



When You're the Only Friend in Town

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Why Organize a New Quaker Worship Group?

Have you felt drawn to the teachings and practices of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)? Do you think the Quaker Way is a spiritual path that might speak to you? Of course you can read about it—there are many wonderful resources on this website—but reading about it is not the same as experiencing it firsthand. And to experience the Quaker Way, you need to be part of a group.

Why is the group important? Quakers put a lot of emphasis on individual spiritual exploration and discovery, but we don't believe that anyone can, or should, go it alone. There are several reasons for this:

*We need other people to hold us accountable, and let us know when we are being self-indulgent or self-willed. Individual leadings are important, but they need to be tested against the wisdom and insight of our faith community. It's very easy for anyone, no matter how sincere, to be led astray by his or her own notions and enthusiasms. The group keeps us grounded and helps us see things in a larger context.

*Intense spiritual experiences can be transforming, but it is only in relationship that we discover what they really mean. Many mystical traditions focus on the individual's ecstatic experience of the divine. The Quaker Way focuses on how the divine is revealed in our lives. How we treat each other is the only true test of inward transformation.

*Quaker worship has been described as "group mysticism". In worship, we not only see what the Light reveals in ourselves, but we see each other differently. As an old Quaker saying describes it: we "meet each other in that which is eternal." It is possible to meditate alone, but it is not possible to practice Quaker worship alone.

*God wants us to be gathered. We probably have very different ideas of just what that means, but our experience is that the Divine Spirit draws people toward connection, relationship and commitment. Quaker meetings are a place to experience and explore that spiritual pull.

So, what can you do if you want to follow the Quaker Way and don't have a Quaker meeting close by? You can start one yourself! The [New Meetings Project Toolbox](#) at [Friends General Conference](#) exists to help you do just that.

How Can a New Worship Group Get Started?

Research the Quaker Network

The first step is to find the nearest Friends meeting, no matter how far away it might be. The [Friends General Conference](#) website [QuakerFinder.org](#) includes a list of all the meetings in the United States and Canada that practice open worship based on silence (what we call “unprogrammed” or expectant, waiting worship). All you have to do is type in your zip code and you will be given a list of the nearest meetings, with contact information.

The [Quaker Information Center](#) website provides a more complete picture of the Religious Society of Friends in the United States. It explains the various branches, which range from liberal unprogrammed to evangelical Christian. In between are the Friends churches affiliated with [Friends United Meeting](#), which have relatively traditional Christian worship services, but maintain traditional Quaker testimonies.

Most Friends meetings and churches are grouped into regional associations, which are called “yearly meetings” because their main business sessions are held once a year. Local meetings, according to the same logic, are called “monthly meetings” because they hold business sessions once a month. You will need to know which yearly meetings serve your general area, as well as which monthly meetings are nearby. The various yearly meetings may define the Quaker Way very differently. Some are firmly Bible centered. Some are inclusive and universalist in orientation. To find out what the expectations are in a particular yearly meeting, check out its book of *Faith and Practice*. You can find many of these online at the [Quaker Information Center](#) website. The new worship group you are building will eventually need to connect to a yearly meeting in order to join the worldwide Quaker network. You should choose one that seems to be a good fit.

Find Other People Who Share Your Interest.

To get your worship group started, you will need at least one or two other people to work with. Family members, co-workers and neighbors are all possibilities. [Let others know](#) that you are curious about the Quaker Way, and ask what they know about it. Spread the word that you would like to start a Quaker worship group, and see what turns up. Social media are a wonderful way to do this ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), Craig’s List). Ask nearby colleges whether they have students who registered their religious preference as “Quaker” or “Friend”. You may

discover that there are transplanted Quakers in your area who would love to be part of a worship group, and have real experience to share.

Get Your Bearings

Once you have found one or two other people to work with, start exploring the Quaker Way together. Choose a book or pamphlet to read as a group. The New Meetings Project has assembled at [Spiritual Reading List](#) to help you get started.

Meet to talk about what you have learned. Hold a meeting for worship, and see how it feels. Talk about what each of you experiences in silent worship, and what you are hungry for. Check out Quaker blogs, such as [QuakerQuaker](#) to ask questions and make connections.

Visit the nearest Friends meeting for worship, introduce yourselves, and explain what you are trying to do. Ask the Friends you meet if they have advice to offer, or if they would like to return the visit and worship with you. If the leading is still strong, it's time to take the next step.

Hold a Public Meeting

The general idea is that your group of two or three will choose a time and place, and invite the public to come and engage in a conversation about the Quaker Way. Public libraries often have a meeting room that you can reserve for an event like this. Or find a café or coffee shop or food co-op with a meeting room where folks who might be interested in the Quaker Way already gather! This meeting will give you an opportunity to explain the Quaker Way, and invite others to join you in forming a new worship group. Collect contact information for everyone who might be interested in attending worship with you.

Meeting Origin Story: Atlanta (Georgia) Friends Meeting

In a racially segregated city, during a worldwide war, some Quakerly-minded individuals gathered to form a new Friends group. The city was Atlanta, Georgia; the date February 7, 1943.

A newspaper notice the preceding day stated briefly: "The Atlanta Quaker Group (Society of Friends) will meet for supper and a worship program Sunday at 6 P.M. at the Central YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], 145 Luckie St. The public is invited. Professor George Hayes, of Agnes Scott College, will speak on The Doctrine of the Inner Light, Shining in the Soul of Man."

According to the terse diary that he kept in those days, George Hayes noted for February 7, 1943: Our first Quaker meeting in 15 years in the South [presumably the 15 years he had been in the area]-at the Y-about 30 present, including refugees, social workers, Friends, pacifists and curious. . . . Supper, meeting for worship, organization, and I talked on the inner Light.

The meeting was the outgrowth of a January gathering in the home of Maurice Strickland and his wife, Irma. Maurice was a native of Moultrie, Georgia, and had completed his Ph.D. at New York University. He and his wife had moved to Atlanta in 1940 from Flushing, New York. They were pacifists-an almost treasonable position in the South during World War II-and had hoped to find a Friends meeting, having attended meetings in Flushing and Philadelphia.

Janet Boyte Ferguson and Janet Adams Rinard, *As Way Opened: A History of Atlanta Friends, 1943-1997* (Atlanta Friends Meeting, 1999), pp. 1-2

Establish a Relationship with a Sponsoring Meeting

New worship groups are often started “[under the care](#)” of an established local meeting. This relationship gives the new group a place to turn for advice and support, and gives it easy access to Quaker resources at the yearly meeting, national and international level.

If you met with encouragement from members of a meeting you visited, that meeting might be willing to take your worship group under its care. Perhaps a member of your group is connected in some way to a more distant meeting that might be willing to sponsor you. Closer is better, but Friends meetings have been known to sponsor worship groups half a world away. It can't hurt to ask.

You may need to explain just what a care relationship requires, since most monthly meetings have not had experience sponsoring a worship group. The following guidelines may be helpful.

Guidelines for a Parent Meeting

What Does It Mean to Have a Worship Group "Under the Care of the Meeting?"

Quakerism tends to be a grass roots religion. Worship groups have been known to spring up spontaneously, and grow into vital meetings on their own. But the process of germination

and growth is helped enormously by the active involvement of an established meeting which takes the new worship group "under its care."

What is involved in caring for a worship group? Here are some guidelines for meetings facing this question.

1. It is important to remember that new worship groups are vital to the future of Quakerism. Established meetings should always be looking for opportunities to plant new worship groups, and should joyfully welcome such opportunities when they arise spontaneously. Sometimes meetings worry that they will be weakened if the energy of some of their members is diverted into a new worship group. Trying to hold on to members by discouraging them from creating their own worship group is an almost certain way to alienate them from the meeting. The energy of the infant group is likely to spill over into the parent meeting. Any leading to start a new worship group is a sign of life and vigor that should be lovingly responded to.
2. If the meeting is approached about helping to start a new worship group, either by one of its own members or by a visitor from outside, the first step is to appoint a clearness committee to meet with the Friend making the request. The clearness committee would explore just what is being proposed, and why it is considered necessary, remembering that this may be an important opportunity for the meeting.
3. The next step is to explore whether there are at least two or three other people who are willing to help establish the new group. These might either be people who intend to be part of the group once it is established, or meeting members who are willing to expend energy in getting it started, but do not intend to leave the parent meeting. Once this group is identified, the clearness committee meets again, to help them clarify their vision.
4. If the leading seems to be clear, and the group seems to be ready to proceed, the clearness committee recommends to the meeting for business that the meeting take the new worship group under its care.
5. The parent meeting should be prepared to provide advice and counsel as needed, and to send visitors regularly to meet with the new worship group.
6. Friends from the worship group should plan to attend meeting for business at the parent meeting, and report regularly to the parent meeting on their activities and concerns.

7. Membership in the worship group will be through the parent meeting, and marriages will be held under the care of the parent meeting. Normally only established monthly meetings can exercise this kind of semi-legal authority.

8. When the worship group is strong enough to manage its own business independently, it may ask the parent meeting for recognition as a monthly meeting in its own right. Then, depending on the yearly meeting that the parent meeting belongs to, steps can be taken to help the new group achieve monthly meeting status.

Suggestions for further reading:

The version of *Faith and Practice* used by your yearly meeting may provide valuable additional guidance.

Select a Meeting Time and Place

Planning your first meeting for worship involves a number of [practical considerations](#). Many new worship groups meet in private homes at first. It's convenient and inexpensive, and provides a comfortable, welcoming atmosphere for worship. The downside is that newcomers may be reluctant to ring a stranger's doorbell. Our research has shown that meeting in a "public" space tends to attract more newcomers and helps the group grow. Libraries, coffee shops, YMCAs, and student centers have all hosted new Quaker worship groups, often with very little expense. Having a sign out front announcing "Quaker Worship Today" also helps.

If you feel you can only hold worship once or twice a month, it's important to have a simple schedule that repeats each month, as well as a regular meeting place, so that newcomers and occasional attenders are confident that they know when and where worship will be held. Even one experience of showing up on the wrong day or in the wrong place can cause someone to give up on trying to become part of a worship group.

New worship groups often choose to meet on Sunday afternoons, Saturdays, or weekday evenings, to avoid conflicting with other church services. There is certainly no requirement that Quaker worship take place on any particular day. Experience suggests, however, that meeting on Sunday morning effectively defines a group as a primary faith community, while other times permit a lower level of commitment. Your group should at least consider this in choosing your meeting time.

Meeting Origin Story: Olympia (Washington)

When we moved to Olympia in June 1972, others began giving us the names of people who might be interested in having a meeting here. At first our reply was along the lines of "If people want a meeting they could start one." Then at the end of the summer we got a letter from a Friend from Pacific Yearly Meeting stating her daughter was going to enroll in Evergreen College and wanted to know if there was a meeting in town. Well, what can you do? If you have a student who wants to go to meeting you certainly should try to have one. We collected all the suggested names and sent out a postcard to each, inviting them to a potluck supper at our home on a Sunday evening. This would be followed by a meeting for worship and then a discussion about whether or not we wanted to meet regularly. Seventeen people came, a surprisingly good beginning. We all agreed we wanted to meet regularly, but it took some discussion to decide where, what time, and how often. Several were involved in other churches where they or family members had commitments, so they wanted to meet in the evening or some other day of the week. Having seen the experience of Corvallis Meeting which started this way, some of us felt that we wanted to try to plan this as a primary worship group from the beginning. Our decision was to meet every other Sunday for potluck breakfast at 9:00, meeting for worship at 10:00, rotating among homes as invited.

After a while, two problems with this schedule became apparent. Five Sunday months meant uncertain meeting dates, and the Christmas vacation meant the potential for up to six weeks between meetings for some. I don't remember when we decided we wanted to meet every Sunday and that going around to homes was too complicated. Our budget was very small and a large proportion of our attendance was by students. We looked around town, made inquiries, and found that the YWCA would welcome our meeting there. The YWCA building is an old home and for some it provided a good transition from our members' homes. Some weren't happy with it at all.

At our beginning we had three members of University Meeting and at least one of a meeting in the East. We felt that we would like to be related to the closest meeting, and that was Tacoma. It was a serious consideration for them because they were at that time low in membership and with a number of elderly and ill. We had as many or more in attendance on a Sunday as they did. We were grateful that they did agree to take us under their care. They sent occasional visitors to our meeting and we tried to attend their business meeting as often as possible. They formed joint clearness committees with us for membership and for a marriage. Most of us who were members in other meetings didn't transfer.

North Pacific Yearly Meeting Outreach Committee, [Survival Sourcebook: The Care and Maintenance of Small Meetings and Worship Groups](#), North Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1989, pp. 36

Reach out

When you are ready to announce where and when you will be meeting for worship, make sure the word is spread as widely as possible. Notify any Friends meetings that are less than a couple of hours away. Post flyers in the local library, health food store, student center, or anywhere else that has a public bulletin board. Set up a website. Ask to have your worship group listed on QuakerFinder.org. Post an announcement on QuakerQuaker or any other Quaker blogs you have found helpful. Find out how much it would cost to be listed in the “churches” section of your local newspaper. You might want to consider acquiring a dedicated meeting phone number, so that you can ask for a telephone directory listing. Both newspapers and telephones can be useful tools for outreach, but may cost too much to be a good value.

