

Pastoral Care *Newsletter*

*For Overseers, Ministry and Counsel,
and others who provide pastoral care
in unprogrammed Friends meetings*

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Grounding Newcomers in Quakerism

Short Essays by Five Friends

A young man who had been attending my meeting for three or four months asked, "What do people *do* during meeting for worship?" A friend in a small Midwestern meeting read an article on the meeting for business and wrote, "Our meeting is made up almost entirely of people new to Quakerism. I never understood why the business meeting begins with worship." So much of the richness of Quaker practice is hidden from view. Members and attenders can participate in our meetings for months and even years without experiencing the fullness of our tradition. What can we do to help those new to our meetings to ground themselves in depth of Quaker tradition and practice?

In this issue of *PCN* we bring you the experience of three meetings: a newly forming meeting in Maryland, an established but quite small meeting in Arkansas, and a large established meeting in Massachusetts. Though each is different in its particulars, they share a desire to help newcomers discover for themselves the life of the meeting and the richness of Quakerism.

In addition, we include a description of Pendle Hill's successful series of "Inquirers' Weekends" and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's course "Quakerism 101" which have been used by meetings large and small.

Not only do Friends have the challenge of helping people new to Quakerism. In many meetings each member brings her or his own idea of what Quakers are, or should be. There may be a the lack of a common understanding of worship and vocal ministry, of meeting for business, of the basis of the testimonies, and of our history and corporate experience. We hope that this issue will stimulate discussion in your meeting that may be beneficial to newcomers and established Friends alike.

This issue of *PCN* is a beginning look at the question of grounding newcomers in Quakerism. What do *you* think is the essence of what we should be transmitting to those new to Friends? We'd love to hear from you.

Editor

Fayetteville Arkansas: Relax and Smile by LaDeana Mullinix

When I consider the growth of our meeting, two comments stand out. One was made by an out-of-town Friend, whose parents live locally, who was visiting after a six or eight year absence. "Thank you for still being here," he said as he left. Another was made by an attender in the process of becoming a member. She had felt since first attending, "This is such a friendly meeting."

Our meeting doubled in active membership in the last year — from 4 to 8. We also have several very dedicated long-term attenders, and weekly attendance varies from 6 to 20. Located in Northwest Arkansas, the Fayetteville Friends Monthly Meeting's closest Quaker neighbors are in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Springfield, Missouri, and Little Rock, Arkansas — 2 1/2, 3 and 3 1/2 hours

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away. We had one period in the 15 years I have attended when internal dissension caused us (then a worship group) to cease meeting. Enough of us felt it was valuable enough to try again. Later, the tragic death of a young attender cemented the bonds within our small group.

Like many meetings, we have discussed how to encourage people to attend (Do we advertise?), and then how to instruct them in the ways of Quakerism. We have talked of having a pamphlet display, suggested reading lists, periodic "Quakerism 101" sessions, assigned mentors, and regular potlucks. None of these has ever happened.

With so few people, the additional commitments seem to hint of burden and burnout. We have used a pamphlet by Mary Moehlman (1990), *The Religious Society of Friends*, which is an excellent summary and introduction. As a meeting, we have looked at different books of *Faith and Practice*, and the *Listening Spirituality* books by Patricia Loring. We have a good-sized lending library in our rented space. Newcomers are always directed there. We also have a good variety of material for children.

Newcomers are greeted before meeting and introduced following. They are invited to attend any after meeting activity. We have tried various formats for singing, worship sharing, book study. An early attempt at study led us to get through 4 paragraphs in 4 months, but we are now committed to one chapter a month. Another favorite activity is going out for coffee. Many good discussions have come from these sessions, which may seem less daunting to a newcomer than book study or meeting for business. Often, members of the meeting will offer phone numbers to be available for questions.

Our meeting responds well to special events, especially out of town visitors. Perhaps we feel honored that someone took time to be with us. We have welcomed the Friendly Folk Dancers, visiting Friends, and AFSC representatives in the last six months. In the weeks following gathering with two Friends in traveling ministry, several attenders applied for membership. Perhaps they felt assured that our meeting's problems were not uncommon and that individuals can be members without knowing everything in advance. With all these visitors we certainly felt included in the wider circle of Friends.

