Faith in Action

How Quakers try to embody our beliefs through our witness in the world.



This unit invites you to find out more about how Quakers try to put faith into practice. Experience in worship leads us to a shared commitment to equality, peace, simplicity and truth, which we try to live out and foster in the world. This is often referred to as Quaker testimony and underpins a lot of Quaker thinking and work.

Faith in Action unit aims

This unit aims to help you:

- understand how Quakers feel called to live out our beliefs through witness in the world
- find out about the Quaker commitment to equality, peace, simplicity and truth
- reflect on your own experience of being called to live out your beliefs

Overview

Quaker faith springs from a deeply held belief in living our lives according to our spiritual experience. Some of our spiritual insights, which we call our testimonies, spring from deep experience and have been a part of Quaker faith for many years. These Quaker testimonies arise out of an inner conviction and challenge our normal ways of living.

- They exist in spiritually-led actions rather than rigid written forms.
- They are governed by continuing spiritual experience and are not imposed in any way.
- They require us to search for ways in which the testimonies can become true for ourselves.
- They emerge and change over time.

The word 'testimony' is used by Quakers to describe a witness to the living truth within the human heart as it is acted out in everyday life. It is not a form of words, but a mode of life based on the realisation that there is that of God in everybody, that all human beings are equal, that all life is interconnected. It is affirmative but may lead to action that runs counter to certain practices currently accepted in society at large... These testimonies reflect the corporate beliefs of the Society, however much individual Quakers may interpret them differently according to their own light. They are not optional extras, but fruits that grow from the very tree of faith.

Harvey Gillman, Quaker faith & practice 23.12

Truth and integrity

Quakers try to live according to the deepest truth we know, which we believe comes from God. This means speaking the truth to all, including people in positions of power. Integrity is the guiding principle we set for ourselves and expect in public life.

Justice, equality and community

Quakers recognise the equal worth and unique nature of every person. This means working to change the systems that cause injustice and hinder true community. It also means working with people who are suffering from injustice, such as prisoners and asylum seekers.

Simplicity

Quakers are concerned about the excesses and unfairness of our consumer society, and the unsustainable use of natural resources. We try to live simply and to give space for the things that really matter: the people around us, the natural world, our experience of God.

Peace

Perhaps Quakers are best known for our peace testimony. This arises from our conviction that love is at the heart of existence and all human beings are equal in the eyes of God, and that we must live in a way that reflects this. It has led Quakers to refuse military service, and to become involved in a wide range of peace activities from practical work in areas affected by violent conflict to the development of alternatives to violence at all levels from personal to international.

Faithful living

Putting faith into action is not easy! But with loving advice and a supportive community, Quakers are encouraged to keep trying. A story about early Quaker William Penn shows that each of us has to find our own way, at our own pace, to living out our faith:

When William Penn was convinced of the principles of Friends, and became a frequent attendant at their meetings, he did not immediately relinquish his gay apparel; it is even said that he wore a sword, as was then customary among men of rank and fashion. Being one day in company with George Fox, he asked his advice concerning it, saying that he might, perhaps, appear singular among Friends, but his sword had once been the means of saving his life without injuring his antagonist, and moreover, that Christ had said, 'He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.' George Fox answered, 'I advise thee to wear it as long as thou canst.' Not long after this they met again, when William had no sword, and George said to him, 'William, where is thy sword?' 'Oh!' said he, 'I have taken thy advice; I wore it as long as I could.'

Quaker faith & practice 19.47

Concerns

When individuals or groups of Quakers feel led to put our faith into action, we may call this 'acting under a concern'; this means more than the normal everyday sense of 'being concerned' about something, but refers to a powerful spiritual

experience of being compelled to act in a certain way. To ensure that we are clear within ourselves and as a community about the rightness of such action, Quakers have developed a process of deep reflection for testing out 'concerns'. In this way we support and challenge one another to really live in accordance with the 'promptings of love and truth' in our hearts (*Advices & queries* 1, in *Quaker faith & practice* 1.02).

Testimonies about faithful lives

Another way in which Quakers use the word 'testimony' is when we celebrate the faithful lives of individual Friends: we write an account of a Friend's life called a 'testimony to the grace of God as shown in the life of...'. These accounts are published as a source of encouragement and inspiration to us in living our own call to faith in action.

Local and national Quaker work

Quakers try to put our faith into practice in many different ways, at local, national and international levels. In this unit you can find out about Quaker activities in your local community and about national Quaker work, including work organised through the Quaker Peace & Social Witness department of Britain Yearly Meeting.

Quaker distinctives

Distinctives 1

Faith into action in Quaker faith & practice

Advices & queries 31–42 (in section 1.02 of Quaker faith & practice) offer thought-provoking guidance about how we put our faith into action as Quakers. If you prefer to listen to Advices & queries, there are mp3 audio files available in this unit of the online Becoming Friends course.

To find out more about particular aspects of Quaker faith in action, you could also read any of the following sections of *Quaker faith & practice*:

- Simplicity: *Qf&p* 20.27 and 20.35
- Truth and integrity: *Qf&p* 20.45, 20.54 and 20.56
- Equality: *Qf&p* 23.32, 23.33 and 23.36
- Peace: *Qf&p* 20.68, chapter 24 introduction, 24.04, and 24.11
- Personal peace witness: *Qf&p* 24.27, 24.37 and 24.38
- Social responsibility: *Qf&p* 23.22, 23.23 and 23.94
- Environment: *Qf&p* 25.02, 25.10 and 25.14

Distinctives 2

Acting under a 'concern'

Quakers sometimes speak of a specific call to action or lived witness as acting under a 'concern'. It may take some time to find out or discern exactly what it is that we feel led to do, though, so Quakers have developed ways of working out what our 'concern' is and supporting one another in taking action.

You could read about discerning concerns in an extract from Marion McNaughton's presentation to the Quaker Peace & Social Witness conference 2009. You'll find this extract on pages 159–160.

You might also like to read the following sections of *Quaker faith & practice* for an overview of 'concerns' and Quaker approaches to discerning and supporting a 'concern':

• a special inward calling: *Qf&p* 13.02

- a sense of 'rightness': *Qf&p* 13.03
- discerning a concern: *Qf&p* 13.05
- support from your meeting: *Qf&p* 13.09

Distinctives 3

Quakers talk about the testimonies

You might like to watch the video 'The Quaker Testimonies' made by Friends at Watford Quaker Meeting about the Quaker approach to living our faith. You can access the video in a number of different ways:

- online at
 - > www.watfordquakers.org.uk/videos.html
 - www.youtube.com as 'The Quaker Testimonies'
- on the DVD *An introduction to Watford Quakers*, available from the Quaker Centre bookshop (see Further exploration for contact details).

Distinctives 4

A Quaker view on ...

The Quaker Peace & Social Witness leaflet 'A Quaker view on...' gives a helpful overview of past and present Quaker approaches to:

- peace, conflict and violence
- human rights
- crime and punishment
- racial and religious prejudice
- the environment

You'll find the leaflet on pages 161–170 or you can access it online at: www.quaker.org.uk/education (click on the leaflet title in the left hand menu)

For more about the history of Quaker faith in action, see the Deep Roots unit.

Distinctives 5

Faithful lives

The Quaker custom of writing testimonies to the grace of God in the lives of Friends provides us with real examples of how individuals have lived out their faith: these testimonies can inspire us to action in our own lives.

There are testimonies to the grace of God in the lives of Friends in the following sections of *Quaker faith & practice*:

- Elizabeth Fry (1780–1845): *Qf&p* 18.08
- Katie Riley (20th century): *Qf&p* 18.19
- John Bright (1811–1889): *Qf&p* 23.07
- Stephen Henry Hobhouse (1881–1961): *Qf&p* 23.51
- Percy Cleave (1880–1958): *Qf&p* 23.59
- Joan Frances Layton (1908–1990): *Qf&p* 23.60

You could also read recent testimonies to the grace of God in the lives of Friends in local Quaker newsletters and documents for yearly meetings.

