

Why Youth and Young Adults are Vital to the Religious Society of Friends

- God speaks to and through all of us; if we exclude younger Friends we are deprived of those voices. Ministers and elders can be of any age.
- Younger and older Friends bring different gifts, and all of them are vital for a healthy and thriving Religious Society of Friends. Intergenerational community keeps Quakerism alive and thriving.
- Many younger Friends bring a deep and alive sense of the Spirit which supports the powerful spiritual community for which we all yearn. Creating different, broader awareness for expressions of the Spirit helps keep worship vigorous.
- Intergenerational community offers the opportunity for older generations to share their experience and wisdom about our Quaker history, so that it may be passed onto different generations.
- Younger Friends often bring a sense of joy, fun, and play that invigorates our faith communities.
- Input from a variety of perspectives keeps meetings vibrant. New ways of doing things that have never been considered could bring new life to old practices.

How to Attract and Keep Families with Young Children

- Have a welcoming and safe facility for childcare and First Day School.
- Recruit non-parents to work in First Day School so that kids can develop relationships throughout the meeting, and so that parents can participate in Meeting for Worship.
- Be sure to talk to the parents as well as the babies.
- Worship:
 - Include children for a part of each week's worship.
 - Be welcoming of the additional noises in meeting, and let parents and children know it.
 - Periodically have full meetings for worship that are child-friendly. (Consider having a meeting for worship outside near a playground when the weather is nice.)
- Have meeting-wide intergenerational activities such as picnics, talent shows, game nights or retreats (being mindful to keep retreats affordable).
- Have an annual recognition day for children and give small tokens (such as a book from QuakerPress or flower) to each child.

Quaker Traditions that May Be Helpful to Young Friends

Friends often ask, how can we support our young Friends? There are a number of early Friends' traditions that can help us support and challenge one another to live more fully into our Light and callings. These processes and practices, often underused, can provide powerful opportunities for Friends of all ages and life stages to deepen their faith, test out leadings, and explore new opportunities. Below are some Friends traditions that might be of use for younger Friends.

Clearness Committees

A clearness committee meets with a person who is facing a difficult decision in his or her life. Through listening and asking questions, the committee helps the individual discern the leading of the Spirit and way forward. For example, a clearness committee might be used by a Friend considering civil disobedience or whether to follow a particular career path.

Anchoring Committees

After discerning the truth of a leading an individual may ask for an anchoring committee to help guide, support, and hold him or her accountable in following the leading. For example, a younger Friend feeling called to engage in cross-branch engagement might have an anchoring committee to



support that Friend in preparation for and after such gatherings.

Spiritual Friendships

A formal relationship between two people who invite God's working in their lives and who make an intentional commitment to journey and share together as their spiritual lives unfold. Such friendships can occur between people of the same or different generation.

Letter of Introduction

A meeting may write a letter of introduction for a member who plans to travel and may be visiting other meetings. Letters of introduction might also be useful to Friends who move away for college, boarding school, or a first job.

Sojourning member

A Friend residing temporarily near a meeting which is not his or her own may seek sojourning status. A minute of sojourn from a meeting can serve to introduce an individual and make clear the intentionality of a temporary period of attendance at a meeting.

Traveling Minute

An endorsement written by a meeting on behalf of a member who is traveling under the weight of a concern. This minute can serve to introduce the individual to a meeting and communicate the depth of the concern carried.



- Support parents by offering:
 - Clearness committees
 - Parents' nights out
 - Quaker topics discussion groups
 - Friendly Eights social groups
 - Couples Enrichment* weekends
 - Other activities that allow parents time to focus on their own spiritual practices or relationship time
 - PROVIDE CHILDCARE!
- Involving parents in the meeting:
 - Ask parents about good times for committee meetings that won't conflict with bed or nap time.
 - Make childcare available so that parents can focus on the work.
 - Welcome children into the committee meeting (and embrace his or her presence and all the joy and potential interruption that results). Alternatively, provide childcare during committee meeting times.
- Love the children and openly show it; talk to them, engage with them, and remember their names.

*an FGC sponsored program



- Intergenerational activities in a meeting help attract more young people and can enliven the community. That's also important because families with children are attracted to a multi-generational meeting.
- New leaders emerge of all ages. By nurturing, supporting and learning to follow younger leaders we contribute to the ongoing health of the Religious Society of Friends.