

THE GREAT TURNING

You've asked me to tell you of the Great Turning

Of how we saved the world from disaster.
The answer is both simple and complex.
We turned.

For hundreds of years we had turned away as life on earth grew more precarious
We turned away from the homeless men on the streets, the stench from the river,
The children orphaned in Iraq, the mothers dying of AIDS in Africa

We turned away because that was what we had been taught.
To turn away, from our pain, from the hurt in another's eyes,
From the drunken father, from the friend betrayed.

Always we were told, in actions louder than words, to turn away, turn away.
And so we became a lonely people caught up in a world
Moving too quickly, too mindlessly toward its own demise.

Until it seemed as if there was no safe space to turn.
No place, inside or out, that did not remind us of fear or terror, despair and loss,
anger and grief.

Yet, on one of those days, someone did turn.

Turned to face the pain.
Turned to face the stranger.
Turned to look at the smouldering world and the hatred seething in too many eyes.
Turned to face himself, herself.

And then another turned.
And another. And another.
And as they wept, they took each other's hands.

Until whole groups of people were turning.
Young and old, gay and straight.
People of all colours, all nations, all religions.
Turning not only to the pain and hurt but to beauty, gratitude and love.
Turning to one another with forgiveness and a longing for peace in their hearts.

At first, the turning made people dizzy, even silly.
There were people standing to the side, gawking, criticizing, trying to knock the
turners down.
But the people turning kept getting up, kept helping one another to their feet.
Their laughter and kindness brought others into the turning circle

Until even the nay-sayers began to smile and sway.

As the people turned, they began to spin
Reweaving the web of life, mending the shocking tears,
Knitting it back together with the colours of the earth,
Sewing on tiny mirrors so the beauty of each person, each creature, each plant, each
life
Might be seen and respected.

And as the people turned, as they spun like the earth through the universe,
The web wrapped around them like a soft baby blanket
Making it clear all were loved, nothing separate.

As this love reached into every crack and crevice, the people began to wake and
wonder,
To breath and give thanks,
To celebrate together.

And so the world was saved, but only as long as you, too, sweet one, remember to
turn

-- Christine Fry (October 19, 2004)

*Thanks to Joanna Macy, American Buddhist activist and a beloved teacher, for this
phrase

THE QUAKER SOCIAL CHANGE MINISTRY PROGRAM

About Quaker Social Change Ministry (QSCM)

(Adapted from "Implementing Small Group Social Change Ministry," by Kelly Dignan and Kierstin Homblette.)

Why join QSCM?

As Quakers, our faith calls us to be agents for social change. Without a supportive community, social change work can be draining, confusing, unsustainable, frustrating, and scattered. Quaker Social Change Ministry (QSCM) provides a simple but transformative approach to doing social change work, bringing together small groups of Friends to focus on an issue that connects the congregation, the local community, and AFSC. A Quaker Social Change Ministry group is a place to worship, build trust, take risks, make mistakes, learn together, and deepen the connection between social change and spiritual growth. The Quaker Social Change Ministry group becomes a home base from which Friends engage with the world and return for reflection, discussion, and renewal. Quaker Social Change Ministry connects Friends to that which is larger than ourselves and calls us into right relationship as we walk beside our partners and endeavor to co-create the Beloved Community.

Mission

Quaker Social Change Ministry began as a pilot program of Friends Relations in 2015 in order to:

- Create an opportunity for Friends to engage in social justice work at the congregational level in partnership with AFSC.
- Bring together Friends Relations staff, AFSC program office staff, and Friends meetings/churches in a shared vision and approach to social justice work.
- Organize Quakers to be effective allies for social justice through a model of accompaniment.
- Connect Spirit and action in Friends' meetings and at AFSC.