- You could ask your Becoming Friends companion to help you track down copies in your local meeting library
- You could look at the testimonies for Yearly Meeting 2008 at: www.quaker.org.uk/files/YM2008-Testimonies.pdf
- You can also see the current yearly meeting documents online by clicking the current year's page at: www.quaker.org.uk/ym

Discovery

Discovery 1

Quaker Peace & Social Witness work

QPSW publish factsheets about different aspects of their work, which give a good introduction to Quaker faith in action and offer ways of getting involved. You can look at an example of a QPSW factsheet by:

- turning to pages 171–172
- downloading one from www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw-factsheets
- requesting one from QPSW (email qpsw@quaker.org.uk or tel 020 7663 1000)

You could also go to www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw and select any subjects from the left hand menu that interest you, to find out more about Quaker work and resources in areas ranging from housing to disarmament.

You may be interested in the QPSW presentation 'Sustainable Security' at: www.quaker.org.uk/sustainable-security-display
To borrow this display for your meeting house, email: disarm@quaker.org.uk or ring 020 7663 1067.

Discovery 2

Exploring local Friends' experience of faith in action

If you would like to explore local Friends' experience of putting their faith into action, you could ask your Becoming Friends companion to help you set up a small group session. The questions below may be useful starting points for discussion, or you may prefer to discuss other questions with your Becoming Friends companion.

- How do you try to live out the Quaker testimony to equality, simplicity, peace or truth in your life?
- Have you ever done anything especially challenging or difficult in living out one of the testimonies?
- Are there elements of the Quaker testimonies that you do not agree with or find more challenging than others?

You could also join in a discussion about experiences of faith in action on a Quaker discussion forum:

- the Britain Yearly Meeting forum at: www.quakerweb.org.uk/forum
- www.friendlink.org.uk (aimed mainly at young Quakers)
- the Faith in Action unit forum

Discovery 3

Discussion about issues of concern

You could consider the introductory questions below, then go to the Faith in Action unit forum and post your own thoughts on the issues raised. You might like to comment on other posts on this forum too.

Alternatively, you could discuss the introductory questions with your Becoming Friends companion, or others in your meeting.

Introductory questions:

- What is an issue that currently concerns you or that you feel passionate about?
- Do you have a suggestion for action that Friends could take? This could be something quite small and possibly happening online.

Discovery 4

Find out about other Quaker faith in action

You might like to find out more about:

Any local Quaker action

Ask your Becoming Friends companion, or others in your meeting. Is there anything you feel led to get involved with?

Circles of Support & Accountability

This is a scheme that decreases the likelihood of sex offenders re-offending by using trained volunteers from the community: www.circles-uk.org.uk
Tel: 0118 950 0068

Email: info@circles-uk.org.uk

Disarm

QPSW disarmament programme: www.peaceexchange.org.uk You can download *Disarm* newsletters from: www.quaker.org.uk/online-resources

Tel: 020 7663 1067

Email: disarm@quaker.org.uk

Living Witness Project

Quakers for sustainability: www.livingwitness.org.uk You can download *Earthquaker* newsletters from the website.

Tel: 01865 725 244

Email: laurie@livingwitness.org.uk

The Retreat

A not-for-profit specialist mental health provider founded and run by Quakers: www.theretreatyork.org.uk

Tel: 01904 412551

Email: info@theretreatyork.org.uk

Turning the Tide

About non violent power for social change: www.turning-the-tide.org Download *Making Waves* newsletters from www.quaker.org.uk/online-resources

Tel: 020 7663 1064/1

Email: denised@quaker.org.uk or stevew@quaker.org.uk .

Discovery 5

Talk to a Friend about putting Quaker values into action

You might like to ask your Becoming Friends companion or another Friend in your meeting about how they put their Quaker values into action. You could ask them:

- Think of a time when you put your Quaker values into action.
- What did you do? Why was it important to you?
- Was it easy or difficult?
- Why did you do it? Did you want to do it?
- Did other people ask you about what you did? How did you explain it?
- How does being a Quaker generally affect your life and the choices you make?

Discovery 6

Quaker Tapestry on faith in action

Many of the panels from the Quaker Tapestry deal with faith in action. You might like to look at these and follow up panels that interest you by discussing them with your Becoming Friends companion, or others in your meeting, or by finding books and information about them in your meeting house library or online.

You could:

• visit the Quaker Tapestry exhibition at Kendal, or contact them for more details:

Tel: 01539 722975

Email: info@quaker-tapestry.co.uk Website: www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk

• find out if there's a book with pictures from the tapestry in your meeting house library, or you could order a book or postcards from the exhibition

Quaker Tapestry panels about faith in action include:

- A7 Conscientious objection
- B8 Quaker Peace Action Caravan
- D2 Simplicity
- D5 Innocent trades and D6 Merchants
- E4 Criminal justice and E5–E6 Elizabeth Fry
- E10 Unemployment and poverty
- F3 The slave trade
- F6-F7 Relief work
- F16-F17 Peace work

Deepening

Deepening 1

Your own experience of living out your beliefs

You might like to spend some time on your own or with your Becoming Friends companion reflecting on your experience of living out your beliefs.

Think of a time when you put your values into action.

- What did you do? Why was it important to you?
- Was it easy or difficult?
- Why did you do it? Did you want to do it?
- Did other people ask you about what you did? How did you explain it?
- How does this experience fit with any of the Quaker testimonies?

Deepening 2

Reflecting with Advices & queries

You could look at *Advices & queries* 31–42 (in section 1.02 of *Quaker faith & practice*), taking time to read them slowly and meditatively. If you prefer to listen to *Advices & queries*, there are mp3 audio files available in this unit of the online Becoming Friends course.

- Is there one that particularly speaks to you at the moment? It may be one that you feel passionately about, or perhaps one that challenges you in some way.
- You could write or print out that advice and put it somewhere that you will see it over the next few days or weeks, so that you can allow it to speak deeply to you.
- You could also reflect on this with your Becoming Friends companion when you next meet.

Deepening 3

A Testimony to the grace of God in your life

Advices & queries 27 (in section 1.02 of Quaker faith & practice) invites us to 'Live adventurously' and to 'Let your life speak.' If you imagine the Testimony that would be written to celebrate the grace of God in your life, what would you want or hope it would say about how you put your faith into action?

- You might like to write out this Testimony about your own life in a journal or record it creatively in some other way.
- Does it have anything to teach you about how you may be led to live?
- You could also share some of your reflections with your Becoming Friends companion when you next meet.

Deepening 4

A fourfold blessing

The 'Fourfold blessing' comes from the Franciscan tradition. You might like to read it and let it speak to you at a deep level. It can be a focus for prayer or spiritual practice over a period of time, inviting these blessings into your life as part of living out your faith.

You'll find an adaptation of the blessing on page 173.

If you would like to take some time to reflect deeply on your own response to these blessings, you could:

- respond by drawing, painting, or using another creative method
- respond in music, song or movement
- respond in writing
- go online and blog about your response
- discuss your response on a Quaker discussion forum:
 - > the Britain Yearly Meeting forum at: www.quakerweb.org.uk/forum
 - www.friendlink.org.uk (aimed mainly at young Quakers)
 - the Faith in Action unit forum
- share some of your reflections with your Becoming Friends companion when you next meet.

Deepening 5

How have other people's lives spoken to you?

You could talk to your Becoming Friends companion, or you may prefer to write in a journal or book of spiritual discipline, about people whose lives inspire you, either now or in the past.

- In what ways do/did they live out their faith or principles?
- What are the everyday or extraordinary things that they do/did which inspire you?
- Are there ways that you could act on this inspiration?

Further exploration

If you would like to explore further how Quakers put our faith into action, here are some suggestions for reading, listening or viewing.