Outreach to newcomers will continue to be important to sustaining your worship group. Here are some ideas to keep in mind:

Meet every week if possible, even if only one or two people can be there. This will make it easier for visitors to find you. Publicize when and where meetings will be held, as well as contact information for someone willing to answer questions. [Social media](#) are very useful for this purpose.

Have a sign or portable sandwich board displayed outside your meeting place. It should identify the meeting by name, give the time of worship, and extend a welcome to visitors. Put a welcoming sign on the door visitors will pass through so they know where to enter. Have someone at the door to greet everyone as they come in.

Offer literature on Friends worship to first time attenders. A wide variety is available from [Friends General Conference](#). Consider creating a lending library of Quaker pamphlets.

Collect contact information from everyone who attends worship. Send out regular updates about what is happening, and make sure they are sent to visitors as well as regulars. Distribute an e-mail list to help everyone keep in touch.

Talk to visitors about what they are looking for. Make sure they feel included. Try to follow up every visit with a phone call or note. Make sure visitors receive a personal invitation to special events and fellowship opportunities.

Remember that outreach is a form of ministry. When we welcome people into a worship community, we are engaging in “spiritual hospitality.”

Meeting Origin Story: Caddo Area Preparative Meeting, under the care of Little Rock Friends Meeting

At the start of this last year we found the number of Friends that were able to attend our monthly Caddo area meeting was dwindling. By summer we were down to only two or three regular attenders. Then in July a new inquirer from Texarkana started worshipping with us. Our new attender encouraged us to do some outreach in the Texarkana area, saying she just knew there had to be others that would want to join us. By fall we were doing some outreach planning. We placed a small notice in the "Church Section" of the local newspaper. There were no inquiries. We were not unexpectedly disappointed.

But the local paper also ran special articles about churches a couple of times each month. We contacted them to see if they could write one about us. Well, no, as we didn't fit the profile of their articles, but if we held a special event, as long as it wasn't proselytizing, they would be glad to write about it. Proselytizing is advertising and you have to pay for that. After careful consideration of the parameters, we decided on a "Get to Know Quakers" opportunity. Two Friends went to the newspaper to be interviewed and found assorted newspaper staffers hanging around the cubicle and listening in, probably their first glimpse of Quakers. We are sure they were probably more disappointed that we didn't look Amish or Mennonite. But we were buoyed by the interest.

The article started out saying: "Those unfamiliar with Quakerism may find the diversity and mysticism associated with their belief perplexing, but local Quakers hope to shed some light on the subject. An introductory-style meeting will be held from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at 3600 Olive St., Texarkana, Texas for those interested in learning more about Quakerism."

We also placed ads on two local radio stations and hung posters in various locations. But it was the newspaper article that generated the most interest. We had already gone to FGC's Advancement and Outreach web site and found out that we might expect to find 2.5 persons in a town the size of Texarkana that would be interested in Quakers. Of course that brought forth some un-Quakerly comments about what the .5 person would be like. Already having one attender from the area we were hoping for one or two others! But we had around 12 people call saying they would like to come. We were literally holding our breath. Nine inquirers did attend. Six or more have been coming to meet with us, as their lives permit, and since then several more have called inquiring. As one member wrote after our meeting, "I'm still basking in the afterglow." That friend spoke our hearts.

With the wonderful response and interest, we rather quickly and joyfully decided to start meeting weekly, a "notion" that we have not even been able to entertain for over 13 years. Friends at a distance from Texarkana committed themselves to being faithful weekly attenders. We also

decided to continue meeting on Saturday mornings instead of Sundays, and rented meeting space in a local Senior Center.

From the Caddo Area Preparative Meeting draft State of the Meeting report, 2004.

What Does a New Worship Group Do?

Meeting for Worship

The heart of your new worship group will be a gathered time of expectant waiting and open, unprogrammed worship. This is a practice that is relatively rare among religious denominations, and may be the special gift of Friends to a noisy frenetic world. As Friends, we [gather in silence](#), and try to settle into the deep inward place where we may experience something of divine grace and power and Light. Many of us visualize Christ, the Inward Teacher, as the presence in the midst of a gathered meeting.

Sometimes one of us feels led to share a message out of the silence—some insight or vision that comes to us with unusual clarity and seems to be meant for the whole group. Occasionally someone offers a prayer that might verbalize the sense of the whole group or articulate its yearnings. Sometimes no one speaks, but this does not mean nothing is happening. Meetings that are completely silent can be amazingly powerful. In the silence we encounter a Spirit that transforms us. We may leave meeting feeling healed or chastened, freed of some old burden, or with a new sense of clarity about what we are called to do.

Quaker worship services usually last an hour, although they may be longer or shorter. Usually someone is assigned to “clerk” the meeting. When the clerk senses that the meeting is ready to end, he or she reaches over and shakes the hand of a neighbor, initiating a general shaking of hands.

Some meetings find it helpful to have a period of singing as preparation for worship. In some, a query or quotation is read toward the beginning of worship, or someone is asked to give a brief message to help those present settle and focus. Many worship groups prefer to have no programmed elements at all. You may try whatever you think might be helpful, while keeping in mind that our efforts to inspire may get in the way of deeper inspiration.

There are no clear-cut answers to the question of [when to speak or not to speak in meeting](#) for worship. Anyone is free to speak as led, including children and first-time visitors. No one

should come to worship either intending to speak, or intending to be silent. There are some basic guidelines that may be useful:

Do not fear the living silence. Speak only if what you have to say would improve on the silence and add to the depth of the meeting.

Stand to deliver your message, if you can. Standing makes it more likely that you will be heard, and the decision to stand helps us to test whether we are truly led to speak.

Speak briefly and confine yourself to the message you have been given to share. Don't try to elaborate or explain.

Don't worry about whether the message you feel led to share is adequate or relevant. You may not even fully understand it. We cannot know the purposes of the messages we are given to speak.

Sometimes a message is intended for us as individuals, not for the group. Take time to consider whether what comes to you is really meant to be shared.

Allow a period of silence between messages. Friends are rarely, if ever, led to speak twice in the same meeting for worship.

Listen deeply enough to hear "where the words come from." Listen in love. If a message does not speak to you, simply let it go. It may well have been intended for someone else.

What happens in meeting for worship is guided by the Spirit. Nothing that is given or received in worship is wasted.

