

Deepening  
and  
Strengthening

*Our*

Meeting  
for  
Worship



## **Deepening and Strengthening *Our Meeting for Worship***

This pamphlet is the joint creation of the members and attenders of 57<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting of Friends. Compiled for the occasion of our April 8, 2006 Spring Retreat, it contains submissions from Friends of material—original writings, quotations, poetry, pictures and cartoons—that speak to their understanding of meeting for Worship in the manner of Friends.

“Shared pain and grief is decreased, shared joy and hope in increased.” Through pooling our individual sources of inspiration, we will deepen our understanding of one another and strengthen our communal worship. In the creation of this pamphlet as a template for our retreat, we bring into being something that will long outlive it; it is our earnest hope that the rays of Light contained within these pages will illumine the steps of seekers far beyond the doors of Quaker House.

—Owen Duncan, 2006

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### **A Quote from the Founding of the 57<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting**

As a unity Meeting, 57<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting of Friends was created as a place where the various strands of Quakerism could come together. In 1931, this united group first came together in worship on that first Sunday under this official announcement: “The 57<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting is a joint effort by Friends of both branches who here unite for study and worship, though keeping their former relations to their Yearly Meetings. All sessions are open to those who care to join us in our quest for reality in religion, in our effort to be enlightened and useful members of society, in our anxious desire to make our children aware of the Divine Spirit... It is hoped that by keeping the Meeting and its activities simple, experimental, and open to new light, it will meet the needs of a great variety of people.”

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57<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting of Friends  
**Threshing Session on Meeting for Worship**  
October 9, 2004

The threshing session was spiritually profitable, filled with thoughtful, prayerful and helpful discussions. Friends felt that attention to such fundamental practices of the Society of Friends was timely for 57<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting and strengthened the Meeting. Appreciation was expressed to Ministry and Counsel for having arranged for the threshing.

Attention was paid to “nuts-and-bolts” aspects of Meeting for Worship, such as how to handle late entry, possible chair formations and how to handle the exits and re-entrances of First Day School in the least disruptive manner. Friends shared the concern that eating and drinking in Meeting for Worship are inappropriate but felt tolerant towards those who sleep during worship, expressing gratitude for those Friends’ physical presences. Use of electronic devices and cell phones and the jangling of keys were seen as avoidable distractions. Reading or writing should not be habitual practices.

The threshing, however, focussed mainly on the spiritual aspects of Meeting for Worship. The Sense of the Meeting was strong that Friends wish and expect Meeting for Worship to be a place and time where Friends and visitors:

- 1) feel physically, emotionally and spiritually safe,
- 2) enjoy an atmosphere of benevolent tolerance,  
and above all
- 3) experience a Spirit-led communal worship and ministry.

In the discussion of Spirit-led ministry, Friends shared the belief, as testified to by generations of Friends, that there should be a community standard for ministry—that Meeting for Worship not become an open forum for those who wish for various personal reasons to speak. Members and attenders were encouraged to actively question their promptings to speak, to let messages “season,” and in general to make every effort to discern that their words issue from the Spirit rather than themselves alone.

The following guidelines were mentioned to help Friends question their own promptings and also to help the community identify those whose ministry may be inappropriate. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that these are guidelines, not rules, and that no guidelines can supercede the true promptings of the Spirit.

- 1) Question the use of “I” in your messages, especially if your message begins with “I.”
- 2) Messages may be inspired by previous messages but should not simply be responses to them—and messages that are contradictory responses to previous messages are cause for grave concern. In like vein, there should be an appropriate pause after ministry before new ministry begins.
- 3) Friends should avoid messages that are essentially political in nature and should question messages prompted by current events.
- 4) Messages should not be announcements and likewise generally should not concern Meeting business.
- 5) Friends should exercise caution in delivering ministry that is over-intellectual or sounds like a lecture.
- 6) Friends should question their urge to speak if it comes frequently and especially if it comes during all or almost all Meetings for Worship they attend.
- 7) In keeping with Meeting for Worship being a safe place, messages critical of or attacking someone outright are not appropriate.

Members and attenders were encouraged to use the above guidelines as a reference point during their internal discernment process, to pursue further reading on the matter if they are still in doubt and to feel free to ask for help from other members and attenders.

