

BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING CONSULTATION ON MEMBERSHIP PROCEDURES

Supporting Document

October 2004

Sharing ideas

I Introduction

As an accompaniment to the Consultation Document which is being sent to meetings and others, the Membership Procedures Group thought that it might be helpful to put together some of the very useful ideas which we have received from meetings and individuals in response to the Yearly Meeting minute in 2001.

There are many other excellent sources of advice and ideas especially *Moving into membership* (Eldership & Oversight Handbook No 8, 2001). This is invaluable, as many meetings will already have found, in providing sample texts in its appendices which can be used by meetings eg a sample leaflet of advice to attenders. Appendix I gives details of many other resources which are available. This document is certainly not intended to replace this - rather it is intended as a supplement and to draw attention to existing good practice.

At Yearly Meeting 2001 minute 30 was drawn up which included this advice:

“We see it as essential that the membership application takes place within a context of care, nurture, education and support of attenders and members. We encourage Monthly Meetings, where they see fit, to experiment with the application process within the spirit of *Quaker faith & practice*, allowing rather more freedom than the current wording about exceptional circumstances (section 11.21 in particular) allows.”

Many monthly meetings have held discussions in the light of this minute, some have decided on fairly radical experiments and some information on these is included in the appendix.

Most have continued to use the traditional process (as set out in Chapter 11 of *Quaker faith and practice*) often with adaptations. As a group we have returned continually to Chapter 11 of *Quaker faith and practice*, the introduction to which (11.1) we have found especially inspirational. Chapter 11 already encourages meetings to find what works for them and for

many the traditional process works very well, using the traditional pattern, many meetings have found ways of ensuring the experience of applying for membership a more positive experience both for the applicant and for the whole meeting. One letter we received commented “the process for acquiring membership is already very simple and undaunting. Any attender who finds it daunting may not have been lovingly advised by his/her PM”.

One monthly meeting who set up a group to look at membership procedures commented that they found Chapter 11 “both more rewarding and more flexible than we remembered, it seems to allow for all the flexibility that we need and also gives helpful advice and a sensitive understanding of the present situation”.

The beginning of the process of becoming a member can be set at different stages. Meetings are very aware of the gradual nurturing which can take place from the time when someone begins to attend. In this document we refer particularly to the latter parts of the process, distinct stages which can be seen as the more formal aspects of acquisition of membership. The nurturing process is, however, referred to in Sections III, IV and the appendix, particularly as it is being formalised in specific ways in some meetings.

The rest of this document follows the headings in the Consultation Document.

II Personal application: initiating the process

1. In some meetings elders and overseers approach attenders to ask whether they might consider applying for membership. Others wait for attenders to approach them. In many meetings both can be true. Among the comments on this which we have had from different monthly meetings are:
 - (a) “we wait and hope”
 - (b) “we are perhaps too confident that attenders will gain knowledge by osmosis”
 - (c) “reluctance to encourage attenders to apply can be seen as unspoken discouragement”
 - (d) “what can happen is that an attender has been waiting to be invited to consider membership while their PM Friends think that they are not interested”
 - (e) “.....(For) a person who has been a longstanding member of a PM local overseers may approach such a person and ask if they would like overseers to write to the Clerk of MM on their behalf to suggest that they should be accepted into membership. If the person agreed, overseers would write giving the reasons for the

nomination.”

- (f) A comment from a recently joined Friend who had been approached by an elder in his meeting: “the evidence that another valued me in that way was a useful nudge”.
- 2. Many meetings produce a leaflet explaining the process of applying for membership. Examples of the wording of such a leaflet are given in *Moving into membership* (Appendix V 'inviting Attenders to apply for Membership') See also the appendix to this present document for details of Leicester Monthly Meeting's leaflet.
- 3. Most meetings still follow the traditional procedure of the applicant writing to the monthly meeting clerk. Instead of a letter of application the wish to join can be expressed in a personal contact, face to face or by telephone with the preparative meeting clerk, an elder or an overseer. The appropriate contact, probably in writing, can then be made with the monthly meeting clerk.

