

# Outreach handbook

## Reaching in, reaching out



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# Introduction

Do you remember why you first came to a Quaker meeting?

One part of outreach is about getting people to their first Quaker meeting: making sure we tell people we exist; showing them how to find us and our meeting places; explaining who we are and what we're about, in a language that is accessible to all, whether from a Christian background, another faith background, or, increasingly, from a background of no religion at all.

But, more importantly, outreach is about getting people to their second Quaker meeting, and their third... Outreach is about what happens in our meetings to make enquirers feel welcomed and heard, the sense of vibrancy and community they feel among us. Outreach is about us being willing to tell our stories of why we came to Friends and why we stayed, how we understand our relationship with God, how we wait and listen in our Quaker silence for the promptings of love and truth and the guidance of the Spirit. Outreach is about listening to people's experience and valuing the new light they bring to our gatherings.

Above all, outreach is spiritually rewarding, exciting and fun. I hope you enjoy this toolkit and the work that will spring from it.

*Paul Parker*

*Recording Clerk, Quakers in Britain*

This outreach handbook has been designed not as a blueprint for how to do outreach, but also as a collection of ideas, stories, insights and experience of things that have worked (and sometimes that have not worked) for Friends and meetings as they have sought ways not just to do outreach but to become outreaching communities.

The stories and ideas here are not just about outreach as a kind of activity that some of us do, but as a way of seeing outreach as something that flows naturally from our being Quakers. It explores how we might become more comfortable and confident in talking about our faith; how we might become communities that "know one another in the things which are eternal"; how we can be ready to welcome and encourage seekers and enquirers; how we might enable others to discover some of the great riches of our tradition.

We give as much space here to preparing for outreach as to suggesting how we might do it, and we hope that Friends might come to see outreach as something woven into our lives as individuals and communities. The phrase 'outreach is for life, not just for Quaker Week' is one which began almost as a joke but which has become especially meaningful as a way of looking afresh at what outreach can be.

The handbook begins by exploring ways that meetings have sought to deepen their spiritual lives, then looks at how they have prepared for outreach. It is only after this groundwork that we then move on to sharing ideas and experiences about different kinds of outreach activity: events, open houses, getting out into the community, offering people the opportunity to experience meeting for worship.

We are very grateful to all those Friends and meetings who have shared their experiences with us and allowed us to share with you some of what they have learned. As well as stories from meetings, we have given guidance about resources and support available through Friends House, Woodbrooke and other groups and organisations. There are substantial sections from Quaker Quest, whose work has in many ways transformed the way we see outreach, and from the Spiritual Hospitality Project undertaken by Friends in Wales. We also share with you some 'distilled wisdom' gathered from meetings' feedback of the past five years of Quaker Week and from what enquirers and attenders have shared with us at our outreach gatherings.

This is not a handbook about theory but about experience; everything in it is drawn from the stories that Friends and meetings have shared with us and is supported by some expert guidance in areas such as working with the media, using social networking sites and working with schools and children.

I hope that this new handbook will be a springboard for your own outreach work, that you will find here both ideas and encouragement and that it will strengthen the essential connection between our own inner lives, the life of our meetings and our engagement with the wider community.

*Alistair Fuller*

*Outreach Development Officer, Quaker Life*

# 1. Reaching in

# Section 1: Reaching in

This section contains:

- \* 'Inreach' and 'outreach' – making the connection
- \* Inner life, shared life
- \* A confident voice
- \* Warmth and welcome
- \* Going deeper: enquirers into attenders

# 1. Reaching in

## ‘Inreach’ and ‘outreach’ – making the connection

We often see outreach as a particular kind of activity, under a particular banner – holding an event, hosting an open house, putting up posters, etc – and as something done by people who like that sort of thing. However, in talking to meetings about outreach, hearing their stories and trying to distil what works, we have found that the most fruitful outreach isn’t limited to the planning of an event or an activity, but grows out of and in turn nourishes the life of what we might call a healthy or vibrant meeting.

There is a deep connection between: our own inner lives; the shared life of our meeting; reaching out.

Effective, enthusiastic outreach flows from a meeting that is vibrant, warm and welcoming, involving Friends who are deeply rooted in their own spiritual lives.

*These three elements are inter-connected and inter-dependent and each is necessary to enable and enrich the other.*

- \* When meetings pay attention to the quality of their life together – creating opportunities for learning as well as service, nurturing a welcoming climate, eating as well as worshipping together, often doing fewer things, but doing them well – they have found it easier to attract (and hold on to) attenders and enquirers and to think imaginatively and creatively about their shared life.
- \* Similarly, when meetings give time to thinking about and planning outreach – working together on a demanding spiritual project, thinking about what and how we tell others about Quakerism, looking at how we connect with our own communities and reflecting on the stories we have to tell – they have found it a galvanizing and enriching experience. It has helped them to look more deeply at what it means to live as Quakers in the world and perhaps to find a clearer sense of some of the riches and insights that Quakerism has to offer.

“ How can we make the meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured, and strangers are welcome? Seek to know one another in the things which are eternal...”

*Advices & queries 1:18*

# 1. Reaching in: 'inreach' and 'outreach'

- \* In the same way, when Friends have taken the opportunity to deepen their own spiritual lives – developing a pattern of daily prayer, worship and reflection, learning more about Quaker spirituality, understanding 'heart and mind prepared' to be a task for the whole week rather than just the journey to meeting – it has been a transforming experience, and one which has enriched the life of the meeting.

This handbook begins, then, by looking at some of the ways that Friends and meetings have done this and offering them as hints and possibilities for others.



## Inner life, shared life

In many ways, encountering Quakerism is really about encountering Quakers. It is important that we feel rooted in and nourished by our faith, both as individuals and as meetings and an essential part of preparing for outreach is the shared task of deepening our spiritual lives.

Experience shows that the best way of doing this is together, listening to and learning from each other and allowing others to see some of the rich treasures of our own hearts and experience.

A significant number of meetings have made time in their life to seek ways to “know one another in the things which are eternal”.

It has been, in many cases, a transforming experience.

This can take many forms, including

- \* An away day together
- \* A study day/weekend at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre
- \* Undertaking a formal course such as *Hearts and Minds Prepared*
- \* A series of gatherings to look at our testimonies and the way they affect our lives
- \* A spiritual review of the meeting.



*Young Friends General Meeting in Nottingham. Photo: © Mike Pinches 2012*

*Leah Dalby from Settle Meeting shares some of the unexpected joys and insights gained through worship sharing and study groups.*

When I was first looking around in meeting, there were a lot of heads; grey heads and bald heads (some shiny, some not) but as I learnt to walk and so look up, heads were translated into legs – smart trousers and serviceable skirts, and then, bit by bit, I discovered that these heads and legs were Friends who had been loving mum and I at meeting week after week following my father's suicide. Gentle invitations to lunch, a holiday organised and funded, but most of all reliable, predictable kindness and warmth. A love that asks no questions.

I feel fortunate, blessed to have been at meeting for 46 years. The ministry (silence, spoken and lives speaking), concern, challenge, fun, imagination, joy, suffering, hard work, fellowship, friendship, understanding (sometimes misunderstanding) and love have been the warp and weft of my life. There have been so many wise Friends who have nurtured my growth – the only expectation being that I had potential to be the best person I could be.

So, it has been easy for me to assume the best of people, know that there would be “that of God” in everyone, that we are all equal and precious. (Easy to be comfortable with very sick patients, knowing that shared silence can be enough, to encourage fellow jurors to hear the views of others, to love the apparently ‘unlovely’.)

# 1. Reaching in: inner life, shared life

What an unpleasant surprise then to discover that over the years I have become more judgemental, not always seeing the best and forgetting to search for it.

Worship sharing at study groups and spoken ministry at meeting for worship has enabled me to know some of the Friends I have found 'challenging' in some of the things which are eternal. I have been humbled to hear the richness of their sincerity, perhaps understand them a little and certainly be delighted to see them, knowing in my heart some of what is hidden in theirs.

So from looking round as a babe in arms to now, my gaze falls thankfully over my Friends in meeting; there are still heads and legs, but I am there for the hearts and minds.

*Carol Wise of Ilkley Meeting reflects on the challenges and blessings of undertaking a spiritual review of the meeting.*

## Holding a spiritual review in meeting, December 2011

The initiative to hold a spiritual review was mine, having heard of other meetings benefiting from doing it. I ran it past the E&Os but there was hesitation as it seemed very different from what they were used to doing. I persisted and it took over a year to take the next step!

We chose to have two hours one Sunday after a shared picnic lunch. A Friend offered to work with me and helped greatly by affirming the process we could use.

We gathered to reflect on the spiritual life of our meeting for worship both as individuals and as our faith community together. We were a group of twenty out of a potential thirty at our meeting, including some new attenders.

Our objective was to enhance our meeting's provision of a worshipping community where each person is made welcome and nurtured, including newcomers and strangers. We wanted to know how well we were meeting the spiritual and pastoral needs of our meeting, ensure that everyone was listened to and discover what ideas we would like to take forward.

We began with a reading of *Quaker faith & practice* 2.01 and a period of silence.

After presenting a brief reminder of the early experience of Friends, a potted history in 15 minutes, I emphasised how waiting in the Light and listening to what love requires of us enables us to live more authentically and bear witness to the insights gained. How were we getting on? This was to be a listening process in which everyone had a voice.

We worked using a thought shower, a free-flow of lots of thoughts and I scribbled as much as I could on a flip chart. Compiling the outcomes was itself a challenge.

I wrote up a draft report which was affirmed at the next business meeting and then circulated to everyone associated with our meeting. We had discovered that there was much to value and celebrate at our meeting. We reflected on our boundaries of personal energy, balancing non-Quaker activities and at times feeling overstretched. We chose to go forward by creating house groups for discussion, reflection, nurture and sharing of our journeys which are still continuing and valued over a year later. I get a sense that Friends in our meeting are now listening more deeply to that of God in ourselves, in each other and in those in our lives beyond our meeting.

# 1. Reaching in: inner life, shared life

*The Society of Friends is rich with groups and individuals willing to share some of their wisdom and learning about the deepening of our inner lives. We are blessed with many opportunities to do this.*

*Your meeting may find it helpful to contact Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre to explore some of these possibilities. Simon Best, Woodbrooke's Nurturing Friends and Meetings Tutor, suggests some of the things on offer.*

## Nurturing Friends and Meetings: nourishing the spiritual life of meetings

### Why is this important?

Many of the joys of Quakerism: the respect for individual beliefs and callings; the lack of an ecclesiastical hierarchy, the simplicity of our worship; are also challenges.

We do not have a creed, so we have nothing everyone has signed up to that we can refer to.

This gives each of us greater responsibility to understand and articulate what unites us and what the tensions are between us.

Quakers have no priest or rabbi to nourish and feed us spiritually. This is something we are all responsible for.

