

Guide to Membership

Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) **Prepared by the Membership and Spiritual Care Committee**

Introduction

This guide serves two purposes: to inspire members of Sandy Spring Friends Meeting and remind them of the meaning of membership, and to help applicants for membership better understand the religious community they seek to join. The Membership and Spiritual Care Committee sets down here our understanding of the meaning of membership in Sandy Spring Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends and of what the covenant of membership entails.

If you are considering membership in the Religious Society of Friends, welcome! A journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step, and we join in your exploration of your leading with Sandy Spring Friends Meeting. We hope this booklet will help your process of determining the rightness, for you, of membership, an outward expression of an inward journey.

This guide is divided into seven sections:

- I. Who are Quakers? A Brief Overview
- II. The Meaning of Membership
- III. How to Become a Member: The Nuts and Bolts
- IV. Commitments and Responsibilities of Membership: A Reciprocal Relationship
- V. Faith and Practice: Becoming a Quaker
- VI. Friends' Structure and Organizations
- VIII. Additional Resources

After reading this guide, you may have additional questions. Membership and Spiritual Care Committee members are available to speak with you and meet for discernment. Please call 301-774-9792 or email office@sandyspring.org for assistance.

I. Who Are Quakers? A Brief Overview

George Fox began the movement that founded Quakerism in the early 1600s when, as a young man in mid-country England, he found a disquiet in his soul. Being a serious reader of the Bible, he found no answers among the clergy or "steeple houses." In despair, he heard a voice which said, "there is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition" and saw an "infinite ocean of love and light which flowed over the ocean of darkness." (The Journal of George Fox) Fox's message of opening oneself to direct experience of Divine Light led to his vision in 1652 on Pendle Hill of "a great people to be gathered." He would preach to gatherings, sometimes for hours, and a movement spread. By the end of that century, there were more than 100,000 Quakers in England, and Quakerism was reaching beyond England to the American colonies and elsewhere.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) holds as the basis of its faith the belief that God endows each human being with a measure of the Divine Spirit. The gift of God's presence and the light of God's truth have been available to all people in all ages. Quakerism is, essentially, a religious fellowship based on common religious ideals and experiences. Quakers express this way of life in many ways, some traditional and some which reject traditional expression.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM, of which Sandy Spring Friends Meeting is a part) is without a binding creed. Its beliefs are based on its Judeo-Christian heritage and adherence to the Spirit of Christ, the inward Light, the Divine Seed, and that of God in everyone. As Friends seek truth, peace, and harmony in the Light of that Spirit, our testimonies emerge.

Each person must prayerfully seek individual guidance and must follow the Light found within. The immanence of God implies that all persons are children of the Divine and brothers and sisters of one another. Each one has the capacity to discern spiritual truth and to hold direct communion with God. Clarity about how the Light is leading each of us is often found in worship with others, both in small groups and larger gatherings.

Each person will be helped by studying the developing interpretations of God in the Bible and in the ideas of great spiritual leaders of all faiths. Help may be found as one ponders the life and the teachings of Jesus. The Divine Spirit became so wholly Jesus's own that his teachings, example, and sacrificial life reveal the will of God to humanity.

Quakers are a Society of seekers, looking for God and divine guidance, valuing unity but not uniformity. As our search continues and deepens, both individually and collectively, our comprehension of God expands. We welcome to our fellowship all seekers who, in spirit and in truth, try to find and follow the will of God and who are in sympathy with the principles and practices of Friends.

Adapted from Baltimore Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice*, 1988, page ii, and 2013 draft, p. iv, v, 149-150.

II. The Meaning of Membership

To seek and to hold membership in a Quaker meeting is, *“a spiritual commitment, both a privilege and a responsibility. It is an outward sign of an inner experience of the Living God and of general agreement with the Society’s belief.”*

Baltimore Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice*, 2013 draft, p. 149

A full-fledged member differs from an attender only in [their] full commitment to the testimonies of the Society and responsibilities for its continued existence... All members, regardless of how they came to the Society of Friends, must periodically become seekers again.

Peter Fingesten, “They Shall Be All Taught of God,” *Friends Journal*, February 1, 1971

Membership is a “life-long process of maturing and transformation” says Friend Pat Loring. The relationship between the individual member and the meeting community evolves and changes over time as one grows into the fullness of membership. We may move between acceptance, appreciation of shared values, transformation, and obedience. A deeper explanation can be found in Thomas Gates’s Pendle Hill Pamphlet, “Members One of Another,” listed in the Resources section of this guide.

