

Palm Beach Religious Society of Friends

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Letter of Welcome

Dear Prospective Member,

We welcome you to the Palm Beach Quaker Meeting and thank you for your interest in membership. Having attended for several months, you know that we are a religious organization devoted to individual and corporate searching for the Light in our lives. Part of this experience is found in silent worship together on Sunday morning, quietly listening for God's voice in our midst. To us, this silent worship is the clearest and most direct way to contact our spiritual core.

In addition, participation in the life of the Meeting involves various activities that are not at all silent: potluck luncheons, work parties, retreats, committee work, and Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business. After a period of regular attendance, you are encouraged to join a committee, such as Property or Social Concerns. We invite you to get to know our Meeting to discover the niche where you can best serve.

Enclosed are the following: a discussion of the process of membership, a list of the membership expectations of both an individual and the Meeting, and a suggested reading list.

Again, welcome to our Meeting and if you have any questions, please contact the Clerk or a member of the Ministry Committee.

In Peace and Friendship,

John Palozzi,
Clerk

THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A MEMBER

The promise within Quakerism is that God is knowable by our direct experience, and that when we meet together we can share in that direct and immediate experience.

Marty Walton, Clerk, Friends General Conference 1989

1. People interested in becoming members of Palm Beach Meeting should attend Meeting for Worship for approximately one year, getting to know members of the Meeting and participating in some of the committees and work of the Meeting. In addition, we recommend that when possible, you attend Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business the second First Day of every month.
2. During this time we encourage you to familiarize yourself with Southeastern Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice* which describes all aspects of Quakerism, its history and procedures. Copies are available at the Meetinghouse and a PDF file can be found at www.seym.org.
3. After a period of regular attendance, an attender interested in membership should send a letter requesting membership to the Meeting Clerk or the Clerk of the Ministry Committee. This letter should include a short statement of your spiritual journey, especially those aspects which have brought you to Quakerism and your reasons for wanting to join.
4. This letter is brought to the next meeting of the Ministry Committee, made up of seasoned Friends who are responsible for recommending people for membership. If the Ministry Committee approves the membership request, two members will then be asked to serve as a Clearness Committee for Membership to meet with you, in your home, if possible, to help you discover whether or not Palm Beach Meeting is the right spiritual home for you. The clearness process may consist of one or more sessions, depending on the sense of clearness shared by all participants.
5. The Clearness Committee reports back to the Ministry Committee with its recommendation. If the Ministry Committee agrees that more seasoning is needed, they may recommend further Clearness Committee meetings or suggest you lay down your request. If they agree that you are ready for membership, the Committee brings the recommendation to the next Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business where your letter of application is read aloud.
6. Because we consider membership a serious step and a two-way commitment, the decision is held over for one month. At the next Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, the Ministry Committee asks for approval of its recommendation and you are welcomed into membership.

WHAT IS ASKED OF YOU AS A MEMBER?

Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all, with the measure of light which is pure and holy, may be guided; and so in the light walking and abiding, these may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

George Fox, 1656, Balby, England

1. We expect that a member will regularly attend Meeting for Worship and Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business. A good knowledge of Palm Beach Meeting in all its aspects is a necessary prerequisite for membership.
2. Attenders are expected to share our sense that all our Meetings for Worship seek the divine presence that can be experienced together. Friends trust that as we wait together in silence, the Holy Spirit reveals God's will for us and brings us into unity. We open ourselves to the truth spoken out of the silence, simply offering our insights, neither pressing our particular views nor withholding in hesitation or shyness.
3. We expect that all members and attenders accept that there is "that of God in everyone," excluding no one, and that faith through love can speak to that spirit within each one.
4. Each new Friend becomes a member of our Quaker family, part of its loving commitment to the welfare of all members, under the discipline of the Meeting, and sharing its responsibilities as well as joys. Palm Beach Meeting members are also members of Southeastern Yearly Meeting, which includes Florida, part of South Carolina and Georgia, and is affiliated with Friends General Conference, a national Quaker organization.
5. Each member is expected to carry a share of the expenses of the Meeting by regularly contributing to the Treasury. We do not assess members or assign a tithe, but if you have questions about your financial responsibility, speak with a member of the Ministry Committee. Members are also expected to carry a share of the work of the Meeting by serving on one or more committees wherever they can best serve.
6. Members have a responsibility to be open to the leadings of the Spirit, which may lead them to speak in Meeting for Worship, as well as to listen lovingly and without criticism to the vocal ministry of others. Leadings may also point to community, peace and social concerns, or other forms of ministry.
7. Members are expected to be willing to learn about Quaker queries and advices and to be guided by their principles. In addition, members attempt to uphold the following Quaker testimonies:
 - a. Integrity/Truth telling (e.g., no oaths)
 - b. Equality of all persons
 - c. Peace testimony: to settle differences non-violently and without vengeance
 - d. Simplicity regarding wealth, prestige, and power.
 - e. Community: our experience in Meeting, our homes, and neighborhoods
 - f. Stewardship of the Earth.