Advices & queries 31–42 in Quaker faith & practice 1.02

Beyond the spirit of the age, Jonathan Dale, Quaker Books, 1996 (Swarthmore Lecture).

Circles UK website: www.circles-uk.org.uk

Engaging with the Quaker testimonies: a toolkit, Quaker Peace & Social Witness Testimonies Committee, Quaker Books, 2007.

'Finding the prophetic voice for our time', Marion McNaughton and Lizz Roe, *Woodbrooke Journal*, Autumn 2007, No 21

Forgiving justice: a Quaker vision for criminal justice, Tim Newell, Quaker Books, 2000 (Swarthmore Lecture).

Good lives study pack, Pam Lunn and Lizz Roe, Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 2009

An introduction to Watford Quakers (DVD), 'The Quaker Testimonies', Just Film, 2007. Also available at: www.watfordquakers.org.uk/videos.html (or at: www.youtube.com as 'The Quaker Testimonies').

Living Witness project website: www.livingwitness.org.uk

New light: 12 Quaker voices, edited by Jennifer Kavanagh, O Books, 2008. Individual themes such as Twelve Quakers and Peace, Twelve Quakers and Simplicity also available in the Twelve Quakers and... series, Quaker Quest 2004–2007.

No extraordinary power: prayer, stillness and activism, Helen Steven, Quaker Books, 2005 (Swarthmore Lecture)

Peace Exchange website: www.peaceexchange.org.uk

Pictorial guide to the Quaker Tapestry, Quaker Tapestry at Kendal, 1998.

Quaker faith & practice, chapter 18, 'Faithful Lives'.

Quaker faith & practice, chapter 20, 'Living Faithfully Today'.

Quaker faith & practice, chapter 23, 'Social Responsibility'.

Quaker faith & practice, chapter 24, 'Our Peace Testimony'.

Quaker faith & practice, chapter 25, 'Unity of Creation'.

Quaker Peace & Social Witness pages on the Britain Yearly Meeting website: www.quaker.org.uk/peace-social-witness

Quaker Tapestry website: www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk

Searching the depths: essays on being a Quaker today, edited by Harvey Gillman and Alastair Heron, Quaker Books, 1996

Spirited living: waging conflict, building peace, Simon Fisher, Quaker Books, 2004 (Swarthmore Lecture).

Testimony and tradition, John Punshon, Quaker Home Service, 1990 (Swarthmore Lecture).

The Retreat website: www.theretreatyork.org.uk

Turning the Tide project website: www.turning-the-tide.org

Woodbrooke's website or brochure for details of courses about faith in action or testimony: www.woodbrooke.org.uk

Many of these titles are available from the Quaker Centre bookshop:

Friends House 173 Euston Road London NW1 2BJ

Tel: 020 7663 1030 Fax: 020 7663 1001

Website: www.quaker.org.uk/bookshop Email: quakercentre@quaker.org.uk



Many of them will also be in your local meeting house library. You could ask your Becoming Friends companion to help you track down titles that interest you.

Closing activity

As you finish your exploration of how Quakers try to put our faith into action, you are invited to reflect on what you have gained through this unit, how your understanding of both yourself and Quakerism has changed, and what areas you would like to explore further.

This closing reflection can be a very good opportunity for sharing with your Becoming Friends companion, or you may prefer to write in a journal or book of spiritual discipline (there's guidance for journalling in Appendix 2 – Guidance on page 282), or to reflect using creative methods such as drawing, collage, model-making or working with materials such as textiles or wood.

- You might like to use one or more of the following questions as a focus for your reflection:
- What have you gained from your work on this unit, whether as a result of positive or more challenging experiences?
- In what ways has your understanding changed as a result of your work on this unit?
- Are there areas that you would like to explore further either as part of your own spiritual journey or relating to Quakerism?
- Has anything arisen that you would find it helpful to reflect on with your Becoming Friends companion?



Extract from Marion McNaughton's presentation to QPSW Conference 2009

Discernment

How is it that we as Quakers collectively, and all of us individually, come to know what it is that we are called to do to in response to all that is wrong in the world? Where do we start? We hope we can perhaps play a small part, with the gifts we have and the resources we can call on, though most of us will always feel our efforts are inadequate.

There are many factors involved in determining and carrying out a piece of Quaker work, whether it is central or local, small or large, individual or corporate. We will hear the origins and the growth of some of our central work tomorrow. But in all of them, we say, the work must be rightly discerned.

Discernment is a word that is often used casually in everyday speech, a matter of choosing or selecting what seems to be appropriate. But to Quakers discernment is a spiritual discipline, because it is about the spirit, or the divine, or God, – whatever we choose to call it – being there, and being active, all of the time, in every aspect of our lives, and guiding us. And about our learning to notice this, to pay attention and respond to it. Someone has said, it is about 'God being up to something' in our lives. Discerned work is God's work.

If we turn to *Advices & queries* and listen to advice number 7, it sounds very simple, but if we stop and let it in, it is breathtaking:

Be aware of the spirit of God at work in the ordinary activities and experience of your daily life.

That's it.

Be aware of the spirit of God at work in the ordinary activities and experience of your daily life.

It is inescapable. And it is addressed to all of us, not just a few special, 'spiritual' people. And notice that these are the ordinary activities and experiences of our daily life – this is not about thunderclaps or lightning flashes, or a voice speaking out of the clouds. It is about God, at work, all of the time. God at work in the mundane, in the ordinary, in the everyday. Sometimes hidden, sometimes manifesting for a second, and then disappearing again. In my life, and in yours. It

helps me to understand this by looking at the tangles of wool and yarn that seem to appear regularly at the bottom of my sewing basket. Here is one.

Discernment acknowledges that the divine and the worldly always come to us intertwined. We have to concentrate to know which is which. The dictionary tells us that discernment means to separate, to distinguish and to determine, what is of God, from what is not of God. So our task, in the ordinary activities and experiences of our daily life, is to take on the tangle of our lives and do three things. To notice and separate the different elements. To learn to distinguish one from the other. And to determine when one comes from a divine source, from God. You will see that there is a slender gold thread in this tangle. It appears and it disappears, but even when you can't see it, you know it is always there, at the heart, running right through the whole. And when you catch sight of it, it is unmistakeable.

This glimpse of the divine is what we wait for in meeting for worship, what we listen for, what we search for in our lives. And when we find it, we stop and pay attention to it, though we may not know exactly what we are meant to do with it. All the threads are important in their way, all are valuable, but one will carry a spiritual charge. It stands out, it seems to prompt us, it may disturb us, and sometimes require something of us that we know we must carry out, even if we don't quite know how. We call this situation 'being under Concern'. All QPSW work, all Quaker work, is work carried out under Concern.

So clearly this habit of seeking and developing awareness is something we must practise, because the more we practise it, the better we will become at it. We must practise it individually in our daily lives, because only then can we practise it together when we try to discern corporately what we are called to do in the world as Quakers. We cannot live our daily lives shut down and unaware of God, and then suddenly come together in a business meeting or a committee, hit the Discern button and come up with the right answer. The right answer grows from our patient, persistent sifting, individually and corporately. All of the work you will hear about this weekend is work carried out under Concern, and it has grown from this inspiration and this discipline, has been discerned, tested, and lived with – faithfully and patiently.



The following is the text of a leaflet published by Quaker Peace & Social Witness.

A Quaker view on...

peace, conflict & violence

crime & punishment

the environment

human rights

racial & religious prejudice

Members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) try to put their faith into practice. Our inner experience leads us to a commitment to equality, peace, simplicity and truth, which we try to live out in our lives. This is often referred to as Quaker testimony and underpins a lot of Quaker thinking and work.

