

CYM Visitation Program – Guidelines for Meetings Hosting Visitors

We hope that the brief outline here and the guidelines on the following pages will be helpful to Meetings wishing to host visitors. If you have questions, or suggestions for further guidelines, please contact the Quaker Visitation Program Coordinator, Stephanie Deakin 250.478.2226 visitationcoordinator@quaker.ca

You should also read “How Does it Work ” on the Visitation page on the CYM website

Here are some **questions that may assist in discernment** when you are considering inviting a CYM visitor:

1. What would be the timing? It would be helpful if choices are offered.
2. What would be the focus/topic of the visit/learning sessions?
3. What length of session would work best for Friends – Saturday only, Friday evening and Saturday during the day, other?
4. Would there be a wish for the visitor to stay a couple of extra days to spend time with individual Friends?
5. How will the Meeting contribute to costs for a visitor? (See the following section)
6. Does the Monthly Meeting have a specific individual in mind for the visit?

Some Friends have asked why there is a **companion for the Visitor**. Companions provide spiritual nurture and support. The companion can look after logistical details, can act as a listener for the visitor, and this leaves the Visitor free to focus on sharing gifts of ministry with the Meeting. The quote below from our Faith and Practice also identifies another benefit – the mentoring of less experienced or younger Friends.

“Until this century it was not uncommon for Friends to travel in the ministry, following a real sense of leading in this direction. Often they went out in pairs, one older, one younger. The study of their travel shows, I think, that their friendship became one in which they could open to one another their struggles and failures, their hopes and visions, when they became for each other the way through to the presence of God.” —Christopher Holdsworth, 1985 – from 5.53, Faith and Practice – Canadian Yearly Meeting

Financial Arrangements

Covering Costs

1. Ideally, the meeting or worship group requesting a visit is able to cover all of the costs of travel (mileage, car rental and/or tickets, meals, parking) and provide hospitality in the homes of their members.
2. When this is not possible, the coordinator can work with the meeting or worship group to determine how much of the travel costs they can support without overburdening themselves.

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3. Both the coordinator and the meeting will have an estimate of travel costs before the visit is made and will have agreed upon what portion will be covered by the meeting and what by the Quaker Education Program.
4. Possibilities others have used for contributing to costs:
 - Take a collection at the conclusion of a visit.
 - Members might donate frequent flyer miles to help provide a plane ticket for their visitor.
5. We intend that no meeting or worship group be denied the opportunity for a visit from a seasoned Friend based solely on inability to financially support a visit.

Reimbursement for visitors

1. Meetings will reimburse visitors and companions directly for their expenses. If a Meeting is unable to meet the full cost of a visit, it may request financial assistance from the CYM Visitation Program using the form below.
2. On occasion, a visitor may need to have some expenses (such as airfare) paid in advance. If such a request is made and the Meeting requires financial assistance from CYM, the Meeting may request such assistance at the time the expense is incurred, and needn't wait until the visit has been completed.

By following this system both Meetings and visitors always know how reimbursement will be handled.

Sample form:

<i>CYM Visitation Travel Assistance Request from Monthly Meeting</i>			
Monthly Meeting		Dates of Visit	
Contact Name			
Visitor			
Companion			
Total Cost of Visit			
Amount Requested from CYM			

Travelling Minutes, Travelling Letters and CYM Visitation Travelling Letters

All Friends travelling with the CYM Visitation Program will carry a CYM Visitation travelling letter and some of our visitors may also carry a travelling minute or a travelling letter from their own meetings.

Travelling minutes and Travelling letters are described in our Organization and Procedure:

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4.9 Travelling minutes - Friends are encouraged to foster the concern for visiting in a way to help the cause of Truth. A Call to visit other Meetings may arise in any individual, whether or not a member of the Meeting of Ministry and Counsel, or it may arise in that Meeting itself. This service may include arranging public addresses, informal conferences, visiting in families or visiting other Meetings, prompted by a concern for deepening the religious life of our Society. The Monthly Meeting, when it seems fitting, and after consideration has been given by its Meeting of Ministry and Counsel, may grant a minute to a Friend visiting under religious concern.... Persons who have been granted minutes should return them to the issuing Meeting within a reasonable time after the service has been completed.

A Clerk of a Meeting, on being presented with a travelling minute by a visiting Friend, should endorse it with a suitable return minute signed on behalf of the Meeting.

