHAPLAINS

- 13.55 The role and the title of the Friends responsible for the pastoral care of students can vary according to the institution; they may also be called student welcomers, student overseers or student chaplains. These Friends may be appointed either by the area meeting or by one of its local meetings according to local circumstances. Their role can be the oversight of Quaker students, linking them to the local meeting. If there are Friends on the staff they will usually help. Sometimes the college chaplains may be part of an ecumenical team and their role will extend to all students and staff. The work may need support, both financial and spiritual, from the appointing meeting (see 12.27).
- 13.56 Work in colleges and universities is an opportunity for outreach. Friends' non-credal approach and openness to new light, from whatever quarter, may be particularly appealing to the enquiring minds of students. Friends should be ready to make Quaker views known as well as providing pastoral care.

13: Varieties of religious service

There may be opportunities for holding a meeting for worship in a college. In this case local elders should share in responsibility for such a meeting.

Some areas may have several educational institutions and several Friends responsible for pastoral care; local meetings should have an overall responsibility to support all these Friends both practically and spiritually.

Where there is a local Young Friends group this may offer a welcome to younger students who are close to them in age.

- 13.57 Quaker Life offers information and advice to college chaplains and links them together.