

# Basics for Newcomers

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The following paragraphs are slightly adapted from FGC's set of newcomer cards for visitors to Quaker meetings.

## **You are Welcome Here!**

We come together in worship

- To listen to God
- To know and be known by God
- To grow in our faith
- To be changed
- To support each other, and
- To help one another do what God asks us to do

Our time together looks like

- Sitting quietly together
- Listening if someone is moved by the Spirit to speak
- Including children for a time before or after a children's program
- Shaking hands when worship ends; and greeting those around us

You are welcome to join us as you are. Dress as you feel comfortable.

We believe that every person is loved by the Divine Spirit. There are Quakers of all ages, religious backgrounds, races, education, sexual orientations, gender identities, and classes.

Please feel free to ask the person who ends meeting any questions you might have after worship.

## Quaker Testimonies

Quakers' experience of the Divine affects

- What we do in our personal lives
- What we believe
- Changes we work for in the wider world

“Testimonies” are what Quakers call the ways we have found to live and act based on our beliefs.

As a group, we find that listening to and following God leads to:

*Integrity*—living as whole people who act on what we believe, tell the truth, and do what we say we will do

*Simplicity*—focusing on what is truly important and letting other things fall away

*Equality*—treating everyone, everywhere, as equally precious to God; recognizing that everyone has gifts to share

*Community*—supporting one another in our faith journeys and in times of joy and sorrow; sharing with and caring for each other

*Peace*—seeking justice and healing for all people; taking away the causes of war in the ways we live

*Care for the earth*—valuing and respecting all of God's creation; using only our fair share of the earth's resources; working for policies that protect the planet.

We do not always hear and follow divine guidance; being in community with other Quakers helps us to be faithful.

## Quakers and Prayer

For many Quakers, prayer is part of our individual lives as well as part of meeting for worship.

### *Prayer*

Prayer is simply conversation or contact with God where we open ourselves to the Divine presence. This can take different forms. Quakers may pray silently. We may formulate words or an image or just be. It is important that we listen for what God may have to say to us.

Some Quakers also use set prayers from the Bible or other spiritual writings when they pray.

### *Quaker grace*

Before meals, Quakers typically have a silent grace or a moment of silent thankfulness for the meal and for each other. The group often holds hands during grace.

### *Holding in the Light*

During or after worship, a Friend may ask the group to “hold someone in the Light.” The person may be sick, dealing with difficult life circumstances, struggling spiritually, or working to serve others.

To hold a person in the Light, imagine them being held in God’s loving presence and offer prayers and love for them. Holding an individual or a group of people in the Light is often part of our practice of prayer.

## **How Quaker Meetings Work**

A Quaker meeting is a local worshiping community. Quaker meetings follow the guidance of the Spirit in business as well as in worship.

Quaker meetings function by appointing members to offices and committees. These volunteers prepare business that comes to the entire group for Spirit-led decision making. Most meetings have no paid workers; some meetings may hire part-time childcare, cleaning, groundskeeping, or administrative workers. Everyone is welcome to participate in the work of the meeting.

### *Committees*

The bulk of the work is done by committees according to the meeting’s needs and concerns. Different committees may care for the quality of worship, finances, peace and justice work, hospitality, religious education, nurturing members, and care of the building, if any. Committees

- Perform specific tasks
- Think through issues

- Come up with recommendations to present to the full meeting for consideration and decision-making during a meeting for business

### *Meeting for business*

The community has a monthly meeting where we make decisions. We use the collective discernment of members as well as tradition and Scripture to help us understand God's will for us.

### *The clerk*

The clerk of the meeting has the role of a servant leader. The clerk

- Serves as the center of communication within the meeting
- Guides the conduct of business meetings
- Serves as the contact person with regional Quaker bodies
- Speaks on behalf of the meeting when a spokesperson is required

### *Finances*

Most meetings have a finance committee which draws up an annual budget. You can contribute to the meeting by giving money to the treasurer.

### *Membership*

When you have attended meeting for a period of time and regularly participate in worship, business meetings, and the life of the community, you may begin to feel a spiritual tie to the community. You may want to consider becoming a member. The clerk can explain the process.

This document was downloaded from the website of Friends General Conference. Explore the many resources and opportunities we offer for Quakers, Quaker meetings, and all interested individuals. Go to [www.fgcquaker.org](http://www.fgcquaker.org).

