

Advices for Participation in Meeting for Worship

From Chapel Hill Friends Ministry and Worship committee

Waiting in silent expectation and prayer for guidance from the Light Within is the basis for our Meeting for Worship. The following are offered not as infallible rules, but as suggestions that reflect the cumulative wisdom of our Quaker tradition.

Is the hour of meeting for worship the only time in the week you seek to nourish your spiritual life? Friends who set aside time each day for meditation, personal prayer, or reflection often find it strengthens and deepens their experience with the living silence of meeting for worship. Such preparation readies the mind and opens one's heart and spirit to engage in deep communion with others.

If you feel moved to speak, take a moment to test your message. Is it from the Inward Light? Is it meant only for me, or for the entire Meeting? When one is moved by the Light to speak, such ministry is often preceded by a physical uneasiness, a "heart pounding weakness," from which our name Quaker is derived. If you are so led, please stand and speak simply and clearly in language that reflects your spiritual experience. Do not feel compelled to explore all the implications of your insight. Leave room for the Light to work through the next person, potentially building on your words and possibly extending them in an unexpected direction.

Be sure to allow adequate time between spoken messages, so that they may settle in the silence and be truly absorbed. In general, Friends counsel against speaking more than once in a meeting.

Not all vocal ministry will be equally meaningful to all present. Remember, ministry that does not speak to your condition may nevertheless be valuable to others. Be patient. Take care to separate the message from the minister. When taking in another's message, take a moment to test your own reactions. Where do they come from? Are you *listening through* to the Light behind the message? If you find yourself struggling with another's words, search for the Love behind them. As George Fox advised, "avoid judging any openly during the meeting."

Finally, if you have concerns regarding vocal ministry, contact a member of the Ministry and Worship committee.

(Compiled from Friends General Conference and many individual unprogrammed meetings.)