4.10 Travelling letters - Members proposing to travel may receive from their Monthly Meeting letters of introduction to the groups they propose to visit, but such letters should not be confused with the type of minute described in the preceding paragraph.

The **CYM Visitation travelling letter** is similar to a travelling minute in that a discernment process is used in selecting who is asked to travel, spiritual gifts are named, and some follow-up care is given. The letter, however, does not carry the same weight as a minute of travel in that the Quaker Education Program Committee can not give the same quality of care and counsel as a Friend's own meeting, nor is it their role to do so. If a Friend carries a travelling minute there is no need to endorse their CYM Visitation travelling letter. They will share the endorsement of their minute with the QEPC. **However, if they do not carry a travelling minute we ask that the CYM Visitation travelling letter be endorsed and returned to the visitor.**

Feedback and Follow-up

1. The travel companion/elder will have a set of brief follow-up questions to leave with the meeting. Friends are asked to discuss the questions after a visit has been completed. Some meetings/worship groups prefer addressing the questions in meeting for worship with attention to business and then sending the completed questionnaire to the coordinator via e-mail or regular mail. Others prefer a telephone contact.
2. If the coordinator does not receive a written follow-up within a few weeks of the visit, s/he will call or email the liaison person or the clerk to ask for feedback. Unless otherwise specified as confidential, this follow-up material may be shared with the visitors.
3. The visitor and elder/companion will also be asked to provide written follow-up to the coordinator, and this feedback may be shared with the meeting.
4. The visitors may also be in touch with the meeting via letter to share thoughts that have come to them since the meeting and to share any relevant resources.

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Hosting Visitors

Canadian Friends have a long history of offering hospitality to those travelling, and may be very familiar with the suggestions below. Some may find it helpful to use this list as a reminder.

1. Name a person who will act as contact to work with the Visitation Program Coordinator for this visit.
2. The Program Coordinator makes sure the Monthly Meeting contact person is informed of any special needs to be considered such as dietary restrictions, allergies, and/or physical restrictions.
3. It is not usually necessary to host the visitor and their travel companion in the same home. If the same family hosts both visitors, **it is important that they be given separate bedrooms** (unless of course, the visitors are a couple or let you know they prefer otherwise).
4. Please provide contact phone numbers to call if the visitors should run into problems of any sort while en route.
5. If visitors are coming by air or bus, please give them instructions as to where they will be met and the name and phone number of the person who will be meeting them.
6. If the person assigned to pick up the visitors does have a cell phone be sure to give that number out before the trip. If the visitor does not know the person who is meeting the visitor it is helpful to have an identifying sign, or share photos before travel commences.
7. If the visitors are driving, please provide clear driving instructions.
8. Please send the name, address and phone number of hosts well before the departure date. This allows visitors to make sure their own families know how to reach them when they are away.
9. **Rest Time** - Many Friends are open to meeting with individual members and attenders when they are not otherwise engaged in meeting activities. Often meeting committees find it helpful to meet with a visiting Friend and elder over a meal or at a separate time. It is also important to remember that Friends need some down time to refresh and relax. Urge host families to remember to allow some daily quiet time for their guests. If the visitor and elder are staying in different locations please arrange for them to have an opportunity for daily worship together. If Friends are staying for several days in your community, arrange for some time off. The best way to do this is to ask the visiting Friends to be clear about their own needs and preferences. Some Friends enjoy a guided tour of the area, but others prefer some time to themselves. Everyone has different needs, so when in doubt ask.
10. Please provide transportation for Friends when they are in your community. Sometimes someone might have an extra car they can loan the visitors, but some Friends do not feel comfortable driving themselves around an unfamiliar area in an unfamiliar car. Please check.

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Here are some suggestions that have come from Meetings who have hosted visitors, about how Meetings can prepare themselves to make the visit as successful as possible:

- It may help to have a neutral space that is not the usual location of Meeting.
- Have a budget.
- Make it easy on yourself – catering is a good idea so you can focus on what you're there for.
- Connect with the visitor by phone at least once before s/he comes.
- Sending reports can help the visitor understand the history – for example, State of Society reports, Business Meeting minutes, Meeting newsletters.
- The discernment process of matching a visitor to a Meeting has to be spiritually grounded – it's important to involve a coordinator who has that gift.

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