Because God is infinite and humans are finite, Quakers hold no expectation that we will come to a single definition of that mystery with which we strive to live in a covenant relationship. We actively encourage each attender’s and member’s search for this understanding through Friends’ corporate religious practice.

Seeking membership in Sandy Spring Friends Meeting also means that you are seeking membership in the Religious Society of Friends, a world-wide religious organization. As a member of Sandy Spring you are member of Chesapeake Quarterly Meeting and Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM). These are regional groupings of local meetings. Several broader associations of Friends also exist. BYM is dually affiliated with Friends General Conference (FGC) and Friends United Meeting (FUM). Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) serves all Friends around the world. (See Friends Structure and Organization, section VI, for more information)

III. How to Become a Member: The Nuts and Bolts

You will say Christ saith this, and the apostles saith this, but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of light and hast thou walked in the light, and what thou speakest is it inwardly from God?

Margaret Fell on hearing George Fox preach in 1652

In your journey to membership you will follow these steps:

1. Undertake Personal Discernment
2. Prepare Your Application for Membership
3. Meet with a Clearness Committee for Membership
4. Be Presented to Monthly Meeting for Business
5. Receive Approval and Welcome

You may already be deeply engaged with the first step or just starting to engage. This guide can be helpful wherever you are in your spiritual journey.

By regularly attending Meetings for Worship and reading and learning about Friends' faith and practice, you can gain a clearer understanding of what it means to enter into membership in the Religious Society of Friends. Sometimes an attender will form too favorable an image. The image may be so favorable that they feel unworthy to join, or, after joining, may suffer disillusionment. We encourage you to bring any concerns about the experience of membership and what it means to your Clearness Committee.

It is essential that those who have a spiritual leading to join Sandy Spring Friends Meeting also recognize that they are asking to become members of the wider Religious Society of Friends. That spiritual leading is indicated by regularly attending Meetings for Worship, including Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business, and learning about the wider world of Friends, at Sandy Spring Friends Meeting and beyond.

We encourage you to review Baltimore Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice* thoughtfully, as well as other writings of Friends, to deepen your understanding of Quaker ways: our mode of worship and transacting business, the meaning of Friends testimonies, and the responsibilities of membership. You can find Baltimore Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice* at bym-rsf.org/publications/fandp/. Participation in a Meeting committee is also helpful, though not essential, preparation for membership.

If you would like further help in preparing yourself for membership, you may request assistance from any member of the Membership and Spiritual Care committee or write to the Clerk of the Meeting.

Step One: Undertake Personal Discernment

You may engage in this step by attending Meetings for Worship, reading and learning about Friends' faith and practice, participating in the life of the Meeting by serving on committees or work groups, and engaging in prayerful discernment. The amount of time you remain in discernment will vary from person to person. Your decision to request membership should be an unhurried and a carefully considered one.

We recommend that you consider the following queries, both individually and in preparation for meeting with your Clearness Committee. (Note: Quakers use queries as a tool for personal reflection. There are no right answers to these queries.)

1. Reflect on your spiritual journey. Where have you been, where are you now, and where do you see your future?

2. Are you led by the Holy Spirit in seeking membership and willing to respond to Divine guidance in making other decisions?
3. What is your understanding of Quaker history and experience?
4. Do you find harmony with Quaker testimonies and with the meeting's expressions of these testimonies? (Note: the Clearness Committee might also inquire how your life, including vocational choices and other associations, may be affected by these testimonies.)
5. How have you been involved in the life of the meeting? Are you prepared to commit to the Meeting community and to the Religious Society of Friends?
6. Are you open to seeking clearness for individual leadings you may have through worshipful exploration with other members/attenders at Sandy Spring Friends Meeting or the Religious Society of Friends?
7. Have you attended Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business?
8. What other religious affiliations have you had in the past (or present)? Are you intending to end these affiliations or continue?
9. What else is on your heart that may help you reach clarity about your decision?

When you believe you have sufficiently searched your heart and are ready to engage in discernment with other Friends, then it is time for the next step.