WHAT IS OFFERED BY THE MEETING?

1. A time and place to worship together
2. An opportunity for spiritual growth
3. Concern for your physical and emotional well-being
4. Support in time of difficulty or suffering
5. Education in the way of Friends
6. Fellowship
7. A place to share concerns, with the hope of support and direction
8. Opportunities to further the work of Friends
9. Representation in wider Quaker organizations and reports on their activities
10. Access to our Meeting library and to materials in all other Quakers libraries in Southeastern Yearly Meeting
11. Facilities for special meetings at the discretion of the Property Committee and the Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business
12. Weddings and memorial services under the care of the Meeting

PALM BEACH MEETING MEMBERSHIP PROCESS FOR ATTENDERS AT A DISTANCE

During the Pandemic of 2020-23, Palm Beach Meeting joined the world of hybrid meetings and installed equipment in the Worship Room. Some Zoom attenders may eventually feel led to request membership. Although different from our traditional process, membership through Zoom is similar to that for those attending in person.

1. Before seeking membership, the applicant attends Meeting for Worship for several months including several Business Meetings. Although they are unable to participate in the fellowship after worship, we hope that applicant will find other ways to get to know members of the Meeting.

2. Applicants write a letter to the clerk of Palm Beach Meeting or the Clerk of the Ministry Committee expressing their desire for membership and briefly describing their spiritual journey.

3. The Ministry Committee considers the request and if in agreement to go ahead with membership, two people are appointed as a Clearness Committee to meet with the applicant. If possible, they meet in the applicant's home. Otherwise, the interview can happen by Zoom or another communication platform. The queries in SEYM *Faith & Practice* can serve as a useful guide. The committee and the applicant should be aware of the limitations of a video interview and try to get to know the applicant at a deeper level. They should make sure the interview is uninterrupted and there is sufficient silence during the visit, at the beginning and end, but also during the discussion, so that Spirit can be present and leading.

4. The Clearness Committee reports back to the Ministry Committee. If the Committee is in agreement on membership, the process is the same as in-person. A recommendation is brought to the next Meeting for Business, held over one month for approval, and then the applicant is brought into membership. The new member is presented a copy of SEYM *Faith & Practice* (or another text such as *Friends for 350 Years*) signed with a welcome by the Clerk (to be mailed).

Approved 12/10/2023

Introductory Booklist

Readings about Quakers and Quakerism

This is a list of suggested readings for beginners in Quakerism. It is slanted towards the liberal branch of American Friends. It is a selective, "starter" list of titles to choose from in several categories. There are many other fine Quaker books in print, and if someone suggests another title to you, please don't assume that its absence from this list is necessarily a criticism of it.

All the books listed below are available from the Friends General Conference Bookstore (www.quakerbooks.org or 1-800-966-4556). Most are also available from the Pendle Hill Bookstore (www.pendlehill.org or 800-742-3150 ext. 2).

Overview - who are Quakers?

- Hamm, Thomas, *Quakers in America*. (A concise history of the Religious Society of Friends, an introduction to Quaker beliefs and practices, and a vivid picture of the culture and controversies of Friends today.)
- Brinton, Howard, *Friends for 350 Years*. (A slightly updated version of the classic *Friends for 300 Years*. Either one is fine. Even the more recent version of this book is a bit dated, but it is still a classic, definitive explanation of who Quakers are and how we function, socially and religiously.)

