

Durham Friends Meeting

Meeting for Worship

WELCOME! We are pleased that you will be joining us for our Meeting for Worship today.

Please feel free to take any seat in the meeting room. Children are welcome at meeting for worship for as long as they are able to stay. Upon entering the room, we wait in silence and try to prepare ourselves for worship which begins upon the hour.

If you are new to Quaker worship, here is what you may expect during the hour.

At about 15 minutes past the hour, most children will leave to attend First Day School (Sunday School) lessons and activities. Often a parent of a younger child will go out with the child to be sure that he or she is settled, and then return to Meeting for Worship.

Our worship is based on a 350-year old practice of waiting quietly with the expectation that we may experience the presence and power of the Holy Spirit among us. We try to “settle in” quietly and calmly, mindful, but not distracted by movements around us. If someone feels deeply that they have an inspired message to share, she or he may stand and speak that truth clearly for all to hear. Others, upon hearing the message, do not comment or respond but process the words in the context of their own meditation.

When the hour is over, an appointed Friend will break the meeting by shaking hands with those nearby, as then will everyone else in the room. Afterwards, there will be introductions and announcements followed by time to socialize and get to know one another.

Quakerism in Brief

Quakerism was founded in the 1650s in England by George Fox who, with the support of Margaret Fell, William Penn, and others, spread this religious practice to the remainder of the British isles, continental Europe, the Caribbean, and the American colonies by the 1670s. Members of the Religious Society of Friends (as Quakers are properly named) were often severely persecuted for their outspoken interpretation of Christ's message and their opposition to the priestly order of the established church.

From the beginning, Quakers have insisted that all persons are capable of directly responding to “that of God” within themselves and each other. From this belief flows the traditional Quaker testimonies of equality of the sexes and races and the principled opposition to war and personal violence. Predating most of Christianity by 300 years, Quaker women were supported as ministers and participated actively in meeting affairs. Led by John Woolman, Quakers renounced slavery and by the late 1700s were at the forefront of the emancipation movement. In the 20th century, Quakers were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for relief efforts during and after World Wars I and II, and have been active in peace and justice work up to the present time.

Theologically, Quakers were united until the 1800s when divisions over spiritual authority and reactions to the holiness movement which swept over America resulted in schisms. Some Friends, especially in the mid-west were drawn to that popular evangelistic view of Christianity, and by 1900 Quakers were split into three branches.

The Durham Friends Meeting, along with many other meetings, continues in the historic tradition of silent worship, not hiring ministers, and supporting testimonies of pacifism and equality. While we are clearly rooted in Christianity, we do not defer to a specific creed, nor do we require belief in trinitarian doctrines or sacraments as practiced in many other Christian sects. We hold to the historic Quaker conviction that each person can directly experience the presence of God's love in whatever form is meaningful to that person and can do so without prescribed rituals, set prayers, or the mediation of a priest or minister.

**Durham Friends Meeting
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<http://durhamfriends.org/>