



**A Spiritual Spa**

**LEYM Spiritual Formation Program**

**2018 - 2019**

## Proposed Schedule

What actually happens may change depending on the leading of the Spirit

### Friday

- 6:00 – 7:00 pm Arrival, check-in, registration, getting settled, and mingling with sandwich makings & snacks
- 7:00 – 9:00 pm Housekeeping:  
Welcome by Weber Center Staff with general information  
Schedule for the weekend  
Handbooks  
Registration/Paying/No-photo stickers  
Book table  
Program
- 9:15 – 10:00 pm Book Table, Conversation (optional)

### Saturday

- 7:30 – 8:45 am Breakfast
- 9:00 – 12:00 Program
- 12:00 – 1:00 pm Lunch
- 1:15 – 5:00 pm Program
- 3:00 - 5:00 pm Local groups meet and plan  
Break: rest, read, walk the labyrinth, take a walk ...
- 4:00 - 5:00 pm Spiritual guidance (optional)
- 5:00 – 6:00 pm Dinner
- 6:15 – 9:00 pm Program  
Activity
- 9:00 – 10:00 pm Book Table, Conversation (optional)

### Sunday

- 7:30 – 8:45 am Breakfast
- 9:00 – 12:00 Program  
Evaluations  
Meeting for Worship  
Remove everything from meeting room
- 12:00 – 1:00 Lunch
- 1:00 Departure\*: Before leaving, turn in room key & name tag at Weber desk
- 1:30 or so Spiritual Formation Planning Committee meeting in the library

\*Strip beds of linens and deposit linens & towels in the laundry room on your floor.  
We need to be out of the common room and our bedrooms by 1:00.

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## Book Table

Please check the book table for ideas on what you and your local Spiritual Formation Group want to read during the year. The books there have been carefully chosen with the needs of Friends in the Spiritual Formation Program in mind.

## **Spiritual Formation Retreat Goals**

- Become more aware of our spiritual capacities for inward listening in relationship with God.
- Receive spiritual nurture.
- Become familiar with the process of conducting a spiritual formation group.
- Learn about a variety of spiritual practices and how they might fit into one's individual life.
- Get to know Friends from the wider yearly meeting.

## **Fall Retreat Goals**

- Choose a specific spiritual practice for the year
- Local groups get organized
- Local groups choose a reading if they wish; check book table for ideas

## **Spiritual Formation Program Structure**

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting's Spiritual Formation Program helps facilitate small groups of Friends in a meeting or worship group who are interested in nurturing each other's spiritual growth in an intentional, ongoing way.

### **1. A fall retreat with other LEYM spiritual nurture groups**

The fall retreat introduces ways of becoming a spiritual nurture group, aiding participants in consideration of their spiritual yearnings, how these might lead to spiritual intentions, and discerning individual spiritual disciplines / practices that might further these intentions. This retreat alternates between guided whole group, breakout group, and individual activities and worship, and meetings of the local spiritual nurture groups to plan and prepare for the coming year. This retreat also provides opportunities to develop rich friendships with yearly meeting members beyond one's monthly meeting, and study a topic related to discernment of spiritual gifts.

### **2. Local spiritual nurture groups**

These groups meet in their own local areas, usually twice a month. A common pattern for these groups is to spend one meeting a month sharing stories about their spiritual journeys, including their experiences with their personal spiritual practice. The other meeting is usually spent sharing personal responses to a common spiritual reading.

### **3. A spring retreat**

The spring retreat offers opportunities for local spiritual nurture groups to examine and refine their practices, deepen their relationships, share experiences with other nurture groups, and plan for the following year. As in the fall retreat, the spiritual nourishment of getting to know other Friends and experiencing worship, study, and play together with the larger group refreshes and inspires participants.

## **Local Group Structure**

A typical spiritual formation group

- A typical group consists of three to seven people, usually within the same Monthly Meeting.
- A group larger than 8 may consider splitting into two or more groups for at least some of the time.

Each participant in a local group

- Takes on the regular practice of a spiritual discipline for a period of time decided by the individual, often for the duration of the program year.
- Participates as agreed by the local group.
- Holds other members of the group in the Light.

If you aren't near a group

- When a Friend who wishes to participate does not live near others who are participating in the program, it is recommended that the Friend join in a spiritual friendship with another person who is willing to meet regularly for the purpose of sharing spiritual journeys and reading. (See "Spiritual Friendships")

## **Respecting Confidentiality**

In order to free ourselves to explore and share deeply, Friends are asked to respect confidentiality. Anything said within the group stays within the group.