III The role of Overseers: nurturing and supporting the Applicant

- 1. Some meetings have an organised system of accompanying attenders to coffee, study groups or other activities in which they have expressed an interest and to business meetings where the accompanying Friend can explain the process. Some meetings have 1 or 2 Friends available after Meeting for worship to answer questions.
- 2. Many meetings produce packs for enquirers and attenders. Many arrange events for enquirers and attenders (*Moving into membership* page 3 gives guidance on how such an event might be organised).
- 3. Many meetings also arrange suitable study groups often following the workbook *You and the Quaker Tradition* sometimes followed by *Who we are* (see resources list, page 35 of *Moving into membership*). One monthly meeting which holds a series of meetings for enquirers and attenders asks them at the final meeting if they wish to become a member.
- 4. A number of meetings have developed nurturing or mentoring systems to guide and support attenders and to help them to discern the right time for them to move into membership (see appendix). In some meetings the nurturing process starts once the application has been made; in other meetings the nurturing is part of the process which leads to application.

Meetings which have introduced a formal mentoring or nurturing process have found that the mentors and the whole meeting have felt benefits: 'a positive effect of working out with attenders the right way for them to join'.

IV The Appointed visitors: Discerning the Rightness of the Application

1. In many cases monthly meetings ask the overseers of the applicant's preparative meeting to suggest the name of one visitor to put forward to the monthly meeting. The other visitor is appointed by monthly meeting from another preparative meeting. In practice this may mean that the monthly meeting appoints one of the Friends present at monthly meeting and this can lead to the same Friends being asked for this service. One comment was that 'it is very hard to get new visitors because the meeting suggests those who are proved and tried as visitors'.

In some monthly meetings visitors are appointed by Monthly Meeting Overseers or Nominations Committee are asked to bring forward names. One monthly meeting felt that 'this allows more thoughtful nomination'. A monthly meeting which usually appoints visitors asks Nominations Committee to act on its behalf if there is likely to be too long a delay before monthly meeting meets. Another asks elders at the applicant's preparative meeting to suggest one name with the other being appointed by Monthly Meeting Elders on a rota basis. Some monthly meetings have a rota so that preparative meetings are asked in turn to provide visitors. In some monthly meetings the applicant is asked if they would like to name one of the visitors in which case three may be appointed. At least one monthly meeting has a 'visitors' coordinator' who contacts overseers to suggest appropriate names.

2. Most monthly meetings have written guidance for visitors. *Moving into membership* has some samples in Appendix VI 'Information about the visiting process'. Chapter 11 of *Quaker faith & practice* also provides guidance. One monthly meeting said that they had arranged a monthly meeting training course for interested members on visiting and that this had 'considerably widened our choice'. At least one monthly meeting has tried to review its visiting process by giving a questionnaire to all recent visitors.
3. Some meetings may hold a meeting for clearness at different stages, eg before application or during the process. But for some attenders it can be daunting - one recently joined Friend whose monthly meeting initially rejected her application and appointed a meeting for clearness even described the experience as being 'like a trial'. *Moving into membership*

warns that a Meeting for Clearness which involves only the preparative meeting could 'make it harder for the monthly meeting to query the rightness of the application'.

