

Highlights from QREC's 2021-2022 Work and Ministry



The Quaker Religious Education Collaborative, across regions and cultures, stepped up in robust, faithful ways to listen, discern, and serve some of the emerging needs of our community of practice during this second year of the pandemic. We drew on our creativity and craft of teaching in this time of reset and recalibration of our ministry. The Covid 19 pandemic, in many cases, imperiled the very existence of the religious education programs in Friends meetings and churches. Many families drifted away from their Quaker communities, while experienced teachers rotated out of service, new teachers needed to be called and trained, and previous styles of content and programming lost their appeal. The myriad challenges cascaded and compounded each other.

The interaction among the challenges may also be a key to a new beginning. We can see how a new way forward, might address multiple needs. Fruitful approaches that can attract families and enliven faith in this new time include intergenerational programming, experiential learning, faith formation extending into the home, and a heightened awareness that Quakerism is useful in guiding all aspects of our life. If there is one overarching theme it might be “re-integration” and yearning for wholeness.

QREC has responded to these needs and shifts by:

- building our collective capacity to do the work,
- regathering and strengthening our communities of practice, and
- actively exploring new ways to speak more fully to Friends’ conditions.

We used the tools at hand like our Conversation Circles and Valiant Together Facebook Page, financial reserves in the form of grant monies, living connections with Friends around the world, and our ability to create new resources to respond to emerging needs.

Conversation Circles

Conversation Circles are regular opportunities for our worldwide community to gather online to explore, grapple, and share around a particular aspect of our work and ministry. The topics are carefully discerned and often a guest presenter speaks briefly to frame the topic. The Conversation Circles are usually offered twice during the 3rd week of the month, Tuesday time at 1pm Eastern and Thursday at 8pm Eastern. Each gathering increased our capacity to do the work and built our QREC community of practice. Topics this year included: World Quaker Day, Faith Formation through Service Opportunities for Quaker Youth, Quaker Parenting, Faith at Home, Safety in Meetings, Intergenerational Religious Education, and Experiments in Worship: Plain, Virtual, and Blended. The notes from each Conversation Circle with a list of resources are posted on the QREC website and are a treasure trove. They can be found on our QREC website under the Events tab. Canadian Friends asked for a demonstration of the Conversation Circle process to experience this spiritually grounded mode of online gathering so that they might use it to strengthen the community of practice across Canada.



QREC Conversation Circles—Each year between 8 and 10 are offered on topics at the cutting edge of Quaker Religious Education practice. They are free but registration is required.

Valiant Together Facebook Page

The QREC community of practice continues to use our Facebook group to connect, share resources, and ask questions of one another. Increasingly, members are posting there and starting conversations in addition to the facilitator, Melinda Wenner Bradley. We've changed the name of the group to, "[Valiant Together: Sharing Quaker Religious Education Support & Resources](#)" and removed the reference to "during Covid-19." While born of the need to connect and share when the pandemic began, the group has outgrown that crisis and now has more than 400 members in a network of support and sharing."



As our network grows and extends its reach, we listen for what Friends say they need in their areas. The generous support QREC received from the Thomas H. and Mary Williams Shoemaker Fund allowed us to sponsor several regional gatherings this year, online, in-person, or hybrid. In October 2021, we organized two Zoom Basics training for African Friends with Kellum Ashuma, Internet Technology Director at Friends Theological College (FTC). He offered Tech Support at our 2021 conference and came to see that simple guidance would really help many African Friends engage more fully with the worldwide QREC family.

Africa Quaker Archives Workshop—November 2021

In November, we helped to sponsor a 4-day workshop for the Africa Quaker Archives at Friends Theological College in Kaimosi, Kenya. A diverse group of Friends gathered in terms of age, experience, and roles in local and yearly meetings. Some were presiding clerks of yearly meetings and some were Sunday School teachers. QREC funded travel from Nairobi to Kaimosi for Jane Matasio, the primary presenter. Jane is a Quaker and Archivist at the Kenya National Archives. She instructed the FTC Librarians in archives management and Quaker leaders and others in the importance of preserving Minutes of Meetings for Business and other documents. Judy Nandikove and Marian Baker offered a daylong

workshop on collecting oral histories from Friends with deep lives of faith. A primary assumption of this 4-day series was that each Friend would go home and train others. Again, we see the themes of re-integration and building of community and capacity to do the work. This integration produced an attendance demographic that was younger and had many more women than Quaker workshops typically have in Africa. This is a striking change, and we hope a sign of things to come.