Guides for entry into the Quaker world:

- Birkel, Michael, *Silence and Witness: The Quaker Tradition*. (Introduction to Quaker thought, practice and spiritual life. Interlaces historic writing and current thought.)
- Brinton, Howard, *Guide to Quaker Practice*. (This booklet provides an overview of how the Friends community works--worship, structure, decision making, testimonies, and more. A bit dated, but still excellent.)
- Punshon, John, *Encounter With Silence: Reflections from the Quaker Tradition*. (A small, rich, and readable book on Quaker worship. The writer speaks personally from his own experience as a Christian Friend.)
- Pym, Jim: *Listening to the Light: How to Bring Quaker Simplicity and Integrity Into Our Lives*. (Summarizes liberal Quaker thought and spiritual practice. Language and descriptions of Quaker

structures are British. The writer speaks personally from his own experiences as a universalist Friend.)

- Smith, Robert Lawrence: *A Quaker Book of Wisdom: Life Lessons in Simplicity, Service and Common Sense*. (Personal reflections by a lifelong Friend who came of age in the World War II generation, looking back on his roots in a Quaker family and community. Easy read.)
- Taber, William: *Four Doors to Meeting for Worship*. (This pamphlet describes the different levels on which we prepare for and experience silent worship. A good guide to deep and authentic worship.)
- Kelly, Thomas, *A Testament of Devotion*. (A short book of devotional essays written in the mid-twentieth century. Still widely read among Friends.)
- Moulton, Phillips, ed. *Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*. (Classic American and Quaker literature. An 18th century New Jersey Friend records his efforts to "walk the walk" of his Quaker faith. Other editions by other editors may be found in libraries, and are equally worthy. Also available on audio cassettes.) Earlier version available online in digital form at Bartleby.
- West, Jessamyn: *Quaker Reader*. (Selections from writings of well-known early Friends.)
- Philadelphia Yearly Meeting: *Quaker Ideals*. (A very brief collection of short statements expressing values common among Quakers.)
- American Friends Service Committee: *An Introduction to Quaker Testimonies*. (A brief introduction to peace, equality, integrity, community, simplicity, and earthcare with queries and pithy quotations.)

Historical:

- Bacon, Margaret Hope: *The Quiet Rebels*. (Lightweight history of American Friends.)
- Newman, Daisy, *A Procession of Friends*. (Quaker history and principles related as a series of short narratives.)
- Punshon, John, *Portrait in Grey: A Short History*. (More scholarly than the other two, but still very readable.)

If you are considering applying for membership in the near future:

- SEYM Faith and Practice. If you haven't already taken a good look at it, now is the time.

- Gates, Tom, *Members One of Another*. (This pamphlet describes ways that we evolve in our relationship with the meeting community, what we need, and what we have to offer at different points in the process. Highly recommended.)
- Steve Chase: *Letters to a Fellow Seeker: A Brief Introduction to the Quaker Way*. (Introduces the Quaker way to a newcomer in language that is personal and gentle, while offering powerful inspiration through stories.)

For children:

- Religious Education Committee of Friends General Conference: *The Quaker Way*. (A simple guide to Quaker faith and practice for upper elementary and middle school students. Could be read and discussed with a younger elementary child. The essentials in clear and simple language.)
- Jane Yolen: *Friend: The Story of George Fox and the Quakers*. (A biography of George Fox. Though written for middle school students, the book provides an excellent, readable account of how Quakers emerged against the backdrop of religious turmoil and the English Civil War.)

Advanced reading:

- Bownas, Samuel, *A Description of the Qualifications Necessary to a Gospel Minister*. (An early Quaker work providing practical and spiritual guidance on how to nurture and deepen spoken ministry in meetings for worship. Slightly revised for modern readers.) –
- George Fox: *Journal of George Fox* - any edition. (Currently in print is the version edited by John Nickalls - other editions can be found in libraries. Considered by many to be the founder of Quakerism, Fox provides an account in his journal of his experiences during the early years of the movement)
- Freiday, Dean, *Barclay's Apology in Modern English*. (Classic systematic statement of Quaker faith by the first Quaker theologian. Shorter and annotated versions are also available. Or if you're a serious scholar, go to a library and get the original, unaltered version of Robert Barclay's *Apology* in 17th century English.)
- Wilson, Lloyd Lee, *Essays on the Quaker Vision of Gospel Order*. (Wilson gives the reader both a historical perspective and a contemporary understanding of the deeper meaning of basics like meetings for worship and for business, spiritual gifts, leadings and ministry.)