4. Applicants can still view the visit as a kind of exam-a major hurdle to be overcome. It has been described as 'daunting' even 'frightening' and one monthly meeting commented that the visitors may feel the same! On the other hand we had comments which suggested that if it was not rigorous it could be 'a very serious let down'. One monthly meeting said 'this process should demonstrate accessibility, flexibility and rigour'. One comment we received referred to the understandable apprehension which applicants feel but said that most came to 'value the experience as a high point in their spiritual lives'.
5. Some monthly meetings have adapted the traditional system. The following are some useful ideas which are taken from the responses which we have received: -
 - (a) Those interested in membership could be given clear choices as to the procedure they wish to follow. The options may include a traditional visit, a period of nurturing and discussion and/or a Meeting for clearness.
 - (b) 'For a regular attender who is well known to local Friends two seasoned Friends draft a very brief report and recommendation to monthly meeting '. It should perhaps be noted here that another letter which we received suggested that some long-standing attenders 'can be very disappointed if it is suggested that they are so well known that there is no need for consultation in depth about Quaker beliefs or a visit'.
 - (c) The name of 'the visit' should be changed either to a 'meeting for worship to consider membership' or a meeting for clearness.
 - (d) A two year period of nurturing by the preparative meeting and then a minute to monthly meeting when the Friend is ready for membership. This minute may be drawn up by the visitors in the context of a meeting for worship which is submitted to monthly meeting in lieu of a report.
 - (e) One monthly meeting has minuted its willingness to accept a recognition of membership from preparative meetings but this has not found unity among all members because of a concern that membership should remain the responsibility of the monthly

meeting.

6. Most monthly meetings show the report to the applicant, some do not. One monthly meeting commented that it had decided that the report must be shared with applicants both because it was fairer and in order to ensure that they were complying with the Data Protection Act. It is also more open and ensures accuracy.

V Decisions about membership

1. In the experimental procedures in several monthly meetings an extensive nurturing and discernment process, involving Friends from the preparative meeting and possibly from other meetings, takes place before a report or minute is brought to monthly meeting. These monthly meetings recognise this and expect to trust that process as the monthly meeting decision is made. For example preparative meeting may receive and hear the 'Report' and send a minute to the monthly meeting making a recommendation. The expectation is that this would be accepted.
2. Some monthly meetings allow attenders to be present when membership matters are discussed. Others do not. This may mean the applicant 'waiting outside for the verdict'. On the other hand one Friend commented that having attenders present 'put off an attender from my meeting applying as he felt that the report on another attender had been judgemental and he was not willing to expose himself to that'. Applications are rarely turned down but occasionally a second visit is asked for. One comment made was 'if the meeting has nurtured the attender well this should not be necessary' and another emphasised how important it was to help the applicant to discern when they were ready to make an application because 'once the process has started it is very difficult to stop it'.

VI Recognition

1. It is usual for the monthly meeting to appoint a Friend to welcome the new member as soon as possible. Most present an inscribed copy of *Quaker faith & practice* or another book of the member's choice. There is usually an announcement during or after meeting for worship. In some monthly meetings both visitors welcome the new member. One monthly meeting gives a year's subscription to *The Friend*, monthly meeting or *Friends Quarterly*. Others send information such as a calendar of events, Woodbrooke prospectus etc. One monthly meeting says that it asks the welcomer to remain as a resource person for the new member giving support when needed, advice over reading, accompanying to business meetings etc.

2. One meeting has developed a process for 'affirmation' of membership. This takes place at a regular meeting for worship with prior notice being given. The new member makes a pre-arranged statement of their commitment to the meeting and the Religious Society of Friends and this is reciprocated by the meeting. A certificate recognising this commitment may be signed by all.
3. *Moving into membership* says that the recognition of a new member 'is a joyous occasion and will hopefully encourage hesitant attenders into membership'. So some meetings organise special events - a welcoming party, shared lunch, or an invitation to supper with other members at a Friend's house. Sometimes flowers are given or there is a cake after meeting.

VII Children

- 1 Monthly meetings have been asked whether they have any specific membership procedures for children. This has elicited little response. Several monthly meetings reported having applications from children on their own behalf which are dealt with in the normal way with parental support. Some do appoint visitors - one monthly meeting said that it appoints both visitors from the child's own preparative meeting making sure that they are known to them.
- 2 Only one monthly meeting said that it had made any changes to its procedures:
'Children apply in the usual way but with a note from a parent supporting this application. The same procedure as with adults applies, with particular care in choosing visitors who are known to the young person. The visitor from another preparative meeting will usually be a parent whose child is known to the applicant. That visitor is encouraged by the monthly meeting clerk to visit the preparative meeting before the visit to meet the applicant. A preparative meeting elder may meet with the child before the visit to go through the leaflet for applicants, if the child wishes. The offer is made to the child in the letter from the monthly meeting clerk.'
- 3 Another monthly meeting described how two of the children who attended one of their preparative meetings applied for membership. Both were aged eight. In one case it was discussed with everyone in the preparative meeting (a small meeting with joint eldership and oversight) and it was decided that the parents should apply for their son with a minute of support from the preparative meeting. His Quaker experience was outlined and he