Some meetings provide for a time of "afterthoughts" following meeting for worship, so that those present can share thoughts that came to them during worship, but did not seem to rise to the level of vocal ministry.

There are many [excellent resources](#) available that can help your group deepen its understanding of the Quaker practice of coming together for silent, expectant, waiting worship.

Enriching Meeting for Worship

Gathered silent worship can be immensely powerful. When we enter in the presence of the sacred with hearts and minds open, we may find ourselves experiencing life in a new way

and seeing each other and the world around us through new eyes. Just having that open space in our hectic lives can be enormously refreshing. But the absence of external structure can be unsettling. Here are some simple suggestions for focusing silent worship, and preparing the way for Spirit-guided ministry.

1. We never know what will happen when we look for divine guidance. Enter meeting for worship every time expecting to be changed.
2. Spend some time each day in meditation, spiritual reading or prayer. The power of any given meeting for worship is probably in direct correlation to how much time the people gathered there spent cultivating the life of the spirit during the previous week.
3. Don't come to meeting expecting either to bring a message, or to stay silent. Practice listening for the inward promptings that mean there is something you are supposed to say or do. These may be as powerful as an earthquake or as light as the touch of a feather.
4. Remember that anyone, however unworthy they may feel, or how unlikely they may seem, can serve as a channel for the Light.
5. Listen deeply to any message spoken in meeting for worship. Listen for where the words come from more than to the words themselves. Listen with love.
6. Take turns bringing a reading you have found especially powerful or helpful to share in the few minutes before meeting settles in. The task of choosing a reading, and deciding what you want to say about it, will help you focus on spiritual practice during the week.
7. Allow some time after worship ends for "afterthoughts" or "twilight meeting." During this time, Friends may share thoughts and insights that came to them in meeting, but didn't seem to rise to the level of a spoken message.
8. Learn more about Quakerism. Reading Quaker classics as a group, doing Bible study or exploring Faith and Practice, will deepen your worship, your shared vocabulary and your sense of community.

Suggestions for further reading:

Birkel, Michael. *Silence and Witness: The Quaker Tradition*. Orbis, 2004.

Loring, Patricia. *Listening Spirituality, Volume 2: Corporate Spiritual Practice among Friends*. Opening Press, 1999.

Taber, William. *Four Doors to Meeting for Worship*. Pendle Hill, 1992.

Community

There is more to a Friends worship group than silent waiting worship at regular intervals. A vital faith community gathers us into a loving, supportive fellowship. It is a place where we are listened to, valued and cared for—and where we listen to, value, and care for the others.

Studies have shown that visitors who make at least two or three friends during their first six months with a new congregation are far more likely to stay than those who don't. Creating opportunities for friendships to grow is absolutely necessary in a new worship group.

A favorite Quaker quotation comes from the seventeenth century Quaker Isaac Pennington:

“Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.”

Here are some of the things you can do to nurture the sense of community that naturally grows out of gathered worship:

Share meals together. Perhaps one or two people can bring soup and bread for everyone to share after meeting for worship, or the whole group can go to a local diner for relaxation and conversation. This will be especially welcome if attenders have to travel long distances to meeting. Organize potlucks for special occasions. Hold meeting picnics, retreats, and outings. Invite each other into your homes.

Community Building Story: Multnomah Monthly Meeting (Washington)

We held a gathering for "a shared meal, shared fun, and sharing on how to strengthen trust within the meeting." After a picnic and wandering about a meadow on the slopes of Mt. Hood, Friends gathered around a large basket. Worship and songs were joined. Then each was asked to seek some item from the meadows around that reflected a gift they could bring to the meeting. Each person shared of themselves in describing their choice of seeds, or leaves, or the wind. The gathering closed with a song and silent worship.

North Pacific Yearly Meeting Outreach Committee, [Survival Sourcebook: The Care and Maintenance of Small Meetings and Worship Groups](#), North Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1989, p. 2.

Encourage Friends to talk about what is going on in their lives. Some meetings set aside time after worship for holding in the Light the joys and sorrows Friends lift up out of the silence. Special called meetings to celebrate a new birth or to support a member who is ill or grieving can be a powerful community building experience.

Create safe spaces for deep sharing. When we allow ourselves to be vulnerable, and truly listen to each other, we are drawn closer together. One technique Quakers often use is called [Worship Sharing](#). A small group is asked to consider a question that focuses on cherished memories, important experiences, fears, or joys. The guidelines call for each person to speak from experience, to listen deeply, and not to respond to or comment on anything anyone else has said. We have found that this tool can help deepen worship, resolve conflicts, and build community.

Worship Sharing Guidelines

Worship-sharing helps us to explore our own experience and share with each other more deeply than we would in normal conversation. It seeks to draw us into sacred space, where we can take down our usual defenses, and encounter each other in “that which is eternal.”

The guidelines for worship sharing have been evolving among Friends for the past half-century, drawing on a number of different sources. They can be summarized as follows:

- 1) The convener or leader should define a question as the focus for sharing which is simple, open ended, and oriented toward individual experience. It might be a question about the spiritual journey (How is God moving in my life today? Where do I experience beauty most intensely?). It might be related to an issue that is exercising or dividing the meeting (What is it that frightens me most about this controversy? What do I long for most in our community?) It might relate to a book you have been reading together (What touched me most deeply? Which character seems most like me when I was a child?) The question should be chosen prayerfully, to meet the particular needs of the group at that time. There are no stock questions.
- 2) The convener then explains the basic rules for sharing:

- Reach as deeply as you can into the sacred center of your life.
 - Speak out of the silence, and leave a period of silence between speakers.
 - Speak from your own experience, about your own experience. Concentrate on feelings and changes rather than on thoughts or theories.
 - Do not respond to what anyone else has said, either to praise or to refute.
 - Listen carefully and deeply to what is spoken.
 - Expect to speak only once, until everyone has had a chance to speak.
 - Respect the confidentiality of what is shared.
- 3) Some leaders feel that going around the circle makes it easier for everyone to speak. Others prefer to ask people to speak as they are ready. Explain which practice you would like to follow. In either case, participants should know that they have the option of “passing” or not speaking.
- 4) Allow at least half an hour for a group of five or six to share their responses to a single question, and at least an hour for a larger group. If you have more than a dozen people, it would be better to divide into smaller groups to make sure that everyone has a chance to participate.
- 5) The convener then reads the query he or she has chosen, and repeats it to make sure that everyone has it in mind. The group then settles into worshipful silence, and the sharing begins.