As an individual, I have found great joy in our quarterly meetings, with monthly meetings and worship groups from Arkansas, southern Missouri and Oklahoma. As a small quarterly meeting, our gatherings have the feel of a family reunion with attendance from 30-60. Sharing and worshipping with this group, and watching the children grow up have increased my feeling of connectedness to the larger group of Quakers. I was surprised that other Quakers consider us as "isolated," since I have never felt that way. New attenders are often hesitant to attend these weekend gatherings, perhaps from a fear of overcommitment, but are often hooked once they do.

As attenders choose to deepen their commitment with a request for membership, they are encouraged to read, especially from the books of *Faith and Practice*, and to attend meetings for business, although these are not requirements. Membership committees, appointed by Ministry and Oversight, meet with the attenders at least twice to decide if membership is the best choice.

With so many new attenders in the last several years, our meeting has been focused on individual spirituality and growth. Only recently have we been able to take a stand on an issue in the larger community (the death

penalty). This felt good, however, as the process had a very firm spiritual base.

Our process of integrating new Friends, while far from perfect, or even organized, seems to be working. People feel welcomed, find the reading material that speaks to them, and eventually join to the extent they feel moved. We may need to try again for some structure, but in the meantime, we are still here, and smiling.

LaDeana Mullinix is a longtime member of Fayetteville Meeting.

The Quaker Heron Unites Patapsco Preparative Meeting **by Diane Reynolds**

Patapsco Preparative Meeting in Ellicott City, Maryland, is a new meeting that began in November of 1996 as a worship group under the care of the Sandy Spring Friends Meeting. Now a preparative meeting, it has been growing rapidly, from an average of 16-17 people at meeting for worship to 30 or more. The meeting newsletter, the *Quaker Heron*, has helped to ground not only newcomers, but everyone in the meeting.

Early on, I felt a leading to begin a newsletter for our meeting.

When way opened to begin the newsletter in the fall of 1999, one of my hopes was that it would function as an outreach to infrequent attenders or those contemplating visiting our meeting. It was to be a way to keep in

touch spiritually with those who are not physically present at the meetinghouse.

I was concerned (and this may be typical of new meetings) that as a meeting we were out of balance, with too much emphasis placed on the practicalities of growing a young meeting and not enough emphasis on the spiritual underpinnings of Quakerism. I asked myself the question: what makes us more than another do-gooder service organization? Where is the religious life of our meeting? How does what people are thinking and feeling drive what they are doing?

To anchor the newsletters, which come out quarterly, I felt led to have each one focus on a particular Quaker testimony. Friends are invited to submit articles on the topic we are examining in that issue. The various issues so far have covered community, simplicity, peace, and equality. Integrity will be the topic of the next issue.

I have been surprised by how gathered each issue has been. By this I mean that the articles, coming in without coordination, have spontaneously covered the important facets of a topic without any preplanning. If

What makes us more than another do-gooder service organization?

one person wrote about the politics of equality and slavery, the next article would discuss equality from a biblical perspective. If one person submitted an intellectually rigorous history of equality, the next person would submit a personal and introspective response to feeling unequal. It has been astonishing to see how the pieces of the newsletter have all been distinct and coordinated parts of a larger picture.

The newsletters have choreographed themselves without preplanning and have demonstrated clearly how different voices looking at the Light together can illuminate aspects of the truth far better than can a single individual. While I am open to the idea that a particular newsletter topic might engender a group of articles on a narrow aspect of the topic, and would consider this an indication of a particular concern within the meeting, so far this has not happened.

The newsletter has helped our meeting grow and define itself. It has extended our outreach, brought people to the meeting, and caused several lapsed or infrequent attenders to phone, e-mail, or send warm notes saying how much they have appreciated seeing the newsletter show up in their mailbox. In a very basic way, it has helped build community and enhance peripheral members' sense of belonging. The newsletter has allowed individuals a chance to express their thoughts and beliefs, and has helped one person clarify his understanding of Quakerism to the extent that he decided to go from being a long-term attender to a member of the Society of Friends.

The *Quaker Heron* has also given us a forum for dialogue and has helped us understand each other's interior selves. In this sense it has helped build our meeting community. It has been a valuable supplement to the meeting for worship, allowing people to give longer messages to the meeting at large. It gives individuals who may not feel comfortable talking in meeting a chance to share their spiritual experiences and insights. It has helped highlight that we are spiritual beings, united because of spiritual convictions.

