

Membership in the Religious Society of Friends

While we are all friends, and all who regularly participate in a local Meeting are a part of that community, there is a formal process of membership for those who wish to commit themselves to the community.

Membership is through the local Monthly Meeting, and it is a two-way commitment. The individual who has found the Quaker path helpful to their spiritual development commits to supporting their Meeting through worship, work, and material gifts, consistent with their particular circumstances. The Monthly Meeting commits to providing support and guidance as needed for the individual Friend in following their spiritual leading.

Membership Process

- When an individual feels they have reached readiness for membership, they will make a formal request to the Monthly Meeting by writing a letter, which may be addressed to the clerk. Requests often include the a brief history of their relationship with the Meeting and a description of their interest in Friends. There is no specific form to follow when writing the letter. Each letter is a unique statement of faith--an appeal from the heart.
- Upon receiving the membership request, the Clerk will present the letter at the next Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business. The membership request is then submitted to the care of the Ministry and Caring committee.
- Ministry and Caring will assemble a clearness committee that will meet with the individual to discern his or her readiness for membership.
- The clearness committee will meet with the individual to hold the request for membership in the Light. The committee will want to hear about the individual's spiritual journey, why he or she is interested in membership, and how the applicant's personal commitment to membership will manifest itself. One meeting may be enough to discern readiness for membership, but it is not unusual to meet multiple times if the need exists. The committee may also find it necessary to meet without the individual. Though applicants may be eager, it is important to not rush the process and to allow the Spirit to work within the committee.
- If the Spirit determines that membership is right and beneficial for both the individual and the Meeting, the committee will recommend the applicant for membership. Ministry and Caring will report this recommendation to the next Meeting for Business.
- Once the Business Meeting approves the applicant for membership, the individual is "hugged in" by those in attendance. The applicant's name is recorded on our Monthly Meeting's membership list, as well that of Illinois Yearly Meeting.

Readiness for Membership

Has the thought of membership in the Religious Society of Friends crossed your mind? These queries from Illinois Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice may help you discern your readiness.

- How does meeting for worship speak to your condition?
- What drew you to begin attending Friends Meeting?

- What do you consider to be central to Quakerism?
- Are there any features of Quakerism with which you have reservations or concerns?
- What changes have you made in your life as a result of your association with Quakers?
- Are you familiar with Faith and Practice and other Friends literature? What have you taken from them?
- Do you understand that membership in the monthly meeting brings with it membership in the Quarterly and Yearly Meetings?
- What is your understanding of the Divine? What is your experience of the Divine in your life?
- Illinois Yearly Meeting and many of the monthly meetings include both Friends who are explicitly Christian and Friends who are not; how comfortable are you with this variety?
- How will you live into our Quaker peace testimony?
- How do you understand the concept of community in light of Friends' testimony?
- What does the testimony of simplicity mean to you and what are the practical consequences of this to your life?
- What does it mean to live with integrity?
- How do you live the testimony of equality?
- In what ways do you see yourself taking on the responsibilities of membership in the meeting? For example: participation in meeting for worship, meeting for worship with an attention to business, committees, stewardship of meeting property and other resources, financial support.
- As Friends we see our spiritual development as a life long journey. Where are you on this journey and what do you think the meeting's role will be in your future spiritual path?