

Report from the Membership & Belonging Sprint

The Sprint

The sprint has met biweekly over the last six months via Zoom. The sprint's work focused on the following goals as outlined in the charge:

- Explore a broadened path to membership beyond the tradition of becoming a member of a monthly meeting.
- Consider how this path contributes to our goal of being a welcoming, supportive, and inclusive faith community.
- Assess new ways of recognizing and recording membership.
- Submit a report with recommendations for a trial process to Annual Sessions in 2021.

To accomplish these goals, we reviewed a variety of data sources, including:

- Minutes from Monthly and Quarterly Meetings in PYM.
- Minutes from other yearly meetings, such as New York Yearly Meeting.
- Interviews with Friends who volunteered or were identified as having a need or a story involving membership.

Insights

For some Friends, traditional membership doesn't work. There may be a variety of reasons, including but not limited to: previous experiences with monthly meeting membership, challenges of very small meetings, lack of religious education, opportunity, and diversity, and difficulty in connecting with "place" based meetings.

Proposal for At Large Membership in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Friends who are interested in exploring at-large membership should become familiar with the sections of Faith & Practice that explain traditional membership:

Membership - <https://www.pym.org/faith-and-practice/faith-reflected-organization/friends-meetings/membership/>

Procedures for Membership - <https://www.pym.org/faith-and-practice/guidelines-and-procedures/procedures-for-membership/>

Individuals who wish to apply for at-large membership in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting are encouraged to submit a letter of application to the clerk.

The letter should include the following:

- A statement of the applicant's understanding of the Religious Society of Friends, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, and an understanding of how at-large membership meets their spiritual needs.
- A plan for worshipping in the manner of Friends over the next year.

- Worship may include monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, yearly meetings, Pendle Hill, or another body with regular or irregular worship.
- A plan for religious education over the next year.
 - Religious education may include workshops, retreats, or religious education classes from any one of the many organizations that offers these opportunities, including but not limited to, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Pendle Hill, Friends General Conference, a quarterly meeting event, or a monthly meeting event.
- A commitment to remain in communication with PYM, including updated contact information and requests for support or assistance as needed.
- An annual update to the appropriate committee with an evaluation of what's working, what's not working, what needs to change, either personally or in the at-large membership process.

Friends have the option of asking a group to write a letter of support for their application. That group could be a committee, a quarter, a worship group, Young Adult Friends, or another Quaker organization the applicant is in community with.

When the letter is received, the clerk will appoint a clearness committee to meet with the individual and explore their spiritual journey. If the committee and the applicant are clear that the individual is open and prepared for at-large membership, then the clerk will write a letter of welcome.

Individuals who complete the clearness process are welcomed into membership. At-large members are eligible to serve on PYM councils and committees, as PYM officers, as representatives to external organizations, or to receive grants. Membership is one way to be a Quaker, but not the only way.

Quarterly Meetings

Quarters are encouraged to consider at-large membership in the Quarter. Some Friends have expressed that their spiritual home and community lies with their Quarter and they'd like to be members of their Quarter. This may not be applicable to all Quarters, as some may not have the capacity or structure to care for at-large members.

The Sprint

The sprint asks that the process for running and evaluating the trial of at-large membership over the next year be turned over to Quaker Life Council. QLC is the natural home for the ongoing care for at-large members, as "Quaker Life Council maintains the community and the spiritual depth within Philadelphia Yearly Meeting."

The sprint members would like to be invited to serve on clearness committees and consult on the drafting of the final report presented to Annual Sessions 2022.

Respectfully,

Carl Stanton, Chester, Chester Quarter
 Deborah Lyons, West Chester, Concord Quarter
 Emily Blanck, Mickleton, Salem Quarter
 Meg Rose, Central Philadelphia, Philadelphia Quarter
 Melanie Douty-Snipes, Fallsington, Bucks Quarter
 Rachel Eshun, Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia Quarter
 Melissa Rycroft, Upper Susquehanna Quarter