

Your First Time in a Quaker Meeting

Welcome. We're glad you are here. The Meeting starts as soon as one person has entered the room. On entering, feel free to sit anywhere and join the silence.

What do Quakers believe?

Quakers have no dogmas or creeds and no paid ministers. We believe that each person can have direct experience of the divine and that there is that of God in everyone.

What happens in Meeting for Worship?

A Quaker Meeting is a way of worship based on silence – a silence of expectancy in which we seek to come nearer to God and each other as we share the stillness of the Meeting. Participants are not expected to say or do anything other than join in this seeking. Do not worry if the silence seems strange at first. It is not unusual to find ourselves distracted by outside noise or roving thoughts. There is no fixed structure to the Meeting: no creeds, hymns or set prayers, no minister in charge, and no formal service.

After about an hour, the Meeting for worship finishes when two Quakers (usually Elders) shake hands. Sometimes a Meeting will pass with no words spoken.

If someone feels compelled by the Spirit to speak, pray or read, the silence is broken. This ministry that is not planned before worship begins, seeks to enrich the worship. If the ministry you hear does not seem to make sense, try to reach behind the words to the Spirit that inspired them, or allow the words to be absorbed into the silence.

Meeting for Worship is not a debate. It is inappropriate to respond to spoken ministry. However it is not unusual for other ministry to build on what was said before.

In worship we have our neighbours to right and left, before and behind, yet the Eternal Presence is over all and beneath all. Worship does not consist in achieving a mental state of concentrated isolation from one's fellows. Rather, in the depth of common worship it is as if we find our separate lives gathered into one life, within which we live and move and have our being.

No two Quaker Meetings are the same. A Meeting can embrace a wide range of experience. Some people may experience a profound sense of awe or an awareness of the presence of God. Others may have a less certain sense of an indefinable spiritual dimension.

What happens at the end of Meeting?

After Meeting ends, we have a short transition period of worshipful sharing. This is followed by announcements and introductions, and then socializing and refreshments.