As Quakers we talk about being pilgrims on a shared journey. In order to make this shared journey a reality we have to know where the people we worship with are on their spiritual journey. In order to support and care for each other as fellow Quakers we must know what each other believes.

Being a Quaker is hard work. Because we have rejected most of the outward structures that other faiths have, for our Quaker communities and our individual faith lives to flourish we need to talk about what we believe. The only way we can find the spiritual nourishment that each of us needs and that our meetings need is to share deeply.

How much of the work of our local meetings focuses on keeping the building running, doing the accounts, filling the roles we're told by tradition that we need? How much, by contrast, is spent on nourishing ourselves spiritually as individuals and as a community? It is vital that we live in meetings and in a religious society where there is a culture of sharing, and where the diversity of individual belief doesn't remain hidden in the silence of meeting for worship or the busyness of keeping the meeting going. This sharing nurtures spiritual communities and is vital to enabling us to be open to new leadings, which in turn means our faith as Quakers can develop.

Community is vital to our lives as Quakers, both as individuals and as meetings – we come together for worship, to make decisions and for fellowship. However, we need this community to be authentic and rooted in faith and where our spiritual lives, as individuals and as a community, are at the heart of what we do. We need to take care of the practicalities like the roof and the bank account, but these should flow from a spiritual groundedness.

### How do we do it?

On one level this is very simple: talk. Talk as a meeting, about our faith, about God, about what we believe as individuals and as a community, about what our Quaker faith leads us to do and say.

# 1. Reaching in: inner life, shared life

On another level the following are some ideas of what your meeting could do:

- \* **Shared lunches:** you could choose to do this every week, every month or just occasionally. This is an opportunity for Friends to gather, share the fellowship of eating together and talk. You could follow this with a discussion on a specific topic or have questions for people to reflect on and discuss over the meal.
- \* **Bible study:** set up a group (or groups) to study the Bible. Group members need not have ever picked up the Bible before to participate fully.
- \* **Spiritual Friendship groups:** set up small groups of people to give the opportunity to meet, away from meeting, to share their spiritual journeys more deeply.
- \* **Discussion/study groups:** choose a topic that your meeting wants to discuss, or you could use one of a number of study materials (see below for ideas or use others such as those produced by Friends House to enable Friends to prepare for Yearly Meeting).
- \* **Away day/weekend:** why not set aside a day, or even a weekend, once a year, when the meeting can come together to worship, to share food and fellowship. Make sure there is no business on the agenda of these days.
- \* **'Woodbrooke on the road':** with everything from Quaker theology to deepening the spiritual life of the meeting, to exploring Quaker heritage, to being a community, Woodbrooke 'on the road' has something to nurture your meeting. We offer more than 50 themed courses for one- or two-day events.

## Resources available

- \* **Woodbrooke-on-the-Road:** email [off-site@woodbrooke.org.uk](mailto:off-site@woodbrooke.org.uk) or call 0121 415 6779.
- \* **Becoming Friends:** an engaging, interactive and flexible course that provides an opportunity to find out more about Friends in a way that is true to the experiential nature of our Quaker faith. There are eight units covering different aspects of Quaker faith and practice, ranging from beliefs about God to living faithfully in the world. You can choose as many or as few of the units as you like, in any order. Although primarily aimed at those who are relatively new to the Quaker way, all Friends can benefit from the exploration and sharing that the course enables. This is available as a study pack and as an online course. For more information email [simon.best@woodbrooke.org.uk](mailto:simon.best@woodbrooke.org.uk) or call 0121 415 6769.
- \* **Sharing our Journeys:** this is a resource pack that contains a variety of activities that enable young Quakers and adult Friends to explore their spirituality in a Quaker context, to share their spiritual journeys and think about and articulate their beliefs and their values. It gives opportunities to discover by sharing together what Quakerism means to them and to other people. It is also suitable for use by groups of just adults. Available from Quaker Life: email [cypadmin@quaker.org.uk](mailto:cypadmin@quaker.org.uk) or call 020 7663 1013.

Simon Best  
Nurturing Friends & Meetings Tutor  
Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre  
0121 415 6769 [simon.best@woodbrooke.org.uk](mailto:simon.best@woodbrooke.org.uk)

## A confident voice

Many Friends find it difficult talking to people about their faith. We don't want to preach and badger, and yet, there is so much to tell that others might find helpful and hopeful and healing. It can be daunting to know where to begin and very difficult not to find ourselves speaking in negatives. It is one thing to say what we are not – “We don't have priests, hierarchy, hymns, etc and we are against war and violence” – but quite another to say what we are.

The only way to get over this hurdle is really by practice. Before planning an outreach event, it can be helpful to take some time, as a meeting, to do this and to talk to each other about what our faith means to us. It can be informative and challenging and can deepen our understanding of things that we haven't thought about for some time (or even at all).

This has been one of the many insights to come out of the work of Quaker Quest. Below is some excellent, tried-and-tested advice about how you might do it. We are very grateful to the Quaker Quest Network for giving us permission to use this.

“Outreach is for me an invitation to others to join us in our way of worship and response to life which are so important to us that we wish to share them.”

Edrey Allot in  
*Quaker faith & practice* 28.09

## Speaking with a confident Quaker voice

**“We wish to see meetings and individuals confidently expressing their Quaker faith and values wherever opportunities arise ...” (A Framework for Action 2009–2014)**

When asked about our Quaker faith and practice we can always come up with a response but in running Quaker Quest training in over 100 meetings we have found that with even a little practice and thought the answers improve considerably.

Being able to express what you think clearly, even if it is to say what you are not sure about, helps everyone. We are not advocating having a reasoned and seasoned answer to every question you may be asked about the Quaker way – we are seekers as well as finders – but **vagueness is not a virtue.**

A guide to any successful communication is: keep your listener in mind, answer their question in a way that is appropriate to them and don't give them more than they want.

In answering questions about Quaker faith and practice we encourage you to:

- \* **Speak personally:** the other person wants to know if you have found something that has helped you.

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- \* **Answer positively:** Don't tell people what you don't believe or do. Say, for example:
  - I find it better to lead my own worship rather than be led by someone else.
  - Looking for ways to appeal to the best in people works for me rather than condemning them: it's part of working for peace.
  - I find what I think about my faith can change over time, but what I hope for doesn't.
  - There is a spirit in which I aim to live, which is based on love. With that as a guide I find rules just get in the way.

Quaker Quest uses tried and tested exercises that will help you feel more confident to speak out in the world with a confident voice: here are four of them that can be used in meetings, with little preparation.

## **Double circles exercise**

This is fun. This exercise has generated a buzz and positive involvement every time we have done it. You get to talk and be listened to, and in doing so learn about your Friends.

### **For facilitators:**

This exercise developed as a way of generating quick answers to questions that might be asked by enquirers. We usually give a minute for answers because that is about the limit that anyone is likely to listen, though on most occasions you'll get a lot less. We need 'quick answers' too.

The character of this exercise can be altered by the length of time allowed to give an answer, the style of question, whether they are questions one Friend might ask another, and whether people get more than one shot at each question.

### **The method:**

Place the participants in a concentric double circle with chairs facing towards each other, giving as much space between pairs as the room allows to aid listening. Participants take turns being enquirers and Quakers, the latter answering a challenging question about faith put by the former. The 'Quaker' has 60 seconds in which to answer, and the 'enquirer' listens without speaking. After the first two questions, the outer circle moves one place clockwise, leaving new pairs to which the next two questions are put. (If the geography of the room doesn't allow for circles of chairs then the same exercise can be done in two parallel lines with one person at the end of one line changing ends.)

### **Questions that could be asked:**

Outer circle: Do Quakers believe in God?

Inner circle: What is happening in a Quaker meeting for worship?

Outer circle: Are Quakers Christian?

Inner circle: Do I have to be a pacifist to be a Quaker?

Outer circle: You have no dogmas or creeds. What do you believe?

Inner circle: Do Quakers believe in the Bible?

Outer circle: What do you put your faith in?

Inner circle: It sounds as if you need to be very good to be a Quaker. Is that true?

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Outer circle: What about evil – the devil – hell?

Inner circle: How do meeting for worship and meditation differ?

Outer circle: Do Quakers believe in Jesus?

Inner circle: Does your faith make you happy?

You might want to allow time for reflection. What was difficult? What did participants learn? Did it get easier as it went on? What could we do to improve our answers? Is it better to give a clear answer than only send seekers off with a leaflet or a book list?!

## **Other questions that have been asked:**

Why haven't I heard of Quakers before?

Do Quakers pray?

Do Quakers drink?

What do Quakers think about illegal drugs?

If Quakers believe there is "that of God in everyone", what about Hitler? Saddam?

Do Quakers have sacraments?

You seem so serious; how do you have fun?

Why do Quakers not take oaths?

How does going to Quaker meeting help you?

If you have freedom of belief then what do you put your faith in?

Do Quakers ever support the use of force?

How do you try to express simplicity in your life?

What might I get out of joining Friends?

If you don't have priests or pastors, who's in charge?

What does living by the Spirit mean to you?

Do you mind if people attend both Quaker and other worship?

What are Quakers doing about the environment?

What's the difference between Quaker meetings and group meditation?

How can Quakers believe that everyone is equal?

Do Quakers believe in the afterlife?

So what do Quakers agree on?

How can a religious group have freedom of belief?

So you welcome gays and everyone else into your Society then?

You speak of "answering that of God in others" – what does that mean?

You also mention 'the Spirit' a lot; what do you mean by that?

## **Or any other questions we need clearer answers on.**

### **Variations that have been used:**

1. Gradually extend the period they speak to 100 seconds.
2. Pause after several rounds to have them reflect with their partners on the exercise.

# 1. Reaching in: a confident voice

## **Double circles exercise: going deeper**

With experienced Friends/attenders, deeper questions can be used and more time given for people to articulate an answer. Alternatively, use the same format but give participants a negative statement often used by Friends and challenge them to say what we DO have or believe in instead. Encourage people to use their own words rather than trot out stock phrases. For example, saying we have 'a priesthood of all believers' instead of priests may be a positive but it is theological jargon and therefore not very helpful.

Negative statements that might be used are:

- \* We don't have priests
- \* We don't have a creed
- \* We don't have rituals
- \* We don't have sacraments
- \* We don't have a sabbath or observe times and seasons
- \* We don't have religious symbols
- \* We don't have music
- \* We don't believe in the literal truth of the Bible
- \* We don't believe in original sin.

Another way of going deeper is to challenge people to explain – without using jargon – oft-used Quaker expressions such as:

- \* Spiritual growth
- \* Holding people in the light
- \* Speaking plainly
- \* Speaking to my condition.

## **The squares exercise**

This is to help develop what you can say. The sort of situation where you might need to go into more depth is when someone really wants to know – say, a newcomer wanting to explore something prompted by ministry, or if you invite them home for supper.