added his own personal statement. In the other case a personal application was made. The children's meeting co-ordinator guided the child and her family through the process. The letter of application was sent from preparative meeting to monthly meeting with their warm endorsement and monthly meeting appointed the children's meeting co-ordinator along with a sympathetic Friend from another preparative meeting as visitors. The visit which took place over tea in the garden of the applicant's home led to 'a clear and thorough report' so that monthly meeting were convinced of the rightness of welcoming the young Friend into membership.

VIII Transfer

1. Current practice varies between monthly meetings. it is often found helpful if a letter accompanies or precedes the forms to introduce a Friend to the new meeting. The appropriate time-scale for transfer will depend on the nature of the move and the needs of the individual Friend.
2. It has been suggested that when a Friend leaves a monthly meeting they could take with them the 'Request for transfer of membership' form to hand to the appropriate person in their new monthly meeting. No transfer would take place until the receiving monthly meeting had agreed and communicated this to the issuing monthly meeting. This procedure untested and the Membership Procedures group do not think that it is likely to make the process any simpler.
3. It may be helpful for meetings to produce a leaflet for Friends giving guidance on the procedures involved in the transfer of membership.

IX Long distance oversight

1. Recognition of the wider network of Quaker links which sustain many Friends can support both a membership application and oversight. A Friend may be involved in a special interest group, central work or Young Friends General Meeting, for example. Membership would be of a particular monthly meeting but oversight, nurturing for membership or discernment concerning the rightness of an application for membership may involve Friends from different parts of the network or 'nurturing' Friends may come from different groups. Each oversight network would be different with the holding monthly meeting being aware that this exists.

2. Email, post and telephone have all been found to be effective ways of maintaining contact and oversight.

X Conclusion

In January 2004 the Membership Procedures Group recorded the following in a minute:-

“Within the differences of practice in the experiments there are common emphases in the changes being made:

- a) the need for flexibility in practice to meet individual needs;
- b) a stronger emphasis on spiritual nurture and the development of understanding of Quaker processes and practice;
- c) more openness;
- d) devolution of aspects of the decision making on behalf of the community to a smaller group, eg from monthly meeting to elders & overseers or to preparative meetings;
- e) acceptance of long-standing attenders with minimal formality;
- f) more initiative being taken by the community which also offers clear support throughout the process.”

Quaker Life Membership Procedures Group

October 2004

Appendix

A number of experiments have centred the decision making on membership in the preparative meeting rather than the monthly meeting. Meetings which have developed such procedures have been enthusiastic about the benefits. The Membership Procedures Group have felt that it would not be difficult for there to be a slight adaptation to these experiments in order to retain the principle of the monthly meeting holding the ultimate responsibility. Mutual trust between the preparative meeting and the monthly meeting is the key.

The following examples of practice are given below (the meetings may have continued to develop these since we received these copies) -

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|--|---------------|
| 1. Notts & Derbys Monthly Meeting | pages 11 - 13 |
| 2. Brighton Preparative Meeting (Chichester Monthly Meeting) | pages 14 - 16 |
| 3. Leicester Monthly Meeting leaflet | pages 17 - 18 |

Notts & Derbys Monthly Meeting: membership procedures

In 1997 Notts & Derbys Monthly Meeting decided to set up a Membership Review Group to explore possible changes in membership procedures (they describe these as 'a very important part of our fellowship'). They had felt particular concern that attenders often wrote to monthly meeting applying for membership without the knowledge and support of their preparative meeting. They felt that attenders needed to have the help and guidance of their preparative meeting in preparing for membership. Applicants also needed to have access to the report presented to monthly meeting.