There are no declared creeds or statements that you have to believe to be a Quaker. Our understanding of faith is that true fulfilment comes from attempting to live life in the spirit of love, truth and peace, and by seeking and acknowledging that of God in everyone. The concept of 'that of God in everyone', by which each human being is considered both unique and precious, is a key tenet of Quaker belief. Interpreting what or who God is, and how God manifests in individuals, is for personal discernment.

This does not make Quakers unrealistic. We know and feel the often unjust and painful world we live in. But in our worship we are led to recognise and foster in our hearts a vision of a world of justice, peace and equality. We strive to let our lives speak to these and try to build that world in the ways we live and act.

Peace, conflict & violence

Quakers believe...

A commitment to peace lies at the heart of Quaker faith and practice. It is part of our striving to live faithfully and is one of our testimonies to the world. Quakers believe that conflict can be a positive force for change, if handled creatively, but it is the use of violence, or the threat of violence, as a means of dealing with conflict, that is problematic.

Quakers think of peace as an approach to living in the world and working for social change, rather than simply an ideological opposition to war and to violence. The use of violence to bring change may create temporary good, but also increases the chance of violence becoming a permanent way of resolving conflict.

Peace is not simply the absence of direct violence, such as murder or domestic violence. Structural violence and cultural violence must also be dealt with for true peace to be present.

Structural violence is present when poverty and hunger are prevalent alongside great wealth. United Nations statistics on the Millennium Development Goals for 2007 show that the seven richest people in the world have a total wealth greater than the combined GDP (gross domestic product) of the world's 41 poorest countries. Cultural violence is present in a society when a dominant culture asserts its position and symbols to the detriment of others, e.g. attacking or otherwise disrespecting the symbols of their identity, language, dress or forms of worship.

For Quakers, such situations represent an unjust and violent world system.

We consider suffering, as a result of both direct and structural violence, to be an avoidable tragedy. When governments and citizens devote significant resources to tackling the root causes of conflict and injustice, the use of violence as a force for change can be greatly reduced and possibly even eliminated.

Faith into action

We strive to practice peace in our own lives, both as individuals and as a community. A key element for Quakers is that we seek to live what we believe. Our work on peace is rooted in the Quaker testimony to peace and to equality.

Corporately, Quakers in Britain have always opposed the use of violence in any form, for any end. Instead, we work to build the conditions of peace that 'take away the occasion of all wars'. Therefore, a central part of the work of Quakers is to respond to human need in the belief that if the problems of poverty and injustice are not attended to, there will not be peace.

In our relationship with others, be they friends, family or strangers, we aim to recognise the dignity of the other alongside our own. This means working to manage conflict with others without seeking their destruction or subjugation.

We also consider the impact of our actions and life choices on the world, for example considering both how we make and how we spend and invest money.

Past

Quakers are probably best known for their stand against war as conscientious objectors. In times of war, Quakers have refused to take up arms and instead tried to help the victims on all sides of the conflict. During past wars, Quakers have participated in war relief work, with many Quakers joining the Friends Ambulance Unit. Quakers have also been involved in humanitarian work in parts

of the world where there is violent conflict. In recognition of this work, Quakers were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947.

Present

Quakers work together as a community, at local, national and international level. Locally we work to introduce peace education, conflict resolution skills and peer-mediation to schools. We organise peace vigils and Nonviolent Direct Action, as well as promoting and supporting the understanding and use of active nonviolence. Information on these can be found at: www.quaker.org.uk/peaceexchange and www.turning-the-tide.org

Quakers support and provide training for groups that are working creatively to build a more peaceful world by challenging injustice and overcoming oppression. Quaker meeting houses are used as community resources, hosting public events to raise awareness of current issues that challenge a peaceful society.

Friends have been involved internationally in highly delicate and sensitive negotiations and mediation, and have worked to support local peacemaking initiatives across the world. Quakers were also involved in developing the Alternatives to Violence Project training, created to assist prisoners in handling personal anger.

Many Quakers join in nonviolent protests against weapons, particularly nuclear weapons. Quakers work for disarmament and against the arms trade, sharing the belief that the more weapons there are in a society, the more likelihood there is of war. Many Quakers believe that war is also made more likely if the military have a strong influence on governmental policies.

Human rights

Quakers believe...

Quakers recognise the equal worth and unique nature of every person. A Quaker statement in 1991 said, 'Our concern for human rights arises from our understanding of how God works in the world and our understanding of God's will for humankind. We believe that all human life has a sacred bond with God and that all people have a holy duty to live the will of God. To develop and grow into the persons God would have us be requires a social environment which provides security and protection for life and personal liberty.'

Faith into action

For many Quakers, a core principle is to try and live what we believe. Our work on human rights is rooted in the Quaker testimony to equality and to peace. These values underpin much of Quaker work.

Past

Quakers were instrumental in setting up Amnesty International. Using his contacts, experience and position, Quaker Eric Baker campaigned for the humane treatment of political prisoners. He wrote an article for *The Observer* entitled 'The Forgotten Prisoner' in 1961. This article called for 'the amnesty of all political prisoners' and began a campaign that resulted in the founding of Amnesty International in 1962.

Many Friends continue to be involved with Amnesty International, both as members and as volunteers.

By meeting with MPs, Quakers worked for the introduction of a Private Members' Bill to raise the age of recruitment into the armed forces to 18 years old. This bill was then used to press the UK government to ratify the optional protocol on the rights of the child in relation to armed conflict.

Present

The work of Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW), the department which works on behalf of Friends in Britain to translate faith into action, and Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), based in Geneva and New York, is focused at a variety of levels – from grassroots to global – on supporting the promotion and protection of human rights.

Human rights protection has been a core aspect of the work of QUNO since its inception in the 1920s. Current work focuses on: women in prison and children of imprisoned mothers; child soldiers; refugees and conscientious objectors.

QPSW programmes in Palestine and Israel, and in the post-Yugoslav countries, work on monitoring, reporting and opposing violations of human rights and international law. Ecumenical accompaniers, trained and supported by QPSW, travel to Israel–Palestine to provide a peaceful and supportive presence to both Israeli peace groups and Palestinian communities. They offer protection through nonviolent presence, advocacy and human rights monitoring.

Our Statement on Torture states that 'British Quakers are deeply concerned at the continued existence of torture and at recent attempts to justify it, in the context of the 'war on terror', by countries that would previously have condemned it.' Quaker Concern for the Abolition of Torture works to raise awareness and campaigns to end the use of torture.

In Britain, Quakers raise issues relating to the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers with their MPs. This includes highlighting how changes to legislation, and the rhetoric used in Parliament when debating these changes, impact upon refugees' day-to-day lives. We believe that we have a duty to challenge some of the bills that are brought before Parliament and pursue dialogue with MPs. Quakers have a long tradition of working in this way, which we call 'speaking truth to power'.

Crime & punishment

Quakers believe...

Our Quaker belief that there is that of God in everyone prompts us to see criminals as human beings with dignity and rights and to care for their welfare regardless of their crime. We believe no one is outside of God's love and that both justice and forgiveness are needed in dealing effectively with crime. In a world of increasing violence, we still believe in the Christian principle of overcoming evil with good.

This perspective has led Quakers to be at the forefront of penal reform, emphasising the need for rehabilitation rather than retribution in the criminal justice system. We believe that by working towards rehabilitation it is possible to heal not only those directly affected by the crime/offence but also to have a positive impact on the community.

Quakers oppose capital punishment. Our Statement on the Death Penalty states that 'private vengeance or judicial execution serves no purpose but to perpetuate... the trauma. Killing... as a judicial act, brutalises a society that kills.'

Faith into action

Putting their faith into practice, many Quakers work to support people in prison and their families, and are involved in working for change in the criminal justice system.

Too often, the needs of the victim tend to be ignored and the offender is punished without reference to the victim. Equally, no redress is made to right the wrong committed.

Quakers feel that 'punishment is useful only when it helps people to realise the hurt they are doing to [the] sense of worth in themselves and others.'

