

Becoming Friends

Living & learning with Quakers

Developed for Quaker Life and
Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre
by Ginny Wall

Acknowledgements

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Dear Friends

Welcome to *Becoming Friends: Living & learning with Quakers*, the learning project from Woodbrooke and Quaker Life for those who are new to Friends and their meetings.

Friends around Britain Yearly Meeting have asked us for help providing the next stage of learning and support for newcomers to Friends after outreach programmes like Quaker Quest and Quaker Week have finished. Friends have told us that they hope for new ways to help newcomers deepen their understanding of Quakerism and their feeling of 'belonging' in their meetings, whether or not they are currently considering applying for membership.

We have worked closely with individuals and groups of Friends to develop and trial a course that meets these objectives. The result is *Becoming Friends*: an exciting, interactive learning experience that offers newcomers flexible course materials, accessible in an online or paper format, combined with options for support from meetings, in particular from a *Becoming Friends* 'companion'.

The *Becoming Friends* course has been designed to be as flexible as possible, with participants working at their own pace and for as long as they wish. There are options for working alone and with others, using a variety of approaches, and there is a choice of learning units and activities to suit a wide range of interests and learning styles.

We hope that meetings will want to provide a *Becoming Friends* 'companion' to support newcomers working with the learning materials. The companion can help newcomers find out more about Quakerism by sharing their own knowledge and experience and by helping to arrange conversations and interactions with other Friends. There is guidance for meetings working with *Becoming Friends* at page 278. Courses for *Becoming Friends* companions are available through Woodbrooke and Quaker Life. See www.woodbrooke.org.uk/becomingfriends or ring 0121 472 5171 for more information.

Experienced Friends and newcomers who took part in trials of *Becoming Friends* reported that the regular conversations between newcomers, companions and other Friends were a highlight of the learning experience for all concerned. One newcomer said of the course, "It made me talk to loads of other Friends...it gave me a good excuse to do what I wanted to do anyway." Another trials participant said "both of us ...learned so much through the *Becoming Friends* project and felt the whole experience had been a blessing."

Whether you are a newcomer to Quakerism or an experienced Friend, we hope that you find the *Becoming Friends* learning experience both interesting and enjoyable.

A free demonstration of the online *Becoming Friends* course is available at <http://moodle.woodbrooke.org.uk>. To sign up for the online course go to www.woodbrooke.org.uk/becomingfriends



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Permissions

Permission was kindly given to use extracts from:

- Barratt Brown, A. *Wayside Sacraments* (Yorkshire Friends' Service Committee. Friends' Literature Committee, Scarborough 1932)
- Bennett, Denise *Quaker Meeting* poem (Quaker Monthly, London October 2008)
- Britain Yearly Meeting *Quaker Faith & Practice* (The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, Fourth Edition 1995, 2005, 2009)
- Britain Yearly Meeting *Quaker Identity and the Heart of Our Faith* Quaker Life Study Materials (Quaker Life 2008) and various Quaker Life and Quaker Peace & Social Witness publications
- 'Caban' *contribution to Britain Yearly Meeting discussion forum* (BYM forum, 14.12.08)
- Courbon-Taylor, Amyon and Stuart, David *Quaker Meeting* poem (Quaker Monthly, London August 2008)
- Durham, Geoffrey *The Heart of Quakerism* (presentation to London Quakers 2009)
- Fischer, Kathleen *Women at the Well: feminist perspectives on spiritual direction* (SPCK, London 1989)
- Gillman, Harvey *A Light That Is Shining: an introduction to the Quakers* (Quaker Books, London 2003)
- Gillman, Harvey *Consider the Blackbird: Reflections on Spirituality and Language* (Quaker Books, London 2007)
- Gillman, Harvey *Reflections on membership and belonging* (previously unpublished, 2008)
- Gillman, Harvey and Heron, Alastair (eds.) *Searching the Depths: essays on being a Quaker today* (Quaker Books, London 1996)
- Gorman, George *The Amazing Fact of Quaker Worship* (Quaker Books, London 1973 – Swarthmore Lecture 1973)
- Hosking, Anne *extract from unpublished letter* (1986)
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- McNaughton, Marion & Roe, Lizz *Finding the Prophetic Voice for our time* (Woodbrooke Journal 21, 2007)
- McNaughton, Marion *Presentation to QPSW Conference 2009*
- Morley, Barry *Beyond Consensus: Salvaging Sense of the Meeting* (Pendle Hill Pamphlet 307, Pendle Hill Publications, Pennsylvania 1993)
- Nhat Hanh, Thich *Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* (Rider, London 1995). Reprinted by permission of The Random House Group Ltd.
- Norris, Gunilla *Being Home: discovering the spiritual in the everyday* (Paulist Press Inc., New York/Mahwah, NJ 1991, 2001). Reprinted by permission of Paulist Press Inc. www.paulistpress.com.
- Punshon, John *Encounter with Silence: reflections from the Quaker tradition* (Quaker Home Service 1987)
- Smith, Jaci *Peace is not a dirty word* (article on BYM website 03.11.09) This article was previously published in DEA (Development Education Association) Journal, October 2006.
- extracts from Twelve Quakers and God* (Quaker Quest, Hampstead Monthly Meeting, London 2004)
- Wildwood, Alex *Tradition and Transition: opening to the Sacred yesterday and today* (Woodbrooke Journal 9, 2001)
- Yamanouchi, Tayeko *Ways of Worship* (Friends World News 113, Friends World Council for Consultation 1979)

Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Introductory letter	3
Permissions	4
Welcome information	6

Course units listed alphabetically, except for Opening and Closing units

Opening Unit	Introducing the course, meeting your Becoming Friends companion, and planning the path	7
Topic unit guidance	Guidance for working through any topic unit	24
Advices and Queries	Exploring the living, questioning approach of Quakerism	25
Deep Roots and New Growth	Finding out about the roots and history of the Quaker faith, and our commitment to ongoing change	51
Experiencing Quaker Community	Introducing the ways that Quaker meetings are organised, nurtured and led	93
Faithful Diversity	Exploring the diversity of beliefs among Quakers, and how we live with this in the modern world	121
Faith in Action	How Quakers try to embody our beliefs through our witness in the world	141
The Sacred in the Everyday	Exploring the Quaker understanding that all times, places and people can be sacred and how this affects our everyday lives	175
Silence and Waiting	Exploring the Quaker experience of worship, silent waiting and spoken ministry	195
Speaking of God	Exploring Quaker experiences of God, and how we try to hear where words about faith come from	219
Closing Unit	Reflecting on the learning, saying goodbye and journeying on...	245
Appendix 1	Spiritual practices	265
Appendix 2	Guidance	277

Welcome to Becoming Friends: Living & learning with Quakers

Before you begin...

- This course aims to be very flexible and to give you plenty of choice.
- There's a wide range of material and activities on offer, but you can choose to do as much or as little as you like, and tailor the course to your own interests.
- There's guidance and a simple framework for approaching the course in the [Opening Unit](#), if you find this helpful....
- ...but please feel free to use the course materials as a resource, choosing activities that interest you and approaching them in whatever way feels right for you.

Opening Unit

Introducing the course, meeting your
Becoming Friends companion and
planning the path



Opening Unit aims

This opening unit aims to help you:

- Find out about the Becoming Friends course, its structure and approach
- Plan your learning path using the Becoming Friends learning units
- Reflect on your own spiritual journey as you begin the course
- Meet your Becoming Friends companion and agree how you will work together

Guidance for working through this opening unit

1. The introductory information (pages 8–12) and frequently asked questions about the course (pages 13–15) are a good place to start.
2. You might like to arrange a meeting with your Becoming Friends companion (if you'll be working with one) at an early stage so that you can begin getting to know each other and plan how you will work together. You could talk to your companion about which topic units to work with. There's guidance about this meeting on pages 16–18.
3. Choose one (or more if you like) of the [Introductory activities](#) on pages 19–21 to begin the process of finding out more about Quakerism and reflecting on your own spiritual journey with Friends.
4. There is an option to explore some of the topics covered in this unit further by following up reading and links in the [Further exploration](#) section on page 22.
5. The [Closing activity](#) on page 23 provides an opportunity for reflection at the end of the unit.
6. There's no time limit for working through this unit – you can take as long or as short a time as you like.

