



Quaker Worship

Worship is at the heart of all Quakers do and are. From their beginning, Quakers adopted worship practices with a minimum of planned events, instead relying on direct revelation by the Holy Spirit to the worshipers gathered in silent expectation.

Quakers call their services “meeting for worship”. The following attempts to briefly describe worship in Lake Erie Yearly Meeting and among other Friends who practice unprogrammed worship based in silence. There are other groups of Quakers that use a format for worship more like other Protestant church services.

Meeting for Worship

The community gathers together in a waiting, expectant frame of spirit. Worship is in silent waiting upon insight from God. A participant may feel led to share a message with those present. There may be many, few, or no such messages, which Friends call “vocal ministry”. The meeting concludes when the person with responsibility for closing the worship discerns that the meeting has drawn to an end. Worship usually lasts about an hour.

What am I supposed to do during worship?

You are encouraged to explore ways to center down. Centering means entering deep stillness. The idea is to clear one’s mind of chatter and to concentrate on listening to God.

Each person finds his or her own way of centering down. Here are a few possibilities that some Friends have found helpful.

- Take a deep breath and relax your body; repeat several times.
- Consciously bring up your internal conversations (such as, I need to stop at the store on the way home, What did my friend mean when they said that yesterday? When is someone going to say something?) and dismiss each one for the time being.
- Think of your friends and relatives and offer up a brief prayer for each one.
- Let a familiar hymn run through your mind.
- Let a familiar prayer run through your mind.

There are many more ways to help you center. If you find your mind wandering, don’t worry about it. Gently bring your focus back to being open to God. The ability to stay focused develops over time.

Centering leads to worship. It is not a time for "thinking," for deliberate, intellectual exercise. It is a time for spiritual receptivity. The aim is not to think about things, but to experience God’s presence. If someone gives a message, listen carefully and non-judgmentally as they share their experience of the Divine.

Who do I talk to to get my questions answered?

If no one approaches you after worship, ask anyone, such as the person sitting next to you. Or seek out the person who closed meeting (started the hand-shaking), who gave announcements, or who identified him or herself as the Clerk. If the first person you ask can’t answer your question, ask them to direct you to the Clerk or someone else who does know. Because Quakers are organized non-hierarchically, it can take a couple of tries to find someone to connect with who can answer your questions.

What about children? [[link to section on children](#)]

What should I wear?

Friends tend to be informal. Jeans, slacks, or a skirt and a top are fine. Wear whatever you feel comfortable in.

The section on Meeting for Worship is from *Silence and Witness: The Quaker Tradition*, by Michael L. Birkel, 2004, ISBN 1-57075-518-3. Used by permission.