Past

Quaker George Fox was imprisoned under the Quaker Act of 1662, which made holding and attending Quaker meetings illegal. Following this experience, Fox identified the 'corrupting influence of prison life', whereby prisoners learn about a life of crime from other prisoners.

Another Quaker, Elizabeth Fry, is well known for her work on prison reform during the early 19th century, especially with imprisoned women and children, as depicted on the back of a five-pound note. As well as setting up a school for the children of prisoners, Fry also campaigned against capital punishment and against the deportation of prisoners to Australia.

Present

Quaker prison ministers work as part of multifaith chaplaincy teams to offer spiritual support and friendship to prisoners.

The Quaker Crime, Community & Justice Group is involved in supporting and working for restorative justice in the criminal justice system. Restorative justice is based on dialogue and negotiation, rather than the adversarial process of the criminal justice system. It respects the basic human needs of the victim, the offender and the community, and is based on the principle that victims desire recognition of the harm done. Restorative justice requires the offender to take responsibility for their crime and to make amends to the victim and the community.

Quakers also work to introduce the principles of restorative justice to schools, in the form of peer-mediation, conflict resolution and restorative conferencing. This work is aimed at prevention as well as resolution. The language used doesn't refer to victim and offender, but rather acknowledges that conflict can be more complicated and that no one is completely blameless or wholly responsible for the harm caused.

Racial & religious prejudice

Quakers believe...

Endeavouring to see that of God in everyone translates into a testimony to equality. We believe that our common humanity transcends our differences and leads us to work for a society where difference is respected and celebrated. We do not believe it is reasonable to expect assimilation or to ignore difference by claiming to treat everyone the same, as this denies the value of variety.

Quakers understand that prejudice can be caused by ignorance and fear. We work to teach tolerance and understanding so that all forms of prejudice are recognised and challenged.

We believe that a community which values the good in everyone and respects the diversity of faiths is essential for a peaceful and just society, where everyone can live without hostility. We assert that achieving such a society requires a long-term commitment by everyone, through the building of good relationships.

Faith into action

The Society of Friends was founded in Britain, by George Fox, during the turbulent mid 17th century. Quakers were seen as subversive and faced discrimination, ridicule and hostility and were imprisoned and persecuted for their beliefs. They published a peace testimony, knowing that there can be no peace without justice and equality for all.

Our experiences have reinforced our belief in the importance of religious freedom, the freedom to worship without state interference and the freedom to form and express one's own beliefs. We consider hastily crafted legislation and short-term measures devised to prevent extremism to be not only unhelpful but also counterproductive. Such legislation frequently risks alienating and radicalising those we need to reach out to.

Past

The problems of racism and religious discrimination are not new. Quakers have been involved with demands for reforms and justice over the past 280 years. For Quakers, the subject was first discussed with regard to slavery in 1727. London Yearly Meeting (Quakers in Britain) stated:

It is the sense of this meeting, that the importing of negroes from their native country and relations by Friends, is not a commendable nor allowed practice, and is therefore censured by this meeting.

In the years that followed, Quakers were instrumental in ending the slave trade in Britain.

Quakers also recognised that 'the roots of racial prejudice lie deep within us, and in seeking a solution to the evil results of racial tensions we need to search our own hearts.' (Yearly Meeting, 1952).

In 1988 Meeting for Sufferings, a nationwide Quaker committee, made a Statement of Intent on Racism. In this they stated:

...there is incontrovertible evidence that people who belong to ethnic minority groups... are subject to a variety of disadvantages. In addition to discrimination... our fellow citizens are often subjected to abuse, harassment and violence. The Religious Society of Friends has a duty to play its part in ending these abuses.

In 1992 they set up a working group to explore racism in the Quaker Society in Britain – Britain Yearly Meeting. Searching our own hearts, a video and study guide, was produced in 1997 for use by meetings to provoke discussion and deepen awareness among Friends.

Some Quakers regularly played a part in local initiatives such as a series of multifaith public vigils and the nonviolent escorting of people going to vote in an East London local government by-election.

Present

Quakers continue working to create and maintain a society which lives at peace, promotes harmony, values difference and nurtures each individual.

We are aware that global migration brings with it major challenges, which are not likely to ease in the near future. Many who arrive in Britain face uncertainty, isolation, separation from family, loss of familiar ways of living and, frequently, poverty.

Quakers wish to embrace the diversity that immigration brings and see it as a gift, not a problem. We wish to support the receiving communities, often themselves under strain, and to encourage local Quakers to welcome and nurture those who arrive here, to meet that of God in them and to enable them to live fulfilling lives.

In March 2008, Northern Friends Peace Board held a conference on 'Building Peace – Tackling Racism'. Although academic in focus, a study guide with DVD is planned, looking at more practical skills such as responding to casual racism at work and the need to tackle racism nonviolently. To find out more, visit the website: http://nfpb.gn.apc.org

The environment

Quakers believe...

We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. Show a loving consideration for all creatures and seek to maintain the beauty and variety of the world. Work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life.

Advices & queries 42

Compassion and a sense of that of God in the other point to a path of nonviolence towards other people, other species and the earth. We seek to understand and reduce the real and potential harm caused by our lives and actions. This means moving to a way of life that does not cause ecological damage or depend on violence to secure resources.

Faith into action

Simplicity is a component of the Quaker testimonies, and is connected to sufficiency: knowing how much is enough. Quakers try to live simply, by resisting the urge to buy what we do not need and by avoiding the clatter of fashion and consumerism, and by focusing on what matters. This means keeping ourselves informed of the effect our lifestyle has on the environment and the global economy, as well as reminding ourselves that we do not need very much in material terms.

Past

Quaker witness to sustainability and the environment has deep roots. During the 17th century, Friends wrote of their concern for the human relationship with the earth and all its inhabitants. In the 18th century, John Woolman wore undyed clothes, partly because of his concern for the environmental damage caused by the dyeing process.

He expressed his concern for the soil and animal husbandry of the time, noting that:

...landlords... by too much tilling, so robbed the earth of its natural fatness that the produce thereof hath grown light.

John Woolman was also conscious of the duty that one generation had to the next, in how they cared for the natural resources of the earth. He noted in early writings that:

The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.

Since the 1920s, British Friends have produced many minutes and epistles of their annual meeting, highlighting the urgent need for action to halt ecological decline and declaring a sense of unity with all creation.

This is a rapidly developing area of Quaker testimony and one which prompts us to question assumptions we have always taken for granted; the needs of the earth can sometimes seem at odds with our own needs.

Present

Many Quakers are making individual decisions regarding the impact of their own lifestyles on the environment. Several Quaker meetings have run 'EcoTeams' sessions, looking at issues such as household waste, recycling, energy and water use, and travel. They found that participating Quakers had waste production levels of approximately one quarter of the UK average.

The Living Witness Project aims to support the development of Quaker corporate witness to sustainable living, and explore ways of taking it to the wider community in Britain and elsewhere, via a growing and vibrant network of Quaker meetings. The project explores corporate witness through study groups and practical activities. They produce resources for individuals and meetings. More information can be found on their website: www.livingwitness.org.uk

QPSW has done some exploratory work on the concept of human security: examining the links between environmental degradation, economic injustice and violent conflict. We believe that human security differs from the prevailing global security model in that it puts safeguarding people, rather than territory, at the centre of security concerns.

QPSW also carries out research on the ethical policies and practices of multinational corporations, on behalf of their partner organisation, the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility. An example of this is the recently published report Water Sustainability: Meeting the Challenge, a comparative analysis of water consumption in the food processing and beverage industries. Information on this and other such projects can be found on the website: www.eccr.org.uk

Want to know more?

Quakers are formally known as the Religious Society of Friends and hence often refer to each other as 'Friends'. The public more commonly refer to them as Quakers.

The information in this booklet refers specifically to the beliefs of Quakers in Britain and the work done by and on behalf of them. Quakers around the world

vary in how they worship and in their theology, though the testimonies are lived out in the lives of Quakers everywhere.

