

FMC COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

It is as if each of us brings a thread of silence to meeting, and it is only through our faithful worship that these threads are woven into a tight and beautiful tapestry through which we hear the Divine Presence. [Thomas Sander]

In our interactions with one another, what weaves us together? How does each of us contribute to an inviting, safe and loving community? In setting forth the following affirmations regarding individual interactions, Friends Meeting at Cambridge recognizes the central importance of making our community norms explicit. [Further guidance may be found in New England Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice*, 1985, The Queries, pp. 211-213]

1. We believe in, we celebrate, and are asked to nurture the best in one another; i.e., “to answer that of God in everyone.”
2. We believe that our community is built upon the richness and depth of our relationships with one another.
3. We believe that transcendence is possible when individuals participate in meeting for worship with attention to business or a standing, clearness, or a support committee. We believe that the whole can be greater than its parts. We believe that when participants in such gatherings listen with an open heart, ask questions, carefully discern, pray, and allow the time and attention each consideration requires, way will open.
4. We believe that the needs of the individual and the needs of our community must be taken in consideration. We believe that when called to consider these sometimes-oppositional needs, much prayer and collective wisdom is called for
5. We believe that trust is foundational:
 - We trust that each of us will act with integrity. *Let your word be 'Yes, Yes,' or 'No, No.'* [Matthew 5: 37]
 - We trust that we will be tender with one another, especially in times of vulnerability.
 - We “*trust the process.*” [Anne Kriebel.] See #4.

Friends Meeting at Cambridge aspires to be an inviting, safe, and loving community where all can be spiritually nourished, enjoy fellowship, and engage in an honest exchange of ideas. We have all experienced painful circumstances, physical and/or emotional harm. Our race, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic, or religious background may mean that what one person might consider an innocent comment or behavior could actually be hurtful or threatening or experienced as harassment by another person.¹ Although these hurtful or painful or feeling-unsafe interactions may be **unintentional**—one person’s sense of personal space may differ greatly from another’s, for example—FMC recognizes that the individual impacted can best communicate their sense of hurt or violation of trust.

¹ From *FGC Gathering Policy and Procedures on Harassment*, 2016 (modified)

We recognize that there is a distinction between conflict that arises out of miscommunication between two or more individuals and a breach of our community norms. The latter is likely to include sexual, emotional, or physical harassment or abuse. These guidelines, which apply to individuals eighteen years and older,² acknowledge that every violation of trust is unique, but some require specific and concrete responses

A word about time: Given that any violation of trust is a violation of another's spiritual condition, which impacts all of us, our beloved community is best served by the timely resolution of differences between us. Seeking Truth, listening to that of Spirit in one another, and prayer require time, however. May we, with Divine guidance, rise to the challenge of being both mindful of the urgency when addressing a violation of trust within our community and to take whatever time is needed to help one another up with a tender hand.

If You Feel Comfortable Addressing the Violation of Trust Yourself:

If you have experienced a violation of trust and **are comfortable doing so**, address the issue directly with the other individual. Arrange for a convenient time to sit together, alone, so that you can explore BOTH the intention AND the impact of an action or communication. (Arranging use of the Selleck Room for these conversations will insure privacy and quiet.) May you both listen to that of Spirit in the other and *be heard* in that same, loving, and open spirit.

Should your conversation(s) not resolve this violation of trust, ask one or two people you trust to accompany you during further conversation(s). These "witnesses" are present not to mediate or to adjudicate but to hold the space for transformation (Amanda Kemp).

Should you *not* feel comfortable to directly speak with the other individual or should the above- described Gospel Order steps still feel unresolved, let someone from this community know. This person may be someone who can help you connect with the appropriate person(s), or you can speak directly with the Resident Friend or the clerk(s) of Ministry and Counsel. (Their names are listed in the FMC Directory.)

After careful discernment, Ministry and Counsel (M & C) may decide to:

- Appoint one or two members of M & C to meet with each party separately
- If appropriate, facilitate a meeting between the individuals involved.
- If not appropriate, M & C members will create a sustainable solution for both parties and the Meeting.
- Explore other resources both within and outside FMC and, if appropriate, encourage
- A clearness or support group for one or both parties

² FMC's *Child Abuse Policy and Protocols* describes FMC's policy regarding violations of trust with children. *FMC's Policies on Discrimination, Harassment and Sexual Harassment* details violations of trust involving an FMC employee.

- Mediation
- Restorative justice (RJ) circle³ [Not yet implemented at FMC]

Harassment and/or Abuse

There are many different types of severe violation of trust including harassment, unwanted attention, or boundary violations. Here are some examples:

- Actions or communication which are experienced as de-valuing, disrespectful, hostile, or aggressive
- Any coercion of one individual over another
- Unwanted verbal interactions of a sexual or sexually suggestive nature
- Engaging in sexual behaviors/activities in any public area of FMC
- Unwanted physical contact or unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature.
- Threats, stalking behavior, or unwanted sexualized conversations regarding another person
- Refusal to abide by community norms as listed above.

Response to Abuse and/or Harassment Guidelines

If you have concerns for your safety and need an immediate response:

Contact the Resident Friend or a member of the FMC Response Committee, comprised of representatives from the Clerks Table, Ministry and Counsel, and Trustees, as well as the Resident Friend at carc@fmcquaker.org. These same individuals, serve as the Child Abuse Response Committee.

The Response Committee will quickly arrange a time to talk to all individuals involved and to take necessary steps to support recognition of and adherence to appropriate boundaries. In addition to providing a safe space for individuals to share their perspectives, interventions from the Response Committee may also include referring the concern to Ministry and Counsel for their assistance. The Response Committee in consultation with Ministry and Counsel will work to find a solution that involves all individuals having a place and space to worship. If so led, the Response Committee may wish to bring a concern to the attention of law enforcement agencies.

If an individual does not adhere to the Response Committee's and/or Ministry and Counsel's guidelines, the next steps may include: barring from the property, police intervention and/or a harassment protection order. **We note that calling the police related to a person of color may place that person at significantly greater risk than when calling the police related to a white person and should be avoided whenever possible.**

Miscommunications and Conflict

Excerpt, Minute approved by FMC, September 14, 2000:

Our meeting is a community of people seeking to be open to the love of God and to be caring of each other. Participation in this community needs to be based on trust. While we acknowledge our human imperfections in interacting with each other, we want to treat each other with love, compassion, and respect.

³ "RJ is an approach to justice that focuses on the needs of the victims and the offenders, as well as the involved community, instead of satisfying abstract legal principles or simply isolating and punishing the offender. Restorative Justice can bring healing to the victim and the offenders and their communities." See <http://www.macucc.org/files/files/documentsmissionjustice/restorative+justice+congregation.pdf>