Essentially the exercise allows each person in a group to benefit from hearing each other's ideas on a topic, and then to do some preparation before giving a short talk themselves. What we have learned in running this exercise is that:

- \* It is possible for people when challenged to come up with more than they thought they could with only a short period of preparation
- \* Hearing each other talk briefly helps us further understand our Friends and ourselves.

**Preparation:** people will need paper and pens/pencils. You can do this in threes or fours.

# 1. Reaching in: a confident voice

## For groups of four:

Lay the room out in groups of four chairs facing inwards. Each group of four should be placed as far away from the others as the room allows.

## Introduction to exercise (for facilitator)

Tell participants that the aim is to be able to speak confidently and coherently on a subject for five (or four) minutes in case a newcomer asks you for clarification on it. The exercise will allow for preparation.

Encourage them to avoid Quaker jargon and references to Quaker history or organisations that will not be understood by non-Quakers. Encourage the telling of personal stories to illustrate points being made.

Give the groups topics to prepare, or allow the groups to choose their own. Some topics that could be used are:

- \* Do I consider myself to be a Christian?
- \* What is my understanding of God?
- \* How do I try to put my faith into action?
- \* What is my understanding of the peace testimony?
- \* What is my understanding of simplicity?
- \* What is my understanding of equality?

Each group labels its members A, B, C, & D, keeping that label throughout both halves of the exercise.

- \* PAIRS warm-up into given theme: A works with B, C works with D, A and C speak. 2 mins
- \* PAIR warm-up into given theme: A works with D, B works with C; B and D speak. 2 mins
- \* Reflect in the last pairs on what they heard and what they wished they had said. 5 mins
- \* In silence, everyone to prepare a presentation in note form. 5 mins
- \* In turn, A, B, C, D make a 5-minute presentation to the group, the others listening. 20 mins
- \* Group go-round of individual reflections, then whole group discussion of the session. 10 mins

**REFLECTION** – briefly consider what you might have done differently and better.

If time permits, the exercise can be repeated, with people in different groups working on different topics.

At the end of the session, in a plenary session, encourage a brief sharing of experience.

For groups of three: this is similar to the squares exercise, but takes less time, involving groups of three rather than four.

- \* Arrange the chairs in groups of three
- \* Each group labels members A, B, C  
1 minute

# 1. Reaching in: a confident voice

- \* Each person in turn gives initial thoughts on the topic, each speaking for two minutes  
6 minutes
- \* As a group, they reflect on what they have heard and what they might now want to say  
3 minutes
- \* In silence, they prepare, in note form, for a five-minute presentation  
5 minutes
- \* A, then B, then C makes a five-minute presentation to the others  
15 minutes
- \* Reflections on what was heard, what was learnt.  
5 minutes

Otherwise, it will be the same as for the squares exercise.

Writing about our Quaker faith and values

Those who have taken part in Quaker Quest outreach activities have discovered that:

- \* To express our views clearly and simply is not easy.
- \* The more we do it, the clearer we become.
- \* Trying to express our ideas clearly helps us discover what we really think.
- \* Sharing our ideas with others deepens our own faith.

We have found that attempting to write about what we have found can be very helpful: writing allows for more reflection and finer choice of meaning. Sharing what we have written with another can help us to develop our ideas even further. This writing activity can be for any size of group but smaller is better.

Choose a partner to work with. Choose a core topic – perhaps ‘How I relate to God’ or ‘My faith is...’ or ‘What I mean by Spirit is...’. Give yourselves 10 minutes to write something quite short. Share it with your partner and vice versa. Does reading your partner’s and yours again help you to see what you want to say more clearly? If so, continue this by email or any other way you choose. Decide whether to invite someone else into this activity.

*Michael Hennessey and Mike Jenn for Quaker Quest Network*

Taking time in our own lives to think, reflect, pray, to deepen our spiritual practice, can be transforming not just for ourselves but for the whole meeting; taking time as a meeting to go deep in the things of our faith, to hear the stories of each other’s hearts, to learn to speak about our faith with gentleness and generosity, can transform the lives of Friends. A meeting that is deeply rooted in its spiritual life can engage deeply and joyfully with the community within which it works and worships.

The first step in reaching out is reaching in.

## Warmth and welcome

When someone has taken the step of actually coming through the door of the meeting house, what they find – the stillness and silence, the lack of visible hierarchy and form, vocal ministry, notices and welcomes, tea and coffee to follow, a room of new faces – can often be dauntingly different from what they are used to. There needs to be thought given to how we welcome people, how we encourage and allow them to feel at home, holding that difficult balance between making them feel at home and yet not overwhelmed.

Everyone who comes to a meeting is different. Everyone brings a different set of experiences, insights, needs and anxieties. As well as hopeful curiosity, enquirers often come to us as people in search of a community, or looking for a source of inspiration, as seekers testing out different traditions or activists seeking like minds. Visitors often bring with them a certain amount of baggage that can be difficult to see at first. What they all bring is the idea that here, in this place, with these people, just might be a place to belong.

Listening to the experiences of enquirers and attenders and sharing the stories and memories of experienced Friends, there would seem to be a few helpful pointers when thinking about how we might offer welcome:

- \* Welcome is a climate of open hospitality rather than just a word; it is who we are rather than what we do.
- \* It is the responsibility of the whole meeting rather than just one person; if you see a new visitor, don't assume that someone else will say hello to them.
- \* If you are unsure whether someone is there for the first time, it's always worth taking the risk of saying hello, just in case.
- \* Catching up with Friends after meeting for worship is an important part of being a community; however, it can be off-putting and can leave people feeling left out. Try to include visitors in the conversation.
- \* Whilst we are sensitive to the danger of overwhelming newcomers and making them feel uncomfortable, on balance it is probably worth erring on the side of warmth. I have come across people who either struggled on through or who never went back because no one spoke to them; I have yet to meet anyone who stayed away because the meeting was too friendly...

“ Many of the people who come to us are both refugees and seekers. They are looking for a space to find their authenticity, a space in a spiritual context. It is a process of liberation... Our riches are precisely our sharing. And the world is very, very hungry.”

Harvey Gillman in *Quaker faith & practice* 28.10



Young Friends General Meeting at Nottingham. Photo: © Mike Pinches 2012

# 1. Reaching in: warmth and welcome

- \* Listening is probably more important than talking. Rather than trying to explain everything about Quakerism, wait for the visitor to ask their own questions and share some of what has brought them here.
- \* Someone reading the noticeboard for 10 minutes probably isn't that interested in the content of the notices; it is more likely that no one has spoken to them.

For most meetings, the time after meeting for worship is when the real work of welcome begins. This can be a time of fresh encounter or of lost opportunity, and it is important to take the time to get it right.



*Friends at Witney meeting.*  
Photo: © Mike Pinches 2012

*Kevin Redpath of Street Meeting is part of an outreach group that has given a lot of thought to how to welcome visitors and newcomers and offers this helpful idea.*

## The Ministry of Teacups

One of my daily tasks at Yearly Meeting Gathering was to replace the tablecloths in the gathering tent. Every morning we would arrive with a large roll of paper tablecloth, unclip the old one and secure the new one with perspex clips. Clearing away the old tablecloths, filled with biscuit crumbs, fruit peel, fliers and the rings of coffee cups made me realise how important the seating area had become for gatherers. It provided an opportunity to sit down and make new friends, acted as a meeting point for families and a quiet chance to reflect between the main business sessions.

I thought about our own meeting where, after meeting for worship, we stand around the hot water flasks, decanting coffee, nibbling biscuits and chattering away like hungry starlings at a bird-feeder. An attender to our meeting once asked "Why are Quakers so noisy after meeting?" "Well", I replied, "we only see each other once a week and there is always a lot to catch up on." However, a nervous newcomer might find it quite a challenge to break into the rapid streams of conversation and sometimes, despite our best intentions to be inclusive, we get so wrapped up in talking amongst ourselves we forget we have guests.

Remembering my Yearly Meeting experience I decided to gently introduce a few tables and chairs to our after-meeting refreshments. At first Friends were taken aback: "Why are we sitting down today – I thought shared lunch was every third Sunday?" "No", I would explain, "it provides an opportunity to share refreshments with our guests while sitting around a table." It is amazing how the very act of sitting down together can draw us into deeper conversations – "let's sit down and have a chat about this". It is more friendly for the infirm who cannot stand comfortably for any length of time and less imposing for very young children who have to wander through a forest of legs to reach the biscuit tin.

Quakers don't have communion but we do commune with one another over refreshments, so why not make it as inclusive and welcoming an experience as possible?

## Going deeper: enquirers into attenders

Welcome is about much more than talking to people in their first few weeks of attendance. It is about how they are enabled and supported through their journey into becoming Quakers.

At the end of last year, we took some time to look at what we have learnt through many years of facilitating gatherings for enquirers and attenders. We reflected on what the participants have shared with us about what has brought them to Quakers and what has held them there. In particular, we tried to identify some of the common themes that occur in the transition from enquirer to attender. Although there are no clear-cut lines here, there are some helpful signposts. An important part of our outreach/inreach is giving some thought to how we might help people in this journey.

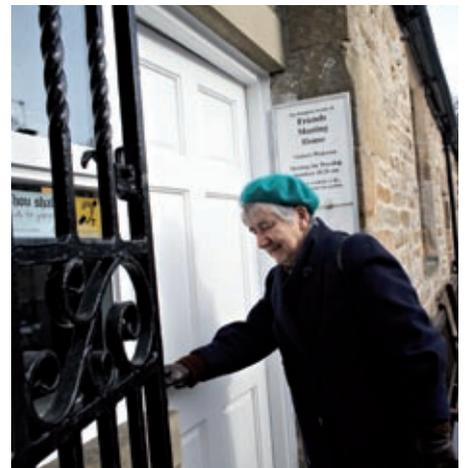
If there is an over-riding theme in many of the stories we heard it is best captured in Gerald Priestland's reflection that "You don't get converted to a Quaker; you gradually come to realise that you are one, usually because other Friends start treating you as one". When people speak of their journey into Friends, many refer to a point (either a single incident or a short time of transition) when they became conscious of being treated 'like one of the family'. This could mean a range of different things, including:

- \* An invitation to serve on a committee
- \* Being asked what they were bringing to a shared lunch (rather than simply being asked if they were going)
- \* Someone remembering their name
- \* Someone remembering their children's names
- \* An invitation to take part in a discussion/poetry/prayer group
- \* Being introduced to someone as 'a Friend'
- \* Being greeted by name on the way into meeting for worship.

All of the above were actions and attitudes made by the meeting to the attender. However, this should not suggest that this process is a passive one. A powerful (though less often articulated) description of the transition from enquirer to attender is a sense of being challenged and, ultimately, changed by Quaker testimonies and values. People spoke of:

- \* consciously changing their habits as a consumer

“ You don't get converted to be a Quaker; you gradually come to realise you are one...”



Skipton Meeting.  
Photo: © Mike Pinches 2009

# 1. Reaching in: going deeper

- \* re-thinking their attitudes to peace and peace-building
- \* recognising with increasing clarity issues of economic, social and political justice
- \* an appreciable change in the quality of close personal relationships
- \* (most powerfully and profoundly of all) a growing sense of real and deepening participation in meeting for worship

There is a change that is usually noticed in others rather than recognised in oneself and this is a shift in language. 'Quakers say' becomes 'as Quakers, we say', 'the local Quaker meeting' becomes 'my meeting'. The use of 'us' and of the possessive pronoun happens imperceptibly and is telling.

Probably the most significant sign of change, though, and one most commonly voiced, is the point at which someone begins to refer to themselves as a Quaker and is willing to be recognised as such by others. This is usually quite tentative and can be inhibited by a feeling of personal unworthiness and an acute awareness of the weight of insight and experience of other, more established Friends. Nonetheless, a number of participants have spoken of it as a point of realisation which, whilst not always a moment of conviction, was certainly an acknowledgement of a deep inner change. Although the starting point is often 'Here, I was accepted as I am', the point of identification is 'Here, I am becoming my true self'.

It seems, then, that the transition is to do with the coming together of:

- \* how the Quaker community responds to us
- \* how living alongside Quaker testimonies changes us
- \* how we are happy to be seen.

There is a kind of creative tension here between belonging, behaviour and identity. These have different manifestations (at least in name and detail) and are differently weighted, but the three factors seem, to a great extent, common.

“ Like all discipleships, membership has its elements of commitment and responsibility but it is also about joy and celebration. Membership is a way of saying to the meeting that you feel at home, and in the right place.”

*Quaker faith & practice* 11:01

# 1. Reaching in: going deeper

*Here Stevie Krayler shares with us some of her insights into warmth, welcome and spiritual hospitality, drawn from her work on the excellent Spiritual Hospitality Project.*

## Spiritual Hospitality

### **Outreach is for life, not just for Quaker Week**

Remember your first time at a Quaker meeting? Or your first time at a strange meeting? Were you made welcome? Did someone make sure you knew where the meeting room/loo/ refreshments were? Did someone explain what was going on? Did Friends make an effort to include you? Did they overdo it and cross-question you intrusively? Or were you simply ignored, left to fend for yourself?

First impressions are very important. We're so used to the way we do things and to our quaint Quaker lingo that we forget how it might come across – or not – to a stranger. When we welcome a guest at home, we try to make sure they are put at their ease and have everything they need. If a visitor asked you a question about the arrangements in your household, you wouldn't respond by giving them a leaflet! It's just the same in our Quaker 'home'. When strangers come to visit, they should be made welcome and treated with every consideration – as you would any guest. That's at the heart of what we mean by "answering that of God in everyone". (And it's what brings people back again and again.)

It isn't just newcomers – we all have a need to feel we are welcome, and we all need to be clear about the 'house rules' both for our own benefit and the whole community's. By creating a welcoming community, we are making a safe space where we each feel valued and upheld, where we can offer our gifts, and where we can help each other to live adventurously in the Spirit and to follow the Quaker way. In other words, a flourishing Quaker meeting.

### **Characteristics of a welcoming community**

How does your meeting **SCORE** as a welcoming Quaker community?

**Sharing.** One of the main characteristics of any thriving community is that its members spend time together, sharing their stories, their concerns, their activities – and having fun together. Getting to know one another is important – whether it's in the things that are eternal or doing the washing-up together. Breaking bread together is one of the best ways of making time for this. Lampeter LM always has a shared lunch after its meetings for church affairs, and has found that not only has this helped to build their community, but the atmosphere in the business meeting has become calmer and more worshipful, because Friends are not in a hurry to get through the business and rush off to their homes.

It's also important for us to take time to work together on what our faith means to us, and to explore what its implications are for how we live our daily lives and our relationships with all those we encounter. It isn't only attenders who need to have Quakerism properly explained – often members benefit just as much from making the effort to clarify what their faith means to them, as numerous Quaker Questers have testified. Study groups, retreats, Woodbrooke-on-the-road, Quaker Quest, Kindlers, online or printed learning packages are all worth experimenting with, as are one-to-one spiritual friendships.

**Caring** is sometimes thought of as a matter that can be left to overseers. But members of a flourishing and Ffriendly community are aware of what's going on in each other's lives, and are

# 1. Reaching in: going deeper

ready to commiserate in one another's sorrows and celebrate one another's joys. It's good to make opportunities for doing this informally – going for walks or other outings together, inviting others into your home, visiting someone who's in hospital, giving someone a lift to area meeting; with a little thought you can find endless possibilities. Obviously we are drawn to some people more than others – it's only natural that we will form particular friendships within the meeting, but that doesn't preclude taking an interest in the wellbeing of those to whom we are less close.

**Open** and inclusive. Sometimes attenders have complained of feeling that 'real Quakers' are part of a closed group and that it's very difficult to get involved as an outsider. We may believe we are being kind and courteous in sharing tasks amongst ourselves rather than asking a newcomer – but there's a danger we can give a patronising impression or leave the new attender feeling useless and left out. When there are jobs needing to be done, don't forget a newcomer may well have useful skills and be willing and eager to help. Showing we value what they have to offer is one of the best ways of making a newcomer feel welcome.

It's important, too, to ensure that attenders are not left to try to work out for themselves how they are expected to behave among Friends, or to worry about what unwritten rules they may be transgressing. Try to be gently explicit about how we do things from the very start – rebuking someone afterwards for some inadvertent breach of Quaker etiquette will make them feel very uncomfortable and may even drive them away. Above all, try to avoid or explain Quaker jargon. Sometimes people can attend a Quaker meeting for years without ever being sure what Sufferings is or what QPSW stands for!

**Respectful.** Newcomers to a Quaker meeting bring with them a whole world of spiritual and life experience, wisdom and culture which may be very different from ours. It's difficult to strike a balance between taking an interest in someone else's lifestyle and treating them as somehow exotic or abnormal, but somehow we need to try. Avoiding them altogether is just as bad – Quakers can be quite shy and introverted but we need to remember that we are the ones on our 'home ground' and they are the guest whom we have a duty to put at their ease. Some meetings have run a cycle of gatherings where individual Friends take turns to share their journey – this can be helpful in overcoming awkwardness and can be very enriching for all concerned.

Exactly the same goes for relations between familiar Friends within the meeting. *Advices & queries* enjoins us to "refrain from making prejudiced judgements about the life journeys of others". When someone shares their personal experience and understanding of the Divine, they are taking a risk and deserve to be listened to respectfully. Remember, we're advised to "avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language". This should be a matter of principle to Quakers, who aspire to be channels of a loving Spirit – but it's also worth remembering that others are watching the way we act and drawing their own conclusions.

**Energising.** Friends often complain that maintaining the meeting uses up all their energy, and there is nothing left over for 'jobs' like outreach and welcome. The experience of many meetings who have tried it is that reaching out, welcoming new worshippers and sharing what we treasure is actually energising – and very enjoyable. Try some of the activities described above – or think up some more of your own. Who knows what might grow once you start sowing a few seeds?

There is nothing sadder than a meeting with a negative **SCORE – Secretive, Critical, Obfuscatory, Rigid, Exclusive**. So let's open up our doors, give people out there access to the Quaker way, and let in all the richness, challenges and excitement that are waiting outside.

## 2. Reaching out

## Section 2: Reaching out

This section contains:

- \* Outreach activities
- \* Quaker Quest
- \* Outreach and worship
- \* Outreach and witness
- \* Working with children and schools
- \* Working with the media

# 2. Reaching out

## Outreach activities

Every year during Quaker Week we receive a lot of helpful information from meetings about the events they are planning. Even more helpful is the feedback some of them send us, telling us how they got on.

As Outreach Development Officer I have been privileged to visit a range of meetings during Quaker Week and have witnessed these events at first hand. Invariably, they are the result of lots of planning and effort by Friends and are almost always energising and enjoyable events. They bring together the meeting in a shared spiritual task and are an opportunity for Friends to think about how they connect with their own communities and about the stories we have to tell.

There is no blueprint for the ideal event, and something that works well for one meeting may not be as successful for another. What works well for a meeting can change from year to year.

Although there is no foolproof set of rules, below are some helpful hints drawn from the experience of a wide variety of meetings over the past five years or more that can help in our thinking and planning for outreach events.

### **Play to your strengths**

Different settings, sizes of meeting, locations of meeting house, the relationship with the local community and demographic (internal and external) are very important factors in planning outreach events. Large meetings can plan for and accommodate events such as concerts and speaker events; smaller meetings should think about something more intimate. (One meeting with five members invited people for a pot-luck supper and games evening, which was a great success.)

Think, too, about your community; plan an event that may have resonance with other things going on in your area. If you are thinking of organising a talk, display or workshop, whether it's music, drama, peace or politics, use it as a way of connecting with groups and activities that are already going on.

Also, give some thought to other events that are taking place. Outreach doesn't need to be tied to Quaker Week; you may want to take part in Heritage Week, Open Gardens, Transition weekends... Look out for what is going on and see if there is a chance to be part of it.

“...our point of departure is not a mighty proclamation of Truth, but the humble invitation to sit down together and share what we have found...”

Harold Loukes in *Quaker faith & practice* 28.08



Friends at Cambridge Meeting.  
Photo: © Mike Pinches 2012

## 2. Reaching out: outreach activities

### Open door

If your event will take place in the meeting house, make sure that there is a good, attractive and uncluttered display that makes it clear that you are Quakers and what this means.

A warm welcome is essential and it can be most effective to spend more time listening than talking. Find out where people have come from and what has brought them here.

Below is a range of things that a number of meetings have done and that have proved successful in the past:

- \* Coffee morning/fair-trade sale
- \* Historic exhibition
- \* Exhibition of work by local artists/art groups
- \* Concert by local group/choir/performer
- \* Poetry reading/evening
- \* Talk/workshop by QPSW speaker
- \* Joint events with local groups, e.g. peace groups, Transition Town/sustainability groups
- \* Inviting local schools (especially primary) to visit the meeting house (this fits with the national curriculum and can be an excellent way of forging links and relationships)
- \* Meeting for worship taster sessions/discussion
- \* Children's activity/craft/messy play sessions
- \* Quaker Quest (N.B. this needs full and proper planning and a realistic lead-in time and often requires support from AM).

### Getting out of the house

Repeatedly, meetings tell us that getting out of the meeting house can be the first (though not always the easiest) step towards some really successful and exciting outreach. It gives greater visibility and can get over the problem some meetings have when the meeting house is hard to find and situated some way from the town centre. Below are some possibilities you might want to consider:

### Exhibitions in a library or museum

This is usually easier to arrange if it focuses on history – who we are now, who we were then – or a particular area of work – peace, sustainability – rather than a generic 'about Quakers' exhibition.