To find out more about the centrally managed work of Quakers in Britain, check out our website: www.quaker.org.uk

For information on our work for peace and justice check out: www.quaker.org. uk/qpsw

For information on Quakers as a religious and spiritual movement have a look at: www.quaker.org.uk/different

This booklet has been written specifically for use by secondary schools and pupils, but will be of interest to anyone wanting to know more about how Quakers translate faith into practice.

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Quaker Peace & Social Witness



Faith into action on behalf of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain

Economic Justice

OPSW's Economic Justice work seeks to promote a fairer and more equitable international economic system that meets the needs of all. We work to influence the policies of governments, companies and international economic institutions and to encourage greater popular understanding of these issues.

Multinational corporations have a huge impact on the lifestyles, livelihoods and environment of people all over the world. Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) challenges the practices of multinational corporations to ensure this impact is positive.



A community in the Philippines says 'No' to mining that threatens their food security

With its partner, the Ecumenical Council for

Corporate Responsibility (ECCR), QPSW carries out research on the ethical policies and practices of a number of corporations in which the churches have investments. ECCR encourages its members to use this information to enter into dialogue with multinational companies and exert pressure on them to improve their practices in areas of concern.

ECCR's latest report 'Vulnerable migrant workers: the responsibility of business' considers the vulnerable position of many migrant workers employed in the UK and Ireland and offers a comparative analysis of the extent to which nine food production, manufacture and retail (supermarket) companies address this vulnerability.

Ethical Trade

Under the auspices of the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), QPSW works with British high street retailers and trade unions to improve the working conditions of the workers, who manufacture the goods that we buy. The highly competitive and dynamic nature of modern retailing means that many retailers now have complex, multi-layered supply chains.

The tripartite nature of the ETI brings together different perspectives and experiences and NGO participation in the initiative is an important way to hold companies to account; to ensure that they are fulfilling their commitments and to challenge them to go further.

Our Witness

The belief that justice in our economic system is a necessary condition for peace is informed by Quaker testimonies to simplicity, truth and equality. Quakers try to avoid unnecessary consumption and advocate living simply in the belief that economic opportunity and advancement should benefit the whole community.

Some Quakers act from within the established economic system and others work for radical change of the system itself.

"Economics is presented as though it has unchanging laws, but it is a human creation.

As Quakers we must believe that we can make a difference. Where do we start? We can encourage each other not just to doubt the conventional but to know where differences have been made."

Tony Weekes, Ferguson Fellow at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

Supporting action for economic justice

QPSW supports Friends advocating greater international economic justice.

Through our membership of the Trade Justice Movement and the Jubilee Debt Campaign we provide resources and information to help Friends to get involved in campaigning for trade justice and debt relief.

As a Fairtrade Churches Stakeholder we encourage Friends and meetings to support Fairtrade and take action in Fairtrade Fortnight.



We are a part of Stand Up and Take Action Against Poverty – an annual global event in mid-October in which millions of people take action to demonstrate their support for the fight against poverty – and can provide support and resources for Friends to take part.

The Economic Issues programme is also currently considering ways in which to support Friends, who are, or are interested in, supporting migrant workers in their local communities.

Keeping informed

QPSW is committed to keeping Quakers informed of important international economic issues and supporting those campaigning for economic justice.

We have a range of educational resources to help Quakers and others gain a better understanding of issues such as trade and debt.

These include a regular newsletter *Better World Economics* and an introductory briefing pack on economic issues and institutions and campaigning materials such as postcards and posters.

We can provide speakers for Meetings who wish to learn more about the Economic Issues programme.

A large print version of this resource is available from qpsw@quaker.org.uk or call 020 7663 1158

Quaker Peace & Social Witness works with, and on behalf of, the Religious Society of Friends in Britain to translate our faith into action. As Quakers we are impelled by our faith to make our lives an active witness for peace and justice. Our historic testimonies to equality, justice, peace, simplicity and truth challenge us to alleviate suffering and seek positive social change.

This work is overseen by QPSW's Economic Issues Group, which sets policy and determines priorities.

Get involved

Visit

www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw to see the full range of our resources and materials for campaigning.

Ask to receive our introductory guide to international economic issues and institutions

Subscribe to the *Better World Economics* newsletter.

Read Responding to
Climate Change – a
briefing to help Friends
learn more about, reflect
and take action on climate
change.

Ask about the latest economic justice campaigning opportunities.

Support this work with a donation.

Ask about a speaker for your Meeting.

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Fourfold blessing

May God bless me with discomfort – at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that I may live from deep within my heart.

May God bless me with anger – at injustice, oppression and the exploitation of people, so that I may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless me with tears to shed for those who suffer from rejection, starvation and war, so that I may reach out to comfort them and turn their pain to joy.

May God bless me with enough foolishness to believe that I can make a difference in this world, so that I can do what others claim cannot be done.

adapted from a traditional Franciscan blessing

The Sacred in the Everyday

Exploring the Ouaker understanding that all times, places and people can be sacred and how this affects our everyday lives.



This unit invites you to find out more about the Quaker approach to sacredness and living 'in the light'. Quakers believe that all of life is sacred and that we can be in touch with the Divine in any time or place without the need for external sacraments. This leads Friends to see our faith as an integral part of everyday life and not just something we do on Sundays.

The Sacred in the Everyday unit aims

This unit aims to help you:

- explore the Quaker understanding of the sacramental nature of life
- find out how Quakers try to live in the light of this understanding
- reflect on your own experience of sacredness in everyday life

Overview

Early Friends had a clear understanding that this moment, now, is 'God's time' and that the whole of life is sacramental. This means actively looking for the sacred in every person, place and time, and living 'in the power of God', as George Fox put it.

This approach led to the development of a Quaker testimony about sacraments: since we are living 'heaven on earth' now, we do not need outward forms and symbols of our connectedness with God, but can experience this oneness at any time, without the special intervention of a sacramental ritual or priest. Rather than abolishing sacraments, Quakers claim that all is sacrament. As one early 20th century Friend said,

It is a bold and colossal claim ... that the whole of life is sacramental, that there are innumerable 'means of grace' by which God is revealed and communicated...

Quaker faith & practice 27.43

Can we live up to this claim by honouring the sacred dimension of all that we experience?

Seeing all times as sacred also led to a testimony among Friends of refusing to celebrate special 'times and seasons' such as Christmas, since every day could be experienced as Christmas (*Quaker faith & practice* 27.42). Many modern British Quakers, however, are less strict about this; it is not unusual to see Christmas trees and Easter eggs in Quaker homes, and many Friends experience a deep connection with the sacred in nature and the turning of the seasons. The fundamental idea of finding the sacred in all the ordinary experiences of life, however, and of being one with God in the present moment, is still central to the Quaker faith.

This insight of Quakerism is not a notion but a way. We are called to live out our faith in the challenges and joys of our everyday lives, in our daily decisions and relationships. It means that we have to pay attention to the apparently unimportant details as well as the big things; it means being the change we want to see in the world. So our lives 'speak' on our behalf about what really matters (*Advices & queries* 27 in *Quaker faith & practice* 1.02), whether it is in our decisions about what to buy, where to shop, how to spend and save our money or what job we do and how we conduct our relationships.

In order to embody this approach to the best of our ability, we must use careful discernment about the choices in our lives. Discernment has been described as 'seeking a graced awareness of how we are to respond to God's invitation

in a concrete situation,'* and Quakers try to make this an ongoing discipline. For some Friends this will form part of a regular spiritual practice, or informal conversations with friends and family, but there are also specific Quaker methods which have been developed over the years to help with discernment about life's bigger decisions: these include meetings for clearness and threshing meetings (see Distinctives 3).