This group reported in February 1998 and their recommendations were accepted by monthly meeting. This particular experiment has, therefore, been in operation for over 5 years and we are very grateful to Notts & Derbys Monthly Meeting for giving us details of their system and for their comments on how this has worked, in *The Friend* of July 6th 2001 Dennis Hawkins gave a very clear resume of the procedure and we have also made use of this in what follows.

The New Process

1. The monthly meeting began by producing their own version of 'Notes for Attenders and Friends': a 16 page booklet which aims to give a background on Quakerism, answer newcomers' questions and provide a reading list. This has been updated from time to time.
2. The monthly meeting then established a group of 'Supporting Friends'. This consists, preferably of at least one Friend from each preparative meeting - consisting of 8-9 altogether. This is to avoid the need to appoint visitors after the receipt of an application. These 'Supporting Friends' are given training.
3. When it is known that an attender is seeking membership a suitable experienced Friend, usually an overseer or elder is appointed as a 'Nurturing Friend'. Although it is not necessary for the application to come to the monthly meeting clerk, this may happen, in which case the monthly meeting clerk will contact the preparative meeting overseers so that the new procedure can be put into operation.
4. Over a period of time there is 'an exchange of information, questions, support and friendship' (Dorothy Millichamp writing in the Nottingham *Quaker Newsletter* June 2002)

between the applicant and the Nurturing Friend.

5. When the applicant and the Nurturing Friend feel that it is time to take the application forward, the Nurturing Friend contacts the co-ordinator of the group of Supporting Friends who ask one of their number to meet with the applicant and the Nurturing Friend. This is usually in the home of the applicant; in one or more meetings they consider the spiritual and practical implications of becoming a member. We reproduce from the late Dennis Hawkins' article in *The Friend* the questions which are used in this process. Dennis commented 'it has become more and more clear that, for most applicants, a 2nd or 3rd meeting reaches greater depths of spiritual awareness'.

WARMING UP QUESTIONS

- How long have you been an attender?
- Have you made some good friends?
- Do you feel you belong?
- Are there Friends you feel you can really talk and share with?
- Are there things you have been drawn into? Things you particularly like? (Study groups, concerns, activities?)
- Have you attended - worshipped with - other PMs or MMs? (What did you take away, learn, discover?)

SHARING THE DEEPEST INNER THINGS

- How do you experience Meeting for worship?
- Can you say when a Meeting for worship is gathered?
- Do you try to hear what is behind the words in ministry and in everyday talk?
- Sharing our favourite texts, poems, writings
- Sharing one's sense of the sacred and the ordinary
- Sharing any significant personal experience
- Sharing spiritual experiences
- Sharing the spiritual journey

MOVING INTO EXPLORATION QUESTIONS

- What aspects of Quakerism interest you most?
- What features or activities in your Meeting mean most to you?

- our silent worship
- peace and nonviolence
- respecting the convictions of others
- looking for and answering that of God in others and oneself
- simplicity in words and deed
- temperance in words and deeds
- being open and honest
- being open to the Light wherever it may occur

5. All three Friends work together as in a Quaker business meeting to draw up a supported application. Dennis Hawkins comments that 'this process gives a valuable practical experience of Quaker openness and mutual trust'. They all sign this and it is sent to the monthly meeting clerk. It is read out in the usual way at monthly meeting which therefore retains responsibility for membership. The applicant can make a request to attend the monthly meeting when their application is being considered, if the application is accepted a welcoming Friend is appointed who is frequently the same person as the Nurturing Friend. Nurture continues after the membership process

How has this worked in practice?