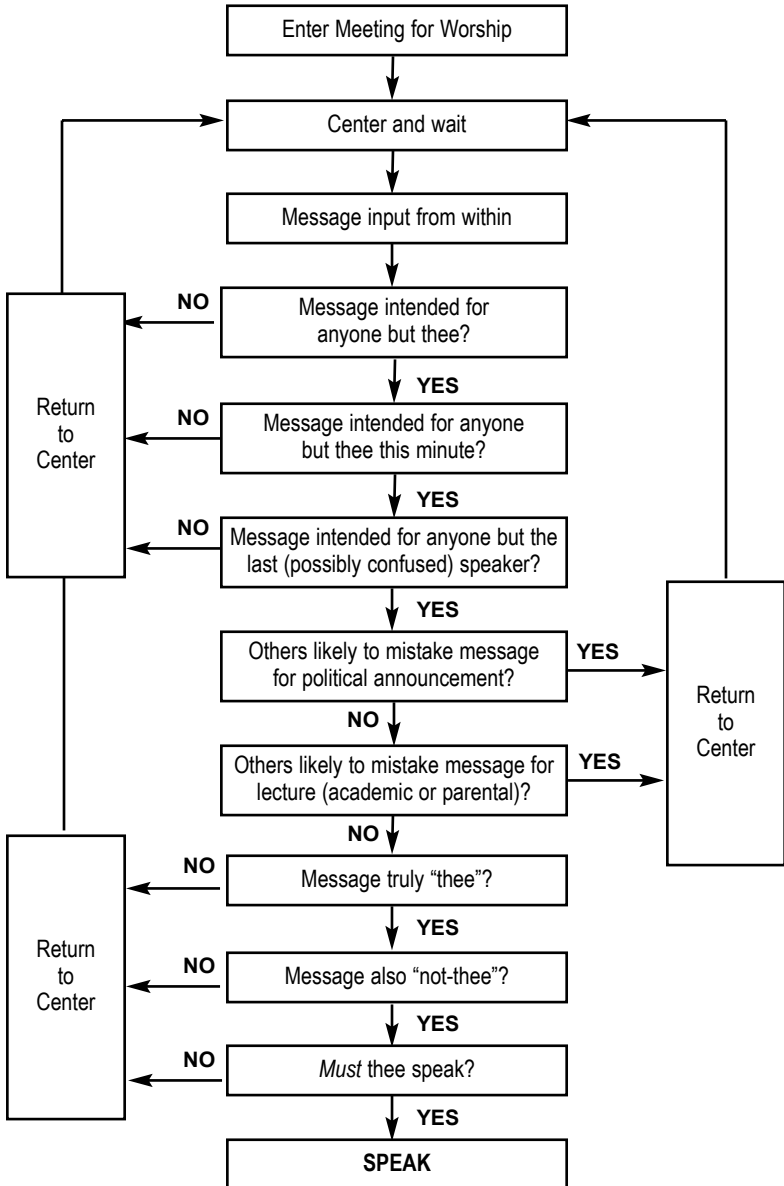
In maintaining the community standard, Friends felt that modeling appropriate ministry was of essential importance. The production of a card with the above guidelines on it was suggested.

In enforcing the standard of appropriate ministry, the time-honored practice of “standing down” inappropriate messages was discussed, as was courteous, loving, Friendly admonition prompted by a concern for the good of the community. If these are not effective, loving eldering by the Ministry and Counsel committee would be in order.

The threshing session ended in silence and a feeling of strength and unity.

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## Further Reflections on Vocal Ministry



A Friends meeting is made up of these who gather from the various walks of life, each bringing with him that which in the week's experience or meditation has passed through the crucible of his own soul. It might be called the pooling of the highest and best of our inner life as it is related to the world in which we live. Yet it is more than that. A meeting for worship is more than the sum total of the experiences of those assembled. There is an unseen presence.

We are seekers—seekers for truth, seekers for light, seekers for the way. This quest will be fruitful as we mind the Divine Spirit whose home is in human hearts. Unprogrammed by human direction, an orderliness comes to the meeting because of the sensitiveness to the Divine touch which is as real as the material world.

Please remember, a meeting for worship gathers. The word 'gathers' is used advisedly. It is not an assembly nor a congregation. Those who gather come from varying circumstances, bringing to the meeting not only a bodily presence but also a gathering of minds, a community of spirit, a flowing together of soul. We gather in silence not because we program a period of silence, but because our group experience has shown that silence better than voices brings us to a high level. Participation in a Quaker meeting is not a thing to undertaken lightly. The solemnity of silence gives weight to spoken messages.