Much less than in the past are new members expected to have already attained final certainty. For them as indeed for old members, the Society of Friends can be looked upon as the favorable environment in which both individual and corporate growth may be expected to take place.

Henry J. Cadbury, "The Character of a Quaker," Pendle Hill Pamphlet No. 103, p.13

Convincement is that moment when the idea of becoming a Quaker becomes a lived reality of being a Quaker, in which the Quaker way comes into the heart and finds a home and makes a nest and settles.

Walter Hjelt-Sullivan, "Becoming Convinced" (Quakerspeak.com)

Step Two: Prepare Your Application for Membership

When you are ready, write a letter containing a brief summary of your personal discernment and readiness to engage with others in continuing the discernment. You may wish to briefly outline:

- Your connections with Sandy Spring Friends Meeting.
- Your journey with Friends, at this meeting and elsewhere.
- Your religious/spiritual background.

Please send your letter to the Clerk of the Membership and Spiritual Care Committee, in one of the following ways:

- Place it in the Committee's pocket in the hallway outside of the meeting office in the Sandy Spring Friends Meeting Community House,
- Mail it to Sandy Spring Friends Meeting, 17715 Meeting House Road, Sandy Spring, MD 20860, or
- Email it to: office@sandyspring.org

Step Three: Meet with a Clearness Committee for Membership

Upon receiving your letter, the Membership and Spiritual Care Committee will appoint two or three of its members to serve as a Clearness Committee. This group will discern with you the readiness and rightness of your leading to become a member of Sandy Spring Friends Meeting and the Religious Society of Friends. At your meeting or meetings with this group, you will sit in prayerful worship and conversation and consider together the queries in Step One.

Your meeting with the Clearness Committee is designed to be a supportive and nurturing experience and a time for personal exploration with the guidance of Friends. The Committee will inquire about your spiritual journey and what draws you to seek membership. They will seek to discern with you whether Sandy Spring Friends Meeting truly is your spiritual home. They may also explore what committee service best fits your needs and interests at this time.

At some point, the Clerk of the Clearness Committee will test the “sense of the meeting.” That is a way of seeing whether all gathered are united with your rightness and/or readiness for membership. If the Committee is united, you will move to Step Four. If more discernment seems helpful, you will plan next steps with members of your Clearness Committee. These might include a second meeting with the Clearness Committee, or additional time for your personal discernment.

Once the Clearness Committee is united, the full Membership and Spiritual Care Committee considers the membership request. The Clerk of the Clearness Committee will make a report to the Committee. If the Committee unites with your readiness and rightness for membership, then it will present that recommendation at the next scheduled Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business.

Step Four: Be Presented to Monthly Meeting for Business

At a Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, the Membership and Spiritual Care Committee will recommend you for membership. You will be invited to attend that meeting and introduce yourself so that Friends can get to know you.

Your application will lay over for one month to allow time for consideration. At the following month’s Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, the Committee will have a second reading of your application. Friends will be asked to approve your application for membership.

Step Five: Receive Approval and Welcome

At the second reading of your application for membership, the Membership and Spiritual Care Committee will also recommend a Welcome and Nurture Committee, which will be approved by the meeting as a whole. The Welcome and Nurture Committee may consist of 2-3 or more Friends who will gather to celebrate your joining Sandy Spring Friends Meeting. You may recommend members for this committee.

You will work with your Welcome and Nurture Committee to decide the best time, format, and venue to meet and welcome you to the meeting. This group is available to share additional information about Sandy Spring Friends Meeting and/or the Religious Society of Friends. This Committee is also an ongoing source of nurture and support, serving as “Special Friends” as you enter into the life of the meeting.

And now a new stage of your journey has begun as a member of Sandy Spring Friends Meeting and the Religious Society of Friends. May you be blessed, and may you bless all of us on this stage of your journey!

Special Circumstances

Membership of Children

Members of Sandy Spring Friends Meeting may request full membership or associate membership for their children. By the age of 25, an associate member must either seek full membership, by writing to the Membership and Spiritual Care Committee with that request, or give up their membership in Sandy Spring Friends Meeting.

Children who feel led to pursue membership on their own initiative are welcomed and encouraged to seek membership through the regular clearness process, as described above.

