

Follow Up with Newcomers at Newtown Friends Meeting

Newtown Friends Meeting is one of six Quaker institutions clustered in and around Newtown, Bucks Quarter, including Friends Home and Village, Chandler Hall Health Services, Newtown Friends School, George School and Pennswood Village.

To date, in 2023, thirty-four visitors who live in the Newtown area came to Newtown Friends Meeting for the first time. Of those 34 visitors 13 have returned for a 2nd or more visit. Their range of participation has ranged from occasional attendance to joining in the following activities.

Newcomers Pot Luck Dinners involve inviting 3 or 4 newcomers to a pot luck dinner in the home of a member. These are opportunities for newcomers to meet members in the relaxed setting of their homes, hear and tell stories of how they came to visit the Meeting. It's a good opportunity to ask questions about Quakers in general, and Newtown Friends Meeting in particular. This is something any Meeting can do. Just identify 3 or 4 of your most recent newcomers and arrange a potluck dinner.

Friendly 8s is a program where members and attenders (usually eight people) join others to have pot luck dinners in each other's homes for three or four times in a program year. It is a very nice way for newcomers to get acquainted and have an increased sense of being a part of the Meeting.

The Spiritual Explorations Group is an ongoing group that meets every week via zoom for the purpose of supporting each other's spiritual lives. Various readings are screen shared, then silently reflected upon. We share our responses to the readings using a worship sharing style. Examples of topics include sharing our favorite poems or readings. We just completed a series of meetings when we told of personal experiences which felt to be mystical in nature.

I confirm the contact information for visitors who sign in at the Welcome Table, then follow up with a phone call and an email message. I arrange for newcomers to get permanent name tags and receive the weekly email announcements of activities at Meeting. Since Newtown Friends Meeting has from 50 to 60 present on Sundays, I find it important to pay attention to whether visitors and newcomers have someone to talk with during social hour at rise of meeting. I notice that newcomers frequently chat with Friends they met at the pot luck dinners. I maintain an excel spread sheet which enables us to do better follow up.

I welcome calls and emails from Friends who would like more details about how to organize the newcomer's potluck dinners, the Friendly 8s dinners, and a group similar to our Spiritual Explorations Group.

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