

Sharing the Spiritual Deepening Program with your Meeting or Yearly Meeting

As your meeting considers whether to participate in the Spiritual Deepening Program from Friends General Conference, this document can serve as a guide for sharing information, experiencing Spiritual Deepening activities together, and planning your next steps.

About the Spiritual Deepening Program

The Spiritual Deepening Program offers a collection of experiential activities and resources for small groups of Quakers and newcomers to explore together, with the goal of building connections with Quaker roots, growing as a spiritual community, and listening deeply to the Light Within.

Together, Spiritual Deepening program participants share their spiritual stories, explore how Quaker thought and spiritual practices can transform lives, and go deeper into the life of the Spirit.

Key Points to Share

The Spiritual Deepening Program is **flexible and affordable**. The suggested fee for participating in the program is \$20 per participant, on a pay-as-led basis.

The program exercises and activities are designed to speak to the condition of both **newcomers and Quakers**, as well as **adults and children**, and to build relationships of mutual learning. Inviting newcomers to join a Spiritual Deepening small group or eRetreat can serve as outreach and offer a way to integrate newcomers into the life of the meeting.

The **materials for children** can supplement a meeting's First Day School programming or be available for meetings to use when families show up.

Small group leaders within meetings have access to the **Spiritual Deepening Library** of exercises and resources and are supported in customizing the Spiritual Deepening experience to meet the needs of their small group participants.

If you have a computer with internet access: watch this video together (6 minutes)

Spiritual Deepening Program Library Tour: <https://youtu.be/28vACzlHsJY>

There are Two Ways to Engage

Friends and newcomers who are interested in connecting with Quaker thought, connecting with each other, and building deeper connections with Spirit have two opportunities for participating in the Spiritual Deepening Program.

Form a **Spiritual Deepening small group** that meets in-person to experience Grounding, Sharing, and Practicing activities and exercises together. Groups can form at any time and can meet for as few as 3 sessions or for as long as a year.

Join a **Spiritual Deepening eRetreat**, together or as individuals, to build spiritual community and explore Quaker practices and faith over a 4, 6, or 8-week online session. eRetreats are offered quarterly on the topics of *Silence & Light* and *Living into Beloved Community*.

More information about these options can be found here: www.fgcquaker.org/spiritualdeepening

Program Materials

The Spiritual Deepening materials for both the in-person and online groups are designed for participants of all ages and stages in their spiritual journey. Participants engage in activities, discussions, role-plays, spiritual practices, art and music exercises, and worship sharing as they explore together content in one of two topic areas:

Silence & Light

Silence & Expectant Waiting

The Light, Seed, Christ Working in Us

Friendly Practices

Beloved Community (Coming Fall 2017!)

Living into Beloved Community

Understanding & Healing White Supremacy

Spiritual Grounding for Immigration Justice

FGC Offers Support for Small Group Leaders

FGC offers **training and ongoing support** for Friends who lead the Spiritual Deepening small groups in their home meetings.

Small group leaders are given resources about planning Spiritual Deepening sessions, leading small groups, building spiritual community, supporting inclusivity, and working with children in the Spiritual Deepening library. All of this information and more details about program logistics is available in a downloadable **Small Group Leader Manual**.

As they begin preparing to lead their Spiritual Deepening group, small group leaders participate in an **interactive orientation webinar**. This encourages leaders to build a supportive community with each other and to explore together what it means to invite Spirit into their small group experience.

Small group leaders also come together for (optional) **monthly support calls**, during which they ask questions of each other, share successes and good ideas, and receive additional resources and training. Leaders are invited to stay connected and share ideas in a private **Facebook group**.

Lead a Sample Spiritual Deepening Activity (or two or three!)

To give people in your meeting a “Taste of Spiritual Deepening,” consider leading one or more of the activities below. Be sure to ground your time together with worship.

The Good Seed activity is effective and works for smaller groups or a large crowd. You can pare it down to 15 minutes using just the "Give over thy own willing" quote/song and pen and paper for the art supplies and it still gives a good taste of what the Spiritual Deepening program feels like. (See attached)

Making a Listening Mural offers an opportunity to worship together in a new way and works well as an intergenerational experience. (<https://tinyurl.com/MLULJJB>)

Choose one of the **Grounding Quotations** from the Silence & Expectant Waiting topic (<https://tinyurl.com/MQ2FU7>) and share your reactions using a group processing technique from the How to Use Grounding Quotations guide. (<https://tinyurl.com/K9UR9TJ>). Here is an example, using a quotation from an early Friend:

Sample Grounding Exercise: Silence & Expectant Waiting

Therefore, my dear hearts, be faithful every one in your particular measure of God's gift which he hath given you, and on the invisible wait in silence, and patience, and in obedience to that which opens to the mystery of God, and leads to the invisible God, which no mortal eye can reach unto, or behold.

