
Set One Creating Inward Connections

Notes for facilitators and participants

What this set of study sessions is about

Many meetings have members and attenders from a wide range of faith backgrounds or none. Language can sometimes cause confusion (and hurt) rather than contribute to communication. In addition, many of us come from work/professional backgrounds where we are expected to behave in ways that may be at odds with the ways used by Friends. While Quakers have traditionally endeavoured to be open to new light from wherever it might come, Friends sometimes feel under siege trying to defend traditional practices, which they may not be experienced in articulating.

The sessions in Set One start with an **Introductory Session** – an opportunity to get to know one another, establish ways of working and consider the way ahead. The five sessions that follow offer ways of exploring five core elements of Quaker practice that underpin our worshipping communities. They are intended to help us:

- Establish what our meeting is about

Session 1: Living our Quaker values

- Explore how it conducts itself

Session 2: Meeting for worship for business

Session 3: Roles, responsibilities and service

- Consider how it handles conflict

Session 4: Addressing conflict

- Pay attention to how it is faring as both a spiritual and socially alert community

Session 5: Renewing our vision

Set One also includes two sessions of specific relevance to YMG:

Session 6: Discernment and Quaker decision-making.

Session 7: Debriefing after Yearly Meeting Gathering

Session 6 will help prepare those going to YMG, and by involving everyone in the group will contribute to upholding the work and discernment done there. You may wish to purchase additional sets of Documents in Advance if a number in the group are not attending YMG.

Session 7 is an opportunity for those who attend YMG to share the experience and learning they gain, and to convey this to others in the meeting.

Choosing which sessions to do from Set One

Whether you do all eight sessions or a selection, it will help to do them in sequence and to start with the **Introductory Session**. In any event, it would be unwise to start with the session on conflict.

If you don't intend to carry on as a group after Set One, consider finishing with the **Concluding Session**, also included with this set.

Set Two Creating Community

Notes for facilitators and participants

Session plans for **Set Two** will be sent to your meeting in time for you to begin working with them from September 2009.

What this set of study sessions is about

Many people come to Friends hoping to be part of some kind of community. They may express this in different ways - as a need for a feeling of connection, for people to talk to about things that matter, for somewhere they can do things that will make a difference, for a place to be still with others, or to feel involved and useful. Others arrive in a meeting not anticipating the community or corporate dimension of Quakers. But one of the distinctive things about Friends is the emphasis on a communal and corporate spiritual and witnessing life. For many Friends there are challenges in this – we are often part of multiple communities (work, neighbourhoods, extended family) and may be the only Quaker in our immediate family or group of friends. This can lead to pressures of time and other resources.

These sessions are intended to help us pay attention to five practices that when shared or undertaken together help a meeting build community. Each session explores one of these practices:

Session 8: Sharing our spiritual journeying

Session 9: Working meaningfully together

Session 10: Learning from one another

Session 11: Celebrating together

Session 12: Exploring and expressing friendship

Choosing which sessions to do from Set Two

Whether you do all five sessions or a selection, it will help to do them in sequence. If you are beginning as a group with this set, consider starting with the **Introductory Session**.

If you don't intend to carry on as a group after Set Two, consider finishing with the **Concluding Session**.

Set Three Creating Outward Connections

Notes for facilitators and participants

Session plans for **Set Three** will be sent to your meeting in time for you to begin working with them from September 2009.

What this set of study sessions is about

Over the course of our history Quakers have been in the vanguard of many spiritual and social concerns. We have always held to the idea that witness and worship go hand in hand and enrich the other. Finding allies in the community, witnessing to our values, and reaching beyond our own meeting to other meetings or our local geographical community feeds our worshiping, spiritual and social lives. Within the areas of Peace, Integrity, Equality, Justice, Truth, Simplicity, Community and Earth-care, we may be led, individually and corporately, to express our testimony to different issues. Working with others allows us to discover and explore shared truths and to find ways together to contribute to significant spiritual and social change.

Broadly speaking, there are five ways of witnessing to our Quaker testimony that help in the process of working with others, and which demonstrate the key Quaker idea that the means should be congruent with the ends. Each of the five sessions in Set Three explores one of these ways:

Session 13: Nurturing a shared vision

Session 14: Building and demonstrating the alternative

Session 15: Celebrating, praying and praising others

Session 16: Speaking out

Session 17: Carrying out symbolic and practical action

Choosing which sessions to do from Set Three

Whether you do all five sessions or a selection, it will help to do them in sequence. If you are beginning as a group with this set, consider starting with the **Introductory Session**.

It is especially useful at the end of Set Three to do the **Concluding Session** as a way of rounding off your engagement with this study pack and thinking about next steps. During this session you will be invited to reflect on your experience of working with these materials and to make notes to pass on to us. Facilitators will be invited to evaluate their experience of facilitating the sessions.