First Africa Quaker Archives Workshop at FTC



AFRICA-QREC Sunday School Teachers' Workshop—April 2022

We sponsored an AFRICA-QREC conference at Quaker Homes in Nairobi, Kenya, April 1-3, 2022. Under a festive tent, 32 Sunday School teachers gathered with 7 presenters in person and Melinda Wenner Bradley online, who offered a Godly Play/Faith & Play Presentation. Other topics included: Teaching Methodologies, How to Manage with Different Ages in the Classroom, Preparing Lessons from the Bible, Outreach to Children, and Pastor Joyce Machaha explored the theme, “Feed My Flock” from 1 Peter 5:2.



AFRICA-QREC Sunday School Teachers' Workshop at Quaker Homes, Nairobi, Kenya

Colaborativa de Educación Religiosa Cuáquera (QREC) América Latina

In October 2021, Rossio Quispe offered a reprise of her workshop on *Creativity and Design for Sunday School Materials: The Art of Colors* originally offered at the QREC 2021 Annual Conference. Friends from Cuba, Bolivia, Guatemala, and El Salvador attended. Another

important initiative was arranging a Godly Play Workshop with Caryl Creswell for Latin American Sunday School teachers, offered in Spanish. Scheduled for June, it had to be postponed because of a loss in the Creswell family. Way opened to include it in the Annual Conference in August 2022. It consisted of two sessions on the same day. The Directiva de América Latina created a survey in Spanish in order to ascertain topics of interest for future workshops and skills and areas expertise they would like to share with other Latino Friends. The survey has been disseminated and the results will be known soon.

We supported Latin American Friends by offering grants to encourage their work. The Colaborativa de Educación Religiosa Cuáquera (QREC) América Latina discerned the process and disbursed the funds at the local level. Friends in Bolivia, Guatemala, and El Salvador discerned the funds allocated to them were best used to bolster the ministries of individual Sunday School teachers who were most in need of classroom supplies and resources.

For example, among Cuban Friends the grant was used to create two in-person workshops in Gibara, Cuba. This gathering in May 2022 explored Mysticism in reflecting on Acts 8:26-39. In this passage, God tells Phillip to go to the desolate road and there he met the Ethiopian eunuch who was eager to talk about faith. His eyes were opened to the ministry of Jesus.



Sunday School Teachers' Workshop in Gibara, Cuba
organized by Kirenia Criado, Pastor and Clerk of Cuba YM Christian Education Committee

Any training event served at least three purposes. It increased the skill and capacity of our practitioners. It strengthened the social ties among their group and deepened the trust in their community of practice. And the event kindled hope that a wider community of Quakers was holding and accompanying them. The QREC Steering Circle humbly walks with practitioners. We trust the regional QREC leaders to make the best decisions about how to use their funds and in so doing embody our commitment to equality and mutuality.

Templates to Encourage Local/Regional RE Gatherings

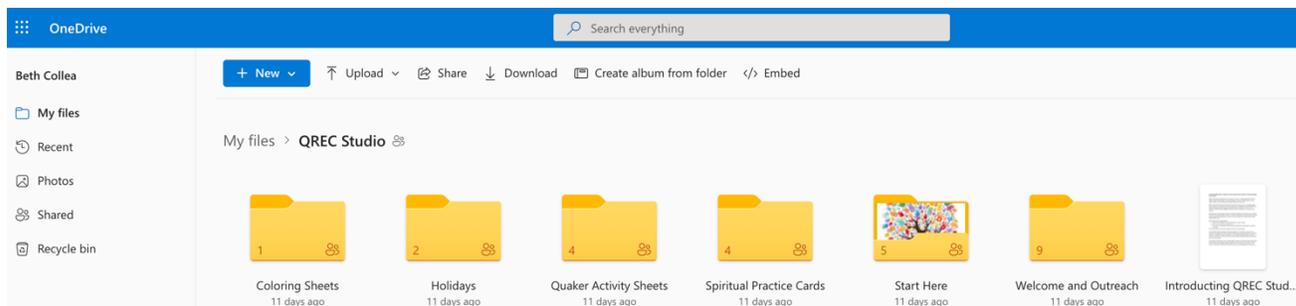
As part of our effort to strengthen local communities of practice, Andrew Wright and Melinda Wenner Bradley created generic materials that can be customized to streamline planning local or regional religious education gatherings. From sample online registration

forms to possible schedules for a gathering and queries for reflection, Andrew and Melinda have given us all a running start on galvanizing our local communities of practice. Soon to be released.