Vision

Friends Relations envisions Friends' meetings and churches around the country participating in the QSCM program, utilizing the program as a vehicle for doing powerful social justice work while following the lead of communities most impacted and modeling the Beloved Community. QSCM groups can be relied upon to be supportive, constructive, and reliable allies, and Quakers are excited to have a useful role to play in building AFSC's capacity and supporting social movements through the QSCM program. Friends and AFSC will both experience the benefits of this collaboration. Friends' meetings and churches participating in QSCM will build deeper relationships within their congregations and deeper relationships with impacted communities, re-enliven their corporate witness, and welcome in new members. AFSC program offices accompanied by QSCM groups will appreciate their deep commitment, long-term support, and willingness to listen. The relationship between Friends and AFSC is an overwhelmingly positive one that can contribute significantly to building local capacity for social change.

Values

- Living out Friends' testimonies in the world and reclaiming corporate witness.
- Restorative justice and centering the voices and leadership of communities most impacted.
- Modeling the Beloved Community we wish to co-create.
- Relationships built on trust, integrity, and staying in it for the long haul.
- Group process, learning, and sharing.
- A shared vision for peace with justice

How does Quaker Social Change Ministry work?

- QSCM groups focus on one of five key issue areas—mass incarceration, migrant rights, racial justice, Israel/Palestine, and confronting Islamophobia.
- Justice work is done as accompaniment, building relationships with communities most impacted by the issue and following their leadership.
- QSCM connects Spirit and activism through storytelling, worship, and covenantal relationships.
- QSCM can be used within Peace & Social Concerns committees or by a small group working outside of meeting/church committee structure.
- AFSC provides one-on-one support, program materials, training opportunities, and regular conference calls with other QSCM groups.
- Groups commit to the program for at least one year in order to fully see its benefits.
- Each QSCM group has a coordinator or co-coordinators who stay in regular contact with Friends Relations and take on the responsibility of guiding their group through the program.

THE QUAKER SOCIAL CHANGE MINISTRY PROGRAM

Detailed description of a meeting

(Adapted from “Implementing Small Group Social Change Ministry,” by Kelly Dignan and Kierstin Homblette.)

The form and flow of a meeting determines a lot and can function as an expression of the values of the people gathered. Many people, no matter how passionate they are about an issue, will determine their level of involvement in a project based on the quality of the meetings. This model is an attempt to create an environment where new members feel welcomed, the gifts and contributions of all members are valued equally, and deep, supportive relationships are grounded in Spirit.

Roles and structure of the meeting

Part I (45-60 minutes): Roles - facilitator, someone who shares a spiritual practice, and a storyteller.

- Read group covenant aloud (5 minutes)

- Centering worship (5-10 minutes)

- Individual check-ins (5-10 minutes)

- Spiritual practice (10-15 minutes)

- Storytelling (10 minutes)

- Group reflection (10-15 minutes)

Part II (45-60 minutes): Roles - facilitator, note-taker/recording clerk, researcher(s).

- Business (40-55 minutes)

- Closing words and closing worship (5-10 minutes)

Part I: Read group covenant aloud

This can be done at any point before the storytelling section of Part I. Group members pass around the covenant, taking turns reading each statement aloud. This reminds the group of its shared intentions and helps welcome new members into the group.

Part I: Centering worship

This can include the sharing of a “third thing,” or a brief poem, quote, or scripture verse. Centering worship is not just a way to quiet our minds. It is a way to connect to ourselves, to our fellow group members, and to Spirit/Love/Truth/God. The sharing of a poem, quote, or scripture verse is another way for group members to participate, and it can also help the group go to a deeper place of worship.

Part I: Individual check-ins

Allow time for everyone present to do a brief check-in. A prompt or format, such as joys and concerns, may be used to encourage sharing. It is important for everyone’s voice to be heard and respected, so that group members can bring their whole selves to the meeting.

Part I: Spiritual practice

For most Friends, meeting for worship is just one way to express and experience spirituality. This is an opportunity to share something that you do outside of meeting for worship that feeds your soul.

Some examples include writing activities, guided meditation, walking meditation, chanting, singing, “Lectio Divina,” making art, and nature activities. This is meant to be a participatory activity with the group being led in doing the spiritual practice together.

