

Knitting Newcomers into the Community

Studies of congregations show that newcomers who make two or three friends within their first six months in a church (or, in our case, meeting or worship group) are more likely to stay than those who don't. Below are some ideas for integrating newcomers into the life of your meeting or worship group.

Inclusion

Look for ways to intentionally include newcomers or sporadic attenders in the life and work of the meeting. Offer opportunities to mingle after worship and personally invite newcomers to attend your pot lucks and other get-togethers. Think of ways to make them feel more welcome. This may include inviting new attenders to participate in your social life outside of meeting. Do newcomers find that they have visited a truly open and caring community?

Small Groups

Recent studies have shown that small group activities (newly formed groups of up to ten people) are critically important in enabling newcomers to make friends. These include things such as book studies, discussion groups, worship-sharing groups, spiritual friendship groups, and so forth. Provide some of these opportunities for newcomers to get involved with others in your meeting or worship group.

Spiritual Friendship

Spiritual Friendship groups can be used to help members and attenders build community by getting to know each other better and sharing their spiritual stories. Look for ways, topics, and times to offer spiritual friendship sharing groups in your meeting.

Simple Supper

Invite a few newcomers and two or three meeting members to a member's home for dinner. Over dinner invite all the guests to take turns telling a little of their story of how they came to explore Quaker Meeting. Start with the host's story. Keep your story to no more than 10 minutes. Be willing to share your story on a fairly deep level. At the end of the evening, ask if any of those gathered would like to meet again. If so, set a time to do so.

Children

Find opportunities to include children in the life and work of the meeting as appropriate. Look for opportunities to have them participate in worship (giving announcements, greeting visitors, teaching them that they may feel led to speak, etc.). It's also important to have a strong First Day School. Even if you have few children at present, there are materials that can be adapted for wide age ranges (such as FGC's Faith & Play). Having such a program is one way your meeting

shows it cares about the spiritual and educational needs of children and parents. Ask others besides the parents of new attenders to care for the children and teach First Day School. Be as attentive to the children of newcomers as you are to those who you have known for several years.

Pastoral Care

To truly include newcomers in the life of the meeting or worship group, you need to consider how the meeting or worship group would be aware that a newcomer was going through a time of personal crisis. It is important to let newcomers know that your system of pastoral care extends to them.

Meetings for Business

Personally inviting newcomers to attend a Meeting for Business can be transformative to your meeting in terms of people staying by helping them feel a part of the community and its decisions.

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 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.

