

Being Friends Together

A brief discernment process

A do-it-yourself discernment process for meetings

Step 1: Exploring the *Being Friends Together* resource

Take some time to explore the options and approaches in the *Being Friends Together* resource, and to consider what might suit your meeting's needs. It may be best for a small group of Friends who have responsibility for learning in your meeting to do this initial exploration, gathered somewhere with access to *BFT* online.

Alternatively, you could do this exploration as a whole meeting. You could start in groups of 3 or 4 using the summary of learning pathways, or, if you have access to the internet, have a closer look at the website, including trying out some pathway and keyword searches. Then come together to share ideas in the larger group.



Step 2: Reflecting on our story so far

Next (and this could be on a later occasion), spend some time reflecting together as a meeting on the following questions. Someone in the meeting will need to make notes capturing the essence of what is said.

- What has been the story or journey of this meeting that has brought us to the place where we are now?
- What nourishes the life of the meeting?

You could read back to the group the story that you have captured.



<http://together.woodbrooke.org.uk>



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Step 3: Where do we feel led to learn or develop as a meeting?

Building on your exploration of *Being Friends Together* in Step 1 and your responses in Step 2, spend time in threes noting ideas down in response to the following questions (it may be helpful for each group to include people with a range of levels of experience or involvement in your meeting). Then come back together to share 'headlines' in the whole group.

1. Where is there a sense of excitement or possibility when we listen to our story and look at the options and approaches in *Being Friends Together*?
2. Where do we feel that there is a need for growth, learning or development in the life of our meeting?
3. What theme, pathway or action might be a good place to start?



Step 4: Making space

Ask yourselves: What might we need to let go of as a meeting or individuals in order to have time and energy to develop and grow in the Spirit?

Be bold and live adventurously - this stage of the discernment process may provide a really helpful opportunity for you to consider whether there is a practice, activity or burden that needs to be laid down so as to make space for the next stage of your meeting's life and learning. This conversation could start off in pairs, perhaps noting ideas on sticky notes, then feedback into a whole group discussion.



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Step 5: Making decisions

You may wish to leave the specific decision about which of the approaches to *Being Friends Together* you are going to use first to another session, so there is no sense of hurry or pressure. Either way, you may find it helpful when you are ready to make this decision to move into meeting for worship for business mode, with someone acting as clerk, so that any decisions arise from a spirit led place and involve as many of your community as possible. You could also at that point formalise any decisions about laying things down from your considerations at step 4, if that feels appropriate.



Step 6: Getting started with *Being Friends Together*

Once you know which of the pathways or options you are going to follow, you will need to appoint two or three people to co-ordinate and make practical arrangements for your meeting's learning journey. Consider involving someone younger or newer to the meeting in this group – they may be very glad to be asked!

These Friends should then check out the 'ways of working' section of the *Being Friends Together* website, which gives guidance about practicalities such as setting dates for learning sessions, booking resources or speakers, being an inclusive learning community, facilitation and so on.

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