As a new meeting we have had to ground ourselves in Quakerism. What does it mean to be a Quaker meeting? What are our various understandings of the core of the Quaker message? By focusing the *Heron* on the testimonies we have shared deeply about those understandings. In the process we have learned from each other about Friends history and beliefs. We have shared our questions together. This has educated all of us members and attenders, long-time Friends and newcomers

I believe it is an important tool for spiritual growth and would encourage meetings to grow and deepen their

newsletters as they are led. As an editor, I have appreciated the freedom I have been given to shape the newsletter. As with anything else, a newsletter works best when it can adapt to the needs of the meeting it serves.

Diane Reynolds is editor of Quaker Heron.

Making Friends Meeting at Cambridge Friendly and Accessible

by Gil and Sheila Johnston

Friends Meeting at Cambridge in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with a membership of approximately 500, is one of the largest meeting communities among unprogrammed Friends in the U.S. Prior to 1995 the Cambridge meeting had two meetings for worship each First Day morning. Average attendance estimates varied considerably during those years, but tended to be in the 200 to 300 range. In 1995, FMC changed to one meeting

each first day morning in order to enhance the unity of the meeting community. A smaller (and quieter) meeting for worship at 5 p.m. supplemented the larger morning meeting, and together they have been attracting about the same number of attenders as before. Visitors from other meetings and new attenders are welcomed at the rise of meeting. Typically there might be three or four coming to Quaker meeting for the first time as well as a sprinkling of other new attenders just recently introduced to the Quaker form of worship.

Our practice is for the person having "care of door" to make several

brief announcements at the rise of meeting, calling attention to the guest book, the weekly announcement sheets available as people leave, and inviting interested persons to come to an inquirer's table where they can obtain information or ask questions. The greeter presides over the inquirer's table for ten or fifteen minutes during the social time and often has a chance to point visitors toward a useful pamphlet or provide an answer to a question. Greeters are usually members of the Fellowship and Outreach Committee which is responsible for the process of welcoming new people to the meeting. It concerns itself with the various details of that process, such as maintaining a "care of door" roster, establishing a regular First-Day procedure including greeting at the door and offering name tags to visitors, handling a brief set of announcements, dealing with visitors' questions, sending welcome notes to persons signing the guest book, and maintaining supplies of handout material.

We try to keep reminding ourselves that it is everyone's responsibility to make Cambridge Meeting a friendly and accessible place.

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While we look to the Fellowship and Outreach Committee to perform these functions, we try to keep reminding ourselves that it is everyone's responsibility to make Cambridge Meeting seem like a friendly and accessible place. As might be expected in a meeting of this size, some people find it less than friendly, as members and long-time attenders involve themselves in conversation during the social time and often fail to engage with people they do not already know. Happily, the 5 o'clock meeting, perhaps because of its smaller attendance, has proved to be a more effective catalyst for friendly conversation with new attenders who find their way to it.

Small groups and committees are a definite aid to newcomers seeking to find a way in to the large meeting community. A young adult group embraces both students and non-students, mostly in their twenties. A small men's group grapples with the varying needs of men at different stages in their lives. Other groups focus on bereavement, spiritual direction, study of the gospels, and discussion of the relationship between science and religion.

Committees such as Garden and Landscape, Friends for Racial Justice, Peace and Social Concerns, and Friends in Unity with Nature provide opportunities for new attenders to become acquainted with others in the meeting and begin to make their own distinctive contribution.

The role of Resident Friends (now called Friends in Residence) is an important aspect of the Cambridge

Meeting's outreach to newcomers. Along with other staff members — the Meeting Secretary, the Facility Manager, and the First Day School Coordinator — the Friends in Residence are expected to maintain a friendly presence both on First Day and throughout the week. In addition, we have particular responsibility for conducting occasional educational sessions on the faith and practice of Quakers. During the last five years we have been using the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting "Quakerism 101" materials in somewhat modified form. Experience showed us that our principal goal should be to help groups of inquirers, some new to the meeting and others long time attenders, to get to know one another and learn to feel at ease discussing Quakerly questions in each other's presence. The prepared materials offered us some excellent points of departure, but we found, as time went on, that we needed a more personal and less academic approach, and one that connected more directly with our own yearly meeting. So we chose to make extensive use of the New England Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice*, supplementing it with some of the "Quakerism 101" materials and citations from PYM and Britain Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice* volumes. One of our most effective sessions has been the one in which we set up a simulated meeting for business and role played our own response to a challenging issue. The "Wade House Controversy" material in PYM's "Quakerism 101" was most useful for this purpose.