1. In general Notts & Derbys Monthly Meeting feel that the new system has worked well. The majority of those who have been involved - applicants, Nurturing Friends and Supporting Friends have found that it is a very moving spiritual experience.
2. As with any new procedure they have found that it needs review by monthly meeting from time to time. It needs 'looking after' and in this respect the key Friend is the co-ordinator or clerk of the Supporting Group.
3. The momentum in maintaining the process has been hard work and it does tend to take longer than the traditional process but it has allowed careful discernment, friendship and nurture which can sometimes be lacking in the traditional procedure.
4. The experiment has not necessarily resulted in more applications but there have been long term benefits.

BRIGHTON PREPARATIVE MEETING (CHICHESTER MONTHLY MEETING)

Document on membership procedures. February 2004.

This is an outline of how we proceeded and this is our new recommendation.

As soon as an Attender shows some tenacity in attendance at Meeting for Worship and appears to be moving towards membership, they can be asked if they would like to take part in the befriending scheme. Overseers then appoint two seasoned Friends from those suggested by the Attender, to act as 'BeFrienders' to help the Attender to get to know us and our ways. The relationship between the Attender and the BeFrienders is a sensitive one. It is very important that the steps suggested below are taken only to an extent and at a pace which is acceptable to the Attender. (If circumstances arise when a change of BeFriender becomes necessary or desirable, this needs to be done through overseers and with the consent of the Attender.)

Once the beFrienders are appointed they need to:

Give the Attender a copy of these procedures so that the process is transparent and a shared experience.

Arrange to meet in order for the Attender to be able to ask all the questions they would like and to discuss all the topics in the list.

Encourage the Attender to get to know and be known by other Members, including some seasoned Friends who would be available to support recognition as a Member.

Encourage the Attender to go, preferably with a BeFriender, to Preparative and Monthly Meetings and to other local Meetings where introductions to Friends from those Meetings can be made. Also encourage the Attendees participation in study and discussion groups for Attenders and Enquirers. Drawing attention to courses at Woodbrooke and Charney Manor (and the availability of bursaries.)

As way opens, discussing with the Attender whether s/he is ready to accept the commitment to the way of life which is implicit in becoming a member of the Society. At this stage it needs to be made clear to the Attender that s/he has the choice of following alternatives:

- the traditional way into membership of a visit by two Friends appointed by the Monthly Meeting
- or alternatively joining a small group of Friends well known to the Attender including the

BeFriends for a Meeting for clearness to seek to know whether the time has arrived for the Attender to become a member.

If the Meeting for Clearness is chosen and it seems clear that the Attender is ready for Membership, the BeFriends should write a letter on behalf of those present to the MM Clerk recommending that the Attender be recognised as a Member of the Monthly Meeting. It is advisable that this letter is written with the Attender. In contrast to previous procedures there should be no discussion at MM and objection should be as rare as formal objection to a marriage.

On receiving the letter from the beFriends, Monthly Meeting records the Friend's membership. Confirmation of membership and a welcome would be sent to the Member both in a letter from the Clerk of MM and from the PM. A brief biographical note, in terms agreed by the Member, might be included in the MM newsletter.

We further suggest that:

At the initial meeting, the BeFriends give the Attender an Attenders Pack which should include:

- Advices and Queries and 'Quaker Speak' by Alistair Heron,
- Any of the leaflets from Friends House which seem appropriate.
- A short reading list (This should have a note to the effect that it is not expected that all the books should be read but that reading one or two which appeal to the Attender might be useful)
- A copy of this document as mentioned above.
- Any leaflet specific to the particular PM which outlines things about the running and organisation of that meeting eg. times of meetings, caring circles, discussion groups.

The discussions with the Attender needs to include all the following topics:

- Advices and queries
- The distinctive Quaker testimonies of Equality, Integrity, Peace and Simplicity and how they came about through their relationship to living in the Light
- Friends approach to the Bible
- Quaker Faith and Practice
- The roles of Elders and Overseers

- Meeting for Worship and Ministry
- Quaker Weddings and Funerals
- The structure of the Society of Friends including Meeting for Sufferings, and the various central committees
- Making clear to the Attender the extent to which the Meeting looks to its Members and Attenders to share the many tasks involved in running the Meeting
- Explaining the Society's financial structure and our collection arrangements.
- Some idea of the World family of Friends and FWCC
- The roles of Woodbrooke, Charney Manor, Claridge House and Lattendales.
- Quaker schools