Worship Sharing: Friends University and Guilford College

During the years that I led college worship-sharing groups with students at Friends University and Guilford College, we sang, ate meals, prayed, read inspirational material, held hands and hugged each other until we felt really close. After these active group-building experiences we shared the silence and sensed the Divine Spirit at a level which gave us guidance and made us feel that we were joined together in a community which was based on that which is eternal. Later I tried worship sharing with adults of all ages. It was different, but it still made us more aware of our Divine leadings. It helped us as we participated in our regular meetings for worship. When someone speaks out of the silence and you have shared their joys and sorrows, you can hear their message on a deeper level. This is an important part of worship.

David Bills, "The Ripening of Quaker Worship" (Twenty-seventh Annual Michener Lecture), Southeastern Yearly Meeting, 1998, pp. 15-16.

Make space for children. Extending a welcome to [families with children](#) is especially important in growing your faith community. You can welcome children into meeting for worship by providing books, soft toys, art supplies and a place to play quietly in the room where meeting is held or you can provide childcare elsewhere. Nothing makes parents feel better than having their children welcomed and cared for.

Thoughts on Children and the New Worship Group

In today's society, many parents are looking for a faith community primarily because they feel that their children should have some sort of religious education. Often these are adults who have drifted away from, or rebelled against, their own childhood church. They are looking for something different. Providing religious education for children may seem like a daunting challenge to the new worship group, but it may be a powerful way of reaching out to the community and drawing new people in.

Friends have always had a refreshingly radical outlook on the role of children in the church. Quakers in the seventeenth century were early opponents of the idea that children are born in sin. They held that children are spiritual beings by virtue of "the Light that enlightens everyone born into the world." They valued each child's inborn capacity for knowing God, and sought to affirm and nurture that capacity, while not denying the all too human tendency to fall prey to temptation. Although children rarely felt led to speak in Quaker meetings for worship, their spoken ministry was received

with respect, as it still is today. There are stories of how children held meeting on their own during the years of persecution in England, when all of their elders were in prison.

The Quaker notion that children should be listened to with respect, and nurtured as spiritual beings in their own right, will appeal to many modern day parents. Here are some ideas to help you think about how your group might minister to children and to families with children.

1. Traditionally, children attended Quaker meeting with their parents. The notion that children need some other activity during silent worship is a relatively recent one. New worship groups might consider simply reviving the old practice. Some children will thrive on being included in the meeting for worship. They will enjoy snuggling with a parent, or simply being free to think their own thoughts.
2. It may be helpful to provide some quiet play space in the meeting room, especially for young children. Some meetings have experimented with laying out a blanket in one corner, with a few books and soft toys for the toddlers. Some provide drawing paper and ask the older children to draw pictures of what they think about or what they hear in worship.
3. Have a supply of special meeting books children can choose to read quietly. One meeting offered old scrapbooks for a toddler to leaf through. Books that are only available at meeting will have more appeal than books brought from home.
4. Sometimes a child will sit more quietly on the lap of an adult who is not a parent, and parents may be very grateful for this kind of help. Not only does it free them to enter more deeply into worship, but also it expresses a community of concern in caring for their children.
5. If a child simply has to get out and move around, an adult other than the parents should step in. Offer a walk or simply a conversation. Suggest that the child find a special nature gift for someone in the meeting or draw a special picture. Be prepared to listen. Children need adults to talk to who are not their parents, and a worship group is a wonderful place to nurture such friendships.
6. Accept the babbling or murmuring of children as part of the normal atmosphere of meeting for worship. In Quaker worship we are not trying to shut ourselves off in a private quiet place, but to encounter others in "that which is eternal." Loving the

children, with all their irrepressibility, is only one more way of enriching meeting for worship.

7. Consider preceding worship with twenty minutes of family worship-sharing or sharing circles. Pose simple questions the children can relate to ("What do you think is beautiful?" "What does it feel like to have a friend?" "What does the word 'peace' mean to you?" "Have you ever felt really close to God?") These will help both adults and children center down for worship, and get to know each other better.

8. Hold sleepovers for children in the meeting, including food, fun, and sharing circles. Plan hikes, picnics, and outings, allowing time for special outdoor worship and sharing.

9. If you do decide to offer classes for children, you can find wonderful religious education curricula and resources through Friends General Conference. Discern whether anyone in your group has a particular leading to nurture and teach the children.

10. If your group feels a special leading to work with children, consider advertising the availability of Quaker religious education in the community, as a way of drawing in new families. Be prepared to welcome the families that come.

Suggestions for further reading:

Caldwell, Barbara and Reichardt, Dorothy. *Growing in the Light*. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1998.

Hadley, Abby. *We're Going to Meeting for Worship*. Quaker Press of FGC, 1996.

Snyder, Mary. *Opening Doors to Quaker Religious Education*. Quaker Press of FGC, 1999.

Spiritual Exploration

Individual spiritual exploration is an essential part of the Quaker Way. We are each expected to seek out truth for ourselves, and to take our own [spiritual journey](#) seriously.

Having a regular spiritual practice is extremely helpful. If we spend some time each day in meditation, contemplation, or reading the Bible or other inspirational literature, attending to the Light becomes second nature. An awareness of the Spirit begins to influence everything we do, providing solid ground to stand on as we face daily stresses and troubles. It also prepares us

for group worship. The vitality and power of a meeting for worship may largely be determined by how much energy the participants have put into individual spiritual practices during the week.

Many of us love to read, but it is important not to rely too much on what other people have to say. Their ideas, insights, and stories can inspire, challenge and comfort us, but it is only our own direct experience of the Divine that transforms us. We should avoid getting caught up in too much intellectual speculation about spiritual questions. It is probably a good rule of thumb to spend at least as much time reflecting as we spend reading.

It is important to remember that spiritual messages can be spoken by anyone—young or old, rich or poor, educated or not—including those who are generally marginalized and despised in our society. One of the central Quaker teachings is that “there is something of God in everyone.” If we truly believe this, we will listen to everyone with respect, trying to see what Light they may reveal.

A remarkable number of Quakers are involved in scientific research. We seem to enjoy examining reality from many different angles, and see no conflict between science and religion. We naturally want to learn as much as we can. But we also want to foster a habit of attention to the Light Within, which many of us think of as Christ, the Inward Teacher. We can learn from the spiritual explorations of others only if we are engaged in the same kind of exploration for ourselves.