## **Example of Group Guidelines**

From *Opening Doors to Quaker Worship*, a publication of the Religious Education Committee of Friends General Conference

### **The Gift of Listening**

A major gift we can give each other is really listening to each other. This means that we don't interrupt or question what others say. We do not probe or debate. We lay aside judgment and the need to take care of or comfort. We simply accept what is being said, and in this way affirm the experience of the person who is speaking. In order to do this, we need to agree that while we are listening, we will lay aside our own trigger words (religious terms that trouble us because of our own past experiences) while we are listening to one other. This will allow the speaker to focus on her or his own experience without being distracted by the need to take care of the listeners.

### **Supporting One Another**

Plan to attend all sessions and arrive on time. We can support one another by the accepting, prayerful quality of our listening, without trying to rescue or otherwise "take care of" other persons in the group. After a speaker finishes, listeners are asked to hold that person in the Light for a few minutes. This both surrounds the person with healing presences and allows that person a few more minutes for transition before another person speaks. Ann Miller, Toronto MM, Canadian YM, says, "I'm convinced from experience that when we do this for one another, we are incarnating God's love and that this is the true source for spiritual healing."

### **A Note about Journal Writing**

Journal writing is a private activity. Talking about what one has written will be entirely optional. If someone chooses to read an entry to the group, there will be no discussion other than the leader's inquiry of how it felt to read the selection.

## **Sample Group Formats**

Every group develops a structure in order to provide both spiritual comfort and challenge to its members. We suggest that your group try out any of the following formats or develop another style. Agree together on a format, then stick to it. Talk together openly about what is working well for you, and what isn't working so well. If you find that you must change the format, agree on how to do that, then stick to that new format. By talking openly about your meeting structure, you will develop a structure together that is satisfying to all.

### **Things to Consider**

Meetings:

- How often?
- For how long?
- What day/time of day?
- Where (same home, rotate)?
- Refreshments?
- Will there be a convener; will that rotate?

### **Format**

What format will the meetings take; for instance, worship followed by book discussion, then refreshments? Many groups have a different format for a second meeting during a month. Will you read and discuss a book? Will you read and discuss something else?

### **Most local groups**

- E-mail reminders of meetings
- Meet for 1 1/2 to 3 hours
- Include worship in the format for each meeting
- Include food or refreshments
- Meet in one or more members' homes
- Meet during the school year

### **Typical formats for two meetings a month**

- Personal sharing out of silent worship (spiritual practices, spiritual life, life events, etc.) - everyone
- Worship, then book discussion by chapter – first each person shares out of silence (or passes), then there is a general discussion

### **Another possible format**

- Check-in, worship, & discussion

## **A Discussion of Ground Rules: Questions to Answer Together**

This discussion will help your group to articulate the tone and atmosphere you collectively want your meetings to have. Speaking plainly to each other, and reaching agreement about your intentions, will go a long way toward a shared experience that is positive for everyone in the group. Toward this end, what ground rules will your group embrace? (See the sample guidelines included in this manual.)

- Will there be shared readings? If so, how will the group select them? How will you interact with the readings (e.g., by discussion, journaling, sketching, writing in the margins)?
- How will leadership be handled? Will you rotate facilitation of the group? Will someone regularly facilitate? Other ideas?
- What will the group do if a decision needs to be made with respect to a change in date or time for one or more meetings?
- What responsibility will members have with respect to attendance at meetings, as well as absences (e.g., letting the group know if you plan to be absent, meeting with someone in your group to make-up a missed meeting)?
- Do you want to share a meal at some of your meetings? Potluck? Rotation (e.g. the host provides refreshments)?
- When will you meet? How often? Where?
- How will you be accountable to one another for what you have agreed to read (e.g., share from journals as moved to do so, respond to questions on the reading list, design your own questions)?

## **Worship Sharing**

From *Quaker Process for Friends on the Benches* by Mathilda Navias, Friends Publishing Corp, 2012.

Worship sharing provides a format for a small group of people to share their responses to a question or set of questions. Each person shares from personal experience without responding to what others have shared. The others listen attentively to what is being said. The questions can have any theme or none at all. Groups of five to twelve people work best.