—Unnamed member of 57<sup>th</sup> St. Meeting, c. 1930-40

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### **A Timely Debate**

It is not only programmed and unprogrammed Friends who have suffered from theological differences. One of the sharpest ongoing doctrinal controversies today is among unprogrammed Friends; it involves the running skirmishes between two opposed parties, the Punctualists and the Tardyites.

Punctualists are named after Elias Punctual, an early Friends minister who is said to have arrived on time for worship every First Day of his adult life. They believe the authenticity of one's Quaker faith can be gauged by how closely to the appointed hour one enters the meetinghouse.

Tardyites, by contrast, are followers of Joseph John Tardy, who was a longtime critic of Friend Punctual, but who is less well known because he rarely made it to meetings in time to get his views entered into the record. Their position, however, is that it is a sign of much grace for many people if they are able to get to meeting at all.

The conflict between these two camps is ongoing, and frequently flares into wrangles over proposals for locked doors and other drastic measures.

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# Fieldguide to Quaker Ministry

(unprogrammed)

Common  
(Heard Weekly)

by SIGNE WILKINSON

Occasional  
(Spontaneous Eruptions)



## EDITORIAL BOARD

"The New York Times  
This morning reminds  
us how REALLY bad  
things are in..."



## MS. MAIAPROP

(OR: YOU GET THE MINISTRY  
YOU PAY FOR!)

"As Jesus said,  
'To be or not  
To be!'"



## WEEK IN REVIEW

"...and after THAT  
meeting my niece  
visited and then my  
friend Isabel called  
which reminds me how..."



## ALL QUIET ON THE SPIRITUAL FRONT

"Isn't silence  
wonderful? Silence  
IS wonderful. I  
come for the  
wonderful silence..."



## IN CLOSING

"While each of our  
speakers had a  
point, they could  
all be summed  
up by the verse..."



## SHRINK RAP

"As I was saying  
to my therapist  
before he went  
to sleep..."

## Random Sightings



## DROP-IN

"This meeting  
means so much  
to me though I'll  
never join, con-  
tribute or show  
up on work days..."



## OLD CHESTNUT

"Like the tree  
out front...  
(the roots)  
(the branches)  
(the leaves)  
remind us that?"

## Your Favorite



clip and send to the Journal

According to the author credit when this illustration originally appeared in FRIENDS JOURNAL (April 1997), "Signe Wilkinson's own managed ministry is tolerated by the patient Friends of Chestnut Hill (Pa.) Meeting."



## **Thoughts On The Quality Of Worship for the Clearness Committee**

The quality of Meeting for Worship in an unprogrammed meeting concerns me deeply. The beauty of Quaker worship is that in the silence we connect with our own inner guidance. Outer distractions are minimized and we can hear what God has to say to us.

The messages that come spontaneously into the mind arise from various inner sources. As we sit in the silence, we learn to sort through these messages and determine what is meaningful to us.

Some messages are the mind's attempt to sift through the events of the week and come to terms with what is happening in our life. We may come to a clearer understanding of what we need to do or how we can adapt to particular situations.

More often we are beset with random thoughts, memories, anxieties or desires. This is a persistent process. It is the nature of the mind to think, and when there are no outer events to distract the mind, it tends to revert to its natural tendencies. To deal with this, we learn to look with dispassion on these inner distractions and try to bring the mind back to focus in the silence.

When we come to meeting for worship we look forward to inspiration from a Divine source. This is what gives us strength and encouragement and sets our direction in life. It is meat and drink to the soul. These inspirations most often seem to come in the deep silence, although it may appear on the surface that nothing important is going on.

The messages we receive from God, however, may not come sugar-coated. They challenge us. It's natural to put up defenses against these messages. One of our defense mechanisms is to distract the mind with intellectualization.

Not all messages we receive are to be shared. As we are sensitive to the process we distinguish which messages are for us alone, which are inspirations to share, and which are not appropriate in this setting.

In unprogrammed worship we each have a responsibility to the whole. We are caretakers of each other and sensitive to the needs of those who are worshipping with us. We hold the silence in sacred trust and are not too ready to break into it with speech.

We minister to each other in the silence as well as in the spoken word. In this regard, even our unspoken thoughts can be a source of ministry (for better or for worse).

We owe a debt to ourselves and our forebears in the Quaker tradition to maintain this gift we have been given. Group worship in silence with brief vocal ministry is an answer to the needs of our time, and with care it is a tradition that will last far into the future.