Shared Learning

“Meetings for learning” are easy to organize. Simply choose a pamphlet or a section of a book for everyone to read, and then meet to share your responses and questions, worship-sharing style. Here are two approaches you might try:

1. Get copies of the book of *Faith and Practice* from your yearly meeting. Choose sections to read and discuss. The reading may be done ahead of time, or you might want to read aloud in the group, taking turns around the room. Share your thoughts and questions. You might do worship sharing around the question: “How does this passage speak to an experience I’ve had in my own life?” If your yearly meeting doesn’t have its own *Faith and Practice*, you might want to try out versions from different yearly meetings and compare what they have to say, or use Howard Brinton’s [*Guide to Quaker Practice*](#). The [*Friendly Faith and Practice Study Guide*](#) by Joanne and Larry Spears provides detailed instruction in how to organize this kind of study.

2. Organize a shared learning course around four or five Pendle Hill pamphlets. The Pendle Hill Pamphlet series is a treasure trove of Quaker wisdom. At only 30-40 pages each, the pamphlets can easily be read at one sitting. Plan to meet about once a month over four or five months. Assign a pamphlet as advance reading for each session. You might want to buy enough copies for everyone in the group, or circulate two or three. When you meet, share your thoughts, responses and questions. Be sure to do some worship sharing in each session, focused on questions like: “What image in this reading stirred me the most deeply?” “How does this reading illuminate some issue I’ve struggled with in my own life?” The following list of pamphlets has been widely used in this way to provide an overall introduction to the Quaker Way.

- Introduction: George Peck, “[What is Quakerism](#)” or Douglas Steere, “[Introduction from Quaker Spirituality](#)”
- Worship: William Taber, “[Four Doors to Meeting for Worship](#)”
- Business Process: Barry Morley, “[Beyond Consensus](#)”
- Witness: Wilmer Cooper, “[Testimony of Integrity](#)”

3. Read the Bible together. Reading the Bible becomes an entirely new experience when we stop depending on other people’s interpretations and look for how it speaks to us directly. Scripture is full of stories and insights into how people have experienced God and God’s creation. When we take time to reflect on these stories and sayings, as we might reflect on a message spoken in meeting for worship, we may suddenly see the Light shining through. Larry and Joanne Spears have published a [Friendly Bible Study Guide](#) that suggests ways to study the Bible in the context of the Quaker Way.

Witness

If we honestly ask for divine guidance in meeting for worship, sooner or later we are going to be prompted to do something about the concerns that touch our hearts. The inward transformation we experience in worship will spill over into a longing to witness in the world to the possibility of transformation, peace, and justice.

Take time in your worship group to talk about traditional Quaker values. We sometimes summarize these as the “SPICES”: simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and stewardship. What do these values mean to you, and how do they shape your life? Your group might want to read one of the queries from your yearly meeting’s book of Faith and Practice

each month and share your responses, insights and doubts. Don't expect total agreement. There is no definitive statement of Quaker testimonies anywhere. What we refer to as Quaker testimonies are simply the ways of living we have developed to testify to our own inward experience of the Light. The SPICES are nothing more than prompts or markers on a life-long journey of exploration.

Your group may feel drawn together around a particular concern and find energy in witnessing together in your community. Or you may want to provide support for individuals following many different paths of witness and service. Either approach is valid. The important thing is to remember that effective religious witness draws its power and clarity from the infinite love we encounter in worship. Deep spirituality and active witness are not alternatives. They are two sides of the same coin.

Mutual Accountability

Quaker meetings include a great deal of diversity. Friends are not expected to believe exactly the same things or to share exactly the same leadings. What holds the group together is a shared commitment to attending to the Light within, being true to our own experience of the Divine, and caring for and listening to each other. The deep sense of unity we find in worship is a reality beyond words and beyond understanding. It has nothing to do with uniformity.

Accepting diversity can be difficult. Those who feel strongly about something may want everyone in the group to agree. Those who feel clearly led to a particular action may not be able to understand why everyone is not led in the same way. Those who believe that they know the right way to do something may try to dictate to the group in a way that stifles growth.

It helps to acknowledge that we each know some part of the truth, but that none of us knows it all, and that learning from each other makes us stronger. It is important to realize that we are called to different kinds of work and witness, and that our differences do not weaken our community, but enrich it.

It also helps to practice mutual accountability. We should ask for each other's help when we are in trouble, and offer help when it seems needed. We should be willing to be counseled about the choices we are making, and to counsel others, simply because we care about them. Quakers traditionally rely on a form of counseling called "eldering", which focuses on nurturing spiritual gifts. Eldering is only undertaken out of a sense of Divine leading, when the impulse is pure love.

Quakers often rely on “clearness committees” to foster mutual accountability. Someone faced with an important decision or struggling with a difficult situation can ask the meeting for a clearness process, which involves gathering a small group of Friends to meet with him or her. The purpose of the meeting is not to discuss strategies or offer advice, but to help the individual explore what he or she is truly led to do, in a safe, supportive space. It is a powerful affirmation of community.

Guidelines for Clearness Committees

In the early days of Quakerism, clearness committees were appointed by Friends meetings to look into whether two people expressing their intention to marry were "clear" of any other entanglements (a previous engagement; unpaid debts; a family dispute) that might stand in the way of their union. Gradually the clearness committees appointed by meetings to look into questions of membership or marriage came to focus less on external impediments, and more on the whether the individuals involved were clear about their leadings.

In the 1960s this old Quaker practice took on new urgency as young men facing the draft asked their peers to serve on clearness committees to help them discern what they were led to do. This was not group discernment, as in normal Quaker business practice, but group support for individual discernment. Only the individual could know for sure what kind of witness he was called to, but the clearness committee could provide prayer and caring to move his discernment process forward. The result was a powerful sense of community and mutual accountability around a shared commitment to faithfulness. Soon clearness committees were being organized around a wide range of issues, not only in Young Friends of North America, but in many parts of the Religious Society of Friends. They have been used to help members through difficult life decisions, to test and affirm individual witness, and as a powerful way of supporting and holding accountable those engaged in traveling ministry.

The basic process is simple. Normally the person seeking clearness asks for a committee to be formed, although it may be helpful for someone else to suggest the idea. The focus person is usually asked to suggest who should serve on the committee. Other members may be added by the meeting. Five is a good size for such a committee, although it may be smaller or larger. A meeting time and place are chosen to allow for privacy and uninterrupted, open-ended worship. The committee settles into silence. Out of the silence, the focus person describes what clearness he or she is seeking. The role of the other committee members is to hold that situation in the Light, and ask questions, out of silent worship, that may help the focus person find clarity.

The person clerking the committee should explain the guidelines for asking questions:

1. Resist the impulse to provide advice or counsel. The purpose of the meeting is not to solve a problem, but to open space for the Light to break through.
2. Do not spend too much time trying to clarify the history of the situation brought before the committee. Focus on opening up the way forward.
3. Keep your attention on the focus person. Sharing your own experiences and insights, even in question form, will be a distraction.
4. Maintain an attitude of prayerful listening. Keep your questions simple and non-directive.
5. Do not be afraid to ask questions that seem far-fetched or even irrelevant. If they rise up in you with a certain insistence, like a message in worship, they probably need to be asked.
6. Pay attention to where God seems to be breaking through, as manifested in love, joy, compassion. Affirm the presence of God.
7. Do not enter into the process feeling that you know the answer. There is always a mystery at the heart of worship.
8. Expect to be transformed.

The committee meets in the expectation that this kind of focused, prayerful support will eventually bring the focus person to a sense of clearness about how to move forward. It may not happen in the first meeting. The committee should be prepared to meet as often as necessary, as long as the discernment process seems to be moving forward. The sense of mutual trust and mutual accountability engendered by the clearness process brings us into deeper community with each other.

Suggestions for further reading:

Hoffman, Jan. *Clearness Committees and Their Use in Spiritual Discernment*. Quaker Press of FGC, 1996.

Loring, Patricia. *Spiritual Discernment: The Context and Goal of Clearness Committees*. Pendle Hill, 1992.

Quaker Process

Most worship groups make decisions easily and informally, but they should keep in mind the principles that underlie Quaker business process. Quakers do not vote, because majority rule invariably results in minority discontent. The object of Quaker process is to discern “the sense of the meeting” —a way forward that seems to bring the group into alignment with the Spirit. Discerning where God or Light is leading us brings us into a sense of unity with each other and with the divine. It is decision making grounded in worship.

This kind of discernment requires a very different approach than most of us are used to. No single individual is in charge or wields particular authority. Decisions are made by the whole group working together. We each try to explain our own point of view as clearly as we can, but we don't try to defend it, and we don't attack the point of view expressed by others. The goal is to understand, not to prevail.

We try to set aside attachment to our own preferred solution, and really listen to what others have to say. [Listening with an open heart](#) often makes us aware of hidden concerns, fears, and longings that change our understanding of what the problem is. Seeing the problem in a new light opens up the possibility of new solutions.

Finding unity through this process is not easy, but it is enormously satisfying. It turns even disagreement into a community building exercise.

Quaker Business Basics

Whenever we remember that we are in the presence of God, transformation is possible. Every task, no matter how mundane, becomes an act of worship, a word of praise offered to God. This is the basis for Quaker business practice. We call it "meeting for worship with attention to business" because it is grounded in an awareness of God's presence.

Don't be lulled into thinking that you are there to get the job done and can dispense with the worship. Hold the work of the meeting in the Light. Listen deeply and speak tenderly Begin with worship; end with worship; and call for worship whenever tempers fray or weariness sets in.

We should be willing to take as long as necessary to reach unity, but we are most certainly not required to take longer than necessary. There are a number of things the clerk can do to keep the meeting focused.

- Have a written agenda. Spend time before the meeting considering just what needs to be done. Remember to hold it in the Light, not just think it through.

- Ask for written reports and proposals. This will encourage advance preparation, and keep Friends focused on what is under consideration. An enormous amount of time is wasted if Friends are confused about what they are being asked to decide.

- Have each report or proposal presented by the person most involved. This will provide a personal touch and an infusion of energy. (If you find you are doing all the presentations, you need to get more members actively involved in the work!)

- Present each item as if it were a question for worship sharing. Explain the guidelines for worship sharing. Make clear that you expect Friends to approach the business in hand in a way that is radically different from ordinary discussion. Here are the basics:

1. Allow silence before and after each person speaks.
2. Listen attentively and respectfully
3. Do not react to or critique what others have said, but express your own concerns and insights as deeply and honestly as you can.
4. Speak as much as possible from your own experience.
5. Expect to speak only once during consideration of a given item.

Paradoxical as it may seem, this approach is likely to achieve a decision, grounded on a sense of the meeting, far more quickly than a back and forth discussion would. Everyone has a chance to speak, and to be listened to. Everyone is encouraged to dig more deeply and share more honestly than they normally would. When everyone has spoken once, there may well be a clear sense of how the meeting is led to move forward. The clerk may want to reframe the question in light of what has been said and ask for another round of worship sharing. If there is no unity, further discussion is unlikely to help. Ask a few Friends to explore the question further and bring back a recommendation to the next meeting. Then move on to the next item of business.

Tips on Taking Minutes

- Carefully record what happens in business meeting. Good minutes help the meeting keep track of its plans and commitments, and help those who were not present to find out what is happening. Minutes should be kept in a safe, accessible place for current use and preserved for future reference.

- Have a recording clerk who serves in this role consistently. Asking for volunteers at the last minute does not work well. The recording clerk plays a very important role, and needs time to prepare for it. In some yearly meetings the clerk also serves as recording clerk. Try out both methods and see which works best in your meeting.
- Remember that the purpose of the minutes is to record actions taken by the meeting. It is not necessary, or desirable, to record what everyone said. Minutes should simply lay out the question under consideration. Touch on major points of agreement or disagreement. Record what action was taken.
- Be sure to include the names of anyone who volunteered to follow up, or any Friends assigned responsibility to take action on behalf of the meeting.
- Read the minutes back in the face of the meeting for approval. After each agenda item, give the recording clerk a chance to write a minute explaining what was considered, what was decided, and who was assigned to implement the decision. Ask for gathered worship while the minute is being drafted. This will give everyone a chance to re-center. Then have the recording clerk read the minute and ask if the minute expresses Friends' intent with regard to that particular item. This way of taking and approving minutes may seem intimidating at first, but it is worth trying. It ensures that everyone is clear about just what has been decided. It breaks the task of writing minutes into small manageable pieces, and once the meeting is over, the task is completed. There is no need to struggle afterwards with trying to reconstruct what happened. Most important, it is enormously helpful in holding a business meeting in worship, creating a rhythm of silence and speaking that is very satisfying.

Meeting for worship with a concern for business is a crown jewel of Quakerism. In worship we learn how to listen deeply, and open our hearts to the Light and to each other. In business meeting, where we inevitably encounter disagreements and differences, we find out whether we can listen and love deeply enough to be a gathered people, obedient to divine guidance.

Suggestions for further reading:

Drayton, Brian. "Reflections on Being Clerk of a Small Meeting." *FGConnections*. Friends General Conference, Spring 2004.

Hickey, Damon. *Unforeseen Joy: Serving a Friends Meeting as Recording Clerk*. North Carolina Yearly Meeting, 1987.

Lacey, Paul. "The Authority of Our Meetings Is the Power of God." Pendle Hill, 2003.

Morley, Barry. *Beyond Consensus: Salvaging Sense of the Meeting*, Pendle Hill, 1996.

From Worship Group to Monthly Meeting

Worship groups have no formal responsibilities within the Religious Society of Friends. They are not required to report annually to their yearly meeting, as monthly meetings are. They are not responsible for membership decisions. Participants who want to join the Religious Society of Friends will need to apply to a monthly meeting for membership. Marriages are normally held under the care of a monthly meeting. Worship groups do not have the corporate identity to speak or act as a recognized unit of the Religious Society of Friends.

At the root of this distinction between worship group and monthly meeting is the expectation that monthly meetings will hold regular “meetings for worship with a concern for business” that support corporate discernment. The discipline of Quaker business process is intended to lead to decisions that are grounded in the Spirit, and express the unity of the body as a faith community. This gives monthly meetings the standing to make decisions regarding membership and marriage, and to issue statements in the name of the Religious Society of Friends.

At some point, most worship groups find that they want to take on this kind of responsibility. They want to hold regular meetings for business and practice the discipline of discernment. They are ready to make the transition from worship group to monthly meeting.

Sometimes there is an intermediate step. A worship group that has been in a care relationship can ask to be recognized as a preparative meeting. A preparative meeting is still under the care of its parent meeting, but is responsible for managing most of its own affairs. Some preparative meetings remain in this status almost indefinitely, but others move very quickly to seek recognition as an established monthly meeting.

If a worship group has no parent meeting, it is likely to move directly from worship group to monthly meeting. This is normally done through the yearly meeting. *Faith and Practice* will explain the process that is used in your yearly meeting.

Meeting Origin Story: Oread (Kansas) Friends Meeting

The Lawrence branch of Penn Valley Friends convened for tea and business after meeting on First Day, 11th Month (1949). William Shoemaker (clerk) refreshed our minds on the

disciplinary admonitions in regard to business or executive meetings. After considerable discussion and all minds were clear, it seemed to be the consent of the meeting that the correspondent contact the executive secretary of Friends Fellowship Council concerning the process of becoming a monthly meeting.

From the minutes of Oread Friends Meeting, as reported in Jean Grant, *Oread Friends Meeting, 1950-2000* (Imprint Memoirs, Lawrence, Kansas), p. 10.

Summary

Planting the seed and nurturing a new Friends meeting will require patience and persistence. The first step is to gather and wait in the Light. It is vital to keep the new worship group spiritually centered and grounded as a loving, supportive community. Avoid overextending yourselves. Keep things simple. Expect to experience ebbs and flows in attendance and participation. Share responsibility widely. Avoid depending on any one individual too much. Your worship group may move quickly toward becoming a monthly meeting, or it may want to retain its informal structure indefinitely. What matters is that the members of the group support each other as they seek to live in harmony with the Divine Spirit.

Resources For New Meetings from the New Meetings Project

New Meetings Toolbox

The [New Meetings Toolbox](#) consists of a variety of basic materials to help you as you consider starting a new Quaker worship group or meeting. Some of these are very practical in nature while others will help you think through various issues as you approach this spiritual enterprise. You may not need every “tool” in this toolbox – just as you don’t often need every tool in your home toolbox. Choose the ones you think best fit your situation and use them and leave the rest of the tools for a later time. We’ll be adding new tools steadily, so check back often.

Quaker Meetings Power Tools

[Power Tools](#) are in-depth explorations/explanations of a wide variety of topics that may be of use to Friends’ meetings, large and small, new and old. Their purpose is not just to provide “how to” guidance, but to make explicit the spiritual Truth underlying all that we do within the Quaker way. Reaffirming and intentionally trying to live into this underlying spiritual reality is the strength and attraction of the Religious Society of Friends.

Here you'll find two sets of tools. One set lists tools that can be downloaded or viewed online free of charge. The second set consists of books or other tools that are available for purchase. All of these tools can be found at [Quaker Books of FGC](#).

Mentoring Teams

Mentoring Teams consist of two seasoned, faithful Friends who will walk alongside and mentor new meetings for up to two years. They will be available for at least one in-person visit per year and via Skype, email, and so on as needed. Friends selected for a mentoring team exhibit the gifts of the Spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22, as well as the ability to listen deeply and remain teachable. These are Friends who can bring into encounters with others an experiential understanding that the Spirit can teach us together. These are Friends with the ability to invite people more deeply into God’s presence and who are nurturers and encouragers.

A Reading List for New Meetings

The following are suggestions for essential books and pamphlets that would be helpful to new meetings or worship groups. These recommendations were compiled by members of the New Meetings Project mentoring teams.

These are all available for purchase from [Quaker Books of FGC](#).

[*A Testament of Devotion*](#) by Thomas R. Kelly

[*Beyond Consensus: Salvaging Sense of the Meeting*](#) by Barry Morley

[*Encounter with Silence: Reflections from the Quaker Tradition*](#) by John Punshon

[*Four Doors To Meeting For Worship*](#) by William Taber

[*Gospel Order: A Quaker Understanding of the Faithful Quaker Community*](#) by Sandra Cronk

[*Holding One Another in the Light*](#) by Marcelle Martin

[*Holy Silence: The Gift of Quaker Spirituality*](#) by J. Brent Bill

[*Quaker Spirituality*](#) by Douglas V Steere

[*Letters to a Fellow Seeker: A Short Introduction to the Quaker Way*](#) by Steve Chase

[*Light Within and Selected Writings*](#) by Isaac Penington

[*Listening Spirituality, vol's 1 and 2*](#) by Patricia Loring

[*Matthew 18: Wisdom for Living in Community*](#) by Connie McPeak Green and Marty Paxson Grundy

[*Members One Of Another: The Dynamics Of Membership In Quaker Meeting*](#) by Tom Gates

[*Peace be with You: A Study of the Spiritual Basis of the Friends Peace Testimony*](#) by Sandra Cronk

[*Sacred Compass: The Way of Spiritual Discernment*](#) by J. Brent Bill

[*Spiritual Discernment: The Context and Goal of Clearness Committee*](#) by Patricia Loring

[*The Amazing Fact of Quaker Worship*](#) by George Gorman

[The Eternal Promise](#) by Thomas R. Kelly

[The Testimony Of Integrity: In The Religious Society Of Friends](#) by Wilmer Cooper

There is a Spirit: The Nayler Sonnets by Kenneth Boulding

[To Be Broken and Tender: A Quaker Theology for Today](#) by Margery Abbott

Connect

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 at newmeetings@fgcquaker.org 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.