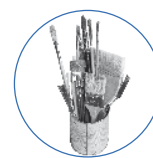
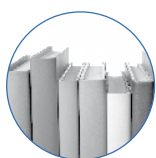
Introduction to the course

Becoming Friends aims to be an engaging, interactive and flexible course that provides an opportunity to find out more about Friends in a way that is true to the experiential nature of our Quaker faith. There are many wonderful books about Quakerism, and some will be referred to during the course, but Becoming Friends aims to avoid just taking a 'here's a good book to read' approach.

Activities on offer will include:

- reading
- watching video extracts
- listening to audio clips
- taking part in conversations with Friends in your local or area meeting
- exploring Quaker and other websites
- spiritual practices
- reflection through conversation, writing and creative media

Throughout the course, you will be able to choose the activities you prefer, so we hope that this will enable you to learn in a way and at a pace that suits you.



Opportunities for sharing and support

An important part of the course will be the opportunities provided to speak to Friends about spiritual questions or issues and to share something of one another's faith journeys. This could be:

- reflecting with a Becoming Friends companion
- talking to other Friends in the local area
- engaging with Quaker websites
- discussing issues in online forums
- meeting in a small learning group with other newcomers or local Friends

A reflective journey

You will also be invited at regular intervals through the course to reflect on what you are learning, both about Quakerism and your own spiritual journey. This 'reflective' approach fits well with the Quaker belief that experience is central to the spiritual life.

Reflecting on our learning is a key element of the Becoming Friends course; it places an open attentiveness at the heart of our spiritual journeying. For Quakers, experience and experimenting are central to our understanding of ourselves and our faith, so the course includes many opportunities for reflection both as you learn and afterwards.

During the course, you may find it helpful to practise becoming more aware of your learning experiences through means such as:

- private reflection
- writing in a journal or book of spiritual discipline (there's guidance for journalling in [Appendix 2 – Guidance](#), on page 282)
- drawing or creating something
- conversation face to face or by phone with your Becoming Friends companion or another friend
- group sharing
- sharing in an online discussion forum
- using the reflective journal facility on Woodbrooke's Moodle site
- adding to an online blog (something you set up separate from the course)



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Structure of Becoming Friends

Opening Unit

This unit is about introducing the course, meeting your Becoming Friends companion (if you will be working with one) and planning the path. It lays the foundations for the rest of the course, so everyone is encouraged to work through this introductory unit.

Eight topic-based units (choose any)

These units cover different aspects of Quaker faith and practice, ranging from beliefs about God to living faithfully in the world.

You can choose *as many or as few* of the units as you like, *in any order*. You can follow your interests or main questions about Quakerism. A good place to start could be the [Silence and Waiting](#) unit, which explores the Quaker experience of silence, worship and spoken ministry, or [Experiencing Quaker Community](#), which introduces the ways that Quaker communities are organised, nurtured and led. Where there are links between learning in different units, these will be highlighted so that they are easy to follow up.

