

Becoming a Welcoming Friend: Queries for Reflection

A Welcoming Friend is someone from a meeting who spends time getting to know newcomers, introducing newcomers to others in the meeting, and offering support, resources, and spiritual nurture as the newcomer explores Quaker worship, faith, and practices.

There are several key components in the process of deepening the spiritual life of our meetings. One is being intentional about responding to the needs of newcomers with grace. Another includes welcoming, guiding and supporting newcomers through the process of learning about Quaker faith and practice. In addition, it is important to offer opportunities for building meaningful connections within the meeting. Welcoming meetings are those that invite newcomers to learn about Quaker faith, processes and worship AND also to build connections and relationships with Friends in the meeting.

Many welcoming practices in meetings rely on individual Friends to serve as this bridge between newcomers and the meeting community. The queries below are offered to support individuals stepping into this role of Welcoming Friend.

Welcoming Friends help newcomers learn about Quaker practice and faith

What support, information, relationships, and/or experiences might a newcomer need as they explore their spiritual path?

What are the classes, programs, small groups, or educational and spiritual opportunities in our meeting for newcomers to gain a foundation in Quaker faith and practice?

How can I share my spiritual journey in a way that might provide spiritual nurture for a newcomer?

How am I feeling called to explore my own spiritual path in order to become more deeply grounding in Quaker practice and faith?

Welcoming Friends ease the way for newcomers into a meeting community

Think of a time when you felt welcomed and embraced by an individual or a community. What did welcoming look like? What did being welcomed feel like? How might you offer this authentic welcoming to a newcomer in your meeting?

Think about your own experience of being a newcomer to your Quaker meeting. What did the meeting do to help you move from being a newcomer to seeing the meeting as your spiritual home? How did you build relationships with other Friends?

In what ways can you support a newcomer in forming relationships with Friends in the meeting? Who might this newcomer need to meet?

Consider a newcomer to a Quaker meeting at different points in time: walking through the door for the first time on a Sunday morning, during coffee hour after that first visit, after 3-4 visits, and after attending for six months. What support and information might the newcomer need at these various points in time?

What's happening in your meeting that newcomers may be invited to join? (social opportunities, religious education opportunities, shared meals and activities, actions in the community, programs for children)

What basic information about the meeting can be shared to help a newcomer feel at ease? (bathroom locations, borrowing materials from the library, decoding "Quaker jargon" terms like First Day School or Second Hour)

Welcoming Friends welcome *all* who would travel the Quaker path

In the QuakerSpeak video *Quakers, Racism, and the Blessed Community* (<http://quakerspeak.com/quakers-racism-blessed-community/>) Vanessa Julye says that “White supremacy is restricting our way of creating a blessed community because it is making it difficult for people of color to be a part of the community.” How can you imagine that the Religious Society of Friends could change to be more accessible for people of color?

Part of white supremacy culture, Vanessa says, is “its invisibility to European-Americans in this country, because if you don’t see a structure and feel that that is normal, then there’s no need to change it.” What would it take for European-Americans to peel back the veil and what changes would happen if they could see what Vanessa is talking about?

Welcoming Friends encourage the whole meeting to practice authentic welcoming

What can we do, as a meeting and as individuals, to build connections with newcomers and share a sense of belonging?

What new practices could we adopt that will provide an authentic welcome into an inclusive and diverse community?

Learn more about becoming a Welcoming Friend to newcomers in your meeting: <https://www.fgcquaker.org/deepen/outreach/becoming-welcoming-friend>