



Current Issues in Eldership and Pastoral Oversight

Nurturing our Local Meetings in Quaker Faith

- One duty of Elders is to nurture our members and attenders and ensure we pass on our Quaker Faith to succeeding generations. This can sometimes involve striking a balance between seemingly conflicting ideas:
 - ◆ Passing on the Quaker Faith and Values we have come to treasure might conflict with welcoming changes to how we do things.
 - ◆ The use of theological language can alienate some people, but avoiding the use of language can risk the loss of authenticity.
 - ◆ Failure to negotiate these tensions honestly and openly can compromise our ideals of truthfulness and plain speaking.

Conduct of Meetings for Worship

Similar tensions can appear in how our Meetings for Worship are conducted:

- ◆ Do our understandings of appropriate behaviour and ministry inadvertently exclude people who are different culturally or neurodivergent?
- ◆ Can vocal ministry identify a Meeting as a “tribe” of like-minded people and inadvertently exclude others?
- ◆ Can our coyness about telling newcomers how we do things lead them to suspect we have secret rules?

My Oversight Journey

- ◆ 1980's: Stories of Overseers visiting the sick with a bottle of cordial
- ◆ 1990's: Overseeing not doing
- ◆ 1990's: Networks or groups?
- ◆ How does the group work?
- ◆ “Pastoral carers” not “overseers”
- ◆ Who does the care?
- ◆ Networks or groups?

Some questions arise:

1. How do we pass on Quaker language and concepts without alienating newcomers?
2. Do we have unwritten rules or unfair expectations of how people conduct themselves in Meeting for Worship?
3. What models do you have for pastoral oversight, and how well do they work?