

# Welcoming Diverse Newcomers: *Transforming Quaker Welcoming Poster*

This downloadable and printable 11x17 inch poster suggests questions and conversation starters that can build relationships across differences and contribute to a more welcoming atmosphere for all. Consider printing several copies for your meeting to hang in the meetinghouse, share in the newsletter, and launch a conversation about welcoming.

## 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:		
<p><i>Avoid saying</i> Our meeting needs more young people.</p>	<p><i>Say instead</i> Glad to meet you.</p>	<p><i>Why?</i> Everyone likes to be seen as an individual in their wholeness, not as a token member of a group.</p>
<p>Are you new here?</p>	<p>I don't believe we've met. I'm Susan.</p>	<p>The younger Friend may have been worshipping with you for years; you just hadn't noticed.</p>
A Friend of European descent encountering a person of African descent:		
<p><i>Avoid saying</i> This must have been a very different kind of service than the ones you're used to.</p>	<p><i>Say instead</i> How did you experience the worship this morning?</p>	<p><i>Why?</i> 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.</p>
A more able-bodied Friend approaching a person in a wheelchair:		
<p><i>Avoid saying</i> How can I help you?</p>	<p><i>Say instead</i> May I grab you a cup of coffee? I'd love a chance to chat with you, if you'd like.</p>	<p><i>Why?</i> 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."</p>
An announcement from a politically progressive Quaker:		
<p><i>Avoid saying</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.</p>	<p><i>Say instead</i> 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.</p>	<p><i>Why?</i> Our civil society needs full participation of all citizens, and our Meetings benefit from a diversity of political opinions.</p>
Connecting across class differences:		
<p><i>Avoid saying</i> What is your major, or Where did you go to college?</p>	<p><i>Say instead</i> So tell me about yourself. What interests/ excites you/makes you curious these days?</p>	<p><i>Why?</i> Only 30% of Americans have a college degree and not everyone's adult life trajectory matches yours.</p>
<p>What do you do for a living?</p>	<p>What brings you here?</p>	<p>Many people do work that is in the service industry and only pay the bills.</p>
Welcoming a person whose gender is not readily apparent to a Friend:		
<p><i>Avoid saying</i> Hi, we have a very active lesbian community in our meeting. Let me introduce you to Beth.</p>	<p><i>Say instead</i> Hi, my name's Jack, what's yours?</p>	<p><i>Why?</i> 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.</p>

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

Adapted with permission from the Unitarian Universalist Association, [www.uua.org/youngadults](http://www.uua.org/youngadults)


FGC NURTURING FAITH AND QUAKER PRACTICE

Download at: <http://www.fgcquaker.org/welcomingposter>

## **Transforming Quaker Welcoming**

Quakers believe that there is *That of God in Everyone* and that we each have the capacity for connecting with the Divine and growing in the Spirit. Ours is a faith of listening for the voice of the Spirit and responding to it. We sometimes hear that voice in meetings for worship. Often, if we are listening, we hear it in the voices of our fellow seekers. When we rise from meeting, we do not leave the communion of the Spirit, we continue it in our announcements, invitation to fellowship, and conversations with others over coffee or tea.

Here is where the careless word or question, though well intentioned, can sometimes stifle the Spirit and wound those we would welcome into fellowship. Sometimes this occurs because we mistakenly (often, unthinkingly) assume that all those gathered in our meetings are pretty much like us – say, for example, heterosexual, middle-class, or politically progressive. Perhaps we speak in meeting and speak from our own experience as though it were universal. At other times, it occurs when we perceive newcomers as different and approach them on that basis, bringing our assumptions about what people of that perceived difference are like. 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.

### **Advices for Welcoming Diverse Newcomers:**

- Offer a variety of printed materials near the meetinghouse entrance and make these available to all, so greeters do not need to make assumptions about what visitors do and do not know about the Quaker Way
- Include an Open & Affirming statement in any materials about the meeting, including all categories of diversity (if applicable)
- Create and share a document that describes the resources available in the meeting to support individuals around issues of accessibility or inclusion, such as rides, hearing devices, childcare, or non-English informational materials
- Consider hosting a whole-meeting discussion about welcoming practices and why members and attenders stayed in the meeting. FGC's *You Are Welcome Here!* booklet may be a good conversation starter.
- Create opportunities for sharing meals and getting to know each other in both social *and* spiritual ways.
- Be aware of the "hidden diversities" that exist within our meetings, including economic class, political orientation, marital status, mental health, level of education, theological diversity, and others. Statements that assume sameness can be alienating and hurtful.
- Looking for a go-to question for engaging in conversation with newcomers? Consider asking, "What do you do for fun?"

-- Prepared by a working group of FGC's Transforming subcommittee, 2015