

ADVANCE REPORT FROM THE QUAKER RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE

The Quaker Religious Education Collaborative (QREC) is a grassroots network of Friends interested in Quaker religious education (RE). We are from all branches of our Quaker family, and we are international. We have a website and an online library of Quaker RE materials and resources, which is free for anyone to use.

In April 2014, four of us from four different Yearly Meetings, who were concerned about the future of Quaker religious education, began talking by telephone conference call. We realized that most unprogrammed Yearly Meetings as well as Friends General Conference had decided not to have paid staff for religious education. We decided to offer a gathering at Pendle Hill to address the future of Quaker religious education. We invited every Friend that the four of us knew who had been involved in Quaker RE.

When 34 Friends from 7 Yearly Meetings showed up in August 2014, we began our community of practice by sharing resources, skills, gifts, questions and insights in support of this Quaker ministry. Since then, we have had a conference every year, and we have moved our conference location every two years in order to provide as much access as we can. After our second year at Pendle Hill, we moved our conference to Quaker Hill in Richmond, IN. This past summer, we were at Powell House in upstate New York, where we will be next year. Our plan is to move to yet another location in 2020, probably in the southeast.

In 2016, we held our first Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business and became a 501c3. Our goal is to be theologically, geographically, and internationally inclusive. At our conference this past summer, we hosted two Friends from Kenya, three from Mexico, one from Bolivia, and one from El Salvador. As all Quakers are teachers and learners, we address religious education for all ages, all sizes, and all locations of Meetings.

Our work includes year-round Conversations Circles with on-line audio-visual discussions on a variety of RE topics. Our online newsletter, *QREC Connections*, highlights educational resources and opportunities to strengthen Friends RE programs. We have a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/quakers4re), an email account quakercollaborative4re@gmail.com, and even a Twitter account @Quakers4RE.

Launched early this year, our QREC website (www.quakers4re.org) hosts a collaborative, searchable, online library of RE materials, such as books, curricula, and videos. Friends who use the materials are invited to share their experience. Our library is free and available for anyone to use.

We organize our Collaboration around Circles of Friends who participate in different aspects of our work. Our Steering Circle is an administrative Circle. Each year we form a new Planning Circle for our next conference. We have a Website Circle, and many Conversational Circles on a variety of topics. Except for our annual conference, all of our work and meetings are online.

Becoming a member of QREC is easy. Anyone who attends a conference pays a \$5.00 membership fee, or one can become a member online. We accept donations. We have no paid staff. Our work is done by volunteers.

We have applied for and received generous grants from Shoemaker, Obadiah Brown, Sue Thomas Turner, New England Yearly Meeting, Friends World Committee on Consultation, Quakers Uniting in Publications, Texas Alternatives to Violence Project, and First Friends of Indianapolis. These grants have made parts of our work possible, such as the editing, printing, and distributing to yearly and monthly meetings a children's booklet, "Quaker Meeting and Me." Our expenses include scholarships to our annual conference, postage, our on-line audio-visual conference call fees, educational video projects, and banking fees.

QREC asks Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM) and all other Yearly Meetings to support religious education through voluntary *Institutional* memberships with annual donations to our budget. We would also like to have an official representative to QREC. We ask the BYM Religious Education Committee to consider this proposal and report back to our March 2019 Interim Meeting.

Quaker religious education is important work. The future of Quakerism is at stake. Meetings that have inadequate First Day Schools are not likely to attract families. Meetings that are not educating their adults in Quaker history, testimonies, and theology will not be vibrant or be able to provide Quaker religious education for their children.

We are asking BYM to support QREC and Quaker religious education.