Transfer of Membership

When a member of another meeting wishes to transfer membership to Sandy Spring Friends Meeting, that Friend must write to the clerk of his/her meeting requesting a letter of transfer. The clerk should send this letter to the Sandy Spring Friends Meeting. This will be considered by Membership and Spiritual Care Committee before they recommend action to the Meeting on the matter. Consideration may include a conversation or informal visit with the individual requesting the transfer or change of membership. Recommendations by Membership and Spiritual Care Committee on membership transfers may be acted upon at the Meeting for Business at which they are first presented.

At the time the transfer request is taken to Meeting for Business, the Membership and Spiritual Care Committee will also recommend a Welcome and Nurture Committee, which will be approved by the meeting as a whole. We will notify the other Meeting of our action.

IV. Commitments and Responsibilities of Membership

In community, Friends affirm and listen to each other, celebrate and grieve together, and make a joint witness to the world. Marcelle Martin, *Our Life is Love*, p. 92

Sandy Spring Friends Meeting is a worshipping and caring community that aspires to provide a welcoming and supportive spiritual home. We hope that you will come to know us as family who can be relied upon to provide practical and spiritual support in times of need. We want you to be known and accepted as you are, a spiritual seeker among Friends. We hope you will find your

place to fit in; many members find this by serving on committees or taking part in the many activities at Sandy Spring Friends Meeting.

Members are expected to participate and contribute the life and work of the Meeting. When membership is approved by the entire meeting community, a reciprocal relationship is created. As members support the meeting, the meeting supports individual members. This relationship requires that members commit their time, talent, and treasure in the following areas:

- Worship and continual spiritual development
- Conduct of the meeting's business
- Committee work
- Fulfillment of financial responsibilities
- Nurturing the meeting community
- Engaging with the wider world of Friends

Worship and Continual Spiritual Development

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.
(Matthew 18:20, King James Version)

Friends have gathered for corporate worship for more than 360 years, relying on the presence of the Spirit of Christ that this scripture promises. Meeting for Worship is the core of our life together. Your spiritual life will be deepened by coming to worship regularly, prepared to participate fully in centered waiting and vocal ministry. Your participation grows the spiritual life of the meeting community. In addition, you are encouraged to seek continual spiritual development through such activities as the study of the Bible and other sacred texts, discussion groups, spiritual formation, retreats, singing, seeker sessions, Friendly Eights, and other meeting programs.

Friends are always welcome to worship together in small groups, in their homes or elsewhere. In addition, Sandy Spring Friends Meeting provides four opportunities for corporate worship each week at the following locations in Sandy Spring.

Sandy Spring Friends Meetinghouse: 17715 Meeting House Road

- Each Sunday (First Day) at 9 a.m.
- Each Sunday (First Day) at 11 a.m. *except* the first Sunday of each month, which is when Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business is held at 10:15 a.m..
- Each Thursday (Fifth Day) at 7:30 p.m. (a potluck dinner precedes the worship at 6 pm)

Friends House: 17340 Quaker Lane (Friends House)

- Each Sunday (First Day) at 10:00 a.m. in Miller Center

Additional, or "Called," Meetings for Worship may also be scheduled: for religious holidays, the celebration of a marriage under the care of the meeting, the celebration of the life of member or attender who has passed away, or and other times when members of the community would benefit from coming together in corporate worship.

Conduct of the Meeting's Business

Sandy Spring Friends Meeting has gathered in worship to conduct its business since 1753. We seek the fruits of the Spirit as we gather in worship and corporately seek unity.

Each month (or more frequently as necessary), committees focused on a particular area of the meeting's life, such as membership, religious education, peace, or ministry, meet to discern leadings and ways forward. Committees share the results of that discernment with the entire meeting body on the first First Day (Sunday) of each month at a Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, seeking approval by the meeting as a whole as needed.

Decision-making through discernment is not to be confused with "consensus". A more accurate description is that Friends seek unity via the "sense of the meeting". In other words, Quakers discern how are we led by the Spirit corporately in whatever matter is before us.

In the Pendle Hill Pamphlet "The Mind of Christ," Friend Bill Taber describes a spirit-filled Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business as "a hands-on laboratory-like experience in which the whole fellowship comes face to face with the Spirit's demands for the sacrifice of time, treasure, convenience and prejudice." Quakers recognize meetings for worship for business as an essential practice, "through which we learn to walk hand in hand with each other and the Spirit out in into the world to do the work of committed and obedient disciples."

