

BUILDING BRIDGES: WORKSHOP 17: HANDOUT 4: WHAT TO EXPECT IN QUAKER MEETING

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WELCOME

Everyone is always welcome at a Quaker meeting for worship.

In worship Friends gather into silent, expectant waiting. We hold ourselves open to the Light and reach for the divine center of our being. We know the center to be a place of peace, love, and balance, where we are at one with the universe and with each other.

We know from experience that revelation is continuing and that a divine power is at work in the world today, healing, guiding, gathering, and transforming. We call this power God, the Light, Christ, the Seed, the Inward Teacher. By whatever name it is known, its nature is love. It draws us toward a life of integrity, simplicity, equality, community, and peace.

Our meetings strive to be loving, nurturing communities. We celebrate diversity and encourage each person to find his or her true voice grounded in experience. We listen deeply to the Spirit and to each other as we seek to discern and embrace God's will for us individually and as a community.

We warmly invite you to join us. In most meetings, worship is held on Sunday mornings and usually lasts about one hour. "Unprogrammed" meetings are grounded in silent, expectant waiting and are spontaneous and open. When someone feels led to share a message, it is received in the gathered silence. "Pastoral" meetings have programmed or semi-programmed worship services culminating in a period of gathered silence. We generally close our worship by shaking hands and exchanging greetings. Programs for children and infant care are usually provided. Children are also welcome to join meeting for worship.

BUILDING BRIDGES: WORKSHOP

17: HANDOUT 5: QUAKER FACT SHEET

Full Name: Religious Society of Friends

Founded: Great Britain, 1647

Founder: George Fox

Derivation of Full Name: Jesus said, "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (Christian scripture, John 15:14).

Derivation of Common Name (Quakers): Intended as an insult to George Fox by a judge during one of his blasphemy trials, it was gladly accepted by Fox and other Friends, who reminded people to, "tremble at the word of the Lord."

Adherents: 300,000 worldwide, concentrated in the United States, United Kingdom, and Kenya

Ranking: About 22nd

Texts: Bible-based; also recognizes wisdom in sacred literature of all faiths

Clergy: None; however, an individual congregation may choose to have paid religious leadership

Symbols: None

Imagery: In the 19th-century and earlier, Quaker plain dress served as an image of the Quaker faith (see this style worn by the man depicted on the Quaker Oats (TM) oatmeal boxes).

Terms and Fundamental Precepts:

- Balance — work to create harmony between their inner journey and their outward (physical) one
- Equality — unequivocally, Quakers value all people equally
- Meeting — a group of Quakers gathered in community or worship, e.g., New England Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Worship (not a service), Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business
- Peace — unwavering commitment to nonviolence and peaceful resolutions
- Peace Testimony — statement of belief and intent to live without violence
- Plainness — plain dress, plain speech, plain truth; an expression of a consistent effort to live simply and honestly.

Shared with Unitarian Universalism:

- Value peace and nonviolence
- Quakers: no hierarchy in Meeting; UUs: congregational polity
- Wisdom from sacred literature of all faiths is recognized
- Belief in individual revelation; that is, "Truth" is within each person
- Equality of all people
- Commitment to social justice and social service
- Religious diversity is actively valued, as a path to and means of refining truth