QREC Studio

This year, QREC launched the *QREC Studio*, a new generation of resources—customizable documents that support Quaker faith formation and outreach. *QREC Studio* is a fresh, robust response to the challenges and changes Quakerism is facing now. We hope this growing collection of documents will supply inspiration and tools to re-engage and support families, strengthen the connections in local meetings/churches, and even reach beyond immediate Quaker circles with invitation to open oneself to Spirit. Most of the documents set the stage for active engagement on the spiritual journey rather than simply imparting information about Quakerism. There are Spiritual Practice Cards, Quaker Family Activity Sheets, Coloring Pages, and more.

The documents are on a OneDrive. Simply download the generic version and tweak and customize any aspect of the language. We know your ministry has to have the right tone and vibe for your particular community. <https://tinyurl.com/26cvv7vb>



RISE Curriculum

QREC identified and lifted up two significant projects, not initiated by QREC, that exemplify the hallmarks of re-integration of Quakerism into daily life. One is Durham Friends' RISE curriculum—*Relationship, Integrity, and Sexual Embodiment*. Andrew Wright and Oriana Messer recognize the integration of relationships and sexuality as the primary spiritual work of adolescence. QREC funded Oriana Messer to craft a curriculum from rich material honed over seven years with teenage Friends in Durham (NC) Meeting.

Vocational Discernment Project at Beacon Hill Friends House

QREC also highlighted the Vocational Discernment Project at Beacon Hill Friends House as our Pre-conference Workshop. Jen Higgins-Newman and Greg Woods had a leading to make Quaker discernment practices available to the wider public. This is truly a ministry as they speak to the condition of young adults and others seeking career and life direction clarity. It is a very promising direction for Quaker outreach. Jen and Greg focus on the universal need to find purpose in life and to align inner values with work in the world. Using queries and clearness committees, they help Quakers and others to navigate times of life transition. They have generously posted directions online so that others may run

Vocational Discernment groups. Their workbook is available online and in hardcopy. [
<https://bhfh.org/bhfh-discern/>]

The BHFH Vocational Discernment Project



A Vocational Discernment Retreat in progress, Online and in-person

We are delighted to welcome three new Steering Circle members: Cameron Hughes from Goose Creek Meeting in Virginia, Emma Condori Mamani from La Paz, Bolivia part of Holiness Yearly Meeting, and Pam Ferguson, who serves as Pastor at Winchester Friends Church in Indiana which is associated with Friends United Meeting. We are grateful to each one who has answered the call.



And, a last note of gratitude, after 6 years of dedicated leadership and faithful service, Sita Diehl is stepping down from the Steering Circle. We are so very grateful for all of the gifts Sita brought to the Steering Circle and to QREC and for the earnest way she carried the work, her administrative expertise, and her clarity about the power of Quaker religious education to ground lives in that which is eternal. Sita will maintain her stewardship of the Conversation Circle Working Circle and the online resource library.

Sita Diehl, Madison Friends Meeting

Each of you is now a QREC Ambassador. We are all teachers, and we are all learners. Please take word of the Collaborative home and share our story, that you are now part of. Invite your Meeting or Friends Church to come along on this faithful journey, giving in their measure to support our work.

We hope to see you virtually or in-person at QREC 2023. The date and place will be discerned as part of the recalibration of our ministry for this new time.

The Quaker Religious Education Collaborative Steering Circle, 2021-2022

Melinda Wenner Bradley, Winchester Friends Meeting, Philadelphia YM

Beth Collea, Dover Friends Meeting, New England YM

Emma Condori Mamani, Bella Vista Friends Church, Holiness Friends YM

Sita Diehl, Madison Friends Meeting, Northern YM

Pam Ferguson, Winchester Friends Church, Friends United Meeting

Marsha Holliday, Friends Meeting of Washington, Baltimore, YM

Cameron Hughes, Goose Creek Friends Meeting, Baltimore YM

Jane Jackson, Treasurer, Friends Meeting at Cambridge, New England YM

Judith Nandikove, Donholm Friends Church, Nairobi YM

Andrew Wright, Durham Friends Meeting, North Carolina YM of Friends (Conservative)