MARGARET FELL, "EPISTLE TO FRIENDS", 1654, AS QUOTED IN BIRKEL, MICHAEL LAWRENCE. SILENCE AND WITNESS: THE QUAKER TRADITION. MARYKNOLL: ORBIS BOOKS, 2004. 15. PRINT. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

Response:

Choose one line or idea that rings true for you. Share with a partner an experience you have had that relates to the line/idea.

Next Steps for Bringing Spiritual Deepening to Your Meeting

1. The first step to bringing the Spiritual Deepening program to your meeting is to generate interest and excitement among members, attenders, and newcomers of all ages. Experience some sample exercises together, distribute the attached flyer, watch the library tour video, and get a feel for the program.
2. Form small groups and discern who will be the leader(s)
3. The leaders register their small group(s), receive training materials and access to the Spiritual Deepening Library, and are invited to participate in an orientation webinar.
4. Schedule the group sessions and begin meeting. At the first meeting, the leader will pass around a sign-in sheet to register participants.

Learn more about these steps:

<https://www.fgcquaker.org/spiritual-deepening/resources>

Stay Connected:

Sign up for the Spiritual Deepening email list to receive announcements about new content and eRetreats:

<https://www.fgcquaker.org/sdinterest>

What Spiritual Deepening Program Participants Have Said

“As a result of these sessions I feel good. Just good, like it was the best choice to make to have been a part of this.”

- Spiritual Deepening small group participant

“I rediscovered my belief in Quaker practice and my belief in the personal experiential experience of God.”

- Spiritual Deepening small group participant

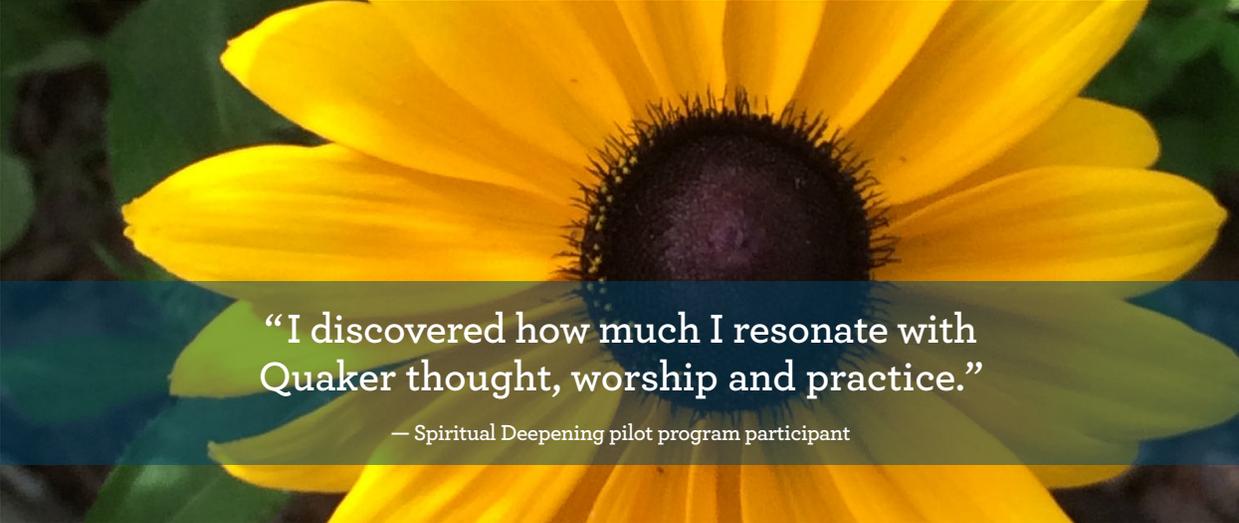
“In a small but meaningful way, this was the beginning of my growing more trusting of the others in the meeting.”

- Spiritual Deepening small group participant

“This eRetreat has been a gentle reminder to 'wait to feel the Spirit' and listen more closely for it.... This was a perfect combination of a mini retreat, communal sharing and learning experience.”

- Spiritual Deepening eRetreat participant

The Spiritual Deepening Experience



“I discovered how much I resonate with Quaker thought, worship and practice.”

— Spiritual Deepening pilot program participant

The Spiritual Deepening Program seeks to deepen the life, worship, and witness of Quaker meetings, individual Friends, and newcomers.

Meeting together in a small group over 8-12 sessions, Spiritual Deepening program participants will explore Quaker thought, share and listen to each other’s spiritual stories, and practice new ways of connecting to Spirit.