In our demanding 21st-century lives, it is as important as ever to take time to connect with the sacredness of life, to experience our oneness with all that is, and to hear the invitation from God to live faithful lives. Taking time for 'inward stillness' (*Advices & queries 3* in *Quaker faith & practice* 1.02) or developing our own spiritual discipline, prayer or meditation practice is an essential part of living with an awareness of 'the spirit of God at work in the ordinary activities and experience of...daily life.' (*Advices & queries 7* in *Quaker faith & practice* 1.02).

^{*} Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the Well; feminist perspectives on spiritual direction,* SPCK Publishing 1989, page 123. Reproduced by permission of SPCK publishing.

Quaker distinctives

Distinctives 1

The sacramental nature of life

The following sections of *Quaker faith & practice* give an overview of the Quaker understanding that all of life is sacred:

- inward life of the spirit: *Qf&p* 27.37
- centrality of ordinary experience: *Qf&p* 27.38
- the whole of life as sacramental: *Qf&p* 27.39
- 'a bold claim': Qf&p 27.43

You could also read the following extracts, which explore the Quaker approach to specific sacraments such as baptism and communion:

- baptism: *Qf&p* 27.40
- eucharist: *Qf&p* 27.41 and 26.15
- a sacramental meal: *Qf&p* 10.08

Distinctives 2

How does being a Quaker affect everyday life?

The following extracts from *Quaker faith & practice* talk about the effect that our Quaker faith can have on our everyday lives and behaviour:

- it's about the whole of our humanity: *Qf&p* 20.20
- impact of our choices on people and the earth: *Qf&p* 25.11
- coping with everyday conflict: *Qf&p* 20.69
- the much loved story of William Penn's sword: *Qf&p* 19.47
- young Friends on our use of money: Qf&p 20.57
- tobacco and alcohol: *Qf&p* 20.40

For more about living faithfully according to our testimonies, see the Faith in Action unit.

Distinctives 3

Choices and discernment

Quakers try to make choices that reflect our understanding of the sacredness of life. To do this we must exercise discernment, both individually and as a community.

'Live adventurously'. You could read *Advices & queries* 17 (in *Quaker faith & practice* 1.02) which guides Quakers in everyday discernment.

Quaker faith & practice also gives guidance about specific Quaker discernment and support methods:

- Meetings for clearness: *Qf&p* 12.22–12.25
- Threshing meetings: *Qf&p* 12.26
- Support groups: *Qf&p* 12.27
- Guidance if you have a particular concern: *Qf&p* 13.08 (and for more about 'concerns', see the Faith in Action unit)

Distinctives 4

The confident Quaker voice

Speaking of our faith in everyday situations can be an important part of witnessing to the sacred aspect of life. This could be at work, with friends, or through 'outreach' activities such as Quaker Quest meetings or Quaker Week activities. You could:

- explore the websites of Quaker Quest: www.quakerquest.org or Quaker Week: www.quakerweek.org.uk
- read extracts about 'Coming Out as a Quaker' at work (you'll find these extracts on page 190)
- read Thomas Ellwood's account from 1659 of telling his friends he was a Quaker in *Qf&p* 19.16

Distinctives 5

Everyday spiritual practice

Quakers have found that making time each day for stillness or spiritual practice helps us become more deeply aware of the sacramental nature of life. The following extracts from *Quaker faith & practice* speak of this understanding:

• An exercise of the spirit: *Qf&p* 20.08

• love can break through: *Qf&p* 20.09

• love silence: *Qf&p* 20.11

• I had given up: *Qf&p* 20.12

For more on everyday spiritual practice, see the Deepening activities in this unit.

Discovery 1

Discussion about Quaker approaches to everyday choices

You could consider the introductory questions below, then go to the Sacred in the Everyday unit forum and post your own thoughts on the issues raised. You might like to comment on other posts on this forum too.

Alternatively, you could discuss the forum's introductory questions with your Becoming Friends companion, or others in your meeting.

Introductory questions:

- What aspects of your everyday life might Quakerism affect, for example shopping choices, use of money and resources, relationships, holidays and travel?
- How do you live as a Quaker?

Discovery 2

Exploring Quaker discernment methods

To find out more about Quaker discernment methods, you might like to ask your Becoming Friends companion to arrange for you to talk to a Friend in your local or area meeting who has experience of any of these:

- a Quaker support group
- a meeting for clearness
- a threshing meeting
- the Experiment with Light practice
- informal help with discernment

You could ask the Friend what was involved and whether they found it helpful in making a choice in their life.

How have local Friends spoken with a confident Quaker voice?

You could ask your Becoming Friends companion or an overseer in your meeting to discuss with you the approach to outreach in your local or area meeting.

- How have Friends communicated about themselves locally? Have they held special outreach activities such as Quaker Quest or Quaker Week?
- If so, what were the challenges or joys? If not, what are the reasons?

Or you could ask your Becoming Friends companion to talk to you about a time in their own life when they have talked about their faith or taken a stand as a result of it.

• What was this experience like? Did your companion feel 'led' to speak or take this action?

Discovery 4

How are you different since coming to Quaker meeting?

This question might be the focus for a small group session, to explore the effect of their Quaker faith on the lives of local Friends. You could ask your Becoming Friends companion or an elder in your meeting to help you set up this group, or you may simply prefer to discuss the question with your Becoming Friends companion.

You or your companion can share the question with the group as a starting point for reflection (it might be helpful to write or print out copies of the question):

How are you different since coming to Quaker meeting/becoming a Quaker?

After people have had a brief opportunity for personal reflection on the question, spend some time in worship-sharing mode as a group, sharing with one another any responses, insights, experiences or challenges relating to the questions.

Guidance for worship sharing is found in Appendix 2 – Guidance on pages 283–284.

How do you experience the Spirit in the everyday?

You could ask your Becoming Friends companion (or another Friend in your meeting) to discuss with you their experience of the Spirit in the everyday.

Are there aspects of this experience that they find challenging, or welcome?

You could also discuss this question by making a post on a Quaker discussion forum:

- the Britain Yearly Meeting forum at: www.quakerweb.org.uk/forum
- www.friendlink.org.uk (aimed mainly at young Quakers)
- the Sacred in the Everyday unit forum

Deepening 1

Drawing on practices from other spiritual traditions

You might like to spend time reflecting on *Advices & queries* 3 (in section 1.02 of *Quaker faith & practice*), which focuses on stillness and spiritual practice.

Many Friends find their spiritual life enriched by drawing on practices from other spiritual traditions.

- You might like to try one of the spiritual practices in Appendix 1 Spiritual Practices (page 265).
- You could explore other possibilities talk to Friends about what they have found helpful.

Deepening 2

Looking for the sacred by reviewing the day

It can be helpful to develop a deliberate habit of reviewing the day or week just gone to find points of growth, and times when we have been particularly aware of the sacred or the work of the Spirit in our life.

The 'review of the day' is a practice which gives us a structure for doing this: see Appendix 1 – Spiritual Practices (page 269).

You could also reflect on this experience with your Becoming Friends companion when you next meet.

Deepening 3

Responding creatively to the sacredness of life

We often experience the sacredness of life through our senses. You can read a reflection on this in *Quaker faith & practice* 21.24.

If you would like to take some time to reflect deeply on your own response to the sacredness of life, you could:

- respond by drawing, painting, or using another creative method
- respond in music, song or movement
- respond in writing
- go online and blog about your response
- discuss your response on a Quaker discussion forum:
 - > the Britain Yearly Meeting forum at: www.quakerweb.org.uk/forum
 - www.friendlink.org.uk (aimed mainly at young Quakers)
 - > the Sacred in the Everyday unit forum
- share some of your reflections with your Becoming Friends companion when you next meet.

Mindfulness as a way to awareness of the sacred

Mindfulness practices have formed part of monastic traditions in East and West, and many Quakers find them very helpful in developing a deeper awareness of the sacramental nature of life. There are extracts about mindfulness by writers from both traditions on pages 191–193.

