



Advice for Greeting Newcomers

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

If you're an older Friend greeting a young adult:

Avoid saying

Our meeting needs more young people. Are you new here?

Say instead

Glad to meet you. I don't believe we've met. I'm Susan.

Why it matters

Everyone likes to be seen as an individual in their wholeness, not as a token member of a group. The younger Friend may have been worshipping with you for years; you just hadn't noticed.

If you're a Friend of European descent greeting a person of African descent:

Avoid saying

This must have been a very different kind of service than the ones you're used to.

Say instead

How did you experience the worship this morning?

Why it matters

The person of African descent might be 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.

If you're a more able-bodied Friend greeting a person in a wheelchair:

Avoid saying

How can I help you?

Say instead

Would you like a cup of coffee or tea? I'd love a chance to chat with you, if you'd like.

Why it matters

The initial question focuses on a disability. The other is helpful, but says, "I'd like to talk with you, though I can understand if you have another agenda."

If you're greeting a person whose sexual orientation or gender identity is not readily apparent to you:

Avoid saying

We have a very active lesbian community in our meeting. Let me introduce you to Beth.

Say instead

Hi, my name's Jack, what's yours?

Why it matters

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, respect boundaries, be interested, and make friends!

Adapted with permission from the Unitarian Universalist Association, www.uua.org/youngadults