

Shepherdstown Friends Meeting A Welcome to All People Minute

Shepherdstown Friends extend a welcoming to the wider Shepherdstown community. We invite all who wish to join our Sunday morning Meetings for Worship regardless of religious affiliation and background, whether Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, or other religion, or no religious belief at all. A sincere desire—or simply a respectful curiosity—to join us in an unprogrammed meeting, based on prayerful meditation after the manner of Friends, is reason enough to attend.

For more than 350 years Friends' tradition has affirmed the spiritual unity of all people. We cherish the belief that there is that of God in each person, leading us to respect the worth and dignity of all. The Light is present in every human and we seek to embrace it without distinction. This same Light enlightened Jesus of Nazareth and enlightened all great teachers of wisdom. This fact is true regardless of a person's physical traits or cultural particulars—ethnicity, skin color, gender, sexual orientation, political belief, illness, ability or disability, legal status, or any other distinctions that are commonly drawn to divide people.

All of us are children of God. All are equal in the sight of God. American Friends witnessed this equality in the 17th century by recognizing both male and female ministers in their meetings—in the 18th century by peaceful and fair relations with Native Americans—in the 19th century by efforts to resist and abolish slavery—in the 20th century in the movement for woman's suffrage and racial desegregation. In the present, Friends witness equality by welcoming gays and lesbians to full participation in society, including marriage. We welcome immigrants regardless of citizen status and affirm their human rights. In all centuries, Friends have opposed war and maintained a commitment to nonviolent engagement as the surest path to resolving conflict.

Shepherdstown Friends Meeting aspires to be a loving community inclusive of the wide diversity of the surrounding national community. Each member and attender has the responsibility to foster that welcoming spirit. We acknowledge that the achievement of our spiritual goals is a lifelong process. Our goal of seeking unity will succeed in proportion to our willingness as individuals to honor our differences as we seek unity and to resist prejudice, discrimination, and injustice. Our ability to do that will succeed in proportion to our ability to seek and find that of God in everyone.

Affirmed by Shepherdstown Friends (WV) Allowed Meeting, Jan 10, 2010.