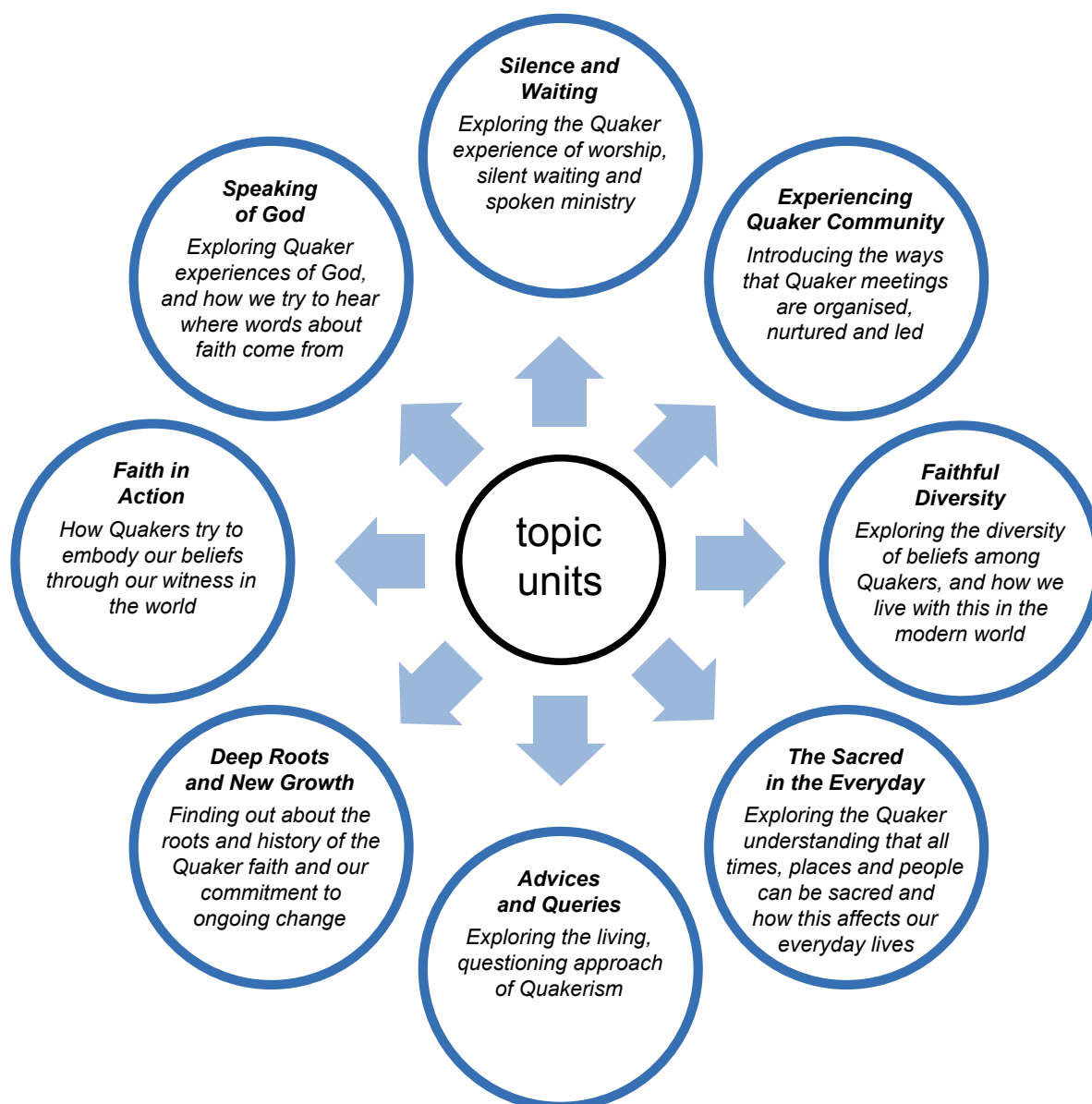
You might like to talk to your Becoming Friends companion about your choice of learning units, the order and timescale for working with them, or you might prefer to begin with one and see how you get on before making any further choices.

Closing Unit

When you have finished the topic based units you have chosen, there is a last unit to engage with, which offers opportunities to reflect on your learning throughout the Becoming Friends course, on the journey you have shared with your companion, on any steps you wish to take to further your learning and spiritual development from here, and to take time to say goodbye.

More about the topic based units

The topic based learning unit titles (choose **any** and follow them in **any order**) are:



In each topic unit there will be three types of activities to choose from:

Distinctives: exploring the distinctive Quaker way in relation to that topic

Discovering: more about Quaker people and community, structures, resources and events

Deepening: opportunities for personal reflection and journalling, prayer or spiritual practice and spiritual friendship conversations

Each of these aspects of the learning process will feed into the others.

Some frequently asked questions about the course

Who is the course for?

This course has been designed to help those who are new to Quakers find out more about Quakerism, explore your own understanding of and connection with different aspects of our faith, and get to know Quakers better.

Do I need to be considering applying for membership?

The Becoming Friends course is not aimed at bringing participants into membership of the Religious Society of Friends. The course is for anyone who is interested in finding out more about Quakers, however recent their involvement with Quakerism.

If, however, you find that the process of taking part in the course does lead you to consider applying for membership, then please approach the overseers or elders in your local meeting and they will explain the membership procedure to you.

It may also be helpful to know that a number of Friends still draw on their experience of and participation in other faith traditions, finding that it enriches their experience of Quakerism. This may be the case for you.

What is a Becoming Friends companion?

