



Evangelism: A Four-Letter Word?*

by Jan Greene, New York Yearly Meeting

According to studies done by Fuller Evangelistic Association (FEA), the following rules of thumb for churches in America apply to churches that encourage growth:

1. The average church will have a ratio of approximately 50% adults to children, but in a growing church the ratio is likely to be 60% adults and 40% children.
2. Of the total adult membership
 - a. 50% will be relatively inactive. They might be considered consumers.
 - b. 40% will be involved in serving the needs of church members and attenders.
 - c. 10% will be involved in service to the unchurched and other outreach ministries.

How full is your meetinghouse on First Days? An FEA study indicated that a church felt comfortably full if an urban church's seating capacity is 80% filled, and 60% filled in rural churches. A church feels comfortably empty if its seating capacity is 60% filled in an urban area, 40% filled in a rural area. Churches feel uncomfortably empty in cities when 40% of seats are filled, 20% filled in rural areas. Using this scale, how does your Meeting rate? If you are uncomfortably empty, would it help to move some of extra benches to another room until more attenders are present?

- Are we willing to make substantial changes to meet the needs of new people?
- Are we willing to fail and make mistakes and have some conflicts, if this is necessary for growth?

Suggestion: Meetings should look at their attenders for the last three years. Who has come in? Why have they come in? If there are those who have gone, why have they gone? Are there any changes that should be considered?

Once a person begins attending Meeting, it is important that the work of the Meeting be shared with that person. How well does your Meeting do this? How appropriately? (Having a new person take over the First Day School is not a good idea, though this too often happens. New attenders need to be in meeting for worship and other programs that will help them nurture their own spiritual journey and learn more about Quakerism, and our Quaker children need the love, care, and teaching of seasoned Friends.)

What are the stumbling blocks to outreach in ourselves and our Meetings? Can we attract, welcome, and nurture newcomers to our Meetings? Is our Quaker faith so important to us that we are willing to share it with others? If necessary, are we willing to step outside our personal comfort zone to let others know about Quakerism? Are we willing to take "evangelism" off our Yearly Meeting's "four-letter-word" list?

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