



# ***Quaker Religious Education Collaborative***

***Joining Hands in Service to Quaker Religious Education***

## **Quaker Religious Education Collaborative Report of the Steering Circle, June 2016**

The Quaker Religious Education Collaborative (QREC) has taken significant strides forward in our second year. As a grassroots network of individuals joined in our commitment to lifelong Quaker spiritual formation, the Collaborative has found new ways to serve and nurture this community of practice. The Steering Circle has connected and supported practitioners, envisioned and strategized the longer-term needs of Quaker religious educators, and discerned and developed our organizational structure to best meet those goals.

The Steering Circle typically met this year using virtual conferencing software on average every two weeks. We have also let grace and serendipity lead us to make space for the living conversations that needed to happen. Some of the Steering Circle's work this year has been structured and task-specific, and some of our engagement focused on our growing edges of thought and teaching where living questions rise. We are grateful for our many companions on this journey of faith and teaching!

**The Steering Circle guided the work of QREC this year in the following ways.**

**Annual Collaboration:** QREC has been clear since our inception that our annual face-to-face collaborations needed to move around geographically to visit among the branches of Quakerism and to know and be known in the religious education community more widely. The Steering Circle was thrilled when Joy Duncan from Illinois and Western Yearly Meetings was led to join us after the second Collaboration in 2015 on the east coast at Pendle Hill Conference Center. Beginning in October 2015, Joy has contributed greatly to all our work, broadening our perspective in many areas and serving on the 2016 Planning Circle that prepared for this Collaboration. The Planning Circle, which included Beth Collea and Liz Yeats, as well as two other mid-west Friends, Beth Henricks(WYM) and Marjorie Isaacs(OVYM), met regularly to make good on QREC's vision to serve Friends widely. We are delighted to gather at Quaker Hill this weekend with Friends from across the country to share our leadings and work in the ministry of Quaker RE.

**Sharing Resources:** Coming out of the August 2015 Collaboration at Pendle Hill, we have continued to challenge ourselves to find ways to help Friends network and share resources:

- While only one issue *RE Connections*, our electronic newsletter, went out this year, as a result of Friends questions about how to teach about Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, we curated and posted to our website special collections of material.
- We initiated and hosted three Conversation Circles, using our virtual conferencing software, GoToMeeting, on:

- Supporting Parents in Contributing to Meeting Life
- Spiritual Partnership Between Meetings and Friends Schools, and
- Mentoring Young Friends in the Meeting Community

Notes from these conversations can be found on our website, [www.quakers4re.org](http://www.quakers4re.org).

- We posted frequently about QREC activities on our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/Quakers4RE](http://www.facebook.com/Quakers4RE), and used our newly created Vertical Response account to send information about events and resources by email.
- One Working Circle, “Seeking Ways to Undo Racism Through Quaker RE,” which came out of the 2015 Collaboration, continued to meet and inform our work.

### **The Steering Circle worked on visioning and new projects.**

Coming out of two collaborations and our experience serving Friends, the Steering Circle spent our second year boldly living into our mission, discerning and addressing the needs of Quaker religious educators.

We have learned that Quaker RE practitioners yearn for a more comprehensive resource and curriculum support mechanism. Along the way, we have come to appreciate deeply the wealth of unpublished material tucked away in files and tote bags and have savored the wisdom that rises in our small circles. We long for these riches of written word and voice to have a wider reach and ministry. We envision a broader conversation enfolding Hispanic Friends in the US and in Latin America, as well. To fulfill these needs, we discerned the need to design an expanded web platform with a curated, searchable resource collection that allows interaction among users, and a whole Spanish-language section.

Recognizing the growing role of video in communicating the word among Friends, we started an “RE video” project, creating a series of short videos on children’s spirituality and welcoming families, sharing the thoughts of Melinda Wenner Bradley. We look forward to highlighting more QREC voices in additional short videos.

As discussed at the collaboration last August, we have also dreamed of re-illustrating and re-publishing *Quaker Meeting and Me*, a children’s book of welcome to Quaker worship originally produced by British Friends. The current illustrations are not inclusive of African American children and we felt an imperative to re-craft the illustrations for use in the Americas. Plans are moving forward with all of these initiatives.

### **The Steering Circle discerned structure and finances.**

This year, we have developed our young organizational structure with prayerful discernment, mindful of the limits of our volunteer time and energy. We were guided by two realities: our new lighter, collaborative style of organization continues to meet our needs best, and we need to find ways to fund our projects.

We are clear that while QREC doesn't have the administrative capacity to take other ministries under our care, we can publicize their work and find creative ways to partner with them. Similarly, while we engage with larger Friends organizations, we are not under their care. We believe that we are best able to fulfill our mission by maintaining an independent structure.

For this reason, grant writing and fundraising have become necessary to move ahead. Therefore, we successfully applied for 501(c)3 standing so that we could request grant monies and receive private donations with a tax deductible status.

We are delighted to report that the Thomas H. and Mary Williams Shoemaker Fund has awarded QREC \$8,000 for the website design, videos, and *Quaker Meeting and Me* projects. In addition, Quakers Uniting in Publications (QUIP) is supporting the collection of Spanish-language materials for our website and private donations have also been received to move forward the republication and free distribution of *Quaker Meeting and Me*.

We also discerned and became clear to become a membership organization so that in some measure we will be self-supporting. We will reach out to some of our early members for special Leadership Donations. We plan to ask yearly meetings for contributions as another component in building a stable, long-term financial foundation. We are uniquely suited to provide a key ministry to their constituent local meetings and individual Friends and will ask them to join with us by financially supporting this vital work. A separate financial statement and budget are attached as well as our QREC Minute on Affiliating with other Groups.

As we move into our third year, we look forward to offering greater levels of service and support for Friends carrying the work of Quaker religious education. We hope to inspire even more broadly by encouraging Friends to submit RE articles for publication to *Friends Journal*, *Quaker Life*, *Western Friend* and other Quaker publications. We already know we will have Circles working on planning the 2017 Collaboration and Seeking Ways to Undo Racism Through Quaker RE. Our grants and contributions will make it possible for the Steering Circle to guide the development of a publication, expand our website resources, and produce videos that interpret, teach and spread our practice of Quaker RE.

**We wonder where you find the Life in your work and if you will consider where you might contribute to QREC through service on a project circle, financial support through membership and/or a contribution, and promoting QREC to others in your meeting or church?**

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Collea, NEYM  
Joy Duncan, ILYM & WYM  
Marsha Holliday, BYM  
Melinda Wenner Bradley, PYM & NYYM  
Liz Yeats, SCYM

**Web:** [www.quakers4re.org](http://www.quakers4re.org) • **Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/Quakers4RE](http://www.facebook.com/Quakers4RE)  
**Email:** [quakercollaborative4re@gmail.com](mailto:quakercollaborative4re@gmail.com)