

# Practical Arrangements for Starting a New Quaker Worship Group or Meeting

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While beginning a new worship group or meeting is primarily a spiritual endeavor, there are also various practical matters you will want to consider. The following are some basic steps you should contemplate prior to holding your first gathering – and continue them after the group is underway.

## **A Place to Meet**

Look for a place to meet that is fairly centrally located to the people you hope to attract. You want a place large enough, but not so large that it feels empty if only a few people attend. It is best to meet at one place regularly so people know where to find you. You may want to start out in a home and then move to larger quarters as attendance dictates. Some other things to think about, besides size of the space:

- Is it accessible to public transportation?
- Is there adequate parking?
- Is it handicapped accessible?
- Are there restroom facilities?
- Are the acoustics appropriate for vocal ministry being heard (especially by the hearing impaired)?
- Can you place a sign (even a temporary one only used on meeting days) someplace visible to let attenders know you're meeting?

## **A Time to Meet**

As you think about when to meet, consider what meeting time might be best for the people you hope to attract. When they first start up, some worship groups begin meeting early on Sunday/First Day morning, on Sunday/First Day afternoon, or in the evening mid-week. This gives potential attenders, who may be involved in other faith communities, the opportunity to discover Quaker worship.

## **A Place to Sit**

No matter whether you're meeting in a home or another space, you'll want to make certain you have enough seating for regular attenders and visitors. Arrange the seating in a way that promotes sharing and sight. Some possibilities include the following:

- If the group is small enough, arrange the chairs in one circle, with spaces for people to come in and out of the circle.

- You could also set up in a square – again with access to and from the square.
- Some meetings and worship groups sit in two sets of rows that face each other
- Make sure to add additional seating as the group grows, following the shape that works for your group
- Encourage regular attenders to sit in the innermost row to allow room for visitor/latecomers to sit behind them.

### **A Place for Children**

Plan ahead of time for how you will serve children who may come. Will they be welcome in worship? If so, how will you provide for their spiritual needs during that time? Have age appropriate materials for them to read or look at. Consider ways of introducing them to expectant listening for God. Prepare bags with quiet activities they can do during worship.

- as your group gets more fully established, you may want to think about providing things such as childcare or First Day school in a space other than the worship space.

### **A Place of Invitation**

Though we Quakers are often reticent to toot our own horns, we need to realize that the only way interested people will find us is if we let them know we exist and we welcome them. Use news releases to your local paper, place posters in places where people gather, start a Facebook page and so on to get the word out that Quakers are meetings and visitors are invited!

### **Arrive Early**

You and the other folks organizing the new group need to be early – not just on time. Plan to arrive 15 minutes ahead of the announced meeting time so you can make certain the room is set up correctly and that you're there to greet visitors.

### **Begin on Time**

Whether there are four or forty, begin meeting at the announced time. Begin gathering in expectant silence at the announced time or even a bit earlier. Have a designated greeter stationed who can remain at the entrance for a while after the meeting settles in. This person can direct visitors and/or latecomers to the meeting space and, after a word of explanation about Quaker worship for newcomers, invite them to enter the meeting space.

### **Announcements and Introduction**

Close worship with a time of announcements and introductions. The reason for closing, instead of beginning, this way is that everyone will be there at the end to hear the introductions and announcements. As a new group, you may want to go around the circle or square and have everyone share his or her name (even the children). This spares visitors any embarrassment of being singled out for attention.

As you think about announcements, share those things which pertain to the group. Avoid Quaker jargon or acronyms (say “American Friends Service Committee” instead of “AFSC”).

- announce where and how donations to the expenses of the group can be made.
- announce the date, time, and location of the next meeting. Don’t assume that everyone, especially visitors, will know when and where the next gathering is.

### **Socialize**

Provide an opportunity for visitors and regular attenders to meet each other and mingle following worship. This may be over something as simple as coffee and light refreshments to a carry-in meal. Such socializing over food gives Friends another chance to bond and form community. It also provides an opportunity to talk more about what the Quaker way offers.

### **Leave the Space Neat**

You may, in the early days, want to designate a couple of people to return the space to its original condition (if you are in rented or shared space) or to assist the home’s host in tidying up after meeting.

### **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 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](http://www.fgcquaker.org).

