

Meeting House Matters notes (ongoing)

An ongoing record of the notes taken at online Meeting House Matters meetings.



Date	Page
21 February 2022	2
25 January 2023	5

Archive of notes

- [Notes from discussions in 2020](#)
- [Notes from discussions in 2021](#)
- [Notes from discussions in 2022](#)

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21 February 2022

Thanks to everyone who joined the session this week. We had a good discussion on marketing with lots of great ideas fed in. Deb Arrowsmith joined and shared some of the thinking about how they have been marketing the space at Oxford Meeting.

Meeting House Matters in-person events in 2023

We are going to offer 3 in-person events in 2023 to bring Friends together to look at topics of shared interest and for peer learning and support. Please use the booking form linked below to register for any of the events in 2023.

<https://forms.quaker.org.uk/mhm-23/>

Most of the day will be in-person with one session online blended. At the event in Bristol on 18 April the blended session will be on health and safety.

Next online session

- Tuesday, 21 March 10.30am
- Join Zoom Meeting:
<https://quaker.zoom.us/j/81586087624?pwd=VHk3MW9sTHJUVDdsMFITMUjN3WEpmUT09>
- Meeting ID: 815 8608 7624
- Passcode: WT-online

Marketing

General notes

What is the purpose of marketing your meeting house?

- Is it because there is a lot of space in a good location which can generate income for the Quaker community?
- Is it because you want people to know that there is a certain ethos to the premises attracts people into the space?
- Is the main reason for the building for Quakerism to flourish but there are a few rooms available that people might like to use for a small fee?

Think carefully about what the purpose of the building is and what you want to tell the audience and ultimately what you want to sell to the audience.

These examples of purpose show a range of the purposes of marketing. If your meeting is wants to offer a professional conferencing opportunity, the rooms will need to match the offer. If you are trying to reach an audience that wants the space for birthday parties on a Saturday afternoon, you will choose a different way to talk about what you have available.

It was helpful to hear about the link between marketing and Quaker outreach. Done well they will both bring us as Quakers or as businesses into contact with new people. What do we do to support their activity? Is there an annual budget for outreach which includes marketing as a specific activity?

We are reminded that marketing is a profession and that we should not assume that it can be done by anyone. Who in your meeting community is skilled in this work?

Would they be willing to lend their expertise to the meeting? How can they work with other role-holders, such as wardens or other workers?

Tips

When you know the audience that you are marketing your meeting house to think about the following.

Signage

- Make sure that there is good external signage to help people find the meeting house.
- Is it clear how to get into the building once you have found it?
- What does the internal signage say about the building and its community and other users?
- Does it look how you hope it might? Professional? Welcoming? Caring? Simple?
- Is it cluttered?
- Does the tone sound positive or negative?
- How would you feel if you walked into a different premises with signage similar to those in your meeting house?

Advertising

- Can you help people see what you have to offer?
- Could you put a picture of each room on the external notice-board so that people passing or arriving can see what the space looks like?
- Is there a locality magazine that you can put an advert, or write an article for? (Articles might be free and mean you can talk about a Quaker event)
- Online (see more below about social media).

Tools

Leaflets

- With clear information on it
- include the date and valid until if printing with prices
- Images that show the spaces and what hirers can expect
- Testimonies from other hirers

Website

- Information (as leaflets)
- Timetable of updating to ensure that it remains current.
- Hire related information able to be updated by the person who manages the lettings so it is always in date.
- Change the images annually so the client always sees what is currently on offer.

Social media platforms

- Nextdoor
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Halls for Hire
- Google Maps: verify your building / address.

- Eventbrite: verify your address so that Google finds it.
- Meet-up: use their spiritual events category.
- Other platforms and websites are also available.

Social media tips

- Choose one or more but don't overwhelm yourself.
- Stick with what works for you and your premises.
- Post regularly and try to rotate content.
- If you have events add them early.
- Give a bit of time for scheduling routine posts so that you are not doing it as it happens.

Involving Friends

- Created a set of leaflets for Quakers to hand to other groups they attend to see if they would like to use the meeting house instead.
- Use Quaker communication channels such as the newsletters to talk about the space.
- Involve a group of Friends to open and close the meeting house when the warden is not working or on annual leave.
- Internal notice boards for information about what the building is used for:
 - One for the Quaker community
 - One for building specific things
 - One for the hirers.
- Hold an open day for the Quaker community and invite hirers to come along.
- Ask members of the meeting to give tours of the building to encourage hirers to see what is now on offer.

Possible hirers or ways to get business

- Office space once a week for small charities.
- NHS, healthcare and other large public organisations. Try to get your meeting house onto their approved supplier list.
- If you have a day that is not popular keep it as free as possible for organisations that require a training space and are not fussy about the day.

25 January 2023

It was great to see everyone who was able to join the first session of Meeting House Matters, the newly re-branded Wardens Talking online discussion network.

As a reminder there is a slightly revised format for the discussions as well as a name change. There will be a topic each week which will be led by one of us or by someone joining us to share their experience.

In 2023 we are planning to hold three events in person. We have done this in the past and are keen to see if we can get people together again to spend a day together. The in-person sessions will be held in locations across Britain and we hope there will be one near enough for everyone to be able to come to one. We are working on the following dates and locations.