Part I: Storytelling

This is an opportunity for a member of your group to share one story from the recent past related to QSCM and your focus issue. See “Sharing Stories” on page 23 for a detailed description of storytelling.

Part I: Group reflection

After listening to the story shared, the group reflects and shares from a place of deep listening. See “Sharing stories” on page 23 for a detailed description of group reflection.

After group reflection, the facilitator is encouraged to summarize what they’ve heard and ask the group if they would like to take any action steps based on the experience that was shared or the group reflection. Ask yourselves, “As an intentional learning community, what do we want to learn more about?”

Part II: Business

Your group may want to take a short break between Part I and Part II of the meeting. The business of the group is going to be very dependent on where the group is at in its process. It could include creating or editing the covenant, sharing research, sharing information about the group(s) or persons you are accompanying/companioning, making your group’s skill and resource list, planning for a protest, action, or event, or any number of other tasks that might come up.

Notes (or “minutes”) should be taken and approved by the group. This does not have to be a formal Quaker process of recording minutes, but should serve as a way to keep everyone on the same page and document the decisions and processes of the group.

The role of facilitator can rotate, be shared between two people, or assigned to one person.

Part II: Closing words and closing worship

The facilitator ends the business of the meeting by summarizing what has been shared, reiterating any action items that have been agreed upon, and inviting the group to share in closing worship.

Sharing stories: Learning together

(Adapted from "Implementing Small Group Social Change Ministry," by Kelly Dignan and Kierstin Homblette.)

Some might not think of storytelling as a spiritual or radical act, but when we incorporate storytelling into our communities, we create the opportunity for healing, learn from each other's experiences, and build supportive relationships.

Choosing a story to share

The intention behind storytelling in this context is to provide the opportunity for the speaker to share a recent story that relates to the focus area of the group, preferably something that happened in the last one to three months. A good story will be a real-life experience. Although a book, movie, news story, etc. might play a role in your story, the focus should be on your own thoughts, experiences, and feelings.

Try sharing an experience that:

- You are still processing and learning from.
- You would like feedback on.
- Connected you to something greater than yourself (eg. Spirit, a community, or a movement).
- Was challenging, frustrating, or upsetting.
- Was joyful, transformative, or encouraging.
- Reminded you why you are passionate about your group's focus.

Queries for storytelling

- What feelings came up for you in that moment?
- What did you feel in your body as you shared that story? (We find that paying attention to the body can be window to the Spirit).
- Did this experience connect you to something greater than yourself? (Another person or community? Spirit/God/the Light? Did you gain a new realization or insight?)
- How does your experience relate back to the tenets of accompanying?
- In what ways does that experience relate to how you see Spirit at work in other aspects of your life?
- In the life of your meeting/church?
- In other people's lives?
- How might this experience impact your social justice work?
- Your life as a whole?

Group reflection

After deep listening and a time of silence, group members now have a chance to reflect on the event (if you were there) or the story as it has been told. Be sure to use "I" statements. This is not meant to be a discussion but rather a time for listeners to respond to what they've heard. Your group may choose to do a "worship sharing" format instead. When in doubt, refer back to the group's covenant. Be sure to allow room for everyone who wishes to share.

Queries for group reflection

- How did you hear God/Spirit/Love working in this story?
- What praise (as in praise song or naming God's or Spirit's work) do you have for the teller?
- How would you describe your feelings about the experience just shared?
- What happened in your body when you listened to this story?
- Did hearing about this experience help you to feel connected to something larger than yourself?
- How did it relate back to your own understanding and experience of accompanying?
- In what ways does the experience that was shared relate to how Spirit is at work in your own life? In the life of your meeting/church? In other people's lives?
- How might the lessons of this story impact you or your group's social change work?

Follow-up

After group reflection, the facilitator is encouraged to summarize what they've heard and ask the group if they would like to take any action steps based the experience that was shared or the group reflection.

Ask yourselves, "As an intentional learning community, what do we want to learn more about?"

Group Evolution:

Initial Meeting:

Decide early on which key issue you would like to focus on.

