

Your first time in a Quaker Meeting?

Welcome.

A Quaker Meeting is based on silence, but it is a silence of waiting in expectancy. The silence may last for quite some time, perhaps a half hour or more. But that does not mean that nothing is happening. All of us are trying to come nearer to each other and to God as we are caught up in the still spirit of the meeting. We do not worship in isolation but try to hold an awareness of all those gathered with us, uniting in a common purpose, so that the waiting and listening becomes an act of sharing.

We come to Meeting because we feel the need to worship. It is important to us. We do not recite creeds, sing hymns or repeat set prayers. There is no ceremony, no priest, no prearranged service.

Meeting for Worship starts as soon as the first person enters the room and sits down. It is helpful if the Meeting can settle a few minutes before the appointed time.

Go in as soon as you are ready. Sit anywhere you like but if possible leave seats near the door and at the end of rows for latecomers. Children may be present for a time at the beginning or the end of meeting, and have their own activities in another room.

You may find it easy to relax in the silence and to enter the spirit of the Meeting, or you may be disturbed by the strangeness of the silence, by distractions outside, or by your own roving thoughts. Do not worry about this, we all find it difficult to settle at times, but we return again and again to the still centres of our being, where the presence of God can be known. Try, if only for brief periods, to be quiet in body, mind and spirit. Bring whatever is pressing on your mind to the Meeting. It can be a time of insight, revelation, healing, or calm.

Nearly everyone at some time in their lives seems to want to find God for themselves, even those who find it hard to believe that God exists. In such cases using a different image or concept, such as 'spirit' or 'light' can be helpful.

The silence may be broken if someone present feels called to say something which will deepen and enrich the worship. Anyone is free to speak, pray or read aloud an appropriate passage, provided it is done in response to a prompting of the Spirit which comes in the course of the Meeting. The silence is broken for the moment, but it is not interrupted.

Listen to what is said in an open-minded, charitable spirit. Each contribution may help somebody, but our needs are different and can be met in differing ways. If something is said that does not speak to your condition or need, try nevertheless to reach the spirit behind the words. The speaker wants to help the Meeting; take care not to reject the offering by negative criticism.

Each of us brings our own life's experiences to Meeting. Some people will have a profound sense of awe and wonder because they know that God is present. Others will be far less certain. They may only be ready to hold an awareness that the experiences in life point beyond themselves to a greater whole.

Some will thankfully accept God's inexhaustible love shown in Jesus, the promise of forgiveness and the setting aside of past failure. Others will know that to seek to be open to people in a spirit of love and trust is the direction in which they want to move.

In the quietness of a Quaker Meeting those present can become aware of a deep and powerful spirit of love and truth that transcends their ordinary experience. We seek to become united in love and strengthened by truth so that we enter a new level of living, despite the different ways in which we may account for this life expanding experience.

After about an hour two Elders will shake hands to mark the end of worship. The Clerk then may announce forthcoming events and give news of members. Afterwards, do feel free to speak to anyone, particularly if you wish to know more about Quakers. Literature is available in the Meeting House and books can be borrowed from the library.