The program materials are designed for participants of all ages and stages in their spiritual journey. Participants engage in activities, discussions, role-plays, spiritual practices, art and music exercises, and worship sharing as they explore together three topic areas:

Silence and Expectant Waiting
The Light, Seed, Christ Working in Us
Friendly Practices

A small group leader from the meeting leads each small group. FGC offers training and ongoing support for small group leaders. The suggested fee for participating in the program is \$20 per participant, on a pay-as-led basis. Groups can start at any time.

Learn more: www.fgcquaker.org/spiritualdeepening

Questions? Contact: spiritualdeepening@fgcquaker.org



Photo by John Margerum

The Good Seed

Overview

Create and share art that represents the “seed” that God sews in your heart.



60 min.



Middle School & Up



Newcomer Friendly

Aims & Objectives

When you have completed this exercise, you will have considered the “seed” as a metaphor for the inward work of Spirit in our lives, which requires an open and receptive place in our hearts to be planted.

Materials & Setup

Write the attached four quotations onto four index cards or pieces of paper. Bring a CD player or smartphone to play the musical track. (There will certainly be someone in your group who will offer their smartphone for use if you don’t have one).

Gather a variety of art supplies, including: paper, scissors, crayons, markers, colored pencils, and plenty of glue and tape. If possible, bring a selection of seeds, such as sunflower seeds, grass seeds, or mixed birdseed, that could be used to make a collage.

Instructions:

Arrange art supplies on a table in the center of the room. Make sure there is plenty of space for each participant to work.

Distribute the index cards with the four quotations and invite volunteers to read each one to the group.

After listening to the quotations, settle into worship for about ten minutes. From the silence, invite participants to create an art reflection, focusing on this question:

What is the “seed” that God has sown in your heart?

This activity will be done in worshipful silence. Everyone is invited to use the art supplies to express their response to the quotations and the query.

When you sense that most of the participants are finished working, announce that the group will be coming back together in a few minutes.

When settled back into a circle, invite folks to share their art response and say a little about their “seed.” Continue your discussion by asking one or more of the queries below, as needed.

Queries:

- How am I already cooperating with the Inward Work of God?
- What will provide an open and receptive place in me for the Seed of God to grow this year?

- How can I help to prepare the soil, and open up my heart, mind, and soul to be receptive to God’s presence in my life and be more centered on that Presence?
- What plowing needs to be done to make way for the seed to grow? What are the weeds or thorns competing with or choking out the growth of the Seed?
- What needs to die for new life?
- What fruits am I being called to bring forth?
- How do we help each other this year to allow the Seed to grow?

Closing:

Begin your closing worship by listening to *Give Over Thy Own Willing*, an Isaac Penington quotation from 1681 that Quaker musician Paulette Meier has put to song. You can play the track on a CD player or using a smartphone connected to the Bandcamp streaming website. (Link: <https://paulettemeier.bandcamp.com/track/give-over-thine-own-willing>)

“Give over thine own willing, give over thine own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything, and sink down to the seed, which God sows in thy heart, and let that be in thee and grow in thee and breathe in thee and act in thee, and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that and loves and own that, and will lead it to the inheritance of life, which is God’s portion.” -- Isaac Penington

Quotations:

“Once there was a man who went out to sow grain. As he scattered the seed in the field, some of it fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some of it fell on rocky ground where there was little soil. The seeds soon sprouted because the soil wasn’t deep. But when the sun came up, it burned the young plants; and because the roots had not grown deep enough, the plants soon dried up. Some of the seed fell among thorn bushes, which grew up and choked the plants. But some seeds fell in good soil, and the plants bore grain...” *Matthew 13:3-8*

“In the good ground which yields its whole nourishment to the good seed, and will not yield nourishment to any bad... the good seed not only springs up, but brings forth fruit to perfection. The thorns, the cares, the worldliness, the fear of persecution, that spring up from another root, and are of another nature, choke the good which the seed brings forth in the thorny ground, and stifle and choke the seed itself also.”

Isaac Pennington

“...I can truly say that my mind has been more and more concerned for the working down everything which would get above the good Seed. I think we are never safe unless we feel the plough of God’s power and the hammer thereof so operating in us as to break us into tenderness”

Susanna Morris, Travelling Friend, 1744

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” *Galatians 5:22*

Additional Materials:

This exercise is adapted from *Light, Seed, Life* from the Quaker Spiritual Formation project of Baltimore Yearly Meeting and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

Link to these resources: <http://bit.ly/2d16NXp>

Paulette Meier's Timeless *Quaker Wisdom in Plainsong* is available for purchase.

The album features 21 Quaker quotations sung in plainsong and is a beautiful addition to group spiritual deepening and personal spiritual practices.

Learn more at: <http://www.paulettemeier.com>