

Being Friends Together

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Guidance for worship sharing

Worship sharing is a meeting for learning based on prayerful silence, where everyone has an opportunity to share in the spirit of worship. The discipline is similar to meeting for worship but more relaxed. It is a way of empowering those who find words less easily, as well as limiting the space for those who are natural speakers. The silence allows deeper reflection and sharing than group discussion, and enables openness to the Spirit of God which is often shut off by verbal debate.

There can be a particular theme, or none. Individuals speak as they feel led, from a heart-felt place but not awaiting the divine urge as in formal worship. The rest of the group listens with full attention, with open and receptive hearts but no verbal comment, trying to draw out the full message and understand what lies behind the words.

Each contribution is treated as confidential and is wrapped in silence before and after, so that the Spirit is free to move and be heard. No-one is obliged to speak unless they wish to. No-one speaks a second time until all who want to have spoken once. These rules may sound rather strict, but in fact they create a safe framework which is liberating. Laughter and light-heartedness are not excluded!

1. Set up the room with chairs in a circle. Be aware of the needs of anyone with hearing or visual impairments.
2. Do a brief round of introductions before focusing on the subject for the worship sharing session.
3. Remind people of the subject or focus question for the worship sharing.
4. It may be helpful to remind the group of this guidance:
 - Speak spontaneously from personal experience and listen with sensitivity. Be aware that everyone will need time to be heard. Often the deepest things can be said in the fewest words. Each person has equal potential for insight. It is important people don't use their turn to comment on or judge other contributions.
 - Only one person speaks at a time, followed by silent pauses of varying lengths, as the words are absorbed and reflected upon. People can speak in any order.
 - The content is confidential.

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Being Friends Together is a joint project of Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre (Registered Charity Number: 313816) and Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) (Registered charity number: 112763).



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- People speak for a second time only after everyone who wishes has spoken once.
 - People are free not to speak. Respect each other's privacy.
5. After the introduction, have a period of silence where each person moves into worship and opens themselves to the contribution they may feel called to make.
 6. The group may agree before starting to place time limitations on each person so that everyone has a chance to speak. In this case, it is also worth agreeing how the facilitator or timekeeper will signal if a person is approaching the time limit.

An extract from *Becoming Friends: Living and learning with Quakers*, Ginny Wall, Quaker Books, 2010, reproduced with permission

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