You will also want to introduce QSCM to your meeting/church in business meeting and/or Peace & Social Concerns Committee, host an introduction to the QSCM program for all interested members of your meeting/church, and identify who would like to move forward as part of the new group (with the knowledge that others may decide to join later on).

Instead of one person sharing a story, everyone should have a few minutes to share with the group on one of the following topics:

- what led you to join
- how do you experience the connection between Spirit and activism
- what excites you about joining this group
- just sharing more about yourself

Part II of the meeting

answer any lingering questions

choose volunteers for the next meeting.

You will need three to four volunteers:

one to share a poem, quote, or scripture

one to share a spiritual practice

one to share a story

You will also want to review the business of the next meeting with your group.

If your group is brand new, you may want to do

more team building exercises such as the accompaniment exercises

one of the supplemental exercises

COVENANT:

Generally speaking, at the second meeting, most groups will focus on forming the covenant. If that is the case then you will also want to introduce your group to the sample covenant at this meeting (verbally and with printouts) so that they can prepare ahead of time.

Meeting II

This meeting will more closely follow the format described in the “Detailed description of a meeting”, with the exception of the reading of the covenant. After Part I of the meeting has concluded, Part II will focus on forming the covenant. The term “covenant” is often used in Unitarian Universalist circles and may be unfamiliar to Friends. *It is meant to signify a personal and spiritual commitment to one another.* Your group can change the name if it wants to, as long as the name holds shared meaning and significance for everyone. It is important to remind people that this document is a “living document” open to continuing revelation and future editing.

Forming a covenant: Our shared commitments

(Adapted from “Implementing Small Group Social Change Ministry,” by Kelly Dignan and Kierstin Homblette.)

For some Friends, given our history of opposing creeds, the idea of forming a covenant might seem odd at first, but this process can be helpful in a variety of ways. Using group process, it is a way to make the group’s shared commitments visible and can serve as a guidepost for how to engage with one another.

When should we form our covenant?

Ideally, the group should set aside time to form a covenant in the first few meetings after joining the Quaker Social Change Ministry Program. The covenant is a living document and can be changed and edited over time. When a new member joins, it is important to go over the covenant with them and ask them for feedback or ideas for revision.

What is the difference between a creed and a covenant?

Reverend Lisa Ward, a Unitarian Universalist Minister, has written beautifully about the difference between a creed and a covenant. For QSCM, the covenant is a way for us to co-create the community we need to support the work that is ours to do.

- “A creed creates a static truth, something that does not incorporate new insights and realities. A covenant is a dance of co-creation, keeping in step with one another in the flow of our lives.
- A creed seeks uniformity and a unison voice. A covenant seeks harmony and a shared voice. Sometimes we may arrive at a unison, but it is not required.
- A creed gives authority to the statement. A covenant gives authority to shared intention.
- A creed creates an “us” and “them.” A covenant invites relationship.

- A creed is a prescription that must be relied on. A covenant relies on the treasures of shared truth.”

What is the process of forming a covenant?

Many groups find it helpful to start with a sample covenant.

Others may find it useful to engage in their own group process first, and then consult the sample covenant to see if they missed anything important.

Guiding Queries:

- How is Spirit guiding us to engage with and support one another?
- In what ways can we model restorative justice and the Beloved Community in our group process?
- When have we felt heard, respected, and supported in group settings? What was present that made us feel that way?
- When have we not felt heard, respected, or supported in group settings? What was present that made us feel that way?

Invite everyone in the group to share at least one addition to the covenant, being sure that everyone’s voice is valued equally. If there is disagreement or confusion about a suggestion, encourage dialogue among the group and ask the person who shared the suggestion to elaborate. Re-phrasing and clarification will help move the group forward and create a shared understanding.

After everyone has shared at least one suggestion and the list appears finished, ask the group if anything is missing. You may want to consult the sample covenant at this time to see how your list compares. The covenant should not be too long or overly restrictive, nor should it be too short or overly vague. When necessary, return to your sense of the meeting during this process.

