

## How to Make your Meeting More Welcoming to Young Adult Friends (YAFs)

- Be visible in your community. Many younger people are attracted to the Religious Society of Friends for its social activism—carry a meeting banner if you participate in marches, demonstrations, or other types of social action.
- Make sure you are listed in the local phone book and newspaper church listings. Have a meeting website with time and location of worship.
- Build relationships with young adult visitors to encourage them to continue attending. Organize times for socializing as well as worship, and be sure to extend personal invitations.
- Be on the lookout for the spiritual gifts and ministries of young adult Friends. Challenge your own assumptions about age and wisdom, and be willing to learn from people of all ages.

- Consider holding meeting for worship at a later hour, like 10:30 or 11 am, as it may be easier for younger adults to attend. (Many younger Friends may be up late on weekends studying or hanging out, and many rely on public transportation, which tends to have slower Sunday schedules).



## How to Reach Out to Local College Students

- Make sure your local college chaplain's office has the contact information for your meeting, so interested students can find you.
- Consider holding worship groups on campus. These worship groups should *not* be only for students, but an opportunity for the entire meeting community to connect with new seekers.
- Have resources available about Quaker history, diversity, and process for those who are new to the religion.
- Engage with new attenders about your beliefs as a Friend and ask about their beliefs and what they are seeking in a spiritual or religious community.
- Be actively inviting and welcoming to them. Show an interest in students' lives, and try not to *only* talk about academics.
- Offer to organize a carpool so that students without cars can attend worship.
- Invite students to other meeting events, such as study groups and potlucks. (You might mention that the students do not have to bring anything to the potluck, as this can be difficult for people with limited finances and without kitchens.)



## How to Start a Young Adult Friends Group in Your Meeting or Area

Some queries to consider before you begin:

- Are there young adult Friends in your area who have a need for a social group? How would you go about finding out? Are there people in your yearly meeting who might provide you with connections, help, or information?
- Might the group be a component of your monthly meeting or yearly meeting?
- Do you have an official Quaker presence on a local college campus? If not, could you start one? Could you connect with the campus ministries group?
- Is there a youth coordinator of any kind in your yearly meeting? Could this person be helpful to your meeting?
- What is a realistic time and place for such a gathering? Does your meeting have an appropriate space to offer? Could you have lunch regularly following meeting for worship, or would the group prefer meeting at another time? How often would Friends like to, and be able to meet?

Some things to try once you're ready to start:

- Schedule a regular potluck, worship group, lunch or coffee after meeting, or other activity especially for young adults.





- Hire or provide child care for young adults' children during their gatherings outside worship.
- Set up a listserv or email list for young adult Friends in your area. If possible connect this to the monthly and/or yearly meeting website.
- Promote the YAF (young adult Friends) group by announcing it regularly in your meeting announcement sheet, newsletter, and in verbal announcements after worship.
- Get in touch with young adult Friends who grew up in the meeting and who no longer come.
- Plant seeds of connection and interdependence within First Day School and high school youth which can potentially grow into a young adult Friends group.
- Personally talk to any young adult visitors or new attenders of the meeting and ask for contact information. Invite them to whatever events you have planned.
- Make sure that all youth and young adults in the meeting know that they are valued for their spiritual gifts and presence in your community.
- Consider the age range of young adult Friends (18-35) which includes people in high school, people in college, people who are parents, couples and singles, people with full-time jobs who live on their own and those who live with parents, etc. Don't assume a "one size fits all" approach to developing a group for young adults in the meeting!



- Try not to treat college students as people "just passing through." While a student may only attend your meeting for a few years, those years may be tremendously important in his or her spiritual development. Forging a meaningful connection may last a lifetime.
- It's also important to remember that, even as new attenders, a student or young new attender may not be new to Quakerism.



- Ask young adult Friends if they need assistance with transportation to worship, especially if your meeting is not centrally located, as many young people do not have cars.
- Invite young adult Friends to your monthly meetings for business, and let them know their gifts are welcomed on committees.
- Encourage younger Friends to engage with the wider Quaker community by attending events such as yearly meeting sessions and FGC Gathering, and provide financial support if needed and available.