The Sandy Spring Friends Meeting community relies on Friends to participate in monthly Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business as we seek understandings from a higher source, transcending the insights of individuals. Each person's Light and Spirit are necessary to discern how the Spirit is leading us together. Our meetings for business are a vital part of our communal life, and each of us shares responsibility to be present in a spirit of worship.

All Friends, I do lay upon you to see that all of your meetings are kept in order.

George Fox

Committee Work

"In the Religious Society of Friends a committee is a group of Friends who are responsible for specific duties or the pursuit of an inquiry which the Meeting as a whole cannot accomplish efficiently or appropriately. A committee is expected to act for the Meeting which appointed it in matters that come within its charge. It reports to the Meeting such of its business as does not betray confidences, seeking guidance from the Meeting before going beyond its stated charge."

Baltimore Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice*, 1988 and 2013 draft

Participation on a committee provides opportunities for spiritual growth and fellowship. These opportunities are focused inward in how the meeting operates, and outward, in the wider community. Committee work is an opportunity for service as well. The meeting's business and operations conducted by committees range from religious education to property management, social outreach, and peace concerns. Service opportunities available through committee work include supporting our local food bank, providing school supplies and Christmas gifts for local families, and participating in an annual fundraising tea with the Sharp Street United Methodist Church. Members of Sandy Spring Friends Meeting also serve on committees in other Quaker

organizations, such as Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Friends General Conference, Friends United Meeting, Friends House and the board of Sandy Spring Friends School.

Each member of Sandy Spring Friends Meeting should prayerfully consider how to best contribute to the meeting, including serving, as they are able, on a committee. You can find out more about committee service by speaking with anyone on the Nominating Committee.

As we respond to the movement of the Spirit among us, other opportunities are brought to us through our committee work and individual leadings to serve the community. You can find these opportunities in our weekly Silent Announcements and monthly newsletter, attending Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, and joining a committee. You can receive information from the meeting electronically by emailing office@sandyspring.org and asking to be added to our list serve.

Fulfilling Financial Responsibilities

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:21 King James Version

Living a life in the Divine Spirit means thoughtfully and prayerfully considering how you acquire and use your resources. Each member is responsible to contribute financially to the meeting, as they are able. Corporately, we have come to understand that meeting our financial responsibilities means that the meeting's current operating expenses are met through voluntary contributions of its members and attenders. Copies of our budget are available from the treasurer or the Finance Committee.

You may contribute to the meeting by:

- Placing a contribution in the box at the rear of the Meeting House.
- Mailing a gift to the Treasurer, Sandy Spring Friends Meeting, 17715 Meeting House Road, Sandy Spring, MD 20860.
- Arranging for regular deposits from your bank account to the meeting; contact the Treasurer for more information.
- Donating online at sandyspring.org.

The meeting may offer financial assistance to Friends in times of need or to support attendance at Quaker camps and schools, retreats, or workshops that promote spiritual growth, renewal, or support of ministry. Contact the meeting clerk (clerk@sandyspring.org) for more information on types of financial support.

Nurturing Our Meeting Community

Loving care is not something that those in sound mind and body "do" for others but a process that binds us together.

Britain Yearly Meeting, Faith and Practice, (year, page)

But the Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

At Sandy Spring Friends Meeting we envision a community in which all have a generosity of spirit in what we give of ourselves and our resources. It is that generosity of spirit for which we lovingly hold one another accountable.

The Membership and Spiritual Care Committee coordinates informal, volunteer spiritual and pastoral care for and with individuals and families in our meeting community. As a loving community, we support one another in formal and informal ways. Practical support such as meals, rides or visits to the sick is available by contacting the committee.

Friends may receive support from the meeting in many ways. Individuals may ask for a clearness or support committee for deep listening to help with discernment: of a call to service or a life decision, or simply for spiritual and emotional support to process life events. These committees may meet just once or many times. A Friendly Visitor can provide a one-to-one listening ear and an open heart. The Committee on Aging coordinates a card ministry to connect with older members. Telephone support is also available. Contact the Membership and Spiritual Care Committee for assistance or support.

