

Berea Friends Meeting welcomes attenders as well as members to take part in all aspects of Meeting life. After you have attended Meeting for Worship for some time, been present at several Meetings for Business, and participated in some Meeting activities, you may be in a position to discern whether Berea Friends Meeting is a place where your spiritual needs may be met and your gifts can develop and be used. At that point, you may wish to consider further commitment to the ideals, way of life, ongoing search, and witness of the Berea Friends Meeting and the Religious Society of Friends.

Every other year, Berea's Ministry and Nurture Committee coordinates a review process for all members and attenders; often, at this time, active attenders are asked whether they are interested in considering membership. It is possible, however, to initiate the membership process at any time, and attenders are encouraged to approach any member for additional information. Individuals considering membership will find material in the Meeting library, especially the Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting (SAYMA)'s *Guide to Our Faith and Our Practice*, useful background reading on the meaning of membership, on Friends historic testimonies, and on Quaker process.

According to SAYMA's *Guide to Our Faith and Our Practice* (2012),

Membership in the Religious Society of Friends identifies a person who seeks, in worship after the manner of Friends, the living reality, discipline, and guidance of the spirit of God. No prescribed or set formula of words and phrases distinguishes a member from a nonmember; instead, the lives of Friends express their faith in accordance with their experiences with Truth and with the meeting community.

Within Berea Friends Meeting, as in the Religious Society of Friends, there is a wide range of conviction and belief, with respect for the integrity of personal beliefs. For Quakers, freedom is essential to the search for truth. It is in striving to speak the truth to each other in love that Friends consider themselves "members one of another" (Ephesians 4:25).

Becoming a member of Berea Friends Meeting is a shared process. If you feel ready to consider membership, address a letter to the Clerk of the Meeting expressing your desire to join and briefly stating why you feel drawn to take this step. The Clerk will refer the matter to Ministry and Nurture, where a Clearness Committee will be formed. Clearness Committee meetings often provide rich opportunities for all those involved to share spiritual journeys and to deepen understanding of each other's backgrounds and interests. If there are particular Friends whom you would like to have on your Clearness Committee, mention them to the Clerk.

Ministry and Nurture will provide both you and the members of your Committee information on the clearness process and some queries to guide the discussion. Clearness Committees for membership may meet once or more than once with the potential member. Once you and the Committee come to mutual understanding (or "clearness") about your request, the Committee makes a recommendation to the next Meeting for Business, which may then approve membership.

Becoming a Quaker implies a commitment to active and ongoing participation in the local Meeting community and an acknowledgment that the Religious Society of Friends is one's primary spiritual home. Membership in Berea Friends Meeting and in the Religious Society of Friends is both a privilege and a responsibility. The Religious Society of Friends depends upon each person's ministry. Membership entails a readiness to participate actively in the life of the Meeting, to provide financial support as possible, and to live in harmony with Quaker beliefs and practices. Membership is a commitment on the part of the member to strive to follow God's leadings as revealed through individual worship and corporate discernment and is also a commitment of the Meeting to support the member on her or his spiritual journey.

Some Friends maintain a spiritual connection to Berea Friends Meeting even though they are unable to participate actively in the life of the Meeting because of distance or for other reasons. For individuals without a local Meeting community, the Wider Quaker Fellowship (1506 Race Street, Philadelphia PA 19102) provides support and literature reflecting Quaker thought, service, and spiritual search:

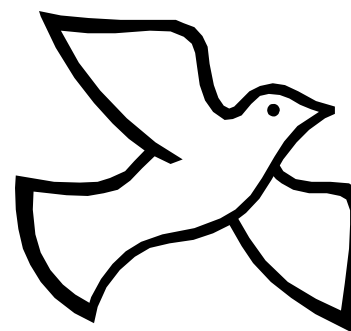
http://www.fwccamericas.org/about_us/programs/wqf.shtml

Approved at Berea Friends Meeting for Worship for Business

17 August 2014

Portions of this text are taken from "Becoming a Member" by Jennifer Goetz (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1996) and from "What is Quakerism?" (Friends World Committee for Consultation, Section of the Americas, 1997).

BEREA FRIENDS MEETING RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS



On Membership

**Berea Friends Meeting
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www.bereafriends.org**