



INTRODUCTION TO

QUAKER SOCIAL CHANGE MINISTRY

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

Why Quaker Social Change Ministry?

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.

What is Quaker Social Change Ministry?

- A pilot program of AFSC Friends Relations that supports Spirit-led, Quaker activism and connects Friends meetings/churches to the work of AFSC
- 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 those 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

What does accompaniment look like?

By following the leadership of communities most impacted by injustice, QSCM models restorative justice and builds local capacity for social change. The following list serves as a guide post for QSCM groups.

- Building relationships of trust and accountability with communities most impacted by injustice by showing up and staying in the relationships for the long haul
- Remembering that the liberation of everyone and everything is inherently connected, and together, we are on a learning journey toward it
- Getting out of your comfort zone (materially, emotionally, and physically)
- Contemplating the gifts you are going to receive while accompanying, instead of how you will give, help, teach, tell, or fix
- Unlearning patterns of dominance, like taking charge, leading, making decisions, etc.

- Walking together while navigating differences in a loving, respectful, trusting relationship
- Struggling together, encouraging one another's spiritual growth
- Asking for and lending empathic support
- Moving beyond asking to acting
- Disrupting the systems and structures of oppression—with integrity and in authentic community with those most impacted, following their leadership

How are the meetings structured?

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 based on the quality of the meetings. This model creates an environment that fosters trust, builds supportive relationships, grounds the work in Spirit, encourages personal growth and reflection, and sustains long-term engagement.

SHARING A COVENANT

Early on, groups form a shared covenant. Forming a covenant is a way to make the group's commitments visible, and it serves as a guide post for how to engage with one another. The covenant is read at the beginning of every meeting.

CENTERING WORSHIP

Centering worship is not just a way to quiet our minds. It is a way connect to ourselves, to our fellow group members, and to Spirit/Love/Truth/God. The sharing of a poem, quote, or scripture verse may help the group go deeper.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

This is an opportunity for members to share a spiritual practice that they find nourishing. Some examples include writing activities, guided meditation, walking meditation, chanting, singing, making art, and nature activities. This is meant to be a participatory activity with the group trying the spiritual practice together.

STORYTELLING

When we incorporate storytelling about our experiences working for justice into our communities, we create the opportunity for healing, learn from each other's experiences, and build supportive relationships.

GROUP REFLECTION

After deep listening and a time of silence, group members have a chance to reflect on the story as it has been told. Be sure to use "I" statements. This is a time for listeners to respond to what they've heard as opposed to a discussion. Your group may choose to do a "worship sharing" format instead.

BUSINESS

The second half of the QSCM meeting is used for business. Beginning with worship allows the group to enter into their work in a more open and connected space. Whether creating a covenant, doing a group exercise, or planning to take part in an action, QSCM groups conduct their business with the intention of modeling the beloved community.

ROLES

Each QSCM group has 1–2 coordinators that communicate with AFSC on a regular basis and encourage and support the process of the group. All members share in the other responsibilities of the group and rotate through the various roles: storyteller, facilitator, and the sharer of a spiritual practice.

Where can I learn more?

Please visit afsc.org/friends to learn more about the Quaker Social Change Ministry pilot program or email Greg Elliott, Friends Relations Associate, at gelliott@afsc.org.