

Quakers Reaching Out Outreach Very Much Alive in NYYM!

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When asked to coordinate this issue of *Spark* on the topic of outreach, Arlene Johnson and I, as co-conveners of the NYYM Outreach Working Group (OWG), welcomed the opportunity to use this important platform to keep the topic of outreach in front of NYYM Friends. Since the primary focus of the OWG has been on nurturing outreach at the local meeting level, we are happy to highlight in this issue four meetings who agreed to share, as members of the Outreach Practitioners' Circle (OPC), their experience with some aspect of outreach. Many of their efforts arose out of their own energy and insights and there are also gems here and there acquired as a result of their OPC engagement.

It is worth noting that each meeting has a unique set of circumstances. Size, location, history... No two are alike. Consequently approaches and solutions are vastly different—and yet wonderfully creative. What works for one is not necessarily what another would or should choose to do. What they *do* share, and what the Outreach Practitioner's Circle seeks to support, is a strong desire to share the Light by opening their meetings to seekers, each as it feels led and able. In each case, there is a sense that they have been energized and grown more confident in their ability to reach out.

Conscience Bay MM, despite its size and stretched resources, has found ways to magnify its presence and do meaningful service in the community by participating in a local grassroots coalition of social action-minded organizations and by participating in the “Quaker Outside the Lines” program. Their self assessment about what feels right and doable and their faithfulness are admirable.

Albany MM wouldn't take “no” for an answer. They gently but firmly challenged the idea that churches were somehow not acceptable nonprofits as participants in a local street fair. And they got their table! In turn, they learned a great deal and herein generously share with us their dos, don'ts and do-better-next-time wisdom.

Wilton MM shares a rich and deeply purposeful outreach journey with us as the entire meeting worked through major changes to its physical property and its use, revamping their presence on the internet, strengthening their First Day School and making the meeting more family-friendly. It is an inspiring read about a meeting that has continued to discern multiple, fruitful avenues for outreach as it changes and grows.

Binghamton MM's story is heartwarming: a small meeting, often disillusioned with past outreach efforts, that has gained a more nuanced understanding of outreach and greater confidence in its outreach efforts.

Chatham-Summit MM. My home meeting! With outreach challenges very similar to many other meetings. One of the greatest, as you will see from Arlene Johnson's article, is cultivating a mindset among ourselves that reaching out to seekers is a *practice* to be shared by everyone, each according to his gifts.

By no means does this exhaust the topic of outreach in NYYM. Lots of creative outreach activity is under way or under consideration. We encourage readers to check out the **Outreach Resources list** on page six where you can learn more about other outreach efforts and gain access to outreach materials from the very basic to more sophisticated. It has something that every meeting can use.

Meetings interested in joining the Outreach Practitioners Circle can learn via the link provided in this issue's Outreach Resources Box or by contacting Arlene and me at outreach@nyym.org.

May the outreach work among us be thoughtful, joyful and become increasingly an ongoing practice!