—Betty Clegg, 2004

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## **The Children of Reading, England**

In early 1664, there was a storm of persecutions in Reading, England. The law was that any prisoner 16 years of age could be treated as an adult. In March, thirty-four Friends were arrested at a Meeting for Worship and hauled to prison. More were taken on successive Sundays “until hardly an adult Friend was left.” But the Reading Meeting Friends never failed to hold Meeting for Worship, even when all the adults were gone.

It was the children who sat in attendance, “in spite of the many efforts made to terrorize, beat, and ill-use them.” One Sunday, law officers burst through the Reading Meeting door, the constables seizing the boys. They took them out to the road and “punched and beat them with sticks... until they were black in the face.”

### **The Lambs' War**

By M. Lacy of Richmond, IN

*Small hands work in unison; barricades fall  
The shattered door hangs drunkenly from one hinge.  
Meeting is gathered;  
The worshippers wait until the Light.*

*Thomas and James besides him sit at the head;  
They are 16 and 12. Elizabeth sobs  
And is comforted  
By her sister Sarah; they are 4 and 10.*

*Throughout the room the silence is penetrated  
By the sounds that children make when small backs  
Grow weary and small feet dangle  
Inches above the floor.*

*The constables arrive to do their job  
But find no one to jail  
Frustrated,  
They swing their cudgels.*

*Bruised and weeping, the children scatter  
To the cold hearths;  
Adolescents shepherd the babes.  
The broken door is boarded shut once more.*

*But at night the constables do not rest;  
They tell their wives:  
“We found none but children there.”  
They cannot rest.  
They dream and call out in their sleep.*

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## None Shall Make them Afraid



This is a famous Quaker picture. The Quakers were sitting quietly in meeting for worship. The Indians with bows and arrows came into the meetinghouse. The Indians understood that the Quakers were worshipping God. God told the Indians not to hurt the Quakers. The Indians put down their bows and arrows and worshiped God with the Quakers.

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If a person believes that he or she is motivated by the Spirit of God, the Divine Light, or some similar spiritual force, it is natural to expect that he or she will tend to speak a great deal about it. This characteristic is seen in almost all religious personalities. In Quakerism, Mary Dyer, George Fox, Elias Hicks, Samuel Janney, Rufus Jones, Lucretia Mott, and James Naylor are just a few examples. This tendency conflicts with the time restrictions of a meeting for worship. If a meeting for worship is one hour long, then a person who feels motivated by the Divine Spirit might be able to speak for the entire 60 minutes. If everyone took this position, there would be no silence in the meeting, and constant competition to see who could begin speaking first. Because of this, important characteristics of meeting for worship ministry are consideration for others and the self-discipline to be succinct and brief. If a meeting for worship is attended by 20-30 people, this suggests that each person try to limit her or his ministry to 5 minutes; certainly no more than 10 minutes.

—Bradford Lyttle, 2006

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It is not that the worshippers wait for something to happen. That would be like the hush before a storm, when no leaf or twig dares to stir. Think rather of the high noon of Summer, or of the stillness of a snow-covered country, how the heat or lightness everywhere gives an intense sense of overflowing and abounding life, making a quietness of rapture rather than of fear.... Gradually, as mind, soul, and even body grow still, sinking deeper and deeper into the life of God, the pettinesses, the tangles, the failures of the outer life begin to be seen in their true proportions, and the sense of Divine infilling, uplifting, redeeming Love becomes real and illuminating. Things are seen and known that are hidden to the ordinary faculties. This state is not merely one of quiescence; the soul is alive, active, vigorous, yet so still that it hardly knows how intense is its own vital action.

—J.M. Fry, 1911

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Once a seeker has the experience of a gathered/covered Meeting for Worship to have this experience again and again is brought to life/Light and is undying.

—Carol K. Zimmerman, 2006

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### **Queries about Social Change**

1. Do I promote my ideas because it makes me feel more secure to be agreed with? Am I seeking validation of my own viewpoints?
2. Am I sensitive to God's leadings in choosing where I would take those who will travel with me?
3. Am I aware of and sensitive to another person's perspective so that I know where our bridges should be built?
4. Believing that one person can make a difference, do I inspire others to do so?
5. When I offer and invite cooperation, do other parties feel called on to help me, or do they sense that I am helping them? Is our vision truly shared?
6. Do my actions ask others "what special gift do you have for the benefit of all mankind?"

