

Information to assist in preparing an application for Membership of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Victoria

Preparing For Membership

Membership is a recognized outward sign of an inner and spiritual commitment to a way of worship and life as lived within the Religious Society of Friends. Friends from the silent worship tradition (unprogrammed meetings) are united in community, based on common practice known as Testimonies rather than on a common statement of faith.

Membership is a serious commitment to continue seeking to grow, both individually and as a community, in our spiritual journey.

The following questions may help you discern whether membership is the path for you:

- Do you let the Spirit guide your life?
- Do you feel a strong commitment to your community of Quakers?
- Do you worship with Quakers as regularly as your circumstances permit?
- Are you familiar with Quaker testimonies & how do you apply them in your life?
- Are you aware of the responsibilities that membership entails?

If so, then it is probably right for you to apply for membership of the Religious Society of Friends! Take your time over deciding whether to apply. Taking this step is a good opportunity to reflect on Quaker faith and practice and how you relate to it.

It may be helpful to you to use one or more of the following resources:

1. Reading, eg "Quaker Faith and Practice" 10.25-10.34 and 11.01 -11.48 (available at qfp.quakerweb.org.uk); "Handbook of Practice & Procedure, sections" 5.1.1 and 5.1.2, and "Australian Advices & queries", (both available at www.quakers.org.au under Publications); "This we can say" p92-95. Other references are available via your Local Meeting or at the Regional Meeting library at Friends House Toorak.
2. Participate in a range of activities such as: Meetings for Worship for Business at Local and Regional Meeting levels; the VRM midyear gathering; Yearly Meeting held for a week in January. Other events are to be found via the "Victorian Quaker News", the "Australian Friend", and the Yearly Meeting secretary's newsletter.
3. Take part in a course of study such as: "Quaker Basics"; "Hearts and Minds Prepared"; "Quaker Heritage"; the Meeting for Learning Program; Courses held at Silver Wattle, the Australian Quaker Retreat & study centre at Bungendore outside Canberra. See www.quakers.org.au under calendar of events, and the two You tube videos "Silver Wattle Australian Quaker Centre parts 1 and 2."
4. Understanding there will be some differences between Australian and other Quaker groups you may refer to websites such as:

www.qis.net/~daruma/member-q.html

<http://www.quakers-in-ireland.ie/home/about-us/joining-quakers>

For nontheistic Friends, see:

<http://www.nontheistfriends.org/article/doctrinally-open-membership-in-the-religious-society-of-friends/>

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5. Discuss the issue of membership with the clerk, elders or other Friends who have had some experience of the membership process.
6. Visit Local Meetings and Worshipping Groups other than your own to get a wider picture of the Quaker Community.
7. Ask for a person to support, mentor or guide you through the membership process & beyond.
8. You may ask for a “clearness meeting” where a small group of Friends might act as a sounding board and assist you in your decision-making. Quaker Faith & Practice 12.22- 12.25

The application process.

Once you have made the decision to apply for membership you should do so in writing to the Victorian Regional Meeting Clerk, because the application is for membership in the Regional Meeting not your Local meeting group.

VRM will then appoint two or more Friends to visit you (see Handbook 5.2.2). Preferably one of the visitors will be well known to you and you may meet with these Friends on more than one occasion. It is a two way conversation process, not an assessment.

The visitors will report to Regional Meeting on their visit/s with you, and VRM will then report to you at the earliest opportunity on the decision regarding your application.