

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. When there are two elders, it can be important 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 others 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 document collects tasks elders have taken up in the past and is meant as a guideline.

The Elders are members of Communications committee (CC), and take part in CC business through skype and in-person meetings, as well as acting as elders in CC's meetings for worship for business. The Elders try their best to attend Annual Meeting, 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 a need for support between events as well.

Annual Meeting (Autumn: October-early December-ish):

- ensure that the Quaker Business Method is explained and that it is upheld. Consider explaining the business method again, even if you think all members already 'know' it. A reminder can help to ground the meeting.
- 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 serves on the nominations committee, which involves supporting the committee to follow the nominations process in a worshipful manner, as well as helping practically with communication, timekeeping and ensuring nominations returns are ready for the business session.
- where needed, assist those presenting business items, in their preparation and presentation
- talk to EMEYF role holders 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 provide pastoral support. 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.
- Introduce our Quaker business method, and 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.
- Make sure to raise and create appropriate spaces for topics that might be important and/or difficult for EMEYFers. For example the topics of family planning, children, partners and the joys,

difficulties and taboos that come with it, or anything else. There might not be a space for such discussions elsewhere.

- Be aware of the effects 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, including when participants cry or express intense emotions. Make sure there is the support they may need to come to terms with the implications of the session's 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 usual to appoint one - three additional elders for the duration of the gathering, to share the work and awareness and ensure elders are not overloaded

Communications Committee (a face-to-face meeting usually Springtime, annually, and by skype throughout the year)

- 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 team-building, mediation or fun time together, and support them in remaining grounded 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 roleholders 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 do so.
- Keep in touch with the Programme Assistant(s) in Brussels (QCEA) and offer them pastoral care (if requested)
- As other roleholders come to the end of their term, Elders are encouraged to reach out to them individually, in good time, and to see how their experience has been. This is a lovely time for roleholders to reflect on their service. Elders may use this opportunity to remind each roleholder to update their "job description" ready for handing over to the next person/people.
- Are you aware of previous individuals who have been roleholders? Sometimes when we finish helping in a particular role, we can feel lost or alienated within the group. Have you as elder, or other members of the community, reached out to them to see how they are feeling now that their role within the community may have changed?

last updated 03/2019 Rose Oliver