Caring for attenders and members is a shared responsibility within our Sandy Spring Friends Meeting community. As ministers to each other, we regularly inquire as to how each member or attender is faring at any given time, reaching out to see that individual worth is appreciated and spiritual needs are met. Members are also encouraged to be responsive to opportunities described in the previous sections and to discern ways in which their special gifts might lend support to others.

Participating in the Wider World of Friends

Membership in Sandy Spring Friends Meeting is a membership in the Religious Society of Friends. There are many opportunities for worship, learning, visiting, service, and support from Quaker organizations as well as individual Friends around the world. We encourage you to explore the list of Quaker organizations in the Additional Resource section of this guide (Section VI), and to take opportunities to participate in the wider Quaker world.

Summary

Maintaining our meeting's corporate health requires each of us to examine our gifts in the light of the larger community's need and to be generous and responsible in sharing those gifts. We seek to find meaningful ways to speak clearly about the need for each of us to give generously of our time, gifts, and financial resources. At the same time, we recognize that all of us have different seasons and circumstances in our lives, so our ability to give in these ways will vary over time.

V. Faith and Practice: Becoming a Quaker

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 things may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

The elders at Balby 1656

This section will provide a brief overview of our Faith and Practice among Friends in Baltimore Yearly Meeting. The complete BYM Faith and Practice document provides more detail and depth about what it means to become a Quaker; access it at bym-rsf.org/publications/fandp/ We have chosen to lift up some of the voices of Friends over the years to introduce you to our worshipping community.

You may wonder where the name Quaker originated. In the early days of Friends' worship, participants would shake or quake when receiving a message from the Divine Spirit (inner Christ, inward teacher, Spirit within, God) and would be propelled to stand and deliver it. They were called Quakers as a way of making fun of this practice. Some Friends today still have this experience when they are called to deliver vocal ministry during worship.

Friends, as a name, has Biblical roots. In the Gospel of John 15:12-17 (NIV), Jesus tells his followers:

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.

Becoming a Quaker is a journey growing towards fullness in unity with God's Love. We trust that the following voices of Friends will "speak to thy condition" and inspire you to a life-long process of seeking, guided by listening to the Inner Light within the community of Friends.

Faith

Give over thine own willing, give over thine own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything, and sink down to the seed which God sows in thy heart and let that be in thee, and grow in thee, and breathe in thee, and act in thee, and thou shalt know by sweet experience that the Lord does know that and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of life which is his portion.

Isaac Pennington

Membership is costly. It is not just about belonging, feeling accepted, feeling at home. It also has to do with being stretched, being challenged, being discomforted...We can never be entirely sure of where the venture will lead us. But one thing we can be sure of is that the process, taken seriously, will call us to change.

Helen Rowlands, 1952

Quakerism is a way of life, rather than a set of beliefs dogmatically required of each member. It is a kind of Christianity which begins with experience rather than with dogma. Friends have avoided stating their beliefs in catechisms or creeds, as they tend to present religion as centered in the mind and memory, rather than as a life centered in the heart. Creeds tend to fossilize the expression of growing truth.

Because the Scriptures are only a declaration of the source, and not the source itself, therefore they are not to be considered the principal foundation of all truth and knowledge. They are and may be regarded as a secondary rule that is subordinate to the Spirit, from which they obtain all their excellence and certainty. The Spirit is the first and principal leader.

Robert Barclay, *Apology*, 1676

Worthiness has nothing to do with membership. God has already accepted us in our imperfection and is loving us forward toward a more perfect image of God's self. The real issue in membership is commitment on the part of both the meeting and the applicant to remain faithful to the development and requirements of the process within Quaker tradition.

Patricia Loring, 1997

Practice: Worship

Baltimore Yearly Meeting, and its constituent monthly meetings including Sandy Spring Friends Meeting, does not have paid clergy. We are all ministers, each of us with different gifts and callings. As some have said, Quakers abolished the laity. We equally share responsibility for the worship. When you enter worship, you will see us sitting in the round, or in a square with one or several Friends at head of meeting. These are the designated Friends to open and close the worship.

