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.

Download at: [http://www.fgcquaker.org/welcomingposter](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