*Friends at Harlow Meeting.  
Photo: © Mike Pinches 2012*



*Young Friends General Meeting  
in Nottingham.  
Photo: © Mike Pinches 2012*

## 2. Reaching out: outreach activities

### Market stalls

Increasing numbers of meetings are trying this – a stall attractively decorated and with leaflets and literature to give away about both Quakerism in general and local Quakers. If it is possible, giving away fair-trade chocolate, for example, can work very well.

A stall at a community fair can be very effective; look out for things being organised by residents' associations or other community groups.

Be prepared to be challenged, though, and willing to respond openly and positively to questions (see 'A confident voice', page 11).

If you are organising a market stall, in whatever setting, keep the display simple and focused.

### Concerts, talks and workshops

Try using community centres, meeting rooms and other more public rooms instead of the meeting house. This can make events seem more open and accessible.

### Offering speakers to local schools and groups

This requires plenty of willingness and a certain amount of courage. Making contact with and offering speakers to the Rotary Club, Mothers' Union, WI, etc can be very fruitful. It needs a good lead-in time (as a rule of thumb, largely female groups such as the WI fix speakers a year in advance, men's groups plan a month or even a couple of weeks ahead) and it pays to spend some time building up a good relationship. It isn't always easy to gain access to schools or to find a space in their timetable, so it is helpful to have a Friend who either is or was a teacher and preferably one who already has contact with a school.

### Publicity

It is important to think hard about publicity. It can be dispiriting to go to the trouble of planning a good outreach event for only a handful of enquirers to turn up. Think about the nature of the event and about your own possibilities and resources. The main areas of publicity are:

### Leaflets, fliers and posters

Producing publicity like this can be costly and time-consuming and it is important to be sure that it will be worthwhile. In some (usually small and fairly active) villages/small towns fliers and posters are highly effective, but more often they are not. Be sure printing costs can be justified, keep the design bold, simple and clear and avoid too much text.



“ Be prepared to be challenged... and willing to respond openly and positively to questions. ”



## 2. Reaching out: outreach activities

### Media advertising

Even in local papers this is costly. It can yield very good results, but often does not. Think realistically about your community and the people you think it will attract. When searching for something to do on a Friday evening, do you go straight to the 'What's on' page in the local Shuttle? If not, then this form of advertising may not be worthwhile.

You may want to write some copy for a local paper; guidance for doing this and for building up a good relationship with your local media can be found in the 'Working with the media' section of this handbook.

### Community newsletter

A better possibility is often a local community newsletter or magazine (be it a church magazine or something more secular). You can often send in copy that will be printed free of charge. An advert in a newsletter will cost, but not as much as a newspaper and more people read a community magazine from cover to cover than read the local free paper.

You might want to try a local school newsletter – some will only allow this if a parent/family from school submits it, but others have a more open policy.

### Personal contact

By far the most effective form of publicity is word of mouth and personal contact. Whether for big events or small, large meetings or small, simply telling people about an event and encouraging them to come along almost invariably works. Key to this is the participation of the whole meeting. If only one or two people take the trouble, then this will tell in the numbers who turn up. Think about the event and think about who, in your circles of friendship and contact, would enjoy it, and invite them. If possible, invite them in twos or threes; it is less threatening than turning up alone. It seems that this kind of personal invitation doesn't only bring people in, it also helps create an atmosphere of warmth and hospitality.

An event's success is very hard to measure and numbers alone – either on the night or on the bench in the following weeks – are not necessarily the best guide. The real purpose of an outreach event is to allow people to discover us, to give seekers the opportunity to find something out about our faith. A good event can sow a seed that may take many years and countless nudges to come to fruition, but the important thing is that the seed is sown.

“By far the most effective form of publicity is work of mouth and personal contact.”



*Friends from Witney Meeting.  
Photo: © Mike Pinches 2012*

## 2. Reaching out: outreach activities

Small meetings speak of their difficulties with outreach, but often being a small meeting can sometimes be an advantage. In small meetings, every member can be involved and be part of the planning of the event itself, and there can be great freedom in trying new things.

*Last year, Wisbech Meeting in Cambridgeshire celebrated its 300th anniversary. Although only a small meeting, it proved to be a very eventful twelve months. Here they share their story.*

### Wisbech Local Meeting – 300th anniversary celebrations

We are a small meeting in rural Cambridgeshire, and in 2011 we celebrated being the second oldest denomination in Wisbech.

How does a meeting with eight members and about the same number of attenders do outreach for such a momentous occasion?

We started with a BBQ for all those who come to the meeting and their families, before we launched into the main events.

Wisbech has two 'town events' each year, and we always open the meeting house to people curious about the meeting house and garden, which backs on to Peckover House (a National Trust property) and is a Quaker burial ground.

For the Annual Rose Fair, we added a Quilt Exhibition. Quilts were loaned from Norwich and Cambridge Meetings, and we were lent the 'Thomas Clarkson Quilt', which commemorates one of Wisbech's most famous citizens and is usually displayed in the Baptist Church. We had 650 people through our doors over a 4-day period.

During Heritage Week, as well as being open for three days, a play, *The Lady on the Five Pound Note* – about Elizabeth Fry and written by a member of our meeting – was performed by a local drama group to around 50 people in the library of Peckover House. On the Saturday, we had the Plain Quakers come and perform their play *9 parts a Quaker* about Thomas Clarkson at our small local Angles Theatre. This was well attended. Over three days we had 450 people through the meeting house doors.

Learning from this and looking forwards, we know two things. We do want to continue our outreach in some form and will continue with our open days, but we also need to guard both our energy and nurture those who form a part of our meeting. We are now having study sessions regularly during the week for members and attenders to become more familiar with Quakerism.

For 2012, we have invited the Plain Quakers back to do another play *The Cadbury Story* and plan to target our local invitations as outreach to secondary schools. Working with Friends House, we are strengthening our links with Peckover House as they prepare to open the 'Banking Hall' as part of their ongoing restoration.

Wisbech LM does not exist in isolation; we are intertwined into our local community through our jobs, our voluntary work and our interests. Using those existing community links and strengthening them allows us to do outreach in novel and exciting ways.

*Helen Gibbs and Starr Farr, co-clerks of Wisbech Local Meeting*

### Quaker Quest

Quaker Quest is, in many ways, synonymous with Quaker outreach. Over the past decade they have transformed the way we see outreach and have given excellent support and guidance to meetings throughout the country and beyond.

Quaker Quest Network continues to explore new ways to approach outreach and to support meetings.

*Michael Hennessey, convenor of Quaker Quest Network, explains what holding a Quaker Quest involves and shares a story of how it worked for a small meeting.*

Quaker Quest (QQ) is a form of outreach that has been used in over 100 meetings in the UK. It can be organised by a meeting on its own, by a group of meetings or an area meeting.

Meetings arrange a series of weekly evening sessions – usually four or six – in which enquirers are encouraged to share food and friendship, have the opportunity to hear Quakers speak about their discoveries and have the chance to engage in discussion and ask questions.

At a typical QQ session, three people speak on a particular theme, such as Quakers and God or Quakers and Peace. They speak in a personal way, often sharing something of their faith journeys, and focus on the present rather than Quaker history.

A team of people support the speakers: they provide the food, welcome enquirers, facilitate small group discussion, and staff the bookshop. A small planning group, created about six months before the QQ, identifies the team of speakers and other helpers and organises the publicity. Sources of funding are identified and a meeting house booked. QQ works best if one meeting house is used on, say, six successive Monday evenings.

For meetings new to Quaker Quest, QQ Network can provide support and training workshops. Support is often available from other meetings who have already run a QQ programme. A booklet, the QQ how-to-do-it manual, gives detailed guidance about every aspect of running QQ.

QQ has informed large numbers about the Quaker way and has helped them on their spiritual journeys; some have begun to attend meetings; attenders and seasoned Friends have benefited from hearing the stories of others; the faith of the speakers has grown and been refined through the challenge of speaking to enquirers.

Further information is available from the QQ website: [www.quakerquest.org](http://www.quakerquest.org)

#### **Quaker Quest in a small meeting**

Could we do QQ in a very small meeting? That was the question that East Cheshire AM asked. We had run QQ successfully in four of our larger meetings but Marple Meeting was small, had lost its meeting house, and was worshipping in a room in the local Methodist church.

We held a meeting of Marple Friends. They were nervous of taking on a large project but once they were assured of area meeting support – both people and money – they felt led to ‘have a go’.

## 2. Reaching out: Quaker Quest

A small planning group was created and once Marple Friends had identified what they could do, we set about recruiting area meeting Friends to fill the gaps. The catering was done by other local meetings in turn and area meeting provided half the expenses. It turned out to be a great success. About 30 people turned up each night, including the local Methodist minister on three of the four evenings. Members of the meeting worked really well together and discovered gifts they did not know they had.

Area meeting Friends derived satisfaction from working together. Friends and attenders were encouraged. One person who had drifted away from Friends has started attending the meeting for worship regularly along with a number of newcomers. The meeting has been left in very good heart.

### Outreach and worship

*“On one never-to-be-forgotten Sunday morning I found myself one of a small company of silent worshippers, who were content to sit down together without words, that each one might feel after and draw near to the Divine Presence...”*

Caroline Stephen



*Young Friends General Meeting in Nottingham. Photo: © Mike Pinches 2012*

These words are so familiar to us as Quakers, not because they are often quoted but because they capture what so many of us have experienced. Whether we discover Quakerism later in life or grow up in the midst of it, we are bound together by a shared experience of unique and transforming power, of the Divine in our midst, of being changed and challenged, individually and together.

Our meeting for worship is not only central to what it means to be a Quaker, it is also a vital gift that we can offer to others. In the midst of our busy, demanding, fractured and fractious world, Quakers have found that it is in stillness and expectant waiting that we can most deeply know what it is to be human, to be most fully ourselves. Meetings have found that creating the opportunity for visitors and enquirers – and even passers-by – to experience meeting for worship can be an effective form of outreach.

Meetings have done this in a variety of ways; some have set up a regular meeting for worship in a library or community centre or university campus, where a few Friends have gathered and encouraged others to join them. Others have created one-off or occasional meetings for worship in a market place or as part of an event that have seen Friends holding a still and silent space often surrounded by the hustle and bustle of the high street (or on the steps of St Paul’s Cathedral); other meetings have started mid-week meeting for worship, perhaps briefer than worship on a Sunday and held between words of welcome and a brief epilogue.

Just how and where to do this depends on circumstance and opportunity, but for many Friends it has been rich and rewarding. We can only imagine the effect it has had on all those who have sought it out or stumbled across it. It does not have to be permanent and will often serve its purpose and then need to be laid down. Success shouldn’t be measured in terms of numbers of new attenders, but rather that this gift was offered and shared.

“  
...we are  
bound together  
by a shared  
experience of  
unique and  
transforming  
power.”

