

Pastoral Care *Newsletter*

*For Member Care Committees,
Ministry and Counsel, Overseers,
and others who provide pastoral care
in unprogrammed Friends' meetings.*

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Quaker Quest: Isn't it Time to Speak Out with Clarity and Passion?

by Harry and Lois Forrest

*"There is a remarkable change
of heart within the society."*

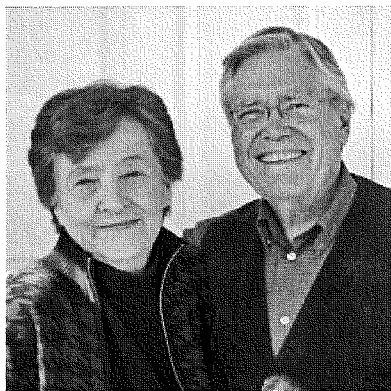
That phrase was written by British Friend, Alec Davison, who continued:

"For more than a century we have been reluctant to speak of our faith and to dialogue with our neighbors. Rightly shunning proselytizing we have wrongly failed to offer even an informed choice. We have been more comfortable at traveling incognito, helping to serve society's social and peace-making needs. So the Society has diminished."

He concludes with some challenging questions::

"Is it not time to speak with clarity and passion of the power of Truth and Spirit that can transcend greed and violence, lies and spin, materialism and cynicism? Are we not called to listen to spiritual needs and respond to the potential for transformation in everyone?"

Inspired action was the response to that profoundly expressed conviction. In January 2002, Davison, together with a handful of other concerned British Friends, launched an inreach/outreach program they called "Quaker Quest—simple, radical and contemporary."



Lois and Harry Forrest

Based on a strong belief that the Religious Society of Friends has a unique and valuable spiritual gift to share, and that there are many seekers who could benefit from it, those British Friends began to offer their ingeniously conceived, simple program each week at Friends House in London. (We'll get to the finer details later.)

They considered their project to be ministry and agreed to dedicate themselves to its presentation for one year. From the first day of Quaker Quest seekers responded—on average, 18 people per week! At year's end they knew that Quaker Quest had to be extended. The program at Friends House is now in its eighth year, and more importantly, has reached out across Great Britain and to other parts of the globe, arriving on US shores two years ago.

Our own journey to Quaker Quest began several years ago, though we did not realize it, when a member of a meeting we were visiting observed that attendance that day was "pretty good." He was referring to the dozen people in the room. Later, as we reflected on what we had experienced we had to ask ourselves, "What is 'pretty good'?" We weren't just thinking about numbers. We felt a growing concern about an overall need for more spiritual nurturing through Spirit-led vocal ministry, and finding ways to build a deeper sense of meeting community. Clearly, that

Friend had only numbers on his mind.

A stunning article written by Mark Myers, then the Interim General Secretary of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM), was another milestone on our journey. He expressed concern about an alarming membership loss in his yearly meeting during the preceding two decades and the consequences he foresaw for the Society of Friends as a whole. He reported a net 16% decline and added that 40% of the current PYM membership was beyond the age of 60 years.

He was sounding an alarm!

Both Friend Myers and Friend Davison presented us with a reality check—a call to take a fresh look at who we are as a Society and a suggestion that we learn to articulate our core beliefs and practices in order to inform those who do not know about us. It has been said, “To share our faith is to grow in faith.”

Mark listed some helpful suggestions for each monthly meeting to consider:

- Develop a strong and deep meeting for worship;
- Become more open and welcoming to visitors;
- Provide quality religious education programs for both children and adults;
- Become an active presence in the meeting’s broader community;
- Care for the meeting’s members;
- Reach out to people who do not know us.

The Journey

In January of 2007, we discovered Quaker Quest while serving as Friends in Residence at Woodbrooke Quaker Conference Centre in Birmingham, England. Knowing nothing of the program, we were nonetheless curious, no doubt

influenced by our discovery two years earlier of a meaningful and effective program called “Hearts and Minds Prepared” that was warmly received in our own meeting (Medford, NJ).

Intrigued by the spiritual creativity of British Friends, we felt it was natural to investigate Quaker Quest. The resulting weekend training conference at Woodbrooke filled us with renewed hope and an excitement for a new path for the Society of Friends. Upon our return to our home meeting we shared the Quaker Quest story with Medford

Friends and representatives of neighboring meetings. Arthur Larrabee, soon to step into his role as new General Secretary of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, attended that session and immediately saw Quaker Quest’s potential.

