



Two Models for Revitalizing Monthly Meetings

March, 2022

Over the past two years, SouthJerseyQuakers (SJQ) staff – working in Burlington, Haddonfield and Salem Quarters – have engaged with Friends across South Jersey regarding the importance of outreach and membership development.

Although most meetings were closed due to the COVID pandemic, two smaller meetings held a series of activities to raise their visibility in their respective communities and thus attract new attenders. Their ultimate goal was to expand the number of active members and thus revitalize their meetings. SJQ staff provided various kinds of support including training, networking, and organizing assistance.

The next two pages include a summary of activities undertaken by Barnegat and Cropwell meetings. We share them as possible models for how other meetings might raise their visibility and hopefully attract new attenders as well. If your meeting would like to explore some of these ideas, please email SouthJerseyQuakers@gmail.com or contact a member of the SouthJerseyQuakers team:

Burlington Quarter: Charles Hardy - sjqburl@aol.com

Haddonfield Quarter: Josh Ponter - haddonfieldquarteryouth@gmail.com

Salem Quarter - Carleton Crispin - carleton.southjerseyquakers@gmail.com

Overall project - Linda Lotz – southjerseyquakers@gmail.com

Barnegat Model

Starting point –

- Small meeting. Most members retired (over 65). Declining attendance due to attrition. Some differences of opinion on whether to begin outreach, with some feeling interested newcomers would find the Meeting on their own, as in the past.

Activities -

- Discussed outreach – why it's important, basic tips.
- Budgeted funds for an event series to promote Quakerism and inform the public that Barnegat is an active congregation with worship year-round.
- Started a Facebook account and posted new content regularly.
- Updated the website regularly, including upcoming events and recent activities.
- Promoted the Meeting's website and social media in event invitations and handouts.
- Offered a series of programs of general interest on topics such as green burial, local environmental concerns, homelessness, and lots of concerts. Most events on Zoom.
- Held a major cleanup of the Meetinghouse for re-opening, after being closed for several months due to the pandemic.
- Held internal conversations about welcoming and integrating newcomers into the meeting as well as keeping in touch with inactive members.

Response –

- Great turnout for the public programs and concerts increased the Meeting's visibility and generated a core group of followers. Pre-registration facilitated creation of a mailing list and tracking attendance. The initial event, a 2020 Holiday concert, attracted 95. Subsequent attendance varied due to topic: of interest to Quakers, local residents, or society at large. Broad interest topics averaged over 40 attendees.
- The Meeting has started inviting regular attendees at public events to participate in small group activities, such as discussions of Pendle Hill pamphlets. These invitations are being accepted, increasing attendance and creating the foundation for a future that will include remote membership and participation in the life of the Meeting community.
- Based on outreach and a grant-funded postcard mailing, the Meeting has received inquiries about Quakerism and a few dozen visitors at our open houses.

Summary: The current Meeting members are very encouraged about the future of the Meeting, whereas two years ago there was a concern the Meeting was heading toward being laid down. While still small, the Meeting is vibrant.

Cropwell Model

Starting point – Two active members plus periodic visitors.

Activities –

- Formed a committee, drawing in family and Quarter staff to develop an outreach plan, emphasizing publicity via Facebook & Instagram, local & online newspapers, history groups, and Google reviews.
- Special cleaning of the meetinghouse and property.
- First event was an open house in mid-September. Additional outreach included signs posted on their fence on a busy street. Several Quaker and local groups were invited to have a literature table. Personal invitations to various people. 60-70 attended including mayor and a township council member, Friends from nearby meetings, and members of the public. People stayed for lunch, provided by the meeting. Children's activities were planned however, few attended.
- Produced a humorous TikTok video. See: [#thingsthatmakesense](#)
- Two Sunday events were held in November and again in December. Themes related to holidays, with faith underpinnings. Worship, short presentation, community potlucks. Again, lots of publicity; 15+ people in attendance for each.
- In early 2022, programs held 1st Sunday of the month. Intergenerational event included reading of "Stone Soup" followed by making and enjoying soup. Also, programs on the Quaker roots of the game Monopoly and Climate Change in late Winter. Upcoming topics: Birds (April) and Friends in Business (May).

Response -

- First new member welcomed in February.
- A slowly growing number of attenders includes children. Average attendance: 10-18.
- Great article in a Facebook group followed by 5,000+ https://www.70and73.com/news/200-plus-years-cropwell-friends-meeting-in-evesham-seeks-new-members-open-house-this-saturday/article_c40e36d0-13cf-11ec-b7ce-37917c9ed7f3.html?fbclid=IwAR2XFVWBYQH12B4ZcTpBNw8NZ3nKCSGEffwqtKN5_j_k6U9tho6WuA1jsYw

