

Baltimore Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice Revision Committee Proposed Advices, Queries and Voices

Outreach: Advices

What do we mean when we repeat Fox's admonition to "Let your life speak"? This simple sentence reminds us that it is our lives, not our words, that speak most reliably about who we are and what we believe. Our lives are our ministry, not the specific acts we think of as "official" ministry, such as speaking in meeting, following leadings, or carrying out our roles on committees. Jesus teaches us not to hide our lights; but to let them shine – as the gospel song would have it, "every day, every way." Outreach in this broad sense is not something we think about and plan; rather, it simply happens as we walk our paths in the world, lighted by "that of God" within us.

Advancement and outreach are natural and integral aspects of the Quaker way of life. Realizing that we are all children of God means that there is an infinite opportunity to search for God in our relations with others. Our fellowship begins, grows, and is nurtured in home and meeting. It reaches greater fulfillment as we carry our love of God and humankind to our relationships with persons in the wider community of which our Meeting is a part, with members of other Meetings, and with all persons whom we meet.

Outreach is not a monologue, but a dialogue - an adventure undertaken in the spirit of a musical improvisation with many instruments. Take time to learn about other people's experiences of the Light and, as you learn, give freely from your own. Respect the experiences and opinions of others, but do not be afraid to say what you value and to speak with conviction. Welcome the diversity of culture, language, and expressions of faith among Friends and members of other faiths.

Outreach also includes being open to others who may be tentatively "reaching in" to explore the Quaker faith. The sense of welcome is expressed in countless small details: the coffee is warm, the biscuits are good, the potluck is plentiful, and people say "hi." Most importantly, when someone walks in and asks, "What do Quakers believe?" it is the meeting's task to be sure that they are likely to get a well-informed answer from anyone they might approach.

Outreach: Queries

How does my life witness to my Quaker faith?

In what ways do I reach out to new attendees and encourage their exploration of Quakerism as a spiritual path?

How does our meeting convey Quaker faith and practice to the wider community?

Outreach: Voices

Let all nations hear the sound by word or writing. Spare no place, spare no tongue nor pen, but be obedient to the Lord God; go through the world and be valiant for the truth upon earth; tread and trample all that is contrary under.... Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one; whereby in them you may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.

George Fox, 1656 (North Pacific YM, p31)

Indeed if one has been visited by a direct sense of inward presence, he is driven to tell everyone who will listen to him. Strange and unendurable irony – that Friends who speak so much about the Inward Light should so timidly hide their own light under a bushel! The time has come to preach the faith we have resolved to practice. If we have good news for our brothers, and I believe we do, let us shout it from the housetops! Let us learn to be publishers of truth about our faith as well as our social concerns.

John Yungblut, Quakerism of the Future

BYM Proposed Advices, Queries & Voices

This story is told of a German woman living in Cologne in 1946. Her husband had been killed during the war and she was left with two small children. Their home was a damp basement beneath the ruins of a house... It is no wonder that she was a cynical and embittered woman when the Service Committee Workers found her. They were of the same nationality that she had been taught to hate, the ones who had killed her husband. But these people brought clothing, medicine, and food and above all sympathy and understanding. "Why do you do it?" she asked, and they tried to tell her something of the spirit that had sent them forth. Finally with tears in her eyes she exclaimed: "This is too good to keep to yourselves — Oh, why don't you preach what you practice!"

John Hobart, *Can Quakerism Speak to the Times?*

The sharing of our spiritual values with others, from our neighbors to the larger world, makes our outreach and advancement activities meaningful. Without spiritual motivation, our witness falls short.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting, 1988

Outreach is simply the process of making Quakerism available to those who are seeking, to those who may find value in its process. Whether these people become Quaker is of no consequence to the person who conducts true outreach. True outreach is an act of spiritual hospitality. It is an act of service to others to find and take what they need so they can find that of God in themselves and others.

Barry Crossno, *thequakerdharma*, 2005

Outreach is the natural result of the second great commandment that we love our neighbors as ourselves. It grows out of the spiritual attitude of caring and can take many forms, limited only by our imagination.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, *Outreach Ideabook*

Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every person has received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

I Peter 4: 9-10

My new acquaintance was told by my friend that I walked a Quaker path. The acquaintance's face lit up. "What is that?" she asked. For the next hour she peppered me with questions about the Quaker path. I could not evade or sidetrack her. She was intense. At the end she exclaimed, "If I had known all of this twenty years ago, I would have lived a different life!" I sat stunned, moved, elated, and saddened all at the same time... She had heard of Quakers all her life, but she never met a Quaker that would explain what it meant. To borrow and butcher a phrase from the Bible: it's time to stop hiding our light under a bushel.

Barry Crossno, *the quakerdharma*, 2005

We dimly see that this Gospel, before it has finished with us, will turn our lives upside down and inside out. Our favourite Quaker vice of caution holds us back. We have much more to learn before we are ready to teach. It is right that we have much to learn; it is right to recognise the heavy responsibility of teaching; but to suppose that we must know everything before we can teach anything is to condemn ourselves to perpetual futility.

George B Jeffery, 1934, 28.06

Our point of departure is not a mighty proclamation of Truth, but the humble invitation to sit down together and share what we have found, in the spirit of Woolman setting out on his Indian journey, "that I might feel and understand their life, and the spirit they live in, if haply I might receive some instruction from them." We approach them without pressure to accept a statement, or with proselytising zeal, but with "love as the first motion."

Harold Loukes, 1955, 28.08

Why have we been reluctant to share our faith? Has our message lost its value? Certainly not. How is it then that Friends retreated from a very active, prophetic kind of outreach, making their beliefs public at the risk of life, limb, and liberty, to our current position where outreach is low on our list of priorities, even actively opposed by some? For when we place a low priority on outreach we suggest either that our message isn't that important, or that somehow the rest of the world couldn't appreciate it, or that Quakerism is only for the select few.

Outreach Handbook of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting