

# Starting a New Quaker Worship Group or Meeting

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Quaker worship groups and meetings are dynamic faith communities. It is wonderful that you are considering starting a worship group or meeting! Below is some information that will help you in this spiritual endeavor.

## **Quaker Worship Group or Meeting**

A Quaker worship group or meeting is composed of two or more people who come together for prayer and worship. Quaker worship generally consists entirely—or having an extended period of— what Friends call unprogrammed worship. This is where folks gather in expectant, waiting silence and listen openly to God, the Light, the Seed, the Inward Teacher, the Living Christ. Women, men, and children are equally able to give vocal ministry as they feel led by the Spirit in a Quaker meeting or worship group. The meeting for worship may be entirely unprogrammed or may be “semi-programmed” in which a reading, a brief presentation, or communal singing may precede the unprogrammed worship.

A Quaker worship group or meeting exists in relationship to other Quaker meetings and is structured within the practices and framework of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). It does not function in isolation.

## **Purpose**

**A Quaker worship group** is a worshipping community that:

- Worships together and listens together to discern how the Spirit/Divine/God/Inward Christ calls them to a life of love, faithfulness, and community
- Supports its members as they live into their beliefs and find ways to be faithful in the Quaker manner
- Celebrates the joys and mourns the sorrows of its members
- Is often newly formed and meets in participants’ homes or in rented space
- Often is smaller than a meeting and has less structure
- Usually exists under the care of a Quaker meeting that offers assistance and nurture

**A Quaker meeting** is a worshipping community that does all the things above, and:

- Has a formal structure and meets regularly to conduct business
- Appoints committees and individuals to do the work of the meeting
- As usually formally affiliated with a Yearly Meeting or an association of Friends (such as Friends General Conference).

## Getting Started

First, go to [Quakerfinder.org](http://Quakerfinder.org) to find out if there are already Quakers near you. If so, worship with them a few times. You may find that you don't need to start a worship group or meeting. Or you may find one or more people on Quaker Finder who would help your group get started.

If there aren't Quakers near you:

- Spend some time discerning if there really is a need for a new worship group or meeting.
  - You may want to invite 2 or 3 local folks who are Quaker or interested in Quakers to join in discernment with you.
  - Contact FGC and a nearby yearly meeting to determine if there are established meetings or worship groups in your region with whom you might form a mentoring relationship.
- Hold a planning meeting, perhaps in someone's home
  - Advertise the planning meeting widely
    - Do not assume that you know the "type" of person who will be drawn to the worship group or meeting
- Decide when and where the group will meet
  - The more consistent the time and place, the easier it is for newcomers to find the group
- Publicize the new group widely
- Worship
  - Include time for refreshments before and/or after worship
  - Provide childcare and/or Quaker education for children
- Find times to study Quaker practice, beliefs, and history together
- Find times to share spiritual journeys
- Consider ways to do service together in the community
- Participate with Quakers regionally to connect with nearby monthly meetings and the area yearly meeting, , e.g., attend gatherings sponsored by other meetings, participate in yearly meeting sessions, etc
- Reflect periodically on how the group is developing
- Connect early and often with any local monthly and yearly meetings
  - The yearly meeting can help your group connect with a monthly meeting which may be willing to send Friends to your worship group to share worship with you, and assist the group in other ways.
  - The yearly meeting can add your worship group to its mailing lists so that your group can be notified of events and opportunities for gathering with other Friends
- Connect with FGC early and often, also, as:
  - FGC has resources to support new groups
  - FGC can help a group connect with other local Quaker groups

- FGC can help you get listed on QuakerFinder.org to help others find you

## **Helpful Definitions**

### *Monthly & Yearly Meeting*

These are recognized structures of meetings and groups of meetings. A monthly meeting usually meets at least weekly for worship, usually on Sunday morning, and meets monthly to do business together. A yearly meeting (or association or conference) meets yearly to do business together. A yearly meeting is generally an association of monthly meetings in a given region.

### *Under the Care of a Monthly or Yearly Meeting*

A new worship group or meeting is usually under the care of a monthly or yearly meeting which assists in carrying out the business of the new group and developing and caring for the spiritual life of the new group. The business of a worship group at this point is primarily related to membership and finances. The new group is asked to be in regular communication with the existing (or “parent”) monthly or yearly meeting and is invited to regional events by these bodies.

## **Connect**

Again, connect with FGC:

- FGC has resources to support new and existing groups
- FGC can help a group connect with other local Quaker groups
- FGC can help you get listed on QuakerFinder.org to help others find you

FGC staff and volunteers are happy to talk with you about this, or any other issue, your meeting or worship group is facing. Please contact us by emailing us or phoning 215-561-1700.

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).

