

AREA COORDINATOR PROGRAM OF FIFTH EPOCHAL FELLOWSHIP

1. Background

It has long been agreed that study groups are central to the growth of our fellowship and the dissemination of The Urantia Book and its teachings. The more encouragement our organization supplies at the local level, the more healthy and vigorous it will be. Beginning in 1959, a system of Field Representatives was created to help study groups and individuals, and it was effective due to the dedicated service of those who served. Its successor, the Area Coordinator program, builds on that good concept by involving far more people, establishing definite areas of responsibility for each Area Coordinator, systematic training and oversight, and terms of service for those appointed.

So long as it remains flexible and responsive, organization is the key to success in our time. People generally work harder when they have a formal position they have agreed to fulfill. The individuals involved in the Area Coordinator program receive a structured relationship to our organization, and are thus propelled into fuller involvement.

2. Purpose

The Area Coordinator is the local area representative of Fifth Epochal Fellowship designated to establish and maintain contact with new and existing study groups and readers in order to encourage and serve them by helping make their Urantia Book-related activities more productive and satisfying, and to integrate and coordinate local efforts with the international work of Fifth Epochal Fellowship.

The Area Coordinator's primary purposes are to help study groups in his or her area and to respond to inquiries from individuals about the book referred to him by the Fellowship office, and where appropriate, to recommend study groups they can attend. The nature of the study group help would be non-intrusive availability as to the individual group, and coordinative as to encouraging area activities among groups in the area. The Area Coordinator's purpose, in effect, is much the same as Fifth Epochal Fellowship's, to advance "the study and dissemination of the teachings of The Urantia Book...through the medium of fraternal association...."

Area Coordinators are a serving, rather than a representative or political group. There is no "political" dimension to their service; it is not a policy-making group. The office does not imply standing to speak for Fifth Epochal Fellowship regarding policy matters. The Area Coordinator exercises only moral authority and may not coerce anyone in the name of Fifth Epochal Fellowship, or commit Fifth Epochal Fellowship in any legally binding transaction. No particular sanction attaches to any Area Coordinator's personal interpretations of The Urantia Book. Fifth Epochal Fellowship maintains a tradition of open-mindedness and equal respect for everyone's interpretation of The Urantia Book.

Area Coordinators are expected to help coordinate the work of study groups, not to be actual outreach agents. They are not expected or intended to be evangelists, but as the name implies, to help coordinate Urantia Book-related activities in geographical areas. The Area Coordinator's work is with existing readers, or those who have inquired.

3. Tone

All Area Coordinators' activity is intended to be non-sales oriented, non-coercive, encouraging, facilitating, and without pressure. The approach you are intended to use is exemplified by Jesus' Instruction for Teachers and Believers, on page 1765 of The Urantia Book, which begins "Always respect the personality of man."

4. Job Description

The Area Coordinator's job is to help individual Urantia Book readers and study groups within his/her territory, to encourage the study of The Urantia Book, fellowship among readers, and the progress of our movement. It is his/her responsibility to keep in frequent touch with all study groups, and to visit each one within his territory at least annually (if possible). On those visits, the Area Coordinator may participate in the meeting, convey Fifth Epochal Fellowship's interest in their welfare, and upon request offer the group or its members any assistance possible. At the present time, due to the realities of a severely limited Fellowship budget, it is necessary that you serve as volunteers and pay your own expenses.

Each Area Coordinator is required to submit a report on the status of any/all study group(s) and readership in his/her area by May 1st of each year, to the International Fellowship Committee. These reports are appended to the committee's annual reports to the General Council.

5. Geographic area of responsibility

An Area Coordinator's territory should never be larger than the individual feels adequate to properly serve, and he/she must reside in his territory. (In the United States at the present time, the upper limits of the territories are usually state lines, [except for very small states] or around five million people, whichever is smaller.)

6. Methods of appointment

Area Coordinators outside the United States are nominated by the International Fellowship Committee, and in the United States by the Domestic Extension Committee. The international nominees are chosen from recommendations from "Urantia-active" people in their area. The appointment itself is by the Executive Committee of Fifth Epochal Fellowship, and may be revoked at any time, without cause. Prior to nomination, the individual must agree to perform the duties of his office. Nominees must have read the entire Urantia Book, be Fellowship members, workers, trustworthy, and able to afford to spend the time and money to write and telephone, and travel around their areas when necessary to fulfill their offices.

In territories where a Fellowship Society exists, the Society is invited to elect an Area Coordinator for its area. (Where more than one Society exists in an area, the Societies are expected to arrive at a joint recommendation.) Other than the method of election, such Area Coordinators would be like all others in their duties, responsibilities, and term of office. There is only one class of Area Coordinators.

Area Coordinators are appointed for terms of three years, with no limit on the number of terms any individual might serve. Successive terms require renomination by the committee concerned and reappointment by the Executive Committee.

7. Training

Only individuals already qualified by long experience in helping study groups and readers are appointed as Area Coordinators. Additional training, however, is provided by an initial training session sponsored by Domestic Extension and/or International Fellowship. Conferences will be held from time to time (in conjunction with other functions), to provide the opportunity to review common experiences, to develop better techniques, and to reinforce one another, in order to enhance the effectiveness of the overall program.

8. Organizational relationship to Fifth Epochal Fellowship

Area Coordinators are appointed by, and serve under the ultimate direction of the Executive Committee. Outside the United States, they report to and are coordinated by the International Fellowship Committee, and in the United States by the Domestic Extension Committee. These committees are responsible for maintaining frequent contact with each Area Coordinator, for the purposes of mutual information, direction and maintenance of enthusiasm for the tasks to which we are dedicated.

In order to avoid unnecessary layers of communication, telephone and letter inquiries from new readers are sent directly to the Area Coordinators from the Fellowship office, with the appropriate committee copied. Communications between Area Coordinators and the Fellowship would ordinarily be through the committees, although Area Coordinators may at any time deal directly with their designated contact person at the Fellowship office.