

QUAKER OUTREACH



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Outreach as Ministry: Speaking to Their Condition

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Quaker Outreach is 90% ministry, 10% public relations and 0% proselytizing! At the heart of Friendly Outreach is speaking to their condition. George Fox directed us to bring people to their Guide and leave them there! No pressure is applied—it's all invitation, encouragement, and embodying a faithful life so we serve as a worthy example. If we do this well, we'll be amazed at the stream of people who find us.

Meetings can become stymied at the thought of speaking to the condition of a newcomer they haven't met yet. Try the following:

1. Engage around a universal theme, offer a spiritually grounded space, and bring a Quaker perspective to bear. Think "Parenting with Spirit: Using Our Deepest Hopes and Values to Guide Us" or "Spiritual Supports in Times of Life Transition." You probably can think of many folks for whom these topics would be useful. Other ideas will spring up as you explore what Quakers have to offer around stress management, life balance, living with hope and impact in a chaotic world, and so on.

The particulars of your situation as a meeting, coupled with possible gifts within your circle of Friends, may hold more clues to vital ministry. For several years, a Hanover (NH) Friend and social worker hosted a monthly dinner at the meetinghouse, near Dartmouth College. She facilitated an open-ended conversation on any topic related to the spiritual dimension of life. Each dinner gave an opportunity to check in around the circle and say how things really were going. That moment of openness, in and of itself, can be healing.

Turn to the wider circle of Friends for programming support. Invite Rob Spencer, MD, Concord (NH) Meeting, to come and share his ministry around living each day in gratitude and acceptance called Mindful Mortality. Invite Don Badgley from Poughkeepsie (NY) Meeting to delve into ways early Friends felt the Light ordered their lives. NEYM's Ministry & Counsel is building an online Speakers Bureau to curate some of the seasoned Friends you could invite. Stay tuned.

2. Select a day and time most likely to work for newcomers. This may require some trial and error. Please keep in mind the exhaustion that many young adults, with or without children, carry as a fixture of daily life.

3. Do some publicity! Give a great program its fullest reach and potential to inspire.



Outreach as Invitation:

Finding and Sharing Your Own “Quaker Kernel”

**Some thoughts from the
NYYM Quaker Outreach Working Group**

Has this ever happened to you?

You're at a social occasion and an acquaintance turns to you and says, *“Hey, I didn't know you're a Quaker.”*

Or maybe you're having a discussion of current events with some colleagues when the topic of Quakers comes up. Someone says, *“Aren't Quakers extinct?”*

Or you're having a casual conversation with new neighbors and the topic turns to religious affiliations. You mention that you are a Quaker. *“Really?”* your neighbor says. *“I didn't know there was a Quaker church around here.”*

Each of these situations is an invitation for a pithy response—a brief statement that authentically conveys your commitment to the Quaker path and gently invites others to inquire more. But if we're not ready for these moments, it's likely we'll become self-conscious or tongue-tied—or maybe too wordy and confusing—thus missing an opportunity to share our measure of the Light.

Just as job-seekers are advised to have their “elevator pitch”^[1] well-practiced and ready to go when an opportunity arises, so too Quakers are advised to be ready at any time to share briefly and personally what they find of value in the

Quaker community. In shaping your own message, your own Quaker Kernel, here are some things to keep in mind.

1. Let go of the notion that you have to say everything, so you can find the words that convey your *own* experience.

Start by writing down everything you might like to say. Then get out a red pen and edit out everything that's not essential to conveying what *you* find compelling about Quakers. There are many true things that can be said about Quakers, but you *don't need to say them all!* Keep in mind that your goal is not only to be responsive, but to open the door to further conversation. That can best be accomplished by speaking personally—and briefly.

Example: *"I have found that Quakers support each other in their own spiritual journeys"*

rather than

"Quakers were founded in the mid-17th century by George Fox, a dissenter who stressed continuing revelation and the need for each person to find their own spiritual path."

2. Accentuate the positive.

It's often a temptation to define Quakerism by what it isn't rather than by what it is. This can lead to sounding critical of other religions, and it also begs the question of what Quakers are and believe.

Example: *"Quakers believe everyone can have a direct relationship with the divine"*

rather than

"Quakers don't have ordained clergy or an established creed."

3. Practice your message out loud to weed out the “stop” words.

Speak your message out loud to one or two people who will give you honest feedback. Ask them to tell you when they get confused or start to glaze over. What are the words that cause them to stop and lose attention? Be alert for Quaker-ese like “monthly meeting,” “testimonies,” and “unprogrammed.” What you don't want to do is confuse the listener or make them feel stupid—and you don't want to rely on jargon rather than finding the words that convey your *own* experience.

[1] In the business world, an “elevator pitch” is a clear, concise statement that makes your point compellingly but briefly when an opportunity presents itself—for example, as when you are in an elevator with a captive audience and you must make your case before the elevator reaches the tenth floor.

Helping Newcomers Getting Traction on the Quaker Path

Quaker discernment can be baffling to a newcomer. Exactly how do we know what God is asking of us? How do we tease apart the self-serving motives of Ego and the deeply right and grounded-in-Spirit nudges of a true leading?

This rack card, which prints two to a page, suggests three straightforward queries as first steps in developing discernment and finding way forward.

- The Love Test: Is there love and kindness directed to everyone this thought or action might touch?
- Give it Time: Discernment takes time. Wait several days and see if the promptings of your heart are still calling you in the same direction.
- Give it to a Larger Group: Ask family and Friends to help you understand what the nature of this proposed course of action might be.

PRINT SUGGESTION: Use heavy-weight, white card stock.

When the Light is at Work in Us



The inner work of the Spirit, the Light, can be mysterious and easy to overlook. The Spirit works through our regular, everyday feelings, gifts, thoughts, and relationships. It takes practice to be able to sense where God might be at work in us. We might feel an increased capacity for kindness or a rising sense of the need to mend a quarrel.

Download the Card

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Your recommendations to those in your network will play an important part in growing the web of connections supporting this new initiative. Thank you!



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Wait!



I still have a question I'd love to explore...

**Contact the NYYM Outreach Working Group
for more ideas & support**



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