Be still and know that I am God

Psalm 46:10

But the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind and earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

1 Kings 19:11-12

On one never-to-be-forgotten Sunday morning, I found myself one of a small company of silent worshipers, who were content to sit down together without words, that each one might feel after and draw near to the Divine Presence, unhindered at least, if not helped, by any human utterance. Utterance I knew was free, should the words be given; and before the meeting was over a sentence or two were uttered in great simplicity by an old and apparently untaught man, rising in his place amongst the rest of us. I did not pay much attention to the words he spoke, and I have no recollection of their purport. My whole soul was filled with the unutterable peace of the undisturbed opportunity for communion with God, with the sense that at last I had found a place where I might without the faintest suspicion of insincerity, join with others in simply seeking His presence. To sit down in silence could at least pledge me to nothing; it might open to me (as it did that morning) the very gate of heaven.

Caroline Stephen 1872

As the worshiper sits in silence some message may arise out of the depth of the soul that by its nature is intended not simply for the worshiper but for the gathering as a whole. If it is left unexpressed, the worshiper feels burdened with a sense of omission, but if it is faithfully ordered, the worshiper feels a sense of clearness and relief. This peculiar sense of urgency is usually the

sign of divine requirement. There is no sure or single test of guidance. Though a message may seem intellectually fitting it should not be given unless it glows with life.

Howard H. Brinton 1942

Near evening I was at a meeting with Indians, where the pure Gospel love was felt, to the tendering of our hearts; and the interpreters endeavoring to acquaint the people with what I said, in short sentences, found some difficulty, as none of them were quite perfect in the English and Delaware tongues, so they helped one another and we labored along. Afterward, feeling my mind covered with the spirit of prayer, I told the interpreters that I found it in my heart to pray to God and I believed it if I prayed aright he would hear me and expressed my willingness for them to omit interpreting; so our meeting ended with a degree of divine love. Before the people went out I observed Papunechang who spoke to one of the interpreters and I was afterward told that he said and substance; "I love to feel where words come from."

John Woolman c1760

Practice: Testimonies/Service

Quakerism has been described as a way of life; we let our lives be our testimony to the world. Early Friends practiced their faith in such a way that their lives and others were substantially transformed. More recently this way of living has been described through testimonies. A simple mnemonic is sometimes used to summarize these testimonies: SPICES: Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, and Stewardship.

A testimony is an outward expression of an inward leading of the Spirit, or an outward sign of what Friends believe to be an inward revelation of truth. Testimonies are an outward expression of an inward spiritual discernment, constituting faith incarnated into action. They provide the moral and ethical fruits of one's inward life of the Spirit.

Wilmer Cooper 2000

And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

The Quaker way is not so much a system of beliefs as it is a framework for asking the right questions.

Christopher A. Dorrance. *Reflection from a Friends Education*

Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone; whereby in them you may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.

Statement of 1656, from *The Works of George Fox (1831)*

All bloody principles and practices, we do utterly deny, with all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretense whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world. That spirit of Christ by which we are guided is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move into it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the spirit of Christ which leads us into all Truth, will never move us to fight in war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world.

George Fox 1660

VI. Friends Structure and Organizations

The Religious Society of Friends began in England in the 1650s as a Fellowship of Friends of Truth. Within twenty years, in response to internal dissension and widespread persecution, George Fox created a system of governance in which meetings were established and named after the interval between business sessions. Monthly meetings became basic units--so-called because they met, and still meet, in a monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business. Groups of nearby monthly meetings met quarterly, and geographically separated meetings gathered yearly for fellowship and business. Thus, Sandy Spring Friends Meeting belongs to Chesapeake Quarterly Meeting, which now gathers three times a year, and to Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM), which meets in annual session each August.

In the 20th century, groups of Yearly Meetings created associations to integrate and encourage spiritual growth and outreach of Friends. BYM participates in both Friends General Conference and Friends United Meeting. The Yearly Meeting also belongs to Friends World Committee for Consultation, an association of nearly all yearly meetings in the world.

Sandy Spring Friends Meeting also appoints representatives to other Friends' organizations, including the American Friends Service Committee, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Friends Council on Education, William Penn House, and Friends Wilderness Center. A comprehensive list of local, regional, and national Quaker organizations can be found at the back of the Sandy Spring Friends Meeting Directory. Copies of the Directory are available in the Meeting office, or you may request an electronic copy by emailing office@sandyspring.org.

Friends Schools

Sandy Spring Friends School, founded in 1961, is the tenth Friends school in the Sandy Spring neighborhood since 1797. It is under the care of Sandy Spring Friends Meeting and Baltimore Yearly Meeting, who jointly appoint 16 of the 20 members Board.

