

Friends General Conference Report for YM2025 Annual Sessions

Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association (SAYMA) is a member of Friends General Conference (FGC), a wider Quaker organization of 16 yearly meetings and 12 directly affiliated monthly meetings across the United States and Canada. Its purpose is, with Divine guidance, to nurture the spiritual vitality of the Religious Society of Friends by providing programs and services for Friends, meetings, and seekers. FGC's website is fgcquaker.org.

The 2025 Gathering of FGC was held virtually in February. An in-person Gathering centering Young Adults, Youth, and children will be held this July 2-6 in Clarkston, Michigan. The 2026 Gathering of FGC on July 7-12 next year in Burlington, Vermont, and is an in-person event for all ages. Hybrid options have been found to be too labor intensive for FGC staff, so there will be no virtual opportunities.

This year FGC joined with a multifaith coalition and the Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection in opposition to the rescission of ICE's sensitive location policy. An injunction has not been granted, and the suit is still going forward.

FGC began the process of working on a change in its governance structure in February of 2024. The Governance Working Group submitted their proposal for change to the Central Committee last fall who united in accepting a proposal to continue this work.. The plan is for the working group's final proposal to go to FGC's Executive and Central Committees for discernment. The current governing body is too large and unwieldy at 115 members who only meet annually. A smaller Governing Board meeting at least 6 times a year, can function more effectively, In keeping with boards of other wider Quaker organizations studied.) A more diverse Representative Council is also recommended, for input from yearly and affiliated monthly meetings to provide communication between the member organizations, FGC staff, and the Governing Board.

FCG has expanded its outreach to those who are newcomers to Quakerism. There are many resources on the FGC website, including a virtual meeting for worship for newcomers and seekers held every second Monday each month at 8 pm ET. There is time for questions and sharing. There is a wealth of suggestions for those who want to know more about Quaker practices. The Spiritual Deepening program offers several e-retreats over the year.

Respectfully submitted Margaret Farmer