## 2. Reaching out: outreach and worship

*Amanda Wheatley of West Somerset Area Meeting tells the story of their experience of offering meeting for worship.*

### **Starting point**

In February 2011 a core group of five Friends from North Somerset Area Meeting began to support a half-hour meeting for worship and welcomed all Friends in the area to it. This was held on a Wednesday evening from 6.45 to 7.15pm in a hired room at local community centre 'the Campus' on the outskirts of Weston-super-Mare in an area of new development and increased population. It was accessible to all three local meetings in our area meeting as well as to a new community. The centre is open evenings and weekends and incorporates sports halls, a children's centre, a library and several small rooms available for hire.

### **Our vision**

We were inspired by the three prize-winning essays from 2010 on the future of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain. We wanted to share our Quaker faith. We hoped the meeting might attract some younger people, and the place and timing fit in with current lifestyles. We wanted to take our Quaker silence out in to the world. In the community centre we were more visible than in our meeting house and together with a shorter half-hour meeting for worship complete newcomers might find it easier to join us.

### **Area meeting support**

Taken to the local business meeting for worship at Weston-super-Mare in January 2011 the idea was supported enthusiastically by Friends there and went to area meeting in the February. It was essential that it was an area meeting-supported idea because there were not enough of us at Weston to carry it through. Friends from Sidcot Meeting came together with Weston Friends to form a core group. Friends from Clevedon Local Meeting fully supported the idea and joined us for worship once the group started. Area meeting were happy to pay the cost of room hire of around £19 a week until June 2011 and following a review of the meeting a commitment was given to support us financially until the end of December 2011. The total cost was about £800 for the year. We were also given money to produce posters and flyers.

Our publicity remained rather low key – perhaps we could have done more. We had strong support from Friends in our area meeting. We were encouraged to go forward. However, there was a sense that some Friends didn't really understand what we were doing or why – worried that we would take Friends from the Sunday meetings or that it was all about outreach. Being visible and wanting to welcome newcomers was important to us but it was not just about outreach. This meeting was an additional opportunity to allow Friends to worship more than once a week or if they weren't able to get to meeting for worship on Sunday.

### **What happened**

We had a table with leaflets on in the foyer of the community centre and a doorkeeper to welcome people outside our meeting room before and for 10 minutes or so after we had started worship. This designated doorkeeper would also close the meeting. We had an elder from Sidcot as part of the core group and elders at Weston were kept informed of how the group was going. We had no notices after meeting but offered an afterword. Together with Quaker leaflets we had flyers available with details of local meetings held on a Sunday. We had our meeting advertised on the community centre's electronic noticeboard as you came into the building on the evening. Our flyers were next to others on dance classes and more on the spinners in the community

## 2. Reaching out: outreach and worship

centre. Flyers and posters were placed at other venues in North Somerset and details on the Quaker website.

Our first meeting was in a room right next to Slimming World. At regular intervals clapping would come through the wall from next door. Some Friends found it really bothered them and others let it come and go. We found another room. This was in the centre of the building where more general sounds came and went. This was the room we settled on.

By June 21 people from across our area meeting had come to meeting for worship – six just once to show support or see what we were doing and 15 Friends had come more often. Usually between 7 and 11 Friends met on each evening. However, once the summer holidays came numbers dropped and towards the end of the year only between 2 and 4 Friends would regularly meet on an evening – these would usually be different combinations of Friends.

We had two new attenders who came on several occasions. One heard of us through local publicity, the other through the website. It was a disappointment to some that more new people didn't come.

Most Friends who came to this meeting over the year were in paid employment. At least six had children of school age and two young Friends joined us occasionally – a boy who was in a Judo class some of the time when his mum was in meeting and a young girl who came to meeting with her parents sometimes and at other times was in the library next door allowing her parents to worship for the duration of meeting and then joined us later.

### **What Friends said:**

- \* I enjoyed the stillness within the busy location, which taught me that we can take that with us wherever we go.
- \* Being able to meet for worship more than once a week has strengthened my faith.
- \* It has been good to get to know Friends from other meetings.
- \* I look forward to Wednesdays. It is a quiet space in the week.
- \* It fits in with after work on the way home.
- \* If you have children it is good to have another opportunity for meeting for worship if you miss Sunday.

### **Where has this led us?**

As our numbers had dropped and we were not reaching the local community we could not justify the costs of room hire. Our year-long experiment has ended but there were several of us for whom it was very important to continue to meet for worship in the evening during the week. We thought the way forward might be for us to hold an Evening meeting for worship at Weston-super-Mare meeting house. We decided to do this. We will meet on a Tuesday – some Friends have expressed a preference for this day and at a slightly earlier time too, which we hope will be better for people to come after work before going home.

In addition, this has prompted us to an exciting move forward at Weston-super-Mare. Friends at Weston had a vision over a year ago of creating a small sacred space out of a small room in the meeting house that had become a junk room. Our large and small meeting house rooms are heavily used by a wide variety of groups during the week. A modern light space within our

## 2. Reaching out: outreach and worship

own meeting house is now being created which can also be home to our new evening meeting for worship. The room has now been freshly painted, new chairs have been delivered and a new carpet is about to be fitted. We will have our own modern space in our own meeting house. We will start meeting there soon.

*A different experiment in offering the opportunity to experience meeting for worship is shared here by Deb Arrowsmith of Norwich Meeting.*

### Still in the City

At Norwich we are right in the heart of a busy city and we've been here since 1826. We may be a large and active meeting but we still feel we have more to offer the community we serve; maybe this was the starting point for...**Still in the City**.

The idea was that though many people may be put off by the term 'worship' our distinctive stillness and time of quiet reflection are still very much needed in most people's busy lives. Maybe we could open up to offer a breathing space in the day; half an hour of complete silence; an oasis of calm amid the hustle and bustle of everyday city life?; to open our doors to provide a space for people working in the city community around us.

Choosing 5.30–6pm every Tuesday we might attract those still at work (still in the city), on the way home or out on the town. Maybe people who lived or worked locally, who pass us every day, who may not ever have come in, who might appreciate the rest and refreshment we offer? (of course there's always a good tea served at 6 and lots of chat!)

Calling it 'Still in the City' was a conscious decision. No mention of worship...do what you will with this half hour of peace...

The next thing was how to market it...well, yes, it's a product – 'branding' it differently might attract a different clientele. Certainly the way we present ourselves to the outside world is vitally important. Let's try something a bit different but **still** distinctive.

So, banners went up on the building and we designed bookmarks. Cheap to produce, beautiful to look at, portable (they can be left all over town for folk to pick up off cafe tables, in the library, at the station – anywhere in the busy world where stillness might just go down a treat).

And does it work? Well, almost one year on, we average 11 people turning up every week, some of whom then come occasionally to Sunday worship, over half of these are not Quakers. Though they seem to find it a valuable meditation space too!

### Outreach and witness

For Quakers, the work of outreach and witness is inextricably bound. Many people who are drawn to Quakers first encounter us within the fields of peace work, campaigning and direct action. Our commitments to justice, sustainability and peace are our highest points of visibility.

Many meetings invite speakers from a variety of Quaker Peace & Social Witness and other Quaker projects as a way of sharing with others both the root and the fruit of Quakerism. It is not unusual at these events for the majority of people present to be non-Quakers; what they are hearing about is not Quakerism as an abstract idea but as a vividly lived witness.

Quakers directly involved in activism, campaigning and direct action have an opportunity to share with others what being a Quaker truly means, both publicly and in their engagement with those around them.

#### **Speakers from Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW)**

The work done by QPSW is a corporate expression of the Quaker concern for issues around peace, justice and sustainability. Sharing the stories of these projects can be a very effective and engaging form of outreach and can make an excellent outreach event.

QPSW staff members working on a number of programmes can offer advice and support to meetings who are planning events based around their projects.

For information, contact Helen Bradford, email: [helenb@quaker.org.uk](mailto:helenb@quaker.org.uk) or telephone: 020 7663 1071.

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*Michael Wood shares his experience of involvement as a Quaker in the Occupy Movement:*

I'm Michael Wood, a London Quaker. For me my Quakerism sits side by side with being an activist – each informing the other. It's a lot about putting Quakerism into practice. It's led me to campaign on issues from anti-arms trade to climate change to human rights and more. Quakers have a long history of non-violent direct action, we can call on this to be examples to other activists and the public, upholding each other in our unique Quaker way.

The idea for a Quaker meeting at the OccupyLSX camp came from an activist Friend who realised there was a great opportunity for Quakers to get more involved in the movement. We wanted to set up a meeting in solidarity, to bear witness to the injustices and the inequalities of the current economic system, as highlighted by the Occupy Movement. We felt as Quakers that this spoke directly to our testimonies. A flurry of emails to various clerks and Friends to start a mailing list and the idea spread across London Quakers and beyond. At the first meeting over 100 Quakers attended, which established a meeting that is now in its 11th week.\*

The meeting is in a very public place with lots of people coming through. We have leaflets and a board explaining what a meeting for worship is. The silence of the meeting often spreads across what is usually a busy, noisy place. It draws people in to join the meeting and we have a good relationship with people in the camp itself. The interest has generated media attention and we have given many interviews. Being able to articulate the purpose of the meeting for worship in the context always remains a challenge, but the strength of our convictions always come through.

*\*This inclusion was written on 16 January 2012*



*Meeting for worship at St. Paul's Cathedral. Photo: Martin Kunz*

### Working with children and schools

During Quaker Week, a number of meetings have taken the opportunity to work with local schools. These events have been excellent opportunities not just for sharing our Quaker story but also for strengthening community links and building relationships.

“ Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognise the gifts they bring.”

*Advices & queries 1:19*

*Children and Young People's team Children's Officer Chris Nikolay gives the following advice on this exciting and sometimes challenging form of outreach.*

#### **School visits**

What do you do when a school asks to bring forty 7- to 9-year-olds to your meeting house? What can you do if a school asks you to run two 2-hour sessions with ninety 9- to 11-year-olds about what Quakers believe?

These can be unnerving and challenging requests. They are also full of potential – for the children, young people and teachers with whom you might engage and for yourself and your meeting. Even if your meeting is tiny always say yes and then get help if you need it.

There is no hiding or being timid about your beliefs and values in front of a room or hall full of children or young people – a confident voice and a good plan are needed (even if you are shaking inside).

You could be asked for all sorts of things, some examples are: Quakers and...slavery... peace...death...marriage. What do Quakers believe?

Unless you know that the children and young people have been to a meeting or learned about Quakers before, always give a brief introduction – for example, find a simple way to talk about 'that of God in everyone'.

#### **Key information you need before you plan**

For a visit to a school:

1. When is it to be?
2. What time of day? (Children's energy and behaviour can be different at different times of the day.)
3. How long have you got?
4. Is it more than one session in a day or over a week or two?

## 2. Reaching out: working with children and schools

5. How many children and what ages are they?
6. What space will you be working in – classroom, hall?
7. How is the space to be set out – can you have a say in this? (a horseshoe or circle is best).
8. What does the school want you to talk about?