Other Friends schools in the area, some under the care of other Friends meetings, are the Friends Community School (College Park, MD), Friends Meeting School (Frederick County, MD), Friends School (Baltimore, MD), and Sidwell Friends School (Bethesda, MD and Washington, DC).

Friends Retirement Communities

Baltimore Yearly Meeting is home to four Quaker retirement communities:

1. Broadmead is an independent life care community in Cockeysville, MD;
2. Foxdale is an independent life care community in State College, PA;
3. Friends House, in Sandy Spring, is a Continuing Care Retirement Community under the care of BYM;
4. Kendal at Lexington (VA) is a Continuing Care Retirement Community.

VII. Additional Resources

Books and Pamphlets

Baltimore Yearly Meeting. **Faith and Practice**, 1988. Revised Draft, 2013.

Brinton, Howard H. & Bacon, Margaret Hope. **Friends for 350 Years**. Pendle Hill, 2002.

Chase, Steve. **Letters to a Fellow Seeker: A Short Introduction to the Quaker Way**. Quaker Press of FGC. 2012.

Cooper, Wilmer A. **A Living Faith**. Friends United Press, 1990.

Freiday, Dean, ed. **Barclay's Apology in Modern English**. Barclay Press, 1967.

Gates, Thomas. **Members One of Another: The Dynamics of Membership in Quaker Meeting**. Pendle Hill pamphlet #371, 2004.

Kelly, Thomas R. **A Testament of Devotion**. HarperOne. 1941. Reprint edition (August 2, 1996).

Martin, Marcelle. **Our Life is Love**. Inner Light Books. 2016.

Morley, Barry. **Beyond Consensus: Salvaging Sense of the Meeting**. Pendle Hill Pamphlet # 307, 1993.

Moulton, Phillips, ed. **The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman**. Oxford University Press. 1971.

Nickalls, John, ed. **Journal of George Fox**. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. 1985.

Punshon, John. **Encounter with Silence: Reflections from the Quaker Tradition**. Friends United Press. 2006.

Punshon, John. **Portrait in Grey: A Short History of the Quakers**. Quaker Home Service. 1984.

Steere, Douglas V., ed. **Quaker Spirituality Selected Writing**. The Classics of Western Spirituality. Paulist Press. 1984.

Taber, William. **Four Doors to Meeting for Worship**. Pendle Hill Pamphlet #306, 1992.

Taber, William. **The Mind of Christ: Bill Taber on Meeting for Business**. Pendle Hill Pamphlet #406, 2010.

These and other books and pamphlets may be found in the Sandy Spring Meeting Library in the Community House. Most can be purchased from:

QuakerBooks (800) 966-4556 www.Quakerbooks.org bookstore@FGCQuaker.org

Pendle Hill Bookstore 338 Plush Mill Road Wallingford PA 19086 (800) 742-3150, ext. 124
www.Pendlehill.org/bookstore bookstore@pendlehill.org

QuakerSpeak Videos, of which there are more than 120 covering many aspects of Quaker faith and practice, are available at www.Quakerspeak.com. These short (5 min +/-) videos represent a variety of perspectives from Friends around the country.

Friends Journal and Quaker Life are Friends' periodicals with timely articles on Friends activities and ministries around the country and the world, as well as reflections on faith and practice, poetry, and other news. The Sandy Spring Meeting Library subscribes to both. Subscriptions are available.

Other Quaker Organizations

AFSC – American Friends Service Committee (afsc.org)

BYM– Baltimore Yearly Meeting (bym-rsf.org)

FCNL - Friends Committee on National Legislation (fcnl.org)

FGC - Friends General Conference (fgcquaker.org)

Friends Journal magazine (Friendsjournal.org)

FUM – Friends United Meeting (friendsunitedmeeting.org)

Friends Wilderness Center (Friendswilderness.org)

FWCC - Friends World Committee for Consultation (fwcc.world)

QEW - Quaker Earthcare Witness (Quakerearthcare.org)

Quaker Life Magazine – friendsunitedmeeting.org/resources/quaker-life

RSWR - Right Sharing of World Resources (rswr.org)

This Guide to Membership has been compiled by the Membership and Spiritual Care Committee of the Sandy Spring Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

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