Soon, we were meeting with various PYM Friends in leadership positions, which, in part, led to the involvement of Ben Lloyd, Outreach Coordinator of Haverford Meeting, and that meeting’s eventual first use of the program in North America. (See Ben’s article in this issue.)

In January 2008, the Support and Outreach Standing Committee of

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting formed the Quaker Quest Working Group. Friends General Conference had embarked on a parallel path toward offering the program across the country. Working with FGC, PYM arranged to take full responsibility for promoting and overseeing its implementation within the PYM family of monthly meetings.

In October of that year, Quaker Quest was officially introduced to PYM at an all-day conference in Philadelphia. One-hundred-eleven Friends attended representing 40 monthly meetings and all 13 quarters. Jean Jenn, one of the British founders of Quaker Quest, was on hand to provide support,

Quaker Quest is:
... a celebration of life in all its diversity and wholeness;
... a search for the sacredness of each person;
... an encounter with the Divine through the power of stillness;
... a journey together in shared responsibility;
... a commitment to the ways of equality and non-violence;
... an engagement to build an inclusive society.

advice and a loving presence to the event.

Since that conference the Quaker Quest working group has traveled to dozens of meetings providing information and training local Quaker Quest teams. At this writing, four meetings have already begun preparations for their own Quaker Quests and Haverford Meeting is getting ready to offer a second round in the Spring of 2010. We've been warmed by the interest and excitement the program has generated. PYM Friends seem energized by the potential for spiritual renewal and the opportunity the program presents for sharing our faith path with others.

The Essentials

Focus:

Quaker Quest is a series of open public sessions that explore Quaker lives, values and worship. They are held weekly at the same day and time and in the same place.

Sessions:

Each session has a separate theme and is a part of a three (or more) session cycle that usually is repeated. The successive cycle allows for those who have missed a session to participate at a later date.

Themes:

The meeting launching the QQ program decides what session themes might be relevant to the seekers whom they identify in their audience or neighborhood, i.e., the people who would be drawn to attend their sessions. Some popular topics are "Quakers and God," "Quakers and the Bible," and "Quakers and Peace."

Speaker's Presentations:

At each session three Quakers speak briefly (6-7 minutes each) on the session's topic. They speak twice from their own experience: first from their own faith path and second, as their faith has related to their own practice. Together they provide a variety of personal approaches to the session's topic.

Seekers' Interaction:

Seekers have several opportunities to participate in a group discussion and share ways that the session's topic has affected their lives. Their questions are answered in a Q & A session. Engaging in dialogue with Friends both before and after the session provides additional ways of discovery.

Quakers Today:

In order to share *contemporary* Quaker faith and practice, Quaker Quest avoids references to Quaker history, structure and jargon. Exposure to these issues will come later as seekers continue on their Quaker path.

Experiencing Meeting for Worship:

After a brief but comprehensive explanation of Quaker worship practice, seekers join with meeting members in a 30-minute worship period. Most seekers have found this experience profoundly meaningful.

Each session in the series spans about two hours, with additional time socializing before and, perhaps, a light meal. All are encouraged to linger afterwards to browse literature tables, take light refreshment and to chat. There is no charge (other than for optional book purchases).

Although a meeting core team is formed to conduct Quaker Quest sessions, the entire meeting community provides support by giving an endorsement to the program, providing a Quaker presence at sessions and helping make visitors feel welcome.

10 Steps in Planning a Quaker Quest Program

1. Arrange for a Quaker Quest information workshop through PYM or FGC if you are outside PYM's region.
2. Your monthly meeting approves use of the program.
3. Your meeting community receives training through a preparation workshop and your meeting's Quaker Quest core team is identified.

4. During a six-month preparation period plans for the program's operation are made in detail. This planning period is important.
5. Advertising and promotional plans are developed and put into action. PYM has resources available for outreach and your yearly meeting may also maintain such funds. FGC may also help you select productive options and funding sources.
6. The meeting's Quaker Quest core team selects the session themes and the Quaker Quest cycle dates.
7. During the six-month preparation period, the meeting will assess its level of "spiritual hospitality." Materials for this process will be furnished. (See Spiritual Hospitality tips on page 6.)
8. The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Quaker Quest Working Group will assist in the preparations of the speakers for meetings within PYM. If QQ is new to your yearly meeting, please contact FGC.
9. Plan a comprehensive follow-up procedure for a caring and nurturing relationship with those who find you through your meeting's outreach methods.
10. Do an evaluation of your Quaker Quest program to help in any plans for future quests.

