

Worship Sharing Guidelines

Worship sharing focuses on a particular question and 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 most long for 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:
 - a. Reach as deeply as you can into the sacred center of your life.
 - b. Speak out of the silence, and leave a period of silence between speakers.
 - c. Speak from your own experience, about your own experience. Concentrate on feelings and changes rather than on thoughts or theories.
 - d. Do not respond to what anyone else has said, either to praise or to refute.
 - e. Listen carefully and deeply to what is spoken.
 - f. Expect to speak only once, until everyone has had a chance to speak.
 - g. 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. Enter into worshipful silence, and begin.