

## Maker cafés prove popular at Durham Friends



*photo: Craig Freshley*

The idea, like many good ideas, emerged from a Durham Friends committee meeting. Around the kitchen table of Doug and Ellen Bennett we discussed concerns of two types: one, societal trends of increased isolation and anxiety; and two, declining membership in our meeting, especially younger folks. And we took stock of our assets: Our fabulous and under-utilized meetinghouse, and us.

Blending all this we invented the idea of a regular “Maker Café” at our meetinghouse: a welcoming place for folks to hang out, learn, and connect. Open to the public. A place to learn to make things together. Screen-free and offline.

We have been having Maker Cafes on the third Thursday evening of every month. We put portable signs outside our meetinghouse to attract locals. We also promote on social media and direct people [to our website](#).

We typically have a learning session from 5:30 to 6:30 led by a paid instructor, followed by a café with live music and free food. Advance sign-up and a materials fee is required for the learning session. The café from 6:30 to 8:00 is open to the public and free of charge. Walk-ins are welcome. To date, each learning session has been at capacity and the cafés have been popular.

We have done five so far, with more planned. We are learning as we go and happy to share lessons learned with other meetings. We have resisted the temptation to call them Quaker Maker Cafés (haha) but we're open to input!

~ Craig Freshley