As a sense of the meeting is reached, Friends agree on the covenant with the knowledge that it can be edited, added to, and changed over time. As a debrief, you may want to ask the group how that process felt to them and if they feel good about what has emerged.

Remember to ask new members if they have anything to add or if something does not make sense. In every group, tensions and conflicts inevitably arise. Use the covenant as a way to gently remind members of the group what they have committed to. Since Quakers often err on the side of conflict avoidance, the covenant should be seen as a way of inviting healthy conflict and difficult emotions by intentionally creating an environment that is open, supportive, and loving.

Sample covenants

1) Adapted from “Touchstones for Circles of Trust,” by Parker Palmer

- Be as fully present as possible, with your doubts, fears and failings as well as your joys and successes. When we offer attentive presence, we nurture love and respect.
- Assume positive intent on the part of fellow participants.
- Listen with resilience, “hanging in there” when hearing something that is hard to hear.
- Refrain from interrupting others.
- Set your own boundaries for personal sharing; ask yourself, “what parts of my life story, if any, am I comfortable sharing?” “Pass” or “pass for now” if you are not ready or willing to respond to a question – no explanation required.
- Speak personal truths in ways that respect other people’s truth. Speak using “I” statements, assuming others can deduce the meaning as it applies to them.
- No fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight. Avoid telling others how they should be. Ask questions from the standpoint of curiosity, rather than arguing or debating.
- When the going gets rough, turn to wonder. If you feel judgmental, or defensive, ask yourself, “I wonder what brought her to this belief?” “I wonder what he’s feeling right now?” “I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?” Set aside judgment so you can listen to others—and to yourself—more deeply.
- Observe deep confidentiality.
- Commit to regular attendance.

2) Sample covenant from the Bull Run UU website

“We covenant with each other, promising our goodwill and honest effort, pledging our care and support to one another and to our [Quaker] community, challenging one another to live in accord with our [Quaker] principles.”

With this common purpose as our source, we covenant to:

- welcome all who come to us with acceptance and respect for the differences among us.
- practice patience and speak the truth directly and with compassion.
- reflect carefully about the potential results of our words and actions before we speak or act.
- keep our discussions to topics and issues rather than personalities.
- acknowledge that we may not always agree with the group decisions, but we will support and participate in decision-making processes that are collaborative.
- seek to resolve disagreements to our mutual satisfaction and ask for help when needed.
- speak directly to those with whom we have disagreements.
- facilitate direct communication between parties in conflict, when appropriate.
- act with loving kindness, seeking to promote justice, equity, and compassion.
- speak out with loving kindness when we witness disrespectful interactions.
- understand that building our beloved community requires learning and practice.”

Meeting III

After your group comes to consensus on your covenant, your group should continue with team building exercises and begin following the accompaniment process in the section titled, "Accompaniment: Preparing ourselves and finding the right organization."

Accompaniment: Preparing ourselves and finding the right organization

(Adapted from "Implementing Small Group Social Change Ministry," by Kelly Dignan and Kierstin Homblette.)

As Glenn E. Martin, the founder of Just Leadership USA, puts it: "Those who are closest to the problem are also closest to the solution." By following the leadership of organizations that are led by individuals and communities most impacted by injustice, we model restorative justice and build local capacity for social change.

Building relationships of trust and accountability within your group

Before your group begins the process of finding an organization to accompany, it is vitally important to spend time building trust within your group. How can you build relationships of accountability with those you are accompanying if you haven't spent time building those relationships within your group? It is also important to begin to create a shared analysis of your issue and of systemic oppression. Please contact Friends Relations for a list of supplemental resources and workshop ideas to help guide you through this process.

This process can take some time, but remember that two of the goals of the QSCM Program is to model the Beloved Community we wish to co-create and to support long-term commitments to social change.

Researching organizations and coalitions in your area

If you live near an AFSC program office that is working on your focus area, that office would be a natural place to start and a first choice for accompaniment. If, for whatever reason, that AFSC program office is not able to assist you, Friends Relations staff will be happy to help you in finding other organizations to accompany. The whole group shares responsibility for this work, but we recommend choosing one or two volunteers who will make this research a priority and report back to the group what they find out about local organizations, coalitions, campaigns, and current events related to your focus issue.