We have been gratified by the fact that eight or nine recent attenders at these sessions have credited the sessions with helping them come to the place of applying for membership. During this, our last year in the position of Friends in Residence, we take considerable satisfaction in knowing that these new Friends have received some of the help they needed from the hours that we have devoted together to what turned out to be, for us as well, a path of deep, inner discovery.

Gil and Sheila Johnston are Friends in Residence at Friends Meeting at Cambridge.

Pendle Hill Inquirers' Weekends By Shirley Dodson

The first Inquirers' Weekend was held at Pendle Hill in 1989 as an experiment in response to "Enquirers' Weekends" held in Britain — they have been held ever since. The British Enquirers' Weekends were designed for people who might know very little about Quakerism, for those who were curious, for religious seekers and others who may never have set foot in a Friends meetinghouse. The focus here has been to help Friends meetings in their efforts to educate and integrate attenders and new members fully into the life of the local meeting and into Quakerism in general.

This description, taken from an early publicity piece for an Inquirers' Weekend, describes the basic outline:

"Would you like to find answers to your questions about Quakerism? Become more familiar with Friends faith and practice as it is lived today? This weekend is designed for anyone interested in an introduction to Quakerism. Together participants explore the basics of:

- *Friends worship: what do you do with all that silence?
- *Beliefs: there's no creed, but commonly held tenets.
- *Practices: including the Quaker decision-making process and Friends ways of expressing their faith in daily life.
- *Terminology: what all those peculiar words mean (leading, gathered meeting, testimonies and more).
- *Organization: How Quakerism is (and isn't) organized.
- *Quaker spiritual community and how it affects its members, plus an overview of different Quaker groups.

Participants ask questions they might be embarrassed to ask in their own meetings.

"In the relaxed atmosphere of Pendle Hill, there are opportunities for worship, discussion, information sharing, celebration and free time. This weekend is designed for anyone interested in an introduction to Quakerism."

There are always at least two leaders, usually different from each other in significant ways, including gender, age, yearly meeting membership and Quaker experience. The majority of leaders are unprogrammed Friends, although leaders often have experience with programmed Friends and sometimes with Quakerism internationally as well.

Recognizing that people new to Quakerism usually aren't familiar with our sources of information, Inquirers' Weekends are made known mainly through those meeting members most in contact with newcomers. In many meetings, these are the Overseers or membership committee or pastoral care committee. In this way, Pendle Hill enters into a partnership with meetings in helping to orient new members. Inquirers' Weekends are particularly useful for small meetings which don't have enough newcomers to make up an orientation class within the meeting.

The majority of participants in Inquirers' Weekends have come from the yearly meetings nearest to Pendle Hill: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Baltimore Yearly Meeting and New York Yearly Meeting. However, people have also come from quite a distance, including Florida, New England and California. Meetings or yearly meetings at a distance from Pendle Hill can arrange for an Inquirers' Weekend in their area through "Pendle Hill on the Road."

For Pendle Hill these weekends are opportunities to provide a needed and useful service to Friends meetings and their members and attenders. Participants often ask important questions about Quaker faith, practice and worship that they might be embarrassed to ask in their own meetings. They meet people from many different meetings and expand their perspective on what Quakers and Quakerism are like. (For information about Inquirers' Weekends, at Pendle Hill or "On the Road" contact Bobbi Kelly at Pendle Hill, 800-742-3150, extension 137.)

Shirley Dodson is Director of Conferences and Retreats at Pendle Hill

Quakerism 101

by Gene Hillman

"Quakerism 101" was developed in the 1980s by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Since that time it has spread widely among Friends as a framework for introducing new members and attenders to Quakerism. A "Quakerism 101" course might also be of use to a meeting by providing a forum for long-time members to explore together what it is to be a Quaker.

"Quakerism 101" is typically a six week course with a two hour class once each week. Classes consider the experience of early Friends, Quaker beliefs (the inward Light, the teacher and guide, universalism), worship and ministry, meeting for business (community and gospel order), witness (testimonies and concerns), and the organizational structure of the Religious Society of Friends. Participants are expected to read 30 to 50 pages in preparation for each class. Teachers select their own texts but Howard Brinton's *Friends for 300 Years*, Wilmer Cooper's *A Living Faith*, John Punshon's *Encounter with Silence*, various Pendle Hill pamphlets and selections from *Faith and Practice* are often used.

