

Guidelines for New Groups - Conscience Meetings

Why?

As mentioned in the Members Handbook, a group conscience meeting is a process by which each FA group can make decisions that affect the group as a whole. These may include matters such as the meeting format and election of officers. Other issues may be more practical – does the meeting start on time, does everyone do their bit in setting up the meeting and clearing away, how do we want to run the meeting when we have newcomers? Etc.

A conscience meeting is a way of reviewing the meeting, keeping it healthy, dealing with things as they come up.

Each group is autonomous and will decide how best to organise their meeting, but here are some suggestions if you are unsure how to proceed.

When?

A regular time, set aside at the beginning or end of a meeting, for a group conscience means that it becomes a natural part of running the group – if there is nothing to raise or discuss, that's fine, the main meeting proceeds as usual. Monthly seems to work well for some groups, but it is up to your group to decide.

A conscience meeting may be called by anyone, at any time, if they have something they wish to raise before the next scheduled CM.

How?

Prior to the meeting, it may be helpful for members to review the questions raised in 'Let's Take a Group Inventory' – they form a good basis for thinking, beforehand, about how your group is getting on. The same goes, on a personal level, for 'My Part in the Group'.

The chosen leader for the main meeting will generally chair the CM.

The leader will then ask if there are any matters to be discussed.

He/she might like to invite different members to read Traditions 1, 2 and 5.

Members then share uninterrupted, giving their point of view. Each member, however new, may contribute to the meeting. If a decision needs to be made, a vote can be taken.

In Conclusion

Conscience meetings can be a safe, non judgemental and non confrontational place in which to voice one's opinion and review group meetings.

The Twelve Traditions and particular FA readings give guidance and structure to these meetings. Holding true to 'Three Destructive Forces' and 'Principles not Personalities' will help to avoid situations where feelings may be hurt.

The Members Handbook, page 3, has more suggestions and gives an excellent précis of practical aspects of FA Traditions.

If your group needs any further guidance then you can always ring your Board member contact, if you have their number, or phone the office for help.

Tradition 1

Our common welfare should come first. Personal progress for the greatest number depends on unity.

Tradition 2

For our group purpose there is but one authority – a loving God as he may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants – they do not govern.