Unless your group already has a good idea of who they'd like to accompany, the process of discerning the right organization to accompany will most likely take more than one meeting. You may need to accompany an organization at a distance, especially if your group is focused on Israel/Palestine. Take the time to really learn about who is doing work that resonates with your group at a spiritual and political level. You will want to focus particularly on organizations that are inter-faith, have active campaigns, are committed to nonviolence, or that you have an existing relationship with.

If you're having a hard time narrowing down your list, find out if a few organizations have upcoming events or meetings that are open to the public and participate. You may discover that an organization has a specific campaign that your group would like to focus on.

At some point in this process, your group should begin communicating directly with a representative from the organization(s) you're interested in accompanying. This will be a conversation between a point of contact in your group and a point of contact at the organization, preferably the person in the organization who handles volunteers and partners. Initially, you may be greeted with skepticism or confusion. This will be a learning process for both parties.

Making a resource/skills list

Before you decide on an organization to accompany, list the skills, resources, and time commitment your group can offer. Here are a few examples:

- Meeting space
- Food preparation
- Attending marches or protests
- Providing childcare
- Accompanying court hearings
- Providing rides
- Petition drives
- Fundraising support
- Visiting prisons/detention centers
- Specialized skills

Discerning as a group

As you try to find the "sense of the meeting," you will want to consider a number of factors:

Grounding:

- Are you listening to Spirit as you discern this call?
- Is this decision in "right order?"
- Where do we see Spirit/Truth/God in the organization(s) we feel called to accompany?

Fit:

- Does the organization share similar values with your group?
- Do the skills and resources of your group pair well with the needs of the organization?
- Do you have the capacity as a group to follow through with this commitment?

Opportunity:

- Is there an entry point into this organization where your congregation could be useful/effective?

- Does it feel like “way is opening?”
- What are we being called to do as a group in our work for social justice?

Accountability:

- Are there relationships in place/forming that are grounded in trust and accountability?
- Are you ready to be in this for the long haul?
- How do we expect to be changed and challenged by doing this work together?

Accompaniment: Building relationships of trust and accountability

(Adapted from “Implementing Small Group Social Change Ministry,” by Kelly Dignan and Kierstin Homblette.)

There is no step-by-step process for building relationships of trust and accountability in the context of accompaniment/companioning/followership. Mistakes will be made, and that is ok. The important thing is to stay committed to the relationship, take responsibility for our mistakes, and learn from them. There is no saving or fixing or taking charge here. We allow ourselves to be changed in the process, learn new ways of being, and develop friendships and partnerships that can last a lifetime.

Finding your part of the work

Finding an organization to accompany is the beginning of an ongoing relationship of followership, companioning, solidarity, trust, humility, and showing up. Difficult experiences, opinions, and emotions are bound to arise. It is important to share those challenges within your group and not with your accompanying organization. Part of the goal of the QSCM program is to organize Quakers for effective social change so that organizations led by communities of color do not have to do that work for us.

Learning as a group

We cannot expect those we are accompanying to teach us, though we will learn a lot from them over time. Your group is encouraged to read books and/or articles together to deepen your understanding and analysis. It is important to remember, however, that there is a difference between academic knowledge and experiential knowledge. For example, we can read *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander and better understand the problem of mass incarceration, but that is not the same thing as being a returning citizen with first-hand knowledge and experience.

Remember that people in your group enter into this work from very different places. For some, this material may be entirely new. For others, racism might be a part of their daily reality. That is why Spirit, storytelling, relationships, and group process are at the heart of this program – to co-create a space where people feel grounded and safe enough to learn and grow together. We must be open to sharing and receiving feedback in a loving way that encourages growth and genuine reflection rather than defensiveness, shame, or blame. Supporting each other within and

beyond your QSCM meetings will be crucial to your ability to take risks and stay involved for the long haul.