Classes may be adapted to the needs of the meeting. In planning the course it is usual for the teacher to meet with the committee requesting the course to consider issues of special concern for the meeting. Typically, a class period will be divided into two parts. The first part of every class will be the transmittal of information. Following a break, the second part of the class might be anything from discussion to worship sharing out of consideration of a query.

"Quakerism 101" starts with a component that provides information as to what it has been, and is, to be a

Quakerism 101 can provide a forum for long-time members to explore together what it is to be a Quaker.

Friend. Most of all these courses provide a forum in which we can share our experiences and understandings of walking in the Light, thereby building community as we listen to and learn from one another.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has developed four other traveling courses. "Quakerism 201: Faith and Witness" is an exploration of the testimonies and other concerns. "Bible" is an introduction to the Bible. "Prayer" is an experimental (experiential) course designed to teach approaches and techniques, as well as build for the participants a deeper relationship with God. Last is "Quakerism 301," an advanced course to explore in greater depth a topic from one of the earlier courses or the writings of a specific Friend (e.g. Barclay, Fox, Fell), or envision and/or plan the future of the meeting.

The curricula for "Quakerism 101", Bible (Finding Our Way In the Bible) and Prayer, as well as studies of Fox, Penn and Woolman can be obtained from the Friends General Conference bookstore. It is best if the teacher is an experienced Friend familiar with the material and able to adapt to the needs of the meeting. However, groups of Friends with little experience can build knowledge of Quakerism by following this curriculum and its readings. Within Philadelphia Yearly Meeting teachers are available to travel to meetings to teach "Quakerism 101". (For information about "Quakerism 101", contact Gene Hillman at 215-241-7182.)

Gene Hillman is Adult Religious Education Coordinator at Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Questions for Reflection

1. Has our meeting given thought to how to help those new to the meeting learn the ways of Friends?
2. What would we regard as important to be conveyed to newcomers?
3. In our process of seeking clearness for membership, what attention do we give the applicant's understanding of Friends tradition and process? Under what circumstances would we ask an applicant to learn more before proceeding with clearness for membership?
4. Are there ways in which our meeting's process shows members' lack of being well grounded in Friends traditions? How could we address this lack in a way that strengthens and deepens our community?

Resources on Quaker Beliefs and Practices

READINGS

- A Living Faith : An Historical Study of Quaker Beliefs*, by Wilmer A. Cooper. Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1990. 217p.
- A Procession of Friends: Quakers in America*, by Daisy Newman. Garden City, N.Y. : Doubleday, 1972. 460p.
- Beyond Majority Rule : Voteless Decisions in the Religious Society of Friends.*, by Michael J. Sheeran, SJ. Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1983. 153p.
- Encounter with Silence : Reflections from the Quaker Tradition*, by John Punshon. Richmond, IN, London, England: Friends United Press; Quaker Home Service, c1987. 131p.
- Essays on the Quaker Vision of Gospel Order*, by Lloyd Lee Wilson. Virginia Beach, VA: the author, 1993.
- Four Doors to Meeting for Worship* by William P. Taber 31p. Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1992.
- Friends for 300 Years : The History and Beliefs of the Society of Friends Since George Fox Started the Quaker Movement* by Howard H. Brinton. New York : Harper and Bros., 1952. 239p.
- On Speaking Out of the Silence : Vocal Ministry in the Unprogrammed Meeting for Worship* by Douglas Steere. Wallingford, Pa: Pendle Hill, 1972. 20p.
- Portrait in Grey : A Short History of the Quakers* by John Punshon. London : Quaker Home Service, 1984. 293p.
- The Little Quaker Sociology Book: With Glossary*, by Lyn Cope-Robinson. Melbourne Beach, FL: Canmore, 1995. 214p.

STUDY GUIDES

- Friendly Faith & Practice Study Guide*, Joanne and Larry Spears, FGC, 1997, 20 p.
- Listening Spirituality Volume II: Corporate Practice among Friends* by Patricia Loring. Openings Press, 1999.
- Opening Doors to Meeting for Worship* by FGC Religious Education Committee. FGC, 1994. 144p.
- Quakerism 101*. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, rev. 1995. 93 p.

Pastoral Care Newsletter is published quarterly by the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Concerns Group on Care and Counsel for Meetings and Members. Annette Bennert, clerk. Patricia McBee, editor. We are located at 1515 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102. Comments are welcome. **Please do not duplicate without permission.** To obtain additional copies or to subscribe, contact Steve Gulick, at 215-241-7068 or steveg@pym.org.