An integral part of the Becoming Friends learning experience is the offer of support from a Becoming Friends companion while you work through the course. This experienced Friend will help you discover more about the Quaker way and provide you with a supportive, listening presence as you reflect on your learning. Usually your companion will be someone from your local area, but this may not always be possible, so some people may access an online Becoming Friends companion for this support.

You may feel that you would prefer to work through the course without a companion, in which case alternative ways of being supported include taking part in online discussions (there will be opportunities for these



throughout the course), opting for activities that involve talking to Friends in your meeting, and making use of the existing support systems in your meeting, such as elders and overseers.

Please note that wherever course activities suggest working with a 'Becoming Friends companion', this can also be taken to include any experienced Friend you would like to work with on that activity, if you do not have a specific Becoming Friends companion.

Whether or not you work with a Becoming Friends companion, there will be opportunities to become part of the Becoming Friends online community throughout the course, and we hope this can become an enjoyable and supportive part of the learning experience for people who choose to work in this way.

Can I do the course online or on paper?

There are different ways of accessing the Becoming Friends course. Becoming Friends is available as an interactive online course using the Moodle learning platform, and as a paper based course.

Both versions offer a wide variety of opportunities to find out about Quakerism and explore your own relationship with the Quaker faith. If you're doing the course on paper, you can always go online to do some activities if you want to.

In some areas, Quaker meetings may offer group sessions using the Becoming Friends materials.

What kind of religious language will the course use?

Language used in the Becoming Friends course aims to be inclusive and to allow for a wide variety of approaches to the spiritual life. We hope to explore and celebrate the diverse nature of Quaker faith and the British Quaker community throughout the course. If there are times when you are not entirely comfortable with the language used, try to sense for the truth beyond the words, even if the words themselves may be strange or difficult. This effort is in itself a profound experience of the Quaker way.

How can I get hold of a copy of *Quaker faith & practice*?

You will find *Quaker faith & practice* in your local meeting house. It has a red cover and is usually on the table during meeting for worship. You may be able to

borrow a copy during this course: ask your Becoming Friends companion for help with this.

You can also find it:

- online at: www.quakerweb.org.uk/qfp
- in the Quaker Centre bookshop, tel: 020 7663 1030
email: quakercentre@quaker.org.uk or go to www.quaker.org.uk/bookshop

References in the Becoming Friends course are to the fourth edition published in 2009. You will find copies of previous editions in meeting houses, with slight variation in section numbering.

Meeting your Becoming Friends companion

You may have been told about this course by your local meeting, and have been offered a Becoming Friends companion who will work with you and support you while you participate in the course. If this has not yet happened, please speak to your local overseers to find out who coordinates the Becoming Friends companions in your area, so that you can be offered this support if it is available locally. If it is not available in your area, we may be able to offer the support of a Becoming Friends companion online.

Once you know who your Becoming Friends companion will be, you can arrange to meet so that you can get to know one another and plan how you would like to work together. Becoming Friends companions will have been prepared for this role, and will be familiar with the structure and approach of the course.

If, on the other hand, you would prefer to work through the course without a Becoming Friends companion (or none is available in your area), don't forget that alternative ways of getting support and hearing about different Quaker experiences include:

- being part of the Becoming Friends online community
- the [Discovering](#) activities in each unit that involve talking to local Friends about different aspects of their faith
- using the existing resources in your meeting, such as study groups, elders and overseers

Suggested elements for a first meeting with a Becoming Friends companion:

1. Worship and hellos

Taking time in silence together at the beginning will help to ground your conversation in worship.

2. Ground rules

It is helpful to consider ground rules for your work together, such as how you want the relationship to work, what kind of support you would like from your companion, whether you are going to take notes of sessions together, any particular issues regarding religious language or beliefs.



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3. Confidentiality

Consider the confidential nature of your conversations together, and any limits which you want to place on confidentiality.

4. Getting to know each other

You might like to share with one another about one or more of the following 'getting to know you' questions:

- What first brought you to Quakers?
- What do you most value about Quakerism?

5. Sharing about the Opening unit's 'Introductory activities'

You might take some time to share any reflections on the [Introductory activity](#) that you chose from the [Opening Unit](#).