- Tuesday, 18 April, Bristol
- Tuesday, 18 July, Leeds
- Tuesday, 14 November, London

Please save the date of the nearest to you, and others if you would like to join more than one. More information will come soon about the in-person events and will be sent by email and other comms channels.

Next online session

- Tuesday, 21 February 2.30pm
- Join Zoom Meeting:
<https://quaker.zoom.us/j/81586087624?pwd=VHk3MW9sTHJUVFdDsMFITMU N3WEpmUT09>
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What is considered a success

This week our theme was *What is considered a success?* We were thinking about success being:

- That our meeting house is finding a good balance between generating an income that covers the cost of keeping the building open.
- And that the building is being used by Quakers and a variety of groups in the community and providing community benefit as per our area meeting charitable objects.

We spent some time in breakout groups with the following question to help us think about success from a variety of perspectives:

- What do you as a warden or manager consider a success from their position?
- What might hirers think of as a success?
- What would your finance and premises committee see as a success?
- What would Friends see as a success?

Combined feedback from the breakout rooms

General points – some may already happen, others we might like to bring in

- Our witness in the works is to run the premises as sustainably as we possibly can.
- How we treat employees, Friends, hirers. We must get that right first!
- Inclusive to the community – welcoming and open.
- Vibrant use of the building.
- Range of groups within similar fields (e.g. support groups, political, arts) signpost to other hirers services – positive cross pollination groups supporting each other creating a community within the meeting house.
- A meeting house for the community IS the ministry.
- Balance and range of hirers, income from hirers regular, one off, training week secure base financial income and security from a few significant hirers plus ample room for a broad range of hirers throughout the year across the MH.

Hirers

- Wifi / internet, we provide a space for them where they don't have to think about the practicalities – can just walk in do what they came to do and go back out.
- A place to hire a room that is affordable offers reliable invoicing and booking arrangements and offers good value for money.
- Calm atmosphere
- Would like to have the best experience that they can with the least effort or work for them
- Don't need to think about it as there is reliability.
- Reliable Wi-Fi.
- Has all the health and safety in place to avoid major issues that could occur (a robust system to deal with incidents).

Finance and premises (Quaker committees)

- To be able to have the worshipping community able to meet in a suitable space, and to have the resources to do what the worshipping community want to do as a Quaker community.
- Be able to support the building so it isn't a cost to the Quaker community.
- That enough income is generated to run the premises and make a surplus.
- London Quaker Property Trust is the mechanism that supports property across London. Income is pooled from the whole area meaning there are funds to maintain the premises and support the worship and witness across the whole region. Area meetings operate in a similar way but on a smaller scale.
- Higher proportion of charities and organisations that use the buildings than profit-making organisations.
- Variety of hirers (social and culturally) have a broad range for a healthier mix of £ and diversity rather than x 2 big hirers (good financially but also a risk if one leaves, plus not enabling a space for a broader amount of groups to benefit from venue facilities).

Quakers / Friends

- To see the building animated – full of other groups and people. An asset and connection to the wider community.
- A building they don't have to think about or give input to?
- SO many want people to come to the building and then and come to Quakers.
- That there is a place for worship and the activities of local Quakers.
- Now a small number of meeting house in relation to the meeting community so the meeting house is used for AM activities more than it was before.
- Not just what happens in worship but are able to carry out activities in the premises that bring the community together. People have come to join in with this who have not been around for a long time.
- Greater membership to contribute to the presence and energy of the venue.

Workers

- A welcoming safe environment for people to meet - Qs and hirers. A space that works for the different groups that we have coming in - meeting their needs.
- We are not just random employees, we are employees of a Quaker meeting house, many of whom are Quakers. It is a vocation as well as work.
- Where there is clarity over the tasks that are required and who does them in the community.
- In answering the first question it is important to answer the other three. If hirers, committees and Friends feel it is a success then the warden should be able to consider their job done.
- Outreach activities.
- All within a framework of ethical behaviour.
- Fellowship with anyone and everyone who works through the door (hirers and Friends).
- Provide a safe, very clean, uncluttered space for hirer so that they feel it is their space (taking ownership).
- Respect – respecting the community we sit in the middle of and sharing upmarket space at a reasonable cost.
- Supporting hirers to generate an atmosphere of respect.
- Best experience when hirers are all in place and it all works with finance too.

What brings you joy

- The people who use the building.
- Adults with learning difficulties spontaneously dancing with a children's group in the corridor.
- Seeing marginalised people comfortable in the meeting house.
- People.
- Foodbank being run from the meeting house.
- Photo of foodbank with shopping bags all in all the rooms of the meeting house in Walthamstow (boxes of support).

- Garden an oasis gives peace to a community especially if that is the only bit of green space within the urban area.
- People who are loyal and enjoy the atmosphere and want to come back in spite of the shortcomings of the building – they feel at home and therefore take ownership.
- Opportunity to do stuff together in person, to work and working with a purpose that's a benefit to more than just us.
- Connection (can't always tell what is happening) when you see the connection in community (it's like watching theatre / music before your eyes) nothing to do with you directly, even though you have enabled it by being there as a venue.
- Celebration and connection.
- Spring in the MH peace garden under the stars.