The Word Spreads

Large meetings and small throughout Philadelphia Yearly Meeting have been looking with new eyes at how seekers are welcomed. They are having deep, transforming conversations about their own spiritual well-being and growth. They are gathering inspired core groups and moving forward.

Harvey Gillman, British Quaker writer and lecturer, wrote in his Pendle Hill pamphlet, *Spiritual Hospitality*:

"Outreach is not only a matter of greeting people on the mat but making sure they are ministered to once they are inside the building, and giving them the opportunity to minister to us. ... We are to care for the spiritual health of all who come to us and doing so involves tending to our own spiritual health."

Quaker Quest's essential and most valuable gift is the opportunity it holds out to us for spiritual renewal and growth and a new recognition of who we are and how the Spirit can move us to greater service and a more enriching faith experience, while reaching out to others.

British Friend Davison again asks us—members, attenders, pastoral caregivers, seekers all:

"Are we not called to listen to spiritual needs and respond to the potential for transformation in everyone?"

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Lois and Harry Forrest, members of Medford (NJ) Meeting, are co-clerks of PYM's Quaker Quest working group. A past clerk of their meeting, Lois was for many years president of Friends Fiduciary, a board member of both AFSC and FGC, executive director of Medford Leas CCRC for 21 years, and a former YWCA executive. Harry is clerk of Medford's Adult Religious Education Committee and serves on Ministry and Counsel. Both are involved in community activities as well. They have four children, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Questions for Reflection

1. How do we articulate our faith—to our inner selves, to each other, to the broader community?
2. What is the condition of our vocal ministry — sharing that is deep and spiritually enriching or "enhanced announcements?"
3. How can our meeting become more open to new ideas?
4. What is our meeting's response to the four spiritual hospitality issues on page six:
 How do seekers find us?
 How do we welcome seekers?
 How do we appear to seekers?
 How do we share our faith?

One Meeting's Experience: Haverford (PA) Celebrates, Shares 'Spirit of Faith'

by Ben Lloyd

*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for
thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

— Hebrews, 13:2

Haverford Friends Meeting was the first in North America to prepare and present the Quaker Quest program. We didn't seek it out. We were *led* there.

We began with a concern: that we had a faith worth sharing, that people were hungry for it, but that they couldn't find us. This led to a more general leading: we committed ourselves to outreach, the on-going task of making connections with the world outside our meeting. Finally, we discovered the best form of outreach yet created: the program called Quaker Quest.

We diverged from the typical Quaker Quest format in two key ways. First, we only had four months to prepare before the first offering, not six as Quaker Quest suggests. There were two reasons for this. The first was our enthusiasm for the program and the support we felt from our meeting. The second was that we had one person in the meeting in place as part-time paid staff called the Outreach Coordinator. That person is me, and while it is not necessary to have such a person at work in your meeting in order to offer Quaker Quest, it did allow us a somewhat more condensed preparatory period.

Our second divergence was that we offered our Quaker Quest sessions on Sunday afternoons from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. QQ sessions are more commonly held on weekday evenings. But as part of our planning process, we identified parents with children as a specific group we wanted to draw to us, and so we offered QQ on Sunday afternoons with free childcare upstairs.

Our topics were Quakers and Peace, Quakers and Spiritual Experience and Quakers and Raising Children. Our Core Group decided on these topics because we felt we had people in our meeting who could speak about them well, and because we felt they were topics seekers would find compelling.

We advertised using brochures, posters, yard signs and radio ads on local public radio, the latter paid for through a grant we received from the Membership

Development Fund at Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. We felt the radio spots were an important part of our outreach. Our total "out-of-pocket" expenses for the entire program were a little over \$1,000.

After offering our topics twice, for a total of six QQ sessions in April and May of 2008, we can confidently say the program resulted in the attraction and retention of three new families with children and a handful of new single attenders. These people are with us still, and some have become members. But, because QQ, at its heart, is about celebrating and sharing the Spirit of our faith, I can also say confidently that QQ would have been a success even without these new people.

