

# Connecting Our Legacy to the Future

*A report about the 2013 QUIP Annual Conference by Sarah Katreen Hoggatt, Northwest Yearly Meeting*

As a group founded when the printing press was in full swing, and printed material was the communication medium of choice, Quakers have had a rich history of the written word. Whether through pamphlets, journals, or printed tracts, the spirit of Quaker faith has been fed by the word for generations. The forms may be changing, new voices emerging and our audience shifting, but the word is still precious in whatever form it takes.

Quakers Uniting in Publications (QUIP) has been at the helm of this work among Friends for the past thirty years. Dedicated to writing, publishing, editing and distributing, we have a deep passion for providing a place where we can talk about God and ask hard questions. Whether in the form of printed books, journals, online articles, or discussions via social media, the Light shared one with another, is the same Divine light; each word is a step in the journey we are taking together.

As we continue to take these steps, however, we are asking the question generation upon generation has asked before us: how do we take what is valuable from our past, share it in the present, and make sure it is in a form that generations after us can recreate into new words of their own? God spoke to our predecessors, God is speaking to us today, and we are quite sure God will be speaking in new ways to Friends we do not yet know. How do we share our discussions with God and each other, in a form people will be able to access today and tomorrow?

Printing on paper is no longer the only way to share our thoughts – now there are numerous possibilities including e-books, blogs, and online discussions, and no doubt, options previously unknown to us will emerge in the future. Each tool opens up creative ways to share our stories. What can we learn about how we've published in the past that can guide us as we look for relevant ways to share our words in the present, and in the future? In addition, we are asking how can we ensure the ministry of the written word is supported – in whatever form it takes – so Friends called to this work can continue on.

The answers that once spoke to these questions are no longer as applicable. The culture continues to change as it always has, and we are helping each other find new ways of being publishers of the word. We feel a broader perspective is needed from a wider variety of Friends. As each person brings with them a bit of divine wisdom, we can accomplish far more together than we can apart. QUIP wants to reach out to musicians, artists, Friends who speak and work in radio, to bring them into the discussion. We wish to share our struggles, where we can improve, our joys and our concerns, with all publishers of Truth. By coming together, combining our experience, we will be able to come up with answers and ideas one group could not come up with on their own. We need to hear each other's words first in order to spread them.

Each year's QUIP conference is a chance to hear these words and to ask these questions. This year, by reviewing our history and our work in publishing, we rediscovered the value of our community as we supported and encouraged one another. We find great value in regularly meeting together: to educate; to converse about what is going on; to hear about new projects; and to make a difference by sharing our diversity and wide-ranging skills.

We understand these are not easy questions, but ones we need to ask and ones we need to keep seeking answers for, if we are going to continue providing a place where people can verbally explore their relationship with God, and learn how to love each other. By teaching each other new ways of sharing our Light, whether through e-books, Quaker Quest, academic online learning, or a fresh look at memoir, we learned new skills. By

celebrating the legacy of over fifty years of *Quaker Religious Thought*, and listening to and asking questions of author Jennifer Kavanagh, we celebrated the footsteps of others, and learned from their insights. We asked what mediums are relevant today, how are people hearing the word in 2013? But more than that, we learned that relationships and relevance are key, and we agreed that meeting together face-to-face on a regular basis is vitally important. We love our conversations, hearing about what is going on, who is working on what, who needs support, and which projects are embracing the theological diversity of Quakers – a diversity we treasure.

Jennifer Kavanagh, quoting an article in *The Friend, The Legacy of the Written Word*, shared with us that “writing is an expression of ministry and a profound engagement of the Spirit”. It is a ministry in which we passionately believe. The written word speaks deeply into our lives – we know this personally as well as corporately – and we want to do whatever it takes to make sure this gift is passed on to future generations so they have the same foundation we were given to engage with the Spirit.

The next QUIP conference is at Woolman Hill Quaker Center in western Massachusetts, May 1-4, 2014. Our theme is *The Tools of Communicating*. To better familiarize ourselves in current ways of sharing our words, we will hold workshops on the tools and mechanics of the trade, such as social media, graphic design, layout, and e-publishing. We ask you to please join with us, share time together in discussion, and ask your questions. We want to hear your voice and hear the words *you* have to say.

We would love for you to join our conversation at [Quakerquip.org](http://Quakerquip.org).