

First Impressions

While the saying “you only get one chance to make a good impression” is a cliché, it is also the truth. The following are some ways that your worship group or meeting can create a good first impression on newcomers – and interest them in coming back.

Meeting Facility

Look to make sure the signs outside your meeting place make it clear where to park their cars and enter the building. Make certain that any door a visitor might enter by is unlocked. Arrange to have signage (portable or permanent) outside the building identifying it as a place where Quakers worship. Place signage inside the building showing the way to important gathering spaces and restrooms. Have your meeting rooms well maintained and attractive – this conveys the impression that Friends truly care about the meeting. Also check to ensure that your meeting is physically accessible. This includes having assistance for the hearing impaired.

Atmosphere

Think of ways that your meeting can practice Spirit-led hospitality – such as having a designated welcomer or two every week. Open your hearts and hands to first-time visitors and new attenders. Seek that of God in each person who attends your meeting, however short or long their involvement in Quakerism, however “Quakerly” their behavior, however similar or different they may be to those already attending the meeting. Reach out to newcomers as fellow seekers instead of seeing them as “growth” or “financial” prospects. A friendly greeting is always welcome and will not scare people away. Greet all newcomers equally.

Introductions and Announcements

Make sure that your announcement period reflects the vitality of your meeting and of the Quaker way. Avoid jargon and acronyms. Your meeting members and regular attenders may know the Quaker alphabet, but newcomers will likely have no idea what AFSC, FWCC, FGC, and the like mean. If you would like visitors to introduce themselves, find a way that does not single them out – many find this uncomfortable. Invite, depending on the size of the group, everyone present, first-time visitor and longtime member alike, to introduce themselves. (see our “Identifying and Welcoming Newcomers” PDF for other suggestions).

Guest Book

Have a current and nice looking guest book prominently displayed and invite visitors to sign it, as they feel comfortable. Include columns for their names, addresses, phone numbers, and emails. Then, since you have this information, follow-up with a card, letter or email thanking them for visiting, asking whether they have any questions, giving them the name of a person to contact should any questions arise, and inviting them to return.

Information

Prepare a packet of basic information for newcomers. It is especially important to include information that explains the life and work of your community. Let your members know that newcomers may ask questions about what Quakers believe and that they should be prepared to answer. Have a supply of simple literature about the Quaker way to offer visitors. You might want to use FGC's "Newcomers Cards" located at <http://www.fgcquaker.org/resources/newcomers-cards>

Bulletin Boards

Check to make sure that your bulletin boards (portable or permanent) are up to date and reflect the diversity and vitality of your meeting and the wider Quaker world. Make bulletin boards more lively by featuring photographs of meeting activities. Use large-print labels to organize material and to help visitors catch the range of the meeting's connections and interests.

Children

Let newcomers with children know that you have a First Day School or childcare and that their children are welcome to attend as they feel comfortable.

Connect

Connect with FGC:

- FGC has resources to support new and existing groups
- FGC can help a group connect with other local Quaker groups
- FGC can help you get listed on QuakerFinder.org to help others find you

FGC staff and volunteers are happy to talk with you about this, or any other issue, your meeting or worship group is facing. Please contact us by emailing us at newmeetings@fgcquaker.org or phoning 215-561-1700.

This document was downloaded from the website of Friends General Conference. Explore the many resources and opportunities we offer for Quakers, Quaker meetings, and all interested individuals. Go to www.fgcquaker.org.

