

## EAST CHESHIRE AREA MEETING

### GOING VISITING

Some guidelines for Friends visiting  
applicants for membership

#### PREPARING FOR THE VISIT

Read *Quaker Faith and Practice*, Chapter 10, *Belonging to a Quaker Meeting*, and Chapter 11, *Membership*.

If possible, meet beforehand with your fellow visitor to discuss the visit. It is not desirable that you should plan in detail what you will do and say at the visit: each is different, and you have to be able to respond to the needs of the applicant. It is helpful if you consider the issues that might be raised and remind yourselves of your role.

*Quaker Faith and Practice* reminds us that membership

- ❑ Does not require great moral or spiritual achievement, but it does require a sincerity of purpose and a commitment to Quaker values and practices.
- ❑ Is a life of discipleship within a broadly Christian perspective and the Quaker tradition.
- ❑ Involves commitment and the acceptance of responsibility for the maintenance of the life of our meetings: we all have the duties exercised by the clergy in other churches.
- ❑ Involves helping to maintain an atmosphere in our meetings in which spiritual growth and exploration are possible for all.
- ❑ Involves giving time, energy and ability to the meeting so far as one is able: this could involve a willingness to support events; undertake necessary tasks; serve on various committees and other groups; and attend meetings for church affairs.
- ❑ Entails a financial commitment appropriate to a member's means.
- ❑ *Through membership, people are saying to their meeting and to the world that they accept the fundamentals of being a Quaker: our understanding of divine guidance; the manner of our corporate worship and the ordering of the meeting's business; the practical expression of inward convictions; and the equality of all before God.*

#### THE VISIT ITSELF

Try to put the applicant at ease. See the visit as an opportunity for all of you to share in an experience that focuses on the spiritual journey of the applicant.

Start and close the meeting with a few moments of quiet worship.  
The applicant could be encouraged to talk about:

- ❑ their journey to Quakers
- ❑ why meeting for worship is important to them
- ❑ areas of Quaker practice and thought they are uncertain about.

The visitors should seek to listen attentively to what is voiced and what is silent; they should recognise and respond to any areas of difficulty that might be revealed. In this way, they might encourage exploration of areas of importance to the applicant, in order to celebrate and affirm the individual's faith.

Try not to waste time on preliminaries, to ensure sufficient time to discuss all that should be discussed.

Try to ensure that sufficient aspects of Quakerism are discussed to enable the area meeting to make an informed decision about admitting the applicant into membership.

Before leaving, make sure that the applicant understands what happens after the visit.

#### AFTER THE VISIT

Write a report that summarises the visit for the next area meeting. It is not the task of visitors to make a recommendation regarding membership of area meeting.

Handle any sensitive personal information with great discretion: such information should be included in the membership report only if it would be substantially incomplete without it.

After the report has been written, one or both visitors should show it to the applicant. Be willing to make changes to the report. When the applicant is happy with its contents, it should be signed by the visitors and the applicant and sent to the area meeting clerk.

It is desirable that at least one of the visitors is present at the area meeting when the report is discussed.

After the report has been discussed by area meeting, it is destroyed.

Revised June 2011