### **Preparation**

The questions used should be simple and open-ended. They should be framed in a way that invites a sharing of specific experience, rather than opinions, theories, or abstract ideas. Avoid questions that can be answered with yes or no. A question might be about one's spiritual journey: How is God moving in my life today? It might be related to the corporate life of the meeting: What do I long for most in our community? It might relate to a book the group has been reading together: What touched me most deeply?

Allow at least half an hour for a group of five or six to share their responses to a single question, and at least an hour for a larger group.

The group needs a leader—someone to explain the format and ground rules, to read the questions aloud, to make sure that everyone has had a turn, and to decide when people are ready to hear the next question.

### **Guidelines**

- Reach as deeply as you can into the sacred center of your life.
- Speak out of the silence, and leave a period of silence between speakers.
- Speak from your own experience, about your own experience. Use “I” words. Concentrate on feelings rather than on thoughts or theories.
- Do not respond to what anyone else has said, either to praise or to refute.
- Listen carefully and deeply to what is spoken.
- Expect to speak only once, until everyone has had a chance to speak. You may pass.
- Respect the confidentiality of what is shared.

### **The worship sharing**

- Go around the circle and share names and perhaps one more piece of personal information, such as one’s meeting or where one lives.
- The leader briefly explains the format and guidelines, even if most of the people are familiar with worship sharing. It is helpful to have a printed list of the guidelines.
- Decide how the group will speak in turn:
  - In order around the circle?
  - As each person feels ready to contribute?
  - In any order, but passing a speaker’s symbol, such as a coin or branch?
- Start with a period of silent centering.
- Read the first question.
- Because the first response will set the tone for the others, it helps if the first person who responds is concrete, honest, and concise.
- The next person should allow a little time before speaking.
- Continue until everyone has either spoken or passed. Before moving on, the leader may invite those who passed to share.
- If there is more than one question, allow a little time, then read the next question.
- End with more silence or a group hug or hand squeeze or whatever seems supportive and appropriate.

### **Tears**

Sometimes someone will cry when sharing with the group. These may be tears of joy or tears from remembering a painful experience. Do not try to cheer up or distract such a person with well-intentioned support. The tears are not the pain. Simply sit quietly, hold a hand or give a gentle hug. Above all, listen with full attention and let the person finish. Be present with loving concern.



## A Sampler of Spiritual Practices

Centering prayer - Choose a meaningful word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly, and silently introduce the word. When you become aware of thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the word. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

Fasting - information can be found on the web; see e.g. [www.cru.org/training-and-growth/devotional-life/personal-guide-to-fasting](http://www.cru.org/training-and-growth/devotional-life/personal-guide-to-fasting)

Gratitude

Ignatian examination of conscience (how-to in *Sleeping with Bread: Holding What Gives You Life* by Dennis Linn, Sheila Fabricant Linn, Matthew Linn)

Journaling

Lectio Divina - a method of engaging with scripture or other writings in a meditative way; see [LEYM.org/spiritual-formation/lectio-divina](http://LEYM.org/spiritual-formation/lectio-divina)

Listening to meditative music

Meditating - instructions can be found on the web. For specific exercises, see, for instance, *Four Meditations to Activate Your Chakras and Inner Wisdom* at [leym.org/spiritual-formation/a-sampler-of-spiritual-disciplines](http://leym.org/spiritual-formation/a-sampler-of-spiritual-disciplines).

Memorizing scripture, prayers, poetry

Morning prayer - Start the day by greeting God and giving thanks; may use a set phrase such as "Today is the day the Lord has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it"

Movement / Dance

Practicing awareness of the Presence - Turn your attention away from daily activities. Empty your mind of daily cares. Take a deep breath and relax. Sit quietly and allow the emptying of your mind and its replacement with the awareness of God's presence. More extensive instructions can be found on the web.

Praying

Reading spiritual journals, biography, autobiography, memoirs. Suggestions: *The Journal of John Woolman*; *With Head and Heart* by Howard Thurman; *The Genessee Diary* by Henri Nouwen; *Something Beautiful for God: Mother Teresa of Calcutta* by Malcolm Muggeridge; *One Thousand Gifts* by Ann Voskamp

Reading and/or studying the Bible or another text

Silent or spoken grace before meals - During silent grace, you may hold hands with the others at the table if you wish

Solitude

Spending time in nature

Spiritual direction/guidance - You will need to find a spiritual director. Mathilda may have suggestions.