6. Looking at the Becoming Friends learning materials together

Have a look at the course materials together. If you have any questions about the course, raise these with your companion as s/he may be able to answer them, or can help you find the answers elsewhere.

7. Making choices about which learning units you wish to follow

Consider the topic based units together. Are there some that you feel drawn to working with? You don't have to make hard and fast decisions at this stage, but it may be helpful to consider the options together.

8. What's coming next?

Think about the next stages of your learning journey. Which unit are you going to work with next? Is there specific support or resources that you would like your companion to help you access at this stage?

9. Practicalities

Look at the activities in your chosen learning unit: you may wish to arrange conversations with Friends in your local or area meeting, a visit to another meeting or Quaker organisation, or perhaps do some searches online. Can your companion help you with any of this?

10. Meeting times and places

What times and places will suit you both for meeting up over the next few weeks or months as you work through the course? Are there any other practicalities to sort out?

11. Reviews and endings

Do you want to agree an overall timescale for your work together, perhaps including an interim point at which you will review progress and consider if both of you are happy to continue with your commitment?

12. Worship, and arranging next meeting

After all the conversation and practicalities are finished with, spending a few minutes in worship together can help bring you back to the spiritual ground for your work together. Don't forget to make arrangements for your next contact or meeting.

Introductory activities

Choose one (or more if you like) of the following five activities

Introductory Activity 1

Ask a Quaker a question

Is there a question about Quakers or the Quaker way that you would like to find the answer to? It might be something apparently trivial, or something very important to you. The Becoming Friends course is all about exploring your questions about Quakerism, so here is your opportunity to use it as an excuse to ask a Quaker a question. This could be your Becoming Friends companion, an elder, overseer or other experienced Friend at your meeting, or you could use the 'Ask a Quaker' facility on the Quaker Week website: www.quakerweek.org.uk

- You could record the results of this activity in a journal or blog
- You might like to share your question, and any answers you receive, with your Becoming Friends companion when you next meet

Introductory Activity 2

Find out how people came to Quakers

You could do this activity by:

- going to the Quaker Week website at: www.quakerweek.org.uk and exploring the information about Quakerism. You can watch some of the short 'talking heads' videos on the 'Introducing Quakers' page, where Friends talk about how they came to Quakerism. Do any of their experiences echo or contrast with your own?
- asking one or two local Friends to talk to you about how they came to Quakers (your Becoming Friends companion could help you arrange this).

Take some time to reflect on your own experience of coming to Friends. You might like to write about this in a journal or book of spiritual discipline, or use creative methods to respond, such as drawing, modelling, or music.

You could share some of your reflections with your Becoming Friends companion when you next meet.

Introductory Activity 3

Watch the video 'An introduction to Quakers'

Watch 'An introduction to Quakers' made by Friends at Watford Quaker Meeting. You can access the video in a number of different ways:

- online at
 - www.watfordquakers.org.uk/videos.html
 - www.quakerweek.org.uk/intro/quaker-worship
 - www.youtube.com as 'Introduction to Quakers'
- on the DVD *An introduction to Watford Quakers*, available from the Quaker Centre bookshop (see [Further exploration](#) for contact details).

As you watch, you may like to note down any questions or issues that the video raises for you. You could share these questions with your Becoming Friends companion when you next meet, or simply come back to them at the end of the course and see if you have found answers or different understandings of any of the issues.

Introductory Activity 4

Questions for personal reflection

Take some time to reflect on one or more of the following questions:

- Where have you come from on your spiritual journey?
- What treasures do you bring with you?
- What do you want to give up or leave behind from previous faith experiences?
- What brings you to Quakers?

You could:

- respond to the questions in writing (you'll find guidance for journalling in [Appendix 2 – Guidance](#) on page 282)
- respond by drawing or using another creative method
- go online and blog about them
- discuss them on a Quaker discussion forum:
 - the Britain Yearly Meeting forum at: www.quakerweb.org.uk/forum
 - www.friendlink.org.uk (aimed mainly at young Quakers)
 - the [Opening Unit forum](#)

- share some of your reflections with your Becoming Friends companion when you next meet

Introductory Activity 5

Introduce yourself on the Opening Unit discussion forum

Go to the [Opening Unit forum](#) in the Becoming Friends online course. Find the 'Introduce Yourself' discussion thread and make a posting which tells other course participants

- your name
- where you live and what local Quaker meeting you attend
- something that has made you smile in the last week

Try to add a comment to at least one other person's posting, so that you begin to get to know other people who are currently following the Becoming Friends course.