Source: This document with substantial alterations and additions is based on
The Meaning of membership, Sidcot PM, 14th July 2001
 Brighton Quaker Meeting committee on membership April 2004

Becoming a Member

Membership does not require great moral or spiritual achievement, but it does require a sincerity of purpose and a commitment to Quaker values and practices. Membership is a spiritual discipline, a commitment to the well-being of one's spiritual home and not simply appearance on a membership roll. The process of application ... is not only about seeking but also about finding. The process is an important part of the life of the monthly meeting, too; accepting a new member means not only welcoming the 'hidden seed of God' but also affirming that it is as a community that we value and cherish.

(Extract from Quaker Faith and Practice: 11.01)

There are three main routes into membership of the Society of Friends through Leicester Monthly Meeting. The process is not 'rigid' and can be adapted to circumstances.

QFP chapters 10 and 11, '*Belonging to a Quaker Meeting*' and '*Membership*', give background and detail and the first route is included there. All three routes are offered here, following encouragement from Yearly Meeting to experiment with the application process.

'Young Quaker'

Some young people have expressed the wish to be recognised as Quakers without the full commitment they feel would be an essential part of Membership.

Young people, in Leicester Monthly Meeting, who are actively involved in their Meeting will be asked at an appropriate age between 5 and 16 if they wish to be recorded in our local book of members as a 'Young Quaker'. It will be made clear to them that, with their parents' consent, they could apply for Membership and be supported in this by Friends.

The designation of 'Young Quaker' could continue, locally, to age 21 if desired.

Leicester Monthly Meeting
Religious Society of Friends

Leicester Monthly Meeting
Religious Society of Friends
Quakers

DRAFT

Becoming a Member

Three Routes into Membership

1

An attender can write a letter of application addressed to the Clerk of Monthly Meeting. This letter can be a simple statement of a wish to apply for membership. It may, if the attender would like, include something of the individual's background and reasons for applying.

Monthly Meeting will appoint two Friends, at least one of whom will be known to the applicant, to visit. This visit, at a mutually convenient time and place, provides an opportunity for a sensitive exchange of thought and should result in mutual understanding and enrichment. The meaning of Quakerism to the applicant will be explored, together with the responsibilities and commitments of formal membership.

At the end of the visit the two Friends will write a report, the contents of which will be discussed with the applicant. The report is considered by the next monthly meeting. Monthly Meeting's decision is formally conveyed by the Clerk, but a member of the new Friend's own meeting will be appointed to give a personal welcome into the fellowship of the Society.

2

When a Preparative Meeting becomes aware that an attender wishes to consider membership, Friends appointed by the PM or by local overseers may offer to meet with the attender. The meeting will provide an opportunity to explore such areas as: the meaning of Quakerism, the importance to the individual of the Quaker community and the responsibilities and commitment involved in formal membership. This could serve as a befriending process for those who would find that helpful.

If membership of the Society seems the right next step, the attender and the appointed Friends will together write to Monthly Meeting asking for the attender to be accepted into membership. The letter will act both as an application and a 'report' outlining the reasons for and background to the application.

The letter will be considered at the next monthly meeting. The decision will formally be conveyed by the Clerk but a local Friend will also be appointed to welcome the new Friend into the fellowship of the Society.

3

If an attender is very well known in their meeting, the PM, or Friends appointed by PM, or local overseers or elders, with the consent of the attender, may wish to present to Monthly Meeting a letter of application on behalf of the attender. This letter would include the type of material often included in a 'report', giving sufficient information to allow Monthly Meeting to reach a decision.

The letter will be considered at the next monthly meeting. The decision will formally be conveyed by the Clerk but a local Friend will also be appointed to welcome the new Friend into the fellowship of the Society.

Note: consideration will be given to including a Friend from another meeting in the process of compiling the letter' or 'report' under each procedure.