Spiritual friendship - An ongoing relationship for mutual spiritual support; see [LEYM.org/spiritual-formation/spiritual-friendship](http://LEYM.org/spiritual-formation/spiritual-friendship)

Walking a labyrinth

Walking meditation - instructions can be found on the web

Yoga / Tai Chi

More information can be found at  
[LEYM.org/spiritual-formation/a-sampler-of-spiritual-disciplines/](http://LEYM.org/spiritual-formation/a-sampler-of-spiritual-disciplines/)

## **Body Prayer**

How I use my body in prayer

Any inhibitions/prohibitions about how I use my body in prayer

Today my body is

Today my prayer is

Today my body-prayer is

How I would like to try using my body in prayer

Strategies for Centering  
Spiritual Formation Retreat, Fall 2018  
Kate Enger, PsyD

1. Prayer. If you're feeling stuck, try this formula borrowed from Catholicism:
  - a. Thank You
  - b. Please
  - c. I'm sorry
  - d. I love you
  
2. The written word. Spend time with an author that brings you peace and focus. One suggestion is Thich Nhat Hahn. Sample prayers from his work:
  - a. I have arrived  
I am home  
In the here, in the now  
I am solid, I am free  
In the ultimate I dwell.
  - b. I am becoming calm  
I am letting go  
As I let go, I smile  
Victory is mine.
  
3. Mindfulness
4. Breathing techniques
5. Progressive relaxation
6. Humor
7. Exercise
8. Music
9. Journaling
10. Nature
11. Escape your own head - get some feedback from a trusted listener
12. Guided meditation
13. Yoga
14. Massage
15. Thought Stopping
  - a. Identify rumination
  - b. STOP
  - c. Replace with \_\_\_\_\_
16. Other ideas from discussion \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Some of these can work in any place or time, including meeting for worship. Others are more suited to helping you find or keep a centered, relaxed state of being at home or at work.

You may be surprised to hear this from a person with psychotherapy training, but sometimes you cannot trust your feelings. For example, imagine you're worried about something that you cannot do anything about at the moment, and a friend invites you to go see a comic play. You may think "I'm not in the mood for comedy," but laughter may be exactly what you need. Similarly, we must be careful to check the impulse to isolate ourselves if it's only going to allow us to nurse an already poor outlook. When I least feel like exercising or meditating, I probably need it the most.

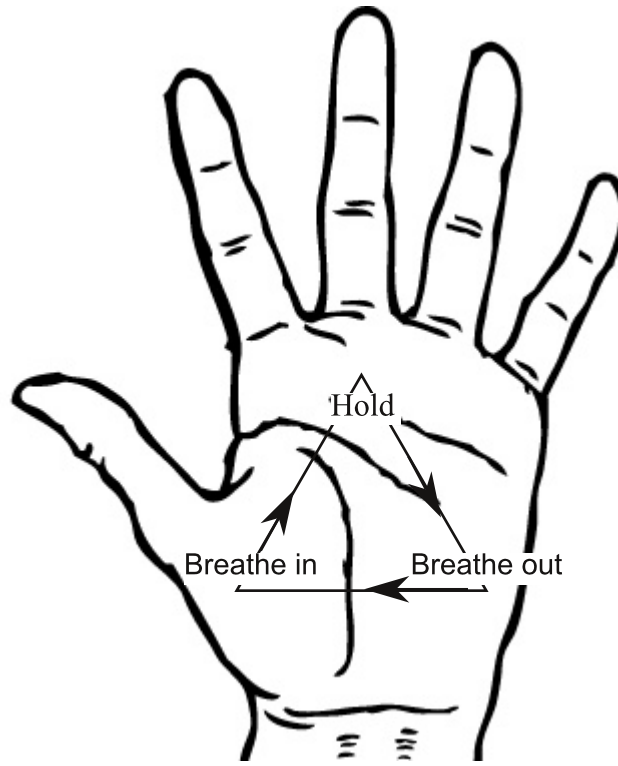
# Quick Relaxation Exercises

## Breathing Exercise

Draw triangle on hand:

- 1) breathe in
- 2) hold
- 3) breathe out

Repeat several times.



## Group Hum

Place your left hand on your heart, then place your right hand on your belly.  
Hum (intone) on a pitch that resonates in your body.

Different people should use different pitches, and strong dissonances are good.  
This is also called toning, especially in healing work.

## Claim Space

Stand up, and spread out your arms & legs as wide as you comfortably can; hold 30 seconds.

## Body Swaying

Stand and sway, shifting your weight.

## Body Shaking

Stand and shake your body vigorously, lifting your arms (and a leg if you can).