

The silence will be broken when one of those present feels that he has something to say which will deepen and enrich the experience of worship. Anyone is free to speak, pray or read, provided that he does so in response to a prompting of the spirit which comes to him in the course of the meeting. The silence is broken for the moment but

Nearly everyone at some time in their lives seems to want to find God for themselves—even those who find it difficult or impossible to believe that God exists. This may be because of some moving experience, or because of some particular problem. No matter what is pressing on your mind at the moment, bring it with you into the silent room.

You may find it easy to relax in the silence and thus to enter into the life 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 but return again and again to the still centre of your being where you can know the presence of God. Try, if only for an instant, to be quiet in body, mind and spirit.

A Quaker meeting is based on silence, but it is a silence of waiting in expectancy. For many minutes, perhaps for half an hour, there may be silence. 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.

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

Your First Time in a Quaker Meeting

Welcome! We hope these notes will help your worship with us.

We come to meeting because we want to, and because we find it worthwhile. We do not recite creeds, sing hymns or repeat set prayers. There is no ceremony, no priest, no pre-arranged service. While we appreciate the great value that these have for others we cannot use them with honesty. We want to worship simply—by excluding anything that for us would not be sincere.

Go in as soon as you are ready. It is a good thing if a meeting can settle down a few minutes before the appointed time. Sit anywhere you like, but it is helpful to leave seats near the back and at the end of rows for latecomers.

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. United in love, and strengthened by truth, the worshippers enter upon a new level of living, despite the different ways in which they may account for this life-expanding experience.

Some will thankfully accept God's inexhaustible love shown in Jesus, and his promise to forgive them and wipe out 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.

One of the unique features of a Quaker meeting is the variety of experience it can embrace. Some people will have a profound sense of awe and wonder because they know that God is present. Others will be far less certain, and may only be able to hold onto a dim awareness that the values they experience in life point beyond themselves to a greater whole.

Receive what is said in an accepting, charitable spirit. Each contribution rightly given will help somebody, but *our* needs are different and can be met only in differing ways. If something is said that does not speak to your condition, try nevertheless to reach the spirit behind the words. The speaker wants to help the meeting: take care not to reject his offering by negative criticism.

it is not interrupted.

The meeting will close after the Elders have shaken hands. Afterwards, feel free to speak to anyone. If you wish to know more about Quakers, please introduce yourself to any member. You may borrow books from the library, and other literature is available.

Whilst sitting in meeting for the first time, you may find it helpful to re-read this leaflet.

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