

# Starting the Conversation: Inreach and the Spiritual Community

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**Background:** Inreach is about meeting the spiritual needs of the people who are already part of your meeting community. It is about nurturing a spiritual community where individuals are connected to each other and to God/Spirit/Light/*That Which is Eternal*. Inreach also contributes to growing our meetings because the visitors that walk through our doors can perceive the vitality, spiritual depth, and sense of connection we share, leading some of them to think, “Ah yes, this could be my spiritual home.”

This activity invites Friends to consider what it takes to grow and sustain spiritual community, with the goal of making a plan for offering inreach activities that could foster a deeper sense of connection to each other and to Spirit within your meeting.

Plan for this discussion to take 30 minutes. It may be helpful for the meeting if the Adult Religious Education committee or an ad hoc inreach group schedules a time to design an inreach plan based on what is shared in this conversation.

**Begin:** Invite the group to settle and enter into worship.

**Introduce the topic:** Take a moment to think about what it means to build spiritual community. What are some practices, activities, or ways of being together that contribute to a sense of spiritual community?

**Write the questions below on flipchart paper and collect answers as shared by the group:**

*What is required to build or deepen spiritual community? What does inreach (spiritual deepening) look like in a meeting?*

[Possible responses: trust and vulnerability, time for worship, opening to grace, opportunities to share spiritual journeys, personal spiritual practices, opportunities for exploring Quaker faith & practice, authenticity, supporting each other in our struggles, sharing vulnerability and connection, some growing pains, real friendships and time for fun....]

**Note:** Many of these practices mirror the characteristics of a healthy meeting. Making time for building these types of connections and being intentional about inviting Spirit into the activities you share as a meeting will increase your sense of knowing each other and sharing a spiritual experience together.

**Ask:** *What types of inreach opportunities would we like to experience together as a meeting?*

**On flipchart paper, collect answers as shared by the group.** You may mention the range of opportunities listed in this toolkit and elsewhere, such as book discussion groups, 30-60 minute whole-meeting activities offered on Sundays before or after worship, intergenerational activities, small groups for sharing and explore spiritual practices, Bible Study groups, exploring Quaker faith and practice, one-on-one Spiritual Friendships, more frequent retreat/renewal time together, or mid-week worship opportunities.

**The goal of this conversation is to leave with a clear picture of what types of inreach opportunities Friends would like to share together, as well as what fits their lives and availability at this time, in order to create a custom inreach plan for the meeting.**

### **Note to Inreach Committees:**

To encourage spiritual deepening and relationship building, it's important to start all inreach activities with worship, to agree to shared norms of confidentiality, to meet in the same small groups for a period of time (6 weeks to 3 months), and to create multiple opportunities to share personal stories.