

Transforming Quaker Welcoming

Advice for Greeting Diverse Newcomers

As we engage with newcomers, let us approach them with an open heart and mind, asking questions that invite them to share their experiences and build relationships.

An older Friend encountering a young adult:

<i>Avoid saying</i>	<i>Say instead</i>	<i>Why?</i>
Our meeting needs more young people.	Glad to meet you.	Everyone likes to be seen as an individual in their wholeness, not as a token member of a group.
Are you new here?	I don't believe we've met. I'm Susan.	The younger Friend may have been worshipping with you for years; you just hadn't noticed.

A Friend of European descent encountering a person of African descent:

<i>Avoid saying</i>	<i>Say instead</i>	<i>Why?</i>
This must have been a very different kind of service than the ones you're used to.	How did you experience the worship this morning?	The person of African descent might be, for example, a Quaker from another meeting—or from any number of other backgrounds. The open-ended question invites the possibility of a conversation about your shared experience of worship.

A more able-bodied Friend approaching a person in a wheelchair:

<i>Avoid saying</i>	<i>Say instead</i>	<i>Why?</i>
How can I help you?	May I grab you a cup of coffee? I'd love a chance to chat with you, if you'd like.	The initial question focuses on a disability. The other is helpful, but says, "I'd like to talk with you, but I can understand if you have another agenda."

An announcement from a politically progressive Quaker:

<i>Avoid saying</i>	<i>Say instead</i>	<i>Why?</i>
We are circulating a petition to recall the governor over his anti-union activities. I know that as Quakers, you are all with me on this, so please sign it at the rise of meeting.	I believe that supporting unions strengthens our democracy. I have a petition to recall the governor because of his anti-union policies, and I invite people to talk to me about it at the rise of meeting.	Our civil society needs full participation of all citizens, and our Meetings benefit from a diversity of political opinions.

Connecting across class differences:

<i>Avoid saying</i>	<i>Say instead</i>	<i>Why?</i>
What is your major, or Where did you go to college?	So tell me about yourself. What interests/excites you/makes you curious these days?	Not everyone's adult life trajectory matches yours. 30% of Americans have a college degree. Some people choose to join a skilled trade.
What do you do for a living?	What brings you here?	Many people who work in the service industry are proud of their contribution.

Welcoming a person whose gender is not readily apparent to a Friend:

<i>Avoid saying</i>	<i>Say instead</i>	<i>Why?</i>
Hi, we have a very active lesbian community in our meeting. Let me introduce you to Beth.	Hi, my name's Jack, what's yours?	You cannot tell someone's sexual orientation or gender based on their appearance. Making assumptions emphasizes a perceived "otherness" or difference rather than the whole person.

DO: Introduce yourself, Make friends, Be interested, Reach out, Respect Boundaries