Further exploration

If you would like to explore some resources that give a more detailed introduction to Quakerism, here are some suggestions for reading, listening or viewing.

Celebrating the Quaker way, Pink Dandelion, Quaker Books, 2009

Coming home: an introduction to the Quakers, Gerald Priestland, Quaker Books, 2003

An introduction to Quakerism, Pink Dandelion, Cambridge University Press, 2007

An introduction to Watford Quakers (DVD), part 1 'An Introduction to Quakerism', Just Film, 2007. Also available at: www.watfordquakers.org.uk/videos.html or www.quakerweek.org.uk/intro (or on www.youtube.com as 'Introduction to Quakers').

A light that is shining: an introduction to the Quakers, Harvey Gillman, Quaker Books, 2003.

Meeting Quakers: a lively introduction to the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain (DVD), Quaker Home Service Outreach Committee, Quaker Home Service, 2000, 2007.

New light: 12 Quaker voices, edited by Jennifer Kavanagh, O Books, 2008. Individual themes also available in the 'Twelve Quakers and...' series, Quaker Quest, 2004–2007.

Portrait in grey: a short history of the Quakers, John Punshon, Quaker Books, reprint 2006.

Quaker faith & practice: the book of Christian discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, 4th edition, Britain Yearly Meeting, 2009 (first published 1995).

Quaker speak, Alastair Heron, Quaker Outreach in Yorkshire, 2003.

Searching the depths: essays on being a Quaker today, edited by Harvey Gillman and Alastair Heron, Quaker Books, 1996

Many of these titles are available from the Quaker Centre bookshop:

Friends House
173 Euston Road
London NW1 2BJ

Tel: 020 7663 1030
Fax: 020 7663 1001

Website: www.quaker.org.uk/bookshop
Email: quakercentre@quaker.org.uk



Many of them will also be in your local meeting house library. You could ask your Becoming Friends companion to help you track down titles that interest you.

Closing activity

As you finish your exploration of this [Opening Unit](#), you are invited to reflect on what you have gained from the unit, how your understanding of both yourself and Quakerism has changed, and what areas you would like to explore further.

This closing reflection can be a very good opportunity for sharing with your Becoming Friends companion, or you may prefer to write in a journal or book of spiritual discipline (there's guidance for journalling in [Appendix 2 – Guidance](#) on page 282), or to reflect using creative methods such as drawing, collage, model-making or working with materials such as textiles or wood.

You might use one or more of the following questions as a focus for your reflection:

- What have you gained from your work on this unit, whether as a result of positive or more challenging experiences?
- In what ways has your understanding changed as a result of your work on this unit?
- Are there areas that you would like to explore further – either as part of your own spiritual journey or relating to Quakerism?
- Has anything arisen that you would find it helpful to reflect on with your Becoming Friends companion?

Guidance for working through a topic unit

1. Each unit includes several activities in each of the sections [Quaker Distinctives](#), [Discovering](#) and [Deepening](#). You might like to choose one or more activities from each section (but *one* is enough – you don't have to do them all!). This selection from the three 'D's will help you achieve a balance between finding out about the Quaker faith, engaging with local Friends or practical activities, and spending time in reflection. Work through the activities in the order that feels right to you.
2. When considering which activities to choose, don't forget to consider options that take you out of your comfort zone, or away from your usual preference for learning style or content. We sometimes learn more through experiences that do not appeal to us at all at first.
3. You can take as long or as short a time as you like on each unit, from a week to several months. It may be a good idea to think about which activities you are going to work on at an early stage, so that you can arrange any contacts with other Friends suggested in the [Discovering](#) section – it could be useful to meet up with your Becoming Friends companion for help with this.
4. You will be invited to take time to reflect on your learning, especially through the [Deepening](#) activities and [Closing activity](#) in each unit. If you have a Becoming Friends companion, you may choose to meet regularly, but in any case, it could be helpful to arrange a meeting with them, perhaps towards the end of the unit, so that you can reflect on your learning together.