—Kent Busse, 2005

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## The Peaceable Kingdom



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Universal Peace is an active movement toward the oneness of all humanity and the realization of the kingdom of God on earth. The testimony for Peace is not an artificial appendage to our faith which can be dropped without injury to the whole. Our Central faith requires that we should proclaim in deed as well as word that war with the whole military system, is contrary to the Spirit of the God whose name is Love. The same spirit must animate our business and Social Relation and make us eager to remove oppression and injustice in every form.

—Minute 79, London Yearly Meeting, 1912

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I believe that we can live on earth according to the teachings of Jesus, and that the greatest happiness will come to the world when man obeys His commandment “Love ye one another.”

I believe that every question between man and man is a religious question, and that every social wrong is a moral wrong.

I believe that we can live on earth according to the fulfillment of God’s will, and that when the will of God is done on earth as it is done in heaven, every man will love his fellow men, and act toward them as he desires they should act toward him. I believe that the welfare of each is bound up in the welfare of all.

I believe that life is given us so we may grow in love and I believe that God is in me as the sun is in the color and fragrance of a flower—the Light in my darkness, the Voice in my silence.

I believe that only in broken gleams has the Sun of Truth yet shone upon men. I believe that love will finally establish the Kingdom of God on earth, and that the Cornerstones of the Kingdom will be Liberty, Truth, Brotherhood, and service.... Without this faith there would be little meaning in my life.

—Helen Keller, 1925

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How then does one enter upon the internal life of prayer? Dynamic living is not imparted to us by one heavy visitation of God, but comes from continuous inner mental habits pursued through years. Inside of us there ought to go a steady, daily, hourly process of relating ourselves to Divine Goodness, of opening our lives to His warmth and love, of steadfast surrender to Him, and of sweet whisperings with Him such as we can tell no one about at all.....

But the internal prayer life is something still more basic. It is carried on after one has left the quiet room, has opened the door and gone back into the noisy hubbub of the family group. It is carried on as one dashes for a trolley, as one lunches in a cafeteria, as one puts the children to bed. There is a way of living in prayer at the same time one is busy with the outward affairs of daily living.

This practice of continuous prayer in the presence of God involves developing the habit of carrying on the mental life at two levels. At one level we are immersed in this world of time, of daily affairs. At the same time, but at a deeper level of our minds, we are in active relation with the Eternal Life.

—Thomas Kelly, 1942

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The Lamps are different, but the Light is the same.

—Rumi, 13<sup>th</sup> century

When mystics plunge into the Light, they meet on a level, in which, there are no words, and at that spiritual core, they are confronted with that which cannot be named.

As a child, under the age of ten, my concept of the Spirit was that the Spirit was an “All Being,” and I had a sense of being a part of whatever that was—this sense was intruded upon by instruction. Mother insisted that those who were trained professionals—the nuns at St. (something)—should teach me about God; she thought they could do the job, and so, every Wednesday for six months, I attended catechism lessons. At the end of those lessons, there was a great ceremony, in which the bishop and priests and little boys and little girls and all of the parents and families of the community celebrated our entrance into the community of God.

Now, at that time two things occurred: 1) an little Irish boy (eight years old) of the community, who was a nice good boy, told the priest that he could not be part of the ritual, because just the day before, right after his confession of sins to the priest, the boy had committed a terrible unforgivable act—he swore when he was playing baseball; 2) my father was working in the garden when I was leaving for services at the local church one Sunday morning. I asked my father, “Are you going to the church?” My father replied, “The spirit doesn't just live in a church; you already know that. You worship your way, and I will worship in my way.” Shortly after this I decided that I didn't want any more instruction about God.

What does it matter what people call the “unnamable?” As a teen, I attended many different church services and found an interesting situation existed in the minds of human beings. At the Congregationalist Church, people were very into Jesus; in fact so involved with Jesus, it appeared that they believed Jesus was Divine! The Catholics were into the “Holy Trinity” and “Virgin Mary.” And the Jews of my acquaintance sounded so intense about Moses that I began to think they thought he was more than a man—that maybe they thought Moses was himself Divine! They were all very passionate about naming the Spirit. But with all the people I spoke with I was convinced that they had little experience with the Spirit, and a lot of experience with the “naming” of the Spirit. This was troubling to me.

