

Ad hoc Task Force on Restructuring FMA Committees
First report to Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business (Sept. 2021)

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Background: At the August 2021 MWAB, an ad hoc task force was formed to review and propose modifications to committee structure at Friends Meeting of Austin. This action was taken in response to the following agenda item:

Clerks Item -

Committee Reorganization – many Friends Meetings struggle with finding enough members and attenders to serve on the committees essential to the life of the Meeting. It is even more difficult to find persons who are willing to serve as committee clerks.

FMA currently has 14 standing committees plus several other groups and Ad-hoc committees with several of the standing committees having just 1 or two members and several not functioning at all. Two years ago, the Nominating committee sought to undertake a review of our committee structure with thoughts of simplifying and/or consolidating the current structure. Unfortunately, this project has not been completed.

Therefore, hoping to revitalize this effort and to engage the entire meeting, Clerks have put together the attached Concepts for Discussion of Restructuring FMA Committees. We present this as a DRAFT to stimulate consideration and evaluation of how we might simplify this vital aspect of our community.

Task Force Activity: The task force met on August 17, 2021 and discussed the Clerk’s “Concepts” document, as well as a document called “Tending the Garden: Addressing Changes in Structure,” from West Chester Friends Meeting. Task force members found we had broad agreement with the goals for streamlining committee structure expressed in each document, and provide the following suggestions and questions for further inquiry.

Suggestions and Questions for further inquiry: The following takes as a starting point the “Concepts” document (which is attached at the end in its original form).

- **Proposal:** Combine Finance and Administration and Stewardship into one committee.
 - **Ad Hoc response:**
 - Proposed name: Stewardship
 - Note that insurance should be included here as well
 - Stewardship is currently “empty.” Can this merger come with volunteers? Can we reach out to former Stewardship members?

- **Proposal:** Combine Worship and Ministry and Care and Counsel into one committee.
 - **Ad Hoc response:**
 - Proposed name: Pastoral and Spiritual Care
 - Note that these used to be combined, and were separated because at the time it seemed too much work for one committee
 - Note that although Care and Counsel deals with weighty and confidential questions, they are not always time consuming deliberations

- **Proposal:** Combine House and Grounds and Community Life into one committee
 - **Ad Hoc response:**
 - Proposed name: task force members were not fond of “Property and Community” but had no immediate other suggestions
 - There seems a stronger connection between H&G and CL than between H&G and Community Relations
 - Note that H&G and CL are in frequent communication. Since CL makes so much use of the H&G it seems reasonable to come together.
 - Note that this may be an especially helpful combination, since at times in the past these have been overly gendered roles!

- **Proposal:** Combine Peace and Social Concerns with Community Relations, Columbia Ministry into one committee
 - **Ad Hoc response:**
 - Proposed name: Social and Community Concerns
 - Note that CR can be a lot of work, especially as it relates to outside groups making use of the meetinghouse. Note that lots of new opportunities come to FMA via CR, including for instance ATX Camp Support and opportunities to weigh in on zoning through our neighborhood assoc.
 - Note that CM could serve as a subcommittee perhaps, or stay an independent committee as it has for so many years. Spanish proficiency is an important asset for CM.

- **Proposal:** Combine Library, Adult Religious Education, and First Day School into one committee
 - **Ad Hoc response:**
 - Proposed name: Quaker Education
 - Note that there is little overlap now due to different people serving e.g. on FDS and ARE
 - Note that the book table needs some attention
 - Note that the Archivist role should be included here as well

- **Proposal:** Make no changes to Nominating, but keep this committee as a stand alone.

- **Proposal:** Make no changes to Friendly Communications, but keep this committee as a stand alone.
 - **Ad Hoc response:**
 - Note that FC is perhaps the highest level of labor of any FMA activities. We are in need of additional volunteers.
 - Task force members felt it related more closely to CR than to CL and therefore could be combined with Community Relations, if Community Relations remained independent from PSC.

Other issues, and possible next steps:

- **Term limits:** should be two years, with a possibility of renewal
- **Recruitment:** it would be helpful to the organization if committee clerks were willing to “swap” roles periodically. Are there ways to characterize the needs for volunteers as task-oriented, rather than committee membership oriented?
- **Next:** One possible next step could be a forum or other venue for seeking broader meeting input; alternatively, we are happy to take further suggestions from MWAB for additional task force work prior to seeking broader input

Original Document (August 8, 2021):

Concepts for Discussion of Restructuring FMA Committees

- Combine Finance and Administration and Stewardship into one committee. Maybe call it Long- and Short-term Financial Concerns. (Include all leases here)
- Combine Worship and Ministry and Care and Counsel as Pastoral and Spiritual Care.
- Combine House and Grounds and Community Life as Property and Community.
 - Or combine House & Grounds + Community Relations + School Support = House, Grounds and Neighbors
- Combine Peace and Social Concerns with Community Relations as Social and Community Concerns.
- Combine Library ARE and First Day School as Quaker Education.
- Combine Colombia Ministry and P& SC
- Combine House & Grounds, Community Relations and School Support as House, Grounds and Neighbors
- Combine Friendly Communications with Community Life