

Integrating Newcomers (and others!) with the Quaker Minute

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The Quaker Minute: An Easy and Effective Educational Innovation

Many meetings struggle when it comes to educating newcomers and casual attenders about the Quaker Way. A newcomer to a Quaker meeting faces a new and unusual situation – one that is filled with people that appear to be speaking their own private, jargon-filled language, consisting of terms like Monthly Meeting, leadings, queries, and holding in the Light. In addition, there is often a lack of understanding of Quaker faith, history, and practices among regular attenders and members.

A Brief, Easy, Partial Solution

Our Meeting has been engaging in an activity that, in a small but significant way, addresses these problems. One of our attenders, Beth Anderson, came up with a quick educational technique that has proven remarkably effective. **It is called “The Quaker Minute” and consists of someone, at the rise of Meeting during Quaker announcements, taking one minute to explain one of the essential concepts of Quakerism.**

Some of the terms we’ve covered including leading, gathered Meeting, hold in the light, and clearness committee. We find that the glossary in the back of Pacific Yearly Meeting’s edition of *Faith and Practice* is an excellent source when it comes to picking topics. The glossary also provides short explanations, which can be used. Often this, with an example or two, fills up the Quaker Minute in an exemplary way.

There are several benefits to the Quaker Minute. One, newcomers hear the Quaker Minute and learn a small but important aspect of Quakerism. Two, regular attenders and members who do not attend other adult educational programs also hear and learn from this. Three, this knowledge accumulates week by week. Four, this method is easy to adopt and requires little advance preparation. Five, it provides a way to involve someone in Meeting without it being a burden. Six, it can be easily adopted by other Meetings. Seven, it can be used in a strategic way to address specific problems in a Meeting, as explained below.

Using the Quaker Minute to Address Specific Problems

Sometimes, when our Worship and Ministry committee identifies a particular issue in our Meeting, we choose a Quaker Minute topic that addresses this issue. For example, the First Day School had a problem with a parent who treated First Day School as a form of childcare—leaving

her children in First Day School supplied with sugary snacks, portable electronic toys, and instructions that they didn't have to participate in the educational program if they didn't want to. Although the First Day School teacher handled this by speaking with the parent, the message was reinforced by a Quaker Minute on First Day School that explained the term and also made clear that it was not the same as childcare.

Other times, Worship and Ministry has invited individuals it felt needed to learn more about a topic to prepare a Quaker Minute on that topic. We had a long time member giving vocal ministry that always seemed to include some reference to his prodigious accomplishments. Part of the way the committee addressed this problem was by giving him the task of doing a Quaker Minute on vocal ministry. The problem of his vocal ministry was addressed by some eldering, but it appeared that he also learned something about the true nature of vocal ministry in the study that he did to prepare for his Quaker Minute.

Conclusion

The Quaker Minute has proven to be easy to implement technique for educating newcomers, attenders and members about various important aspects of Quakerism. It has proved very effective in small but important ways.