It was this Spirit which led us to QQ, this Spirit which bound five of us together in a Core Group, and led us joyfully in the minutia of planning and advertising.

This Spirit led the speakers to search themselves to speak truthfully and affirmatively of their faith experiences to the Core Group first, and later, to the groups of seekers who came to our Quaker Quest.

It was this Spirit which led to the "all hands on deck" enthusiasm of members and attenders creating well-presented snacks, guiding discussions at QQ sessions, and engaging seekers in warm conversation afterwards. Most of all, it was this Spirit which allowed us within the meeting to see each other in a newly warm and loving light, and to feel proud of our accomplishments and proud of who we are as Friends. This is not a vain pride. This is a healthy pride, which leads us to open our doors and invite strangers into our well-tended and welcoming faith communities, remembering the words of William Penn:

*True godliness does not turn men out of the
world, but enables them to live better in it and
excites their endeavors to mend it.*

This Spirit is alive and well among all Friends, and will soon gather Haverford Friends together again as we prepare for QQ "round two" in the spring of 2010. I invite any Friends who would like to sit in and observe our 2010 Quaker Quest process to contact me at blloyd@me.com. Please visit our 2008 Quaker Quest web site at: http://web.me.com/blloyd1/Benjamin_Lloyd/qq_HFM_2008.html

Spiritual Hospitality: Do We Hide Our Light Under a Bushel?

Before a meeting begins the Quaker Quest inquiry, members should wisely ask, "Are we ready?" By considering these four questions, you can assess your meeting's readiness. Then get started!

How do seekers find us?

By maintaining:

- A sign that's large, bold, attractive, readable from a distance, and well-lighted at night?
- Directional roadside signs pointing the way?
- Phone-answering system with call forwarding?
- Web site?
- Regular press releases, features, paid ads, a listing in a church directory?
- Participation in local inter-faith events, provide information booths at fairs, farm markets, etc.?
- Host

Resources

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting website

<http://www.pym.org/quakerquest/index.php>

Friends General Conference website:

www.fgcquaker.org/quakerquest

Clogg, Mary Jo, Quaker Quest, Friends Journal, February 2008

<http://www.friendsjournal.org/quaker-quest>
Pamphlets covering major themes raised by Quaker Quest participants, pub.

Quaker Quest 2007, available from FGC Bookstore, <http://www.quakerbooks.org>: *Twelve Quakers and Jesus ... God... Equality... Simplicity... Evil... Pacifism... Worship*

Quaker Quest in the UK:
<http://www.quakerquest.org/>

Lloyd, Benjamin, *Growing a Twenty-First Century Religious Society of Friends*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet, #387, 2006

community events like performances, etc.?

How do we welcome seekers?

By:

- Assigning specific members to personally greet visitors, invite questions about Friends, provide pamphlets explaining worship and testimonies?
- Inviting visitors to sign a guest book, sit with a greeter or member, introduce visitors both at rise of worship and at coffee time?
- Providing name tags for both visitors and members?
- Offering First Day School and child-care programs?
- Inviting attenders to become part of the meeting, socially and spiritually?

How do we appear to seekers?

By maintaining:

- an inviting perspective, reflecting Friends' environmental and historical values?
- Safe, clean, well lighted, neatly landscaped, walks, parking, drives in good repair?
- A welcoming, clean, well-lighted interior in good repair?
- A lobby: neat, simple and welcoming?
- Informational materials neat and accessible?
- Meeting for Worship space with well-kept, benches, clean cushions in good repair?
- Sparkling windows?
- Common areas that are clean, inviting, lighted, organized?

How do we share our faith?

By offering:

- Periodic educational sessions for new attenders?
- "Seeker's kit" with brochures or selected pamphlets and materials about your meeting, the Society, testimonies, and worship?
- A copy of *Faith and Practice* after a short time?
- Bench card explaining unprogrammed worship, meaning of silence, vocal ministry?
- Library shelf and invitation to new attenders to select?
- Small gestures like an invitation to lunch or visit?
- Our own stories of why we are Friends, why we stay?

A Tip: Share this issue of PCN with your meeting's committees! It is a valuable, compact guide to your own Quaker Quest program.

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