It is also important to make time for socializing, potlucks, and get-togethers with your QSCM group and your partner organization. Extend the invitation into your home and community but also venture outside of your community and your comfort zone. If you are invited to attend events or gatherings by folks in your partner organization, do your very best to attend. Modeling the Beloved Community does not mean all work and no play. Having fun together and getting to know each other is a vital part of building relationships of trust and accountability. For supplemental materials to help navigate challenging group dynamics or situations, please contact Friends Relations staff.

Accompaniment/companioning/followership

(Adapted from "Implementing Small Group Social Change Ministry," by Kelly Dignan and Kierstin Homblette.)

This exercise explores the use of these three words and how each one highlights a different but equally important aspect of the work of your group. The term "companioning" was chosen by Kelly and Kierstin as a more spiritual alternative to "accompaniment" and "followership" and will be familiar to those familiar with pastoral care. Many associate "accompaniment" with organizations like Christian Peacemaker Teams, where people are literally accompanying activists and the oppressed in violent or dangerous situations, but it also has a broader definition of solidarity work. "Followership" comes from the business world but is gaining wider use in the white ally community.

Feel free to continue using all of these words or decide on one that resonates with your group.

Write "*accompaniment*," "*companioning*," and "*followership*" on three separate pieces of paper. First, ask the group to share what comes to mind when they hear the word, "accompaniment," and write down what is shared. Do the same thing for "companioning" and for "followership." Once all three lists are completed, ask the group what they notice about the differences and similarities between the different lists.

Accompaniment Consideration Exercises:

Scenario I

Staughton Lynd and his wife Alice are in their 80s and have spent years working in prisons, unions, the Black freedom movement, and for peace. He says that in all his years of experience, accompaniment or companioning is the most effective way to do social change.

Companioning, Staughton says, is more than allies helping people oppressed by the systems and policies of society. Instead, it is two people exploring the way forward together.¹ Two people walking together in a loving, respectful, trusting relationship.

He says companioning is a challenge for many of us, because it requires we unlearn our patterns of dominance - our patterns of taking charge and getting things done. It insists that we learn to struggle together with someone.

Scenario II

Dr. Vincent Harding was a historian, a social activist, and a speech writer and confidante of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He recalls the Mississippi Summer of 1964. It was important then, he says, for the volunteers who were coming from the north to realize that they were coming with a very real burden of white, class, and academic superiority. They were coming to the Black community of Mississippi which was by and large working class. They had to find out how to recognize what they were bringing with them – which was an attitude of how much they'd be able to offer and give and do – and then they had to find a way to transpose that into a spirit of coming and giving thanks for the gift they were going to receive.

Dr. Harding says the fundamental model for the social change work we all do together now looks like listening more than speaking. Partnering instead of helping. People, holding onto and being held by people. Singing together. Being absolutely befuddled together. All of these actions are what grows out of us simply being on the path together – walking hand in hand

Scenario III

Rev. John Fife was co-founder of the Sanctuary Movement in the 1980s and more recently No More Deaths, a ministry of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson. Rev. John Fife says that if you are doing committee work in the community, make sure you are following the voices of those most impacted by systems of oppression. Don't serve on any action committee in the community that isn't led by those voices. And listen. Always listen.

We can come back to our church committees to share our experiences – and there we can set the agenda and use our language. But when we're companioning, we don't set the agenda. Communities most impacted by oppression do.

Companioning has to lead to disrupting the systems of oppression. It has to move us to raise our voices – resisting, confronting, and challenging – together.

Scenario IV

Two social justice activists who are undocumented immigrants say what they want from their solidarity partners:

Don't take over when we're trying to get something done. Don't act out of control at a rally. Be someone we can trust. Be someone who wants to get to know us. We want to be viewed as experts. And we need the help of partners to get access to decision makers, and to do some of the dirty work like fundraising, donating, and rallying their people. The most important thing is to be in it for the long haul. And be our friends.

Prompt

Take two to five minutes of silence to reflect on this scenario. Write down your thoughts. What would it look like and feel like to do social justice work in this way? What do you need to stay in it “for the long haul?”

