

Report from Ad Hoc Outreach and Social Media Committee

(7/12/2024)

The committee received responses to the query regarding the basis of an outreach program from many of the monthly meetings. These responses were shared during an interest group on fifth day afternoon during the annual sessions. Based on the discussions from the interest group, the committee feels more clarity about the basis for any outreach effort.

The basis for the “why” of outreach would rest with each individual monthly meeting. The work of the yearly meeting would be done if monthly meetings want to engage in outreach on the monthly meeting level that would benefit from support from the yearly meeting. This support could be financial or advisory, and could include the possibility of outreach committees from monthly meetings regularly sharing experiences and supporting each other.

Any outreach effort by the yearly meeting would be to support and amplify constituent monthly meetings as they let their lives speak and they invite inquirers into community and spiritual fellowship. This would benefit not only new inquirers but could also help monthly meeting participants to be aware of activities in other monthly meetings and feel more connected to the yearly meeting community.

The committee proposes that this understanding be shared among the monthly meetings. Monthly meetings are asked to provide feedback on the following by tenth month interim body:

- 1) Does the monthly meeting have an active outreach program or intend to start one?
- 2) What support would the monthly meeting be interested in receiving from the yearly meeting regarding outreach?

Outreach thoughts

- We can reach people most widely and with the least time and energy expended through an improved use of social media platforms. The idea is not to create new activities for Friends, but to make more people aware of the activities that are already going on in a Quaker meeting nearby.
- Each local meeting should have its own on-line presence and identity. People will be most interested in people and activities that are local to them, not located at a distance. The yearly meeting can help make technological know-how available and can generate content for its own website, but local Friends will have to be willing to take pictures and write short descriptions of what the pictures show. The yearly meeting can help with training local Friends in how to be effective doing this.
- The overall market of social media users is fragmented, but also segmented by age, gender, etc. Specific platforms can be used to target specific audience subgroups. North

Carolina Friends could be active on more than one platform in order to reach a broad audience. Friends should choose carefully, and not attempt to be on all platforms at once.

- Facebook is still reaching literally millions of users daily. It is also becoming a platform with an identifiable age range; we can use that fact to tailor new content to the Facebook readership.

Role of the Yearly Meeting

- Maintain an inviting website which serves as an initial landing place for inquirers and makes them interested enough to follow links to a local meeting for further information and opportunities to sample the Quaker experience and/or to share in our healing work.
 - Maintain a yearly meeting web presence that will be inviting to inquirers, provide some basic information about our flavor of Quakers, and smoothly direct them to monthly meeting contacts. The yearly meeting web presence would become a temporary“landing pad” where they could learn enough about Quakers in general to become interested in finding out about a local meeting near them.
- Gather resources which will be of use to monthly meetings - both content and methods
 - Identify resource people who can help monthly meetings maintain their own social media presence.
 - Provide financial and technical resources to monthly meetings so that all can benefit from being more visible to a wider world.
 - Friendship Friends has already benefited from hiring a web designer for the monthly meeting website. The yearly meeting should help by providing financial resources to hire a web designer who would be available to monthly meetings without resources to do that on their own.
 - The yearly meeting web page could be used to host monthly meeting subpages at minimal cost to monthly meetings.

Recommendations

- Start with what already exists:
 - Websites
 - Improving Monthly Meeting Websites:
 - Yearly Meeting should identify and subsidize a competent web designer to implement an inviting website design for those monthly meetings who wish to use that service. This design should be one that can be maintained easily.
 - Improving Yearly Meeting Website:

- Should include more content (images and words) about who Quakers are and what we are doing in the world on our “front porch,” with material specific to yearly meeting members moved to a click or two away.
 - Every social media post made should communicate the message, “Here is how we Quakers are living in the world.” That does not mean that every post has to be long or serious. But that’s how to decide what does and doesn’t get posted.
- Facebook:
 - 71% of all Americans are on Facebook: that’s roughly 221.6 million American Facebook users as of 2021 (see *Additional Readings*, below).
 - There is a current Facebook group identified with the yearly meeting. A Facebook group is inward-facing, and not the right vehicle for advancement and outreach purposes.
 - To meet Advancement & Outreach goals, the yearly meeting should use a Facebook page, rather than a group. This page should be outward-facing; that is, aimed at persons new to Quakerism rather than existing Quakers.
 - The existing Facebook group may want to continue as an independent activity, private or unlisted. We propose that members of the group name and support moderators for the group and note that posts are not endorsements by the YM.
 - Encourage monthly meetings to provide information to the yearly meeting about their activities that could be posted on the Facebook page and encourage viewers to seek out details from the local monthly meeting.
- Future Steps:
 - Continue to maintain an interesting, up to date web presence that is inviting to newcomers.
 - When ready, pick one additional social media platform, targeting a different demographic, and develop resources to participate there usefully.
 - Encourage and enable monthly meetings to develop their own web and social media presence where appropriate.