### For a visit to your meeting house:

Questions 1 to 5 and 8 on page 38 and:

- \* What space will you use in the meeting house?
- \* How will the space work for activities? How will you set it out?

Once you have planned your visit, speak to the school and give them a basic outline of the session's structure. The school will need to know the basics of room arrangement, expectations of the children, young people and staff and what your needs and requirements are.

### Planning and preparation

Some basic rules for visits to a school or your meeting house:

- \* Work with at least one other Friend
- \* Plan at least two weeks before the visit or session
- \* Your plan needs to be age-appropriate with variations in the types of activity – talking, arts, small groups, whole group and individual time.
- \* Include at least one period of worship
- \* Laughter and fun are good
- \* Be detailed about content, timing and what you want to say – even if it changes on the day

The shape of a session in a school or meeting house:

- \* Welcome
- \* Introduce yourselves
- \* Introduce theme – what you are going to help them find out about and explore
- \* What are Quakers?
- \* Stillness, centering and worship
- \* Main content and activities – include opportunities for questions (and maybe Fairtrade chocolate – this can be fitted into any theme!)
- \* Reflection time – use pre-prepared sheets or booklets (mention to school)
- \* Any more questions
- \* Ending stillness, centering and worship
- \* Review and debrief with co-facilitators

### **Where can you get help?**

#### **In your meeting:**

Who else in your meeting could be asked for help or advice? What about Children's Committee or an elder?

#### **In your area meeting:**

Area meeting should have a Children and Young People's Work Advocate. Get in touch with them – they may know somebody else who has been part of a visit or session that you could talk to; the Advocate may also have ideas themselves.

#### **Quaker Life Outreach team:**

For an initial conversation about what you have been asked to do contact the Outreach Development Officer on 020 7663 1016 or at [alistairf@quaker.org.uk](mailto:alistairf@quaker.org.uk). The Outreach Officer may then involve a member of the Quaker Life Children and Young People's work team in advising you.

#### **Resources for you to use include:**

*Schools Journeys*

*Journeys in the Spirit*

*Spiritual Development*

*Living as a Quaker*

Contact the Children and Young People's department on [cypadmin@quaker.org.uk](mailto:cypadmin@quaker.org.uk)

*Quaker meeting and me*

Quaker Young Person's leaflet

Gold cards

Contact the Quaker Centre bookshop at [quakercentre@quaker.org.uk](mailto:quakercentre@quaker.org.uk) or on 020 7663 1030/1031.

## 2. Reaching out: working with children and schools

*Margaret Lever of Manchester and Warrington AM shares her own experience of working with her local primary school.*

### Two-day visits to a primary school in St. Helens, Lancashire

During Autumn 2011, I was invited to spend two days in a primary school close to the Friends Meeting House, in St. Helens, Lancashire. Three years ago, I had helped a church in that area with some charity fund-raising and one of its members had remembered that I am a Quaker. We never know how wide the ripples flow when we throw a pebble in a pond! I was delighted when she contacted me and as a retired primary school teacher, thrilled to be asked to work with around 250 children over the two days. As a trustee of Hardshaw Estates, which includes the Friends Meeting House in St. Helens, I knew there were a lot of Quaker connections around the school and surrounding area. I believed both children and staff would be interested in stories of their local history and I would myself have the opportunity to learn more.

The staff decided to group classes together, 50 children at a time, for the one hour sessions in their lovely quiet school hall, to hear about our testimonies, George Fox and our beginnings and of course Cadbury, Fry, Rowntree and Terry families. Another Quaker Friend joined me each day and we worked well together. We set up displays of leaflets, pictures, little books and articles and worksheets. The younger children loved the little books *Quaker meeting and me* and all wanted to take one home. We also gave each member of staff a copy of *Advices & queries*. The stories we were asked to tell were of Slavery issues, Quaker Marriage, Elizabeth Fry and her work with prisoners, John Woolman, William Penn, and how we feel today, about climate change, carbon footprints, environmental issues and sustainability concerns.

We answered lots of questions and told many little stories using visual aids, charts and items from the Godly Play Box kindly loaned to us from Quaker Life, making our time so worthwhile and fun for everyone.

Each session began with five minutes worship, sitting on the floor in a circle, with a lighted candle shaped like an actual sized cocoa pod. This had been given to me some years ago and I knew one day it would have a use! The children were very well-behaved and I am certain the teachers appreciated the stillness. It was wonderful to feel it. During the preparation for the session on slavery, we placed a huge cardboard box in the centre of the circle and there were no end of volunteers wanting to sit in it and tell us of their feelings of isolation, darkness and the loneliness of a small cell. For part of this session we divided the children into groups of five to each represent, a cocoa plantation owner, grower, slave, ship owner and shop keeper and asked them to work out who should be paid the most for their labour. The answers and reasons given by the groups' chosen spokesperson, were very interesting and quaker lessons were learned about fairness.

Time spent in the classrooms was invaluable. Our presentations were appropriate for each age range and we provided pictures to colour and ideas for things to make. The follow-up work was a joy to behold on our second visit, and the whole school were as pleased to see us as we were to be there. We have been asked to visit again next year so we must have done something well! Many of the children live on streets named after local quakers. The park in Shaw Street, was once the Quaker Burial Ground. It is now leased to the town for a peppercorn rent. There are three flat gravestones just visible in the shrubbery and on our return visit, several children could not wait to tell us they had seen them! When the land behind Crab Street (one of George Shaw's three purchases) was built on a century ago, the huge stone left there after the Ice Age,

## 2. Reaching out: working with children and schools

was moved by Quakers on a horse and cart, to the centre of the little park near the meeting house. All the classes have since visited the Friends Meeting and have written letters telling us all about it. What a joy this “work” has been and thanks to Friends from Quaker Life who gave us help and loving support. We will be in touch again soon!

*Margaret Lever and Linda Holborn, Eccles Meeting (Manchester and Warrington AM)*

The CYP team at Quaker Life are happy to give expert advice and support to Friends and meetings who are looking for ways to work with local schools. They can be contacted on 020 7663 1013 or at [cypadmin@quaker.org.uk](mailto:cypadmin@quaker.org.uk)



### Working with the media

Working well with local and national media can be a highly effective way of both advertising events and raising the profile of the Quaker community.

Our media officer, Anne van Staveren, offers some expert advice on working with the media:

#### Speaking out in the world

We know that we have found in the Quaker way something of value which we want to share. Through the media we can be seen as a welcoming community, where all can belong, among people of faith who make a positive difference to the world.

Quaker Week is a good opportunity to interest journalists in Quakers and Quaker ways, when we can show how our experience of recognising God in everyone and our commitment to peace, equality, simplicity, sustainability and truth, challenges Quakers to put our faith into action, and to seek social and legislative change.

We know that people are intrigued by Quaker stillness and we can show that stillness, that listening to the Spirit, is the springboard for our work in the world.

How do we know this has any effect? When Quakers were interviewed on BBC Radio 2, on the Jeremy Vine Show, he began the interview unusually for radio with a long silent pause. That led to 992 hits to our website that day.

Working with the media helps Quakers nationally and locally because our reputation, fundraising and outreach are all affected by media coverage.

We can engage journalists' interest in Quaker Week and develop it during the year.

#### Where to start?

- \* Does your meeting have a media contact? How could a journalist find their name and phone number?
- \* Think about process: who will decide if you have a story for the media and how might you answer a simple query from a journalist?
- \* Agree who may contact the media and who may speak for the meeting
- \* Decide who would write a press release, who needs to sign off, who decides to which media you send it, who emails it? Who posts it on your meeting website?
- \* Write a template (what will the press release look like?). There are guidelines on [www.quaker.org.uk/news](http://www.quaker.org.uk/news)
- \* Build a database of local media, noting email addresses and print deadlines
- \* Develop relations with local media.

## 2. Reaching out: working with the media

Be wary of speaking on behalf of Quakers in Britain: better to say “As a Quaker, this is what I think...” Act in a measured way, taking time to ensure you have the facts to hand, are clear about our position and have the necessary authority to speak. Be clear what you can offer.

Our Quaker voice can take many forms. You can start by simply writing letters for publication in your local newspaper. Would your event make an interesting feature? Who can you offer for interview and what would be their key message? Can you offer local radio an interviewee or Quaker Thought for the Day? You need a visually strong story to get television coverage. Think about the readers and listeners: will they hear about a welcoming, adventurous faith community?

Local media are always interested in the local angle of a national news story. So do adapt for local use news releases issued from BYM's media desk, on [www.quaker.org.uk/news](http://www.quaker.org.uk/news) or seek advice from Anne van Staveren on 020 7663 1048.

If you decide to contact the media, write a news release and keep in mind these guidelines:

- \* News editors receive many news releases and you need to get their attention
- \* Type News Release at the top, next line, the date; then in bold a short headline; then maybe four or five paragraphs of text; the word “ends” at the end of the text; notes to editors for extra information; contact details for further information and a note to say if photos are available.
- \* Focus on these key points: who, what, where, why, when and how
- \* Include a quote to add colour and life
- \* Keep sentences and paragraphs short, vocabulary simple and concise
- \* Keep your news release to one page
- \* Put your news release as text in the body of an email and don't attach as a Word doc. In the subject field of the email, type the words News Release: followed by your brief headline (aim for six words). Follow up with a phone call to the newsdesk.

*For support and advice, Anne can be contacted on 020 7663 1048, or at [annev@quaker.org.uk](mailto:annev@quaker.org.uk)*

### *Jan Arriens shares his experience of speaking on Radio Shropshire's Pause for Thought*

Towards the end of 2010, after I had been in Shropshire for a year, I was interviewed by BBC Radio Shropshire about writing letters to prisoners on death row, which I have been doing for over 20 years. This led to a request several months later to take part in Pause for Thought on Sunday mornings. Until then, they had had only Anglicans and Roman Catholics, and they felt it was time to broaden out.

Radio Shropshire specifically wanted me to say something about Quakerism. I was of course happy to do so, but felt it needed a light touch, so as not to proselytise. Another challenge has been to find the “payoff” that Radio Shropshire wants: a few pithy words at the end acting as an invitation or challenge to the listener. Once I spoke of “being aware”; I have also spoken about

## 2. Reaching out: working with the media

carrying our inner stillness with us at all times, and about the unexpected importance of small acts of kindness.

Scripts have to be submitted a few days in advance but are, at most, lightly edited. I am meant to speak for around four minutes, but the timing is not strict. Quite often there will be some chat with the presenter, Mike George, before or after my contribution. Mike is very good at saying something that leads seamlessly into my script.

The hardest talk to prepare was the one that went out a few days before Remembrance Day. What was I to say that would be Quakerly but not insensitive on a day that holds such meaning for so many people? In the end I spoke about red poppies and white poppies; the challenge, I felt, was for us all to wear both poppies every day of the year, in our hearts.

### Social media

We live, too, in an age where 'media' means more than newspapers, television and radio. Social media is increasingly a feature of many people's lives as a way of communicating ideas and stories, sharing news and even creating a sense of community and belonging.

In preparation for Quaker Week 2012, we are encouraging Friends to use social media as a way of raising awareness and publicising events; we will offer links and suggestions and we hope that this will become a growing outreach tool.



*Nik Dadson, Web Officer for Britain Yearly Meeting, offers help and guidance in this rapidly changing media.*

Facebook and Twitter both have the potential to reach a lot of people and to engage them in dialogue.

#### Facebook

Facebook is a very versatile way to share with friends. You can start discussions, refer people to other websites, link to videos, photos, news articles etc. The beauty of Facebook is that so many people use it, are continually logged in and look at it every day. When you post on Facebook all of your friends will see what you write. If the post is interesting and people 'Like' or 'Share' it, then all of their friends might see it, and so on.

#### Twitter

Twitter is more restricted in terms of sharing media and offers a challenge of getting your messages, or 'tweets', down to 140 or fewer characters. Again, it's all about creating messages that people may want to see and share. Like Facebook posts, if your tweets are interesting, your followers can share or 'retweet' them. With Twitter you can 'get out there'. A topic can become very popular or 'trend', so if it's one you can talk about and you know how to be noticed (that's what the '#' on your computer is for) you can talk to a huge number of people.

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Imagine it's Remembrance Day and everyone is talking about poppies on Twitter. You could tweet:

Many #Quakers wear white #poppies today. Ask me why. #peace

People watching for tweets about #quakers, #poppies or #peace will see yours and may engage with you.

### Setting up accounts

With both of these social media facilities there are two main options:

1. Use your own account and use your existing contacts. Be sensitive to your non-Quaker friends though.
2. Create an account for your meeting, get members to give you interesting content, then encourage friends and members of the community to 'Like' or 'Follow' you. The content can then be purely Quaker in flavour as that's what people will be expecting.

One note of caution: the ease of using these tools allows users to stop following you at a click. Good, interesting content which is brief and infrequent will help you retain followers.

Both have excellent help sections on their site which will lead you through how to set up.

### Virtual outreach

*Jez Smith of Westminster Meeting writes a very popular blog called 'naylor.org' and below he suggests some of the ways that blogging and online communities can help make meetings more visible and offer the opportunity to learn more about what it means to live as a Quaker.*

Now that 77 per cent of UK households have internet access, having a blog is a great way to take your meeting out to the wider public.

Sheffield Quakers ([www.sheffieldquakers.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.sheffieldquakers.blogspot.co.uk)) have around 20 contributors from the regular to the very occasional and a mixture of longer reflective articles, video, poetry and short pieces. Key to their success is having a small group of Friends willing to continue contributing long after the initial excitement has worn off.

Manchester Quakers have incorporated a blog within their main website ([www.manchesterquakers.org.uk/blog](http://www.manchesterquakers.org.uk/blog)), which has been used for reports of events, and Quakers in Beeston ([www.beestonquakers.blogspot.com](http://www.beestonquakers.blogspot.com)) use their blog for information about their meeting.

My own blog ([www.naylor.org](http://www.naylor.org)) is a space for Quakers to share about their faith to newcomers, while also being a space for Quakers to learn from each other. It receives around 3,500 visits per month. Although it isn't formally linked to my meeting at Westminster, I've had several contributions from Friends at the Meeting, writing about how and why they're Quakers. I've also recorded talks at the meeting and published them as podcasts.

Setting up a blog takes very little internet know-how. There are free blogging platforms such as wordpress, tumblr and blogspot that do all the technical work for you. All you need to do is

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write and, if you like, add pictures. Getting a professional look is affordable too. Nayler costs about £50 a year to run. If you want to publish a talk or other ministry, make sure that you have everyone's permission first – it is good to remind people that their writing or talk can be accessed by practically anyone.

*Jez Smith, Westminster Local Meeting*

# Afterword

Outreach doesn't need to be about plans and programmes; it simply needs to spring from our own Quakerism. At its best it is gentle, generous and spontaneous, open and responsive to the moment, and motivated by a desire to allow others to experience what has been so valuable to us.

As Quakers, we do not proselytise, and this should be present in our thinking and preparing around outreach. However, what lies at the heart of outreach is a willingness to allow others to find us, a readiness to welcome them when they do and a feeling that Quakerism might be something worth finding.

Much of this handbook is about how to prepare as a meeting; how to become outreaching and welcoming communities. But it is important to remember that for so many people who come to Quakers, what prompted them wasn't an outreach event or a poster but meeting a Quaker. There is a recurring theme to many of our stories of encountering someone of quiet integrity, someone alive and alert to issues of justice, peace and equality; someone grounded and centred; someone living what has been described as 'an extraordinary ordinary life'. We meet them, spend time with them and, eventually, we discover that they are a Quaker. This kind of unconscious sharing – a million miles from evangelism or mission – is often outreach at its most effective and most Quakerly. It is letting our lives speak.

I heard the story of one Friend who, over years of chatting and listening to a group of friends, found that she had inadvertently shared something of her Quakerism. She never had any intention of persuading anyone to come to meeting, but had simply found common ground in the shared stories, ideas and interests of those around her. As a result, a number of these friends began to come to meeting and found themselves staying.

To me, this story and many others like it seem to highlight three very important things: it is us and our lives that speak most clearly about what Quakerism means and we share our Quakerism best when we do it unselfconsciously and spontaneously; what we have to offer as Quakers is something for which many people are searching, and all we are doing is holding the door open wide enough and for long enough for them to look inside; the most helpful thing we can do as meetings is to offer a place of warmth and welcome to those who find us.

*Alistair Fuller*

*Outreach Development Officer, Quaker Life*

## Resources and further support

**The Quaker Life Outreach Team** are always pleased to offer any direct support and guidance they can to Friends and meetings. We are especially keen to visit meetings, to hear about your ideas and experiences and to share some of our developing thinking around outreach.

Please contact us at [outreach@quaker.org.uk](mailto:outreach@quaker.org.uk)

or contact Alistair Fuller, Outreach Development Officer, at [alistairf@quaker.org.uk](mailto:alistairf@quaker.org.uk), 020 7663 1016

Rosie Carnall, Assistant Outreach Development Officer, at [rosiec@quaker.org.uk](mailto:rosiec@quaker.org.uk), 020 7663 1017

### Chaplaincy

Quaker college and university chaplains work in a wide variety of FE and HE colleges and universities around the country. They offer pastoral support and provide a visible Quaker presence within the organisation.

They also serve as a point of contact and support for Young Friends going away to college or university. If you are a Young Friend going to college or if you know someone who is, we can put students in touch with the Quaker student contact in their area. Student contacts can introduce Young Friends to the local meeting, help them meet with other Quaker students or just be a friendly face.

Many chaplains are an important part of the outreach work of their meetings, creating opportunities for staff and students on campus to experience Quaker worship, and taking up opportunities to host exhibitions and 'market stalls' during the year and especially around Quaker Week.

Students are advised to make the initial contact with the Quaker student contacts. Check the list on the Britain Yearly Meeting website ([www.quaker.org.uk/university-chaplains](http://www.quaker.org.uk/university-chaplains)) to find out who the student contacts are at institutions throughout Britain. Rosie Carnall, the Assistant Outreach Development Officer, coordinates this work and is developing support for chaplains.

Telephone 020 7663 1017 or email: [outreach@quaker.org.uk](mailto:outreach@quaker.org.uk) for further information.

### The Quaker Centre at Friends House

The Quaker Centre incorporates a café, bookshop, resources area and a worship space. It is a place that is both vibrant and peaceful and it offers a welcoming Quaker presence in Central London.

It is open to everyone six days a week. There is a specialist bookselling service available from Monday to Friday, 10am–4pm.

Email [quakercentre@quaker.org.uk](mailto:quakercentre@quaker.org.uk) or call 020 7663 1030.

### Books

The Quaker Centre bookshop carries a selection of books which are particularly good for recommending to enquirers, and would also be useful stock for meeting house libraries:

- \* **Twelve Quakers and Worship / God / Pacifism / Evil / Equality / Jesus / Simplicity / Faith**  
These excellent booklets, published by Quaker Quest, outline Quaker thought in different areas through the experience of twelve Friends. £2.50 each.
- \* We also carry a full range of simple, attractive and accessible outreach leaflets.  
Available from [quakercentre@quaker.org.uk](mailto:quakercentre@quaker.org.uk) or 020 7663 1030.

## \* **The Friendly Guide to Quakerism**

A colourful guide to Quakers, put together by Ireland Yearly Meeting. It covers historical figures and periods, as well as the Quaker testimonies and how they have been lived out by Friends. Particularly helpful to younger enquirers. £5.00.

## \* **A Light that is shining**

Harvey Gillman's standard introduction to Quakers is part of the free enquirers' pack; it is also available from the Quaker Centre bookshop for £5.00.

## \* **Deepening the life of the Spirit: resources for spiritual practice**

Developed by Ginny Wall. Quaker Books, £4.00.

## \* **Bookboxes**

The Quaker Centre can supply books on sale or return for you to sell at outreach events. This is ideal for anyone holding an event in their meeting house. Please give two weeks' notice to get the stock out to you. Contact [quakercentre@quaker.org.uk](mailto:quakercentre@quaker.org.uk) or 020 7663 1030.

## **Becoming Friends: Living & Learning with Quakers**

Becoming Friends is an engaging and accessible course from Woodbrooke and Quaker Life that aims to nurture and support those who are new to Friends. The learning materials have now been launched online and on paper. Courses are also available for those who are offering service as Becoming Friends companions. For more information and resources see [www.woodbrooke.org.uk/becomingfriends](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/becomingfriends).

## **Quaker Quest**

Quaker Quest is an exciting and engaging method of both outreach and inreach, which has proved popular and effective throughout the Yearly Meeting and abroad. Many meetings have found it an invaluable outreach tool and also a great way of deepening the sense of community within the existing members of the meeting. The Quaker Quest Network offers support and local training workshops for meetings who are thinking about running a Quaker Quest. For more information go to [www.quakerquest.org.uk](http://www.quakerquest.org.uk)

## **Quaker Tapestry**

The Quaker Tapestry offers a variety of good resources and publications, including books and DVDs, postcards, plus loan of slides and photographs.

[www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk](http://www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk) or phone 01539 722975

## **The Quaker Life Network**

The Quaker Life Network is a network of Friends who are willing to devote time and energy to deepen the life of the Yearly Meeting. Members of the Network strengthen the Quaker community by exchanging ideas and good practice, providing support for each other and helping Quaker Life's work of supporting Friends and meetings around Britain. For more information or to become part of the Quaker Life Network, contact Oliver Waterhouse: [oliverw@quaker.org.uk](mailto:oliverw@quaker.org.uk) or 020 7663 1007.