It was a tradition in our family to become members of the Masons, and in my case, the Eastern Star. At the age of twenty-two, I became an Eastern Star. It was while we did the Star Point Ritual that I felt a lack of integrity on my part, particularly when we were required to state that we believed in God. “I don't think I do,” I said, “at least not the God you are ‘naming.’”

There is only one Divine source in life. “Naming” that source does it a great injustice. It cannot be named. We cannot follow religious dogma blindly in order to experience the Divine; the Divine is experiential.

When I was going at a good “clip” down a country walkway in Nottinghamshire, England, one very cold dark winter day, I came upon the source of Light, the unnamed source. There it was! When you discover what is Holy you know that it is, and it cannot be named; it is the unspeakable name. Once you realize your essential oneness with all things, you will have experienced the infinite Spirit. Oddly enough, the Spirit I brought to that walkway was the Spirit I found there. You will find the Truth right where you are, you cannot expect to find it anywhere else.

—Joyce Hopkins, 2006

“There is no place like home, Toto,” said Dorothy.

—Frank Baum, 1900

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A Finn once suggested to me that in every conversation between two people there are always at least six persons present. What each person said are two; what each person meant to say are two more; and what each person understood the other to say are two more. There is certainly no reason to stop at six, but the fathomless depth of the listener who can go beyond words, who can even go beyond the conscious meanings behind words and who can listen with the third ear for what is unconsciously being meant by the speaker, this fashion of attentive listening furnishes a climate where the most unexpected disclosures occur that are in the way of being miracles in one sense, and the most natural and obvious things in the world, on the other.

—Douglas Steer, c. 1943

Perhaps silence is just easier.

—Judy Wolicki, 2006

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This is the only way to know God. ‘Be still, and know that I am God.’ ‘God is His Holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him’.... God was waiting in the depths of my being to talk to me if I would only get still enough to hear His voice.



I thought this would be a very easy matter, and so I began to get still. But I had no sooner commenced than a perfect pandemonium of voices reached my ears, a thousand clamouring notes from without and within, until I could hear nothing but their noise and din. Some of them were my own voice, some of them were my own questions, some of them were my own cares, some of them were my very prayers. Others were the suggestions of the tempter and the voices of the world's turmoil. Never before did there seem so many things to be done, to be said, to be thought; and in every direction I was pushed and pulled, and greeted with noisy acclamations of unspeakable unrest. It seemed necessary for me to listen to some of them, and to answer some of them; but God said, 'Be still, and know that I am God.' then came the conflict of thoughts for the morrow, and its duties and cares; but God said, 'Be still.' And as I listened and slowly learned to obey, and shut my ears to every sound, I found after a while that when the other voices ceased, or I ceased to hear them, there was a still small voice in the depths of my being that began to speak with an inexpressible tenderness, power, and comfort. As I listened, it became to me the voice of prayer, and the voice of wisdom, and the voice of duty, and I did not need to think so hard, or pray so hard, or trust so hard, but that 'still, small voice' of the Holy Spirit in my heart was God's prayer in my secret soul, was God's answer to all my questions, was God's life and strength for soul and body, and became the substance of all knowledge, and all prayer, and all blessing; for it was the living God Himself as my life and my all.

—Martin Hope Sutton, c. 1900

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We sense that God is too difficult for us, that we must defer him in order slowly to do the long work that separates us from him.

Three kinds of prayers:

- 1) I am a bow in your hands, Lord. Draw me lest I rot.
- 2) Do not overdraw me, Lord. I shall break.
- 3) Overdraw me, and who cares if I break?

—Nikos Kazantzakis, 1961

“Eve said to Adam, ‘My dear, we are living in an age of transition’.”

—quoted by Henry Cadbury, 1944

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So when they had broken their fast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?" He saith unto him, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." He saith unto him, "Feed my lambs." He saith to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?" He saith unto him, "Yea Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." He saith unto him, "Tend my sheep." He saith to him again the third time, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?" Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, 'Lovest thou me?' And he said unto him, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus saith unto him, "Feed my sheep."

—John 21: 15-17

God never says, "You should have come yesterday";  
He never says, "You must come again tomorrow";  
but today, if you will hear his voice, today he will hear you.

—John Donne, 1624

Who is the person next to you? He (or you may substitute She) is an inexhaustible sort of existence. He is an overpowering will to survive, to arrive at destinations. He is an urge to become manifest, to be something in particular, to emerge as a dependable structure out of the amorphous cloud of being, and then make clear and vivid this pattern. He is a unique world of experience, a cluster of memories and expectations. He is working away at problems. He has fears. He wonders how he is doing... The person next to you is sacredness...

