

A Friendly Welcome for Families: Spoken and Unspoken Messages of Our Meeting Spaces

Adapted from "Good Ideas and Great Practices for Becoming a More Welcoming Meeting," created by the Outreach Working Group of New York YM

Street Presence: *Do people passing by know that Quakers worship here and all are welcome?*

- Include mention of *children's programs and welcome* on the signage.
- *Where there's foot traffic, have a "stroller parking" area and signage.*

Greeting and Welcome: *Do new attenders and visitors get the information and connections that make them feel comfortable to come again?*

- What is the experience of entering the meeting space with children like? Is there an entryway or other space to transition and be ready to go to worship or children's programs? Where will children hang up coats, put boots, or stash a stroller?
- If you have programs for children and youth, a greeter should have a handout with description of what is offered (child care, children's religious education, teen/youth program) and a calendar or schedule where applicable.
- In many cases, children and parents will opt for them to stay in worship the first time they come. Having a basket near the greeter with picture books, coloring pages and crayons or colored pencils is helpful and denotes welcome of children. (Be sure to check books, and other materials with images, for inclusion of people of color and other diversity.)
- "*Color Me Quaker! A coloring book for kids of all ages*" is available from Friends United Press <https://friends-united-meeting.myshopify.com/products/color-me-quaker>. Friends General Conference has wonderful children's "Activity Pages" that correspond with their Newcomers Cards: <https://www.fgcquaker.org/resources/quaker-childrens-activities-pages>.
- Do you have a basket with copies of "Quaker Meeting and Me" from the Quaker Religious Education Collaborative available to give to visiting children?

A Welcoming Space: *What is the first impression of visitors to your meeting place? Will they feel at home and be able to picture themselves there?*

- Is the entry area clean, well-lit, and uncluttered?
- Is there a changing area/table for babies in a restroom?
- At coffee hour: is this space comfortable for people with children to participate? A small table with little chairs for children to sit at while adults talk can be very supportive to parents. Is there a high chair?
- Do a walk-through exercise of your meeting space to see through newcomers' eyes what it is like to visit for the first time, including for young children and teens. (Perhaps ask the young people in your meeting to help with this!)