

Quaker Religious Education Collaborative Forms

On August 17 and 18, 2014, thirty-three Friends gathered at Pendle Hill in Wallingford, PA to envision the future of religious education among Friends. We left feeling exhilarated, believing that way had opened for a collective effort in Quaker religious education that reaches across the current yearly meeting, organizational and geographic boundaries. "Elegant in its simplicity, the meeting planted a thousand seeds," is how one Friend described the gathering.

The major underpinnings the gathered group confirmed:

- Religious education for Friends is about taking people to their Inner Teacher.
- Each Quaker Meeting grows in its own way.
- Whatever we do must be theologically and geographically inclusive.
- Meetings need families, and families need religious education.
- Religious education is for children of all ages.
- From infant to elder, all of us are teachers, and all of us are learners.

The way this collaboration came about was amazing. Last spring, four Friends were led to expand their discussions on religious education resources and networking by inviting others from across the country to conduct Listening Circles focused on religious education joys and challenges. In faith, they reserved space at Pendle Hill to gather a first meeting of an emerging Collaborative. By August, 33 Friends from Texas, Tennessee, Oklahoma, South Dakota, New York, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Maine, Massachusetts, and Washington, DC responded to the call to gather. Many more Friends added their voices from the Listening Circles. At Pendle Hill a steering group for the Collaborative was formed.

Our intentions going forward:

- Continue to build an international online community of practice using a contact list that has grown to almost 100 names and represents 15 yearly meetings and three countries
- Create an on-line repository of Quaker curricula and teaching/learning resources that could be freely available to everyone
- Establish a fluid structure that would allow us to raise money to pay for a website
- Support the set-up of small, virtual working groups around religious education topics
- Gather the RE community of practice together again in 2015
- Offer an RE Institute in the USA within the next four years

Interested in joining us or learning more about what is available for those in Quaker RE and the work of the Quaker RE Collaborative? Contact: quakercollaborative4re@gmail.com

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