

Double Circles: *What Do Quakers Believe?*

Double Circles 1.0

The Double Circles exercise is a favorite among many Friends and serves as a powerful form of inreach *and* preparation for outreach and welcoming. While challenging, the questions and structure of this exercise allow for deep sharing and prompt many further conversations within the meeting. Moving from partner to partner gives people a chance to learn new perspectives from each other, build relationships, and consider their own faith journeys.

The purposes of this exercise include giving participants practice articulating their faith and having folks give gentle feedback to each other.

Equipment and set up:

- Arrange two concentric circles with pairs of chairs facing each other
- Those with less mobility should be in the circle that does not move.
- Use a watch with a second hand or a stopwatch to keep time and use a bell or flash the lights to alert the group of new instructions.

Share with the group: Although many questions ask what “Quakers” believe, folks are encouraged to try to speak from their own experience. These questions are asked in this manner because these are real questions asked by actual seekers. Invite folks to consider using the Hallmarks of Speaking About the Quaker Way as they respond.

Directions: The directions are on the next page/back so that you can see them all on one page.

Double Circles 1.0 Facilitation Guide

Directions:

Begin by asking Outer Circle “O” the first question. “O” responds to the Inner Circle “I” as though “I” had asked the question. Ring the bell or flash the lights after 60 seconds. Then ask “I” the second question. Ring the bell after 60 seconds. Ask folks in the circle that moves to rotate clockwise to the next seat. Follow the same pattern with the new pairs for every set of questions.

- This exercise is practice for articulating our faith to others. Although many questions ask what Quakers believe, try to speak from your own experience.
- Consider using the Hallmarks of QuakerQuest.
- Good Feedback Questions are:

Set 1: Question for O - What do Quakers believe?

Question for I – **How is Quakerism - or the Quaker way - different from other Christian denominations?**

Set 2: Question for O – How do Quakers view the Bible?

Question for I – **Do Quakers have sacraments?**

SET 3 Directions: After everyone has take their place, let the participants know that after each question in this set there will be 30 seconds to provide gentle feedback to their current partner. The feedback is about the answer that they just heard. This will be the only set of questions where feedback will be given.

Set 3: Question for O – **Is there a place for children in a Quaker meeting?**

Inner Group: Reflect on what you heard from the speaker. Was the response clear and did it made sense? Is there anything else you would have liked to have heard?

Question for I - **You say you have no dogmas and creeds, can you believe anything you like?**

Outer Group: Reflect on what you heard from the speaker. Was the response clear and did it made sense? Is there anything else you would have liked to have heard?

Set 4: Question for O - What is the difference between meeting for worship and meditation?

Question for I - **Are people really moved to minister in meeting or do they just like the sound of their own voice?**

Set 5: Question for O - Do I have to be a pacifist to be a Quaker?

Question for I – **What do Quakers believe about Jesus?**

Set 6: Question for O - If Quakers believe there is that of God in everyone, what about sin?

Question for I - **My lifestyle is not simple; what would I have to do to be a Quaker?**

Closing- It is very important to take this last step! Bring everyone back into a large group circle.

Go around the circle and ask everyone to share one word responding to the question. How are you feeling now? (Anyone can pass.)

Going Deeper: Double Circles 2.0

For a meeting that has practiced double circles 1.0

Use these questions and/or develop your own questions:

- 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 sin?
- You seem so serious; how do you have fun?
- 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?
- How can Quakers believe that everyone is equal?
- Do Quakers believe in the afterlife?

Variations: *Present a negative statement and ask it to be rephrased in a more positive way.*

For example:

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
We don't believe what we are told
We are not certain
We don't believe in hell and the devil
We don't evangelize

If there is time, invite very brief responses about the exercise. Did participants feel any growth in confidence? What need did it show for us to be able to respond more helpfully to newcomers? Point out the importance of engaging seekers in dialogue and not just sending them off with a leaflet or a book list!

Double Circles 3.0: Breaking the “Quaker Code”

Visitors to a Quaker meeting can sometimes find it challenging to understand the insider language used during announcements and conversations. Adopting a practice of explaining Quaker “code words” can contribute to an atmosphere of welcoming.

As a variation of the double circles exercise, present Quaker code words and invite participants to explain the term in simple language. **How might we speak more clearly so that people unfamiliar with the Quaker way can understand?** For example, *testimonies* can be explained as “the way we live our values.” *First Day School* can be translated to “Sunday School” or “Our Children’s Program.”

Choose a variety of terms from the list below, or add terms that are specific to your community.

Quaker

Friend

Worship

Monthly Meeting

Yearly Meeting

Quarterly Meeting

“FUM meeting” or “FGC meeting”

First Day School

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

AFSC

FCNL

QVS

Committee on Oversight

Ministry & Counsel Committee

Clerk

Testimonies

Member / Attender

Religious Society of Friends

Ministry

Queries and Advices

Convinced Friend

Facing Bench

Concern

Unprogrammed / Semi-Programmed / Programmed Worship

Book of Discipline

Gathered Meeting

Meeting for Sufferings

Birthright Friend

Epistle

Preparative Meeting

After some time of practicing, invite folks to reflect on the ways that the language we use can either build walls of separation or open doors to welcoming.