—Ross Snyder, 1960

A question which Friends may well ask themselves is whether the chief purpose of the gathered fellowship is to be a comfort station where they come regularly to escape the pressures, anxieties and perplexities of modern life and have their ruffled spirits soothed? Or is the meeting a filling station where Friends come to be inspired and replenished so they can last through the week until they gather again? Or is the meeting a mission station which exists for the purpose of becoming expendable in service and mission to the world? Any group which is to fulfill its task as a witnessing community must answer this question. And the central thrust of its answer is that the meeting must exist for others rather than for itself.

—Wilmer Cooper, 1999

... Lord, teach us to pray.

—Luke 11:1

(One) focal point of prayer is intercession for others. Wordless adoration of God, the beginning and end of prayer, cannot but return to earth in an offering of the self to others, for every advance in prayer is a movement in loving care.

—Elsie H. Landstrom, 1970

He drew a circle that shut me out,  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But Love and I had the wit to win;  
We drew a circle that took him in.

—Edwin Markham, 1936

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In the Quaker practice of group worship on the basis of silence come special times when an electric hush and solemnity and depth of power steals over the worshippers. A blanket of divine covering comes over the room, and a quickening Presence pervades us, breaking down some part of the special privacy and isolation of our individual lives and bonding our spirits within a super-individual Life and Power—an objective, dynamic Presence which enfolds us all, nourishes our souls, speaks glad, unutterable comfort within us, and quickens in us depths that had before been slumbering. The Burning Bush has been kindled in our midst, and we stand together on holy ground....

What conditions favor a gathered meeting? Let us venture upon the question in an attitude of humility, not in the spirit of the masterly man, so characteristic of our modern post-Baconian age. We seek at best to discern merely favoring conditions and releasing stimuli, not the full control of the event.

One condition for such a group experience seems to be this: some individuals need already, upon entering the meeting, to be gathered deep in the spirit of worship. There must be some kindled hearts when the meeting begins. In them, and from them, begins the work of worship. The spiritual devotion of a few persons, silently deep in active adoration, is needed to kindle the rest, to help those others who enter the service with tangled, harried, distraught thoughts to be melted and quieted and released and made pliant, ready for the work of God and His Real Presence.

There is a real invisible work of kindling and of mutual assistance in worship which some of the worshippers must do, directing it upon others along with themselves. It is an internal work of prayer. Its language is not “I,” or “You,” but “We.” It is an awakening and an attuning that

goes on with energy in the soul. In power and labor one lifts the group, in inward prayer, high before the throne. With work of soul the kindled praying worshipper holds the group, his comrades and himself, high above the sordid and the trivial, and prays in quiet, offering that the Light may drive away the shadows of self-will. Where this inward work of upholding prayer is wholly absent I am not sure that a gathered meeting is at all likely to follow.

This means a preceding preparation for worship. Worship, and preparation for worship, begin before one has left one's home. They begin when one wakes on Sunday morning, before one has gotten out of bed. Worship in a meeting-house with one's friends should be only a special period of a life of worship that underlies all one's daily affairs. Such worship is no intermittent process, but a foundation layer of the life of the children of the kingdom. And such special sense of bondedness and unity with others as is experienced in the gathered meeting is only a time of particular enhancement of the life of bondedness and fellowship in love among souls which is experienced daily, as we carry one another in inward upholding prayer.

—Thomas Kelly, c. 1944

The first gleam of light, 'the first cold light of morning' which gave promise of day with its noontide glories, dawned on me one day meeting, when I had been meditating on my state in great depression. I seemed to hear the words articulated in my spirit, "Live up to the light thou hast, and more will be granted thee." Then I believed that God speaks...by His spirit. I strove to lead a more Christian life, in unison with what I knew to be right, and looked for brighter days, not forgetting the blessings that are granted in prayer.

—Carolyn Fox, 1841

Hope, peace, and encouragement is not enough to depict my religion. When my spirit is animated by my religion and is aware of the inviolable Truth prevailing, my heart dances for joy and gratitude and sings the praise of God! Every moment is a mystery. Even this body of mine, what a mystery it is, whose heart is beating incessantly without my knowing, and whose lungs breathe ceaselessly without my knowing! This air is God's, the light is God's, we are his. I am living in all the universe, and all the universe is living with me, in God.

—Yukio Irie, 1957

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