

## EMEYF Elder

The EMEYF Elders - we usually appoint two and make sure that terms overlap - are responsible for providing (spiritual) care and support within EMEYF, both on group-level and on individual level. On the one hand this means bringing life to the Quaker spirituality that we have inherited from the past, such as the Quaker business methods and the use of silence and worship in our community. On the other hand this means providing support to those who are in need for whatever reason. (Also referred to as oversight/pastoral care). This may take a wide range of shapes and forms. Much of an Elder's work requires sensitivity towards the individuals concerned, and confidentiality is important. If there are two elders, you may want to stay in close contact and support each other. Remember, and remind each other, that you are not asked to do superhuman things, but to be a friend in a community of friends. Elders may also be described as the ones who remind the other's that we are all elders.

The tasks of the elders may need to be adjusted according to the needs of EMEYF and its individuals as they arise and change. The following collects tasks elders have taken up in the past and is meant as a guideline.

The Elders try their best to attend Annual Meeting, Communications Committee, and Spring Gathering, and any other appropriate events. This face to face contact provides the most obvious opportunity for elders to fulfill their role, but there may be need for support between events as well.

### **Annual Meeting (around October):**

- ensure that the Quaker Business Method is explained and that it is upheld. Consider explaining the business method anyway, even if you think all members already 'know' it. It can be helpful for grounding the meeting to be reminded.
- have an eye out for the well-being of all group members, with the awareness that some may need some encouragement to play a full role in the group.
- one of the elders is on the nominations committee.
- where needed, assist those presenting business items, and in their preparation.
- talk to EMEYF postholders to find out how they are and support them in fulfilling their role.
- where needed, facilitate other activities, e.g. epilogue, Meeting for Worship, Special Interest Groups.

### **Spring Gathering (Easter):**

- introducing the Elders and their role at the beginning of the week
- support for the Planning Group. Let them know that elders are there to support them. If needed, provide opportunities for them to share how they are feeling with you. Remember that they may be stressed even if things seem to be going well.
- look after the business sessions, the same as at Annual Meeting.
- uphold the spirit of worship during Meetings for Worship during the week, including epilogue and any other periods of worship.
- preparation of epilogue is a group responsibility, but elders may find it appropriate to offer assistance or guidance.
- have an eye out for the well-being of all group members, with special awareness of the

needs of those who are there for the first time, those who are quiet and do not necessarily express their feelings, those who may have problems at home or who are going through changes in their life, those who find it difficult to communicate due to language difficulties etc.

- having awareness of any affects that sessions may have on individual group members. Spring Gathering is usually an intense period in which people may find the safety, to open up to deeper and more vulnerable parts of themselves. Don't be surprised or scared when this happens, along with tears and intense emotions. Make sure there is the support they may need to come to terms with the implications of the session content. Create time to be with anyone who needs support, and opportunities for everyone to express anything they experienced. (Be aware of your own limitations; there are many people around you who are happy to help. If you have arranged for someone else to give emotional support, then this part of the Elder's job has been done.)
- It is possible to appoint one or two additional elders for the duration of the gathering, to share the work and awareness and make sure elders are not overloaded

### **Communications Committee (usually Springtime, annually)**

- Take part in CC meetings, including any preparation of or follow up to agenda items that is needed.
- have an eye out for the well-being of all cc-members, and help them fulfill their roles.- Try to find out what CC needs in terms of teambuilding, mediation or fun time together, and support them in grounding in the spirit.

### **Between events**

- if any issues arose for individuals during gatherings, follow up and support these individuals afterwards as they return to normal life, if appropriate.
- keep in touch with other postholders and help them to fulfill their role.
- Keep an eye on email communication and Skype Calls of CC, make sure discernment happens in the right way
- be available and contactable by anyone within EMEYF if they feel the need to talk to someone. Ensure people know they can contact the elders, and how to contact them
- the elders and the clerks share the responsibility of being the contact person for our Secretary
- keep in touch with the Programme Assistants in Brussels (QCEA) and Geneva (QUNO) and offer them pastoral care

*last updated 4/2014, Mieke van Opheusden and Esther Koehring*