After everyone has finished writing, each person takes three to five minutes to share what they’ve written. Together, summarize your group’s insights (in five or six sentences) to share with the larger group.

THE QUAKER SOCIAL CHANGE MINISTRY PROGRAM

Tenets of accompanying for social change

(Adapted from “Implementing Small Group Social Change Ministry,” by Kelly Dignan and Kierstin Homblette.)

Accompaniment is hard work, and it is easy to feel lost, overwhelmed, and hopeless. These tenets, along with your group’s covenant, can help to guide you as you navigate this journey together.

Tenets of accompanying for social change

1. Building relationships of trust and accountability with people and communities most impacted by injustice by showing up and staying in the relationships for the long haul.
2. Remembering that the liberation of everyone and everything is inherently connected, and together, we are on a learning journey toward it.
3. Walking together while navigating differences in a loving, respectful, trusting relationship.
4. Struggling together and encouraging one another’s spiritual growth.
5. Contemplating the gifts you are going to receive when accompanying, instead of how you will give, help, teach, tell, or fix.
6. Acknowledging and unlearning your patterns of dominance, like taking charge, leading, making decisions, etc.
7. Asking for and lending empathic support.
8. Moving beyond asking to acting.
9. Getting out of your comfort zone (materially, emotionally, and physically) and allowing yourself to be changed by this process.
10. Disrupting the systems and structures of oppression – with integrity and in authentic community with those most impacted, following their leadership.

The Latin roots of “accompanying” are:

To be together (“com”) in eating bread (“panis”), face to face.

Derived from academic and pastoral care resource on the topic, along with interviews by Kelly Dignan with Dr. Vincent Harding, Staughton Lynd, Rev. John Fife, Rev. Dr. Thandeka, Rev. Julie Todd, PhD, and companions in creating Beloved Community.

THE QUAKER SOCIAL CHANGE MINISTRY PROGRAM

Doing social change as companioning

(Adapted from “Implementing Small Group Social Change Ministry,” by Kelly Dignan and Kierstin Homblette.)

The concept of “companioning” as it is used by Kelly Dignan and Kierstin Homblette is especially useful when doing one-on-one accompaniment.

1. Companioning is being present to another person’s pain without trying to take away the pain.
2. Companioning is going to the wilderness of the soul with another human being without thinking you are responsible for finding the way out.
3. Companioning is honoring the spirit as well as the intellect.
4. Companioning is listening with the heart before analyzing with the head.
5. Companioning is bearing witness to the another person’s struggle without judgment while trusting what emerges from the act of listening.
6. Companioning is walking alongside; it is not about leading with expertise and solutions.
7. Companioning is discovering the gifts of the sacred silence without filling up every moment with words.
8. Companioning is about being still and not about frantic movement.
9. Companioning is respecting the creative movement of disorder and confusion.
10. Companioning is learning from others before teaching them.
11. Companioning is cultivating curiosity as well as expertise.

Adapted from: *Handbook for Companioning the Bereaved: Eleven Essential Principles* by Alan Wolfelt (Companion Press, 2009.)

QUAKER SOCIAL CHANGE MINISTRY - SUMMARY & INTRODUCTION

Quaker Social Change Ministry Group is currently meeting on the first and third Tuesday of each month at 7pm, in the garage classroom. Everyone is welcome.

Feel free to email or call Arthur Kegerreis with any questions.

LIBRLART@gmail.com

(323) 573-4758

The Orange Grove Monthly Meeting Website also has several sections in the bulletin board that relate to our work. There is a discussion thread in the AFSC section where we are sharing links and resources relating to immigration, sanctuary, and refugee accompaniment organizations. You are encouraged to add additional links that might be helpful to us.

www.ogmm.org/bulletin-board/

Forum: American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

Thread/Conversation: Quaker Social Change Ministry Group

AFSC's website has a number of materials describing the meeting structure in greater detail, as well as conference call recordings with program participants participants discussing the progress of their groups.

www.afsc.org/QSCM