- You could read these and reflect on how you could become more mindful in your everyday life.
- You can also find guidance on mindfulness practices such as 'walking' or 'working' meditations online at:
 - www.plumvillage.org/practice.html
 - www.youtube.com try searching for 'Walking meditation with Thich Naht Hanh' or 'We Live Love Mindfully', also from Thich Naht Hanh's Plum Village community
- You could try eating a meal or doing a household chore mindfully.

You may wish to reflect on how you have got on with this exercise at a future meeting with your Becoming Friends companion.

Reflecting with Your Becoming Friends companion

You might like to spend time with your Becoming Friends companion reflecting on your response to any of the following questions:

- How am I living differently since first walking into a Quaker meeting?
- Has my interest in Quakerism brought me into any interesting conversations, experiences or conflict with people?
- How do I live my life? How do I know the right course to take?

Alternatively, you might like to make a post in response to any of these questions on the Sacred in the Everyday unit forum.

Further exploration

If you would like to explore the subject of the sacred in the everyday further, here are some suggestions for reading, listening or viewing.

Advices & queries 1–7 and 21–30 (in *Quaker faith & practice* 1.02).

A faith to call our own: Quaker tradition in the light of contemporary movements of the *Spirit*, Alex Wildwood, Quaker Home Service, 1999 (Swarthmore Lecture).

A light that is shining: an introduction to the Quakers, Harvey Gillman, Quaker Books, 2003.

Light to live by, Rex Ambler, Quaker Books, 2002 (about 'Experiment with Light')

Listening spirituality 1: personal spiritual practices among Friends, Patricia Loring, Openings Press, 1997.

New light: 12 Quaker voices, edited by Jennifer Kavanagh, O Books, 2008. Individual themes such as *Twelve Quakers and Worship, Twelve Quakers and Simplicity* also available in the *Twelve Quakers and...* series, Quaker Quest 2004–2007.

Quaker identity and the heart of our faith, Quaker Life Study Materials, Quaker Life, 2008. Includes 'Nurturing the spiritual life' by Deborah Rowlands (page 64). Available online at www.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/Faith-and-practice-proceeding.pdf or in hard copy by contacting Quaker Life on 020 7663 1140 or email: ql@quaker.org.uk

Women at the well: feminist perspectives on spiritual direction, Kathleen Fischer, SPCK Publishing, 1989.

Woodbrooke's website or brochure for details of courses about discernment, spiritual practice and living faithful lives: www.woodbrooke.org.uk

Many of these titles are available from the Quaker Centre bookshop:

Friends House 173 Euston Road London NW1 2BJ

Tel: 020 7663 1030 Fax: 020 7663 1001

Website: www.quaker.org.uk/bookshop Email: quakercentre@quaker.org.uk

Many of them will also be in your local meeting house library. You could ask your Becoming Friends companion to help you track down titles that interest you.

Closing activity

As you finish your exploration of the Quaker understanding of the sacred in the everyday, you are invited to reflect on what you have gained through this unit, how your understanding of both yourself and Quakerism has changed, and what areas you would like to explore further.

This closing reflection can be a very good opportunity for sharing with your Becoming Friends companion, or you may prefer to write in a journal or book of spiritual discipline (there's guidance for journalling in Appendix 2 – Guidance on page 282), or to reflect using creative methods such as drawing, collage, model-making or working with materials such as textiles or wood.

You may like to use one or more of the following questions as a focus for your reflection:

- What have you gained from your work on this unit, whether as a result of positive or more challenging experiences?
- In what ways has your understanding changed as a result of your work on this unit?
- Are there areas that you would like to explore further either as part of your own spiritual journey or relating to Quakerism?
- Has anything arisen that you would find it helpful to reflect on with your Becoming Friends companion?



Coming out as a Quaker

Friend 1

I work in a Day Care setting and it seemed really important to me to come out straight away to my colleagues because we work so closely together.

No-one really knew much about Quakers but they did ask, at first as a kind of joke and later more seriously, about what it meant. I don't go on about it but if anyone asks me what I am doing on a particular weekend and it happens to be Quaker activity then I always tell them. They are used to it now.

We also have a Jehovah's Witness among the staff and one or two who are interested in Buddhism and being open about my faith life means that conversations about these things are possible.

I feel happy about being able to say 'I am a Quaker' and so I say it whenever the occasion arises.

Friend 2

'Coming out' has been an important activity for those of us who don't fit into the general assumption that everyone is, or would like to be, heterosexual. For me it has been about naming and accepting a truth about who I am, and then facing up to telling people that I just don't fit a particular image. It goes against the grain of the prevailing culture in society. It's about correcting people's false assumptions and expectations about me; perhaps most painfully, when they are trying to be kind and welcoming.

When I started attending Quaker Meeting seriously, I realised that I would have to start coming out all over again, but that this time I had to come out to my rational, sceptical friends as a Quaker. In many ways, this second process has been just as hard as coming out as a lesbian. Being Quaker goes against the grain in so many ways today, just as it has always done. It goes against the grain of the anti-religious, rational-scientific approach to life. It goes against the grain of religion based on rules, creeds and dogma. It goes against the grain of a life based on appearances and a primary focus on personal pleasure-seeking. There's a well-loved story of a 17th-century Quaker who started wearing plain clothes and refusing to take part in the elaborate and meaningless social rituals of his friends: eventually the truth dawned on them that he had become a Quaker. The testimonies we hold to may not be quite so visible for our generation, and they challenge us to speak up and 'come out' against false assumptions. In what ways will you be 'coming out'?

Extract for Deepening 4: Mindfulness as a way to awareness of the sacred

Extracts on mindfulness

Walking

I leave the bedroom...I begin walking through my house. I will traverse it many times today like a creature covering her turf. It is a journey that zigzags and returns upon itself... a circumambulation...a re-remembering of 'place.' I know this is the way many ancients prayed – circling a holy site to deepen their devotion. I wonder if animals offer their speechless prayers to You by scudding over their well-known ground? My foot rises. Before it falls there is a tiny moment when neither of my feet are really carrying weight – a suspension, a moment of physical trust. Something in me knows that the ground will still be there. Let me return to this innate knowledge – this ancient confidence. The floor in this house is wood...wide, old boards. When I walk I am walking on the wood and in the woods. I am walking on the life of these trees. They have been cut and planed...offered up for this sheltering. Let me remember to offer myself to be shelter for something in Your world. My foot falls. The ground rises to meet it. A holy, ordinary moment is repeating itself. All the time I am meeting and being met like this. Your whole creation is ground. Help me to remember that in this mutuality we can become home for each other. You are asking us slowly to become Your holy site.

Gunilla Norris

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Tangerine Meditation

If I offer you a freshly picked tangerine to enjoy, I think the degree to which you enjoy it will depend on your mindfulness. If you are free of worries and anxiety, you will enjoy it more. If you are possessed by anger and fear, the tangerine may not be very real to you.

One day, I offered a number of children a basket filled with tangerines. The basket was passed around, and each child took one tangerine and put it in his or her palm. We each looked at our tangerine, and the children were invited to meditate on its origins. They saw not only their tangerine, but also its mother, the tangerine tree. With some guidance, they began to visualize the blossoms in the sunshine and in the rain. Then they saw petals falling down and the tiny green fruit appear. The sunshine and the rain continued, and the tiny tangerine grew. Now someone has picked it, and the tangerine is here. After seeing this, each child was invited to peel the tangerine slowly, noticing the mist and the fragrance of the tangerine, and then bring it up to his or her mouth and have a mindful bite, in full awareness of the texture and taste of the fruit and the juice coming out. We ate slowly like that.

Each time you look at a tangerine, you can see deeply into it. You can see everything in the universe in one tangerine. When you peel it and smell it, it's wonderful. You can take your time eating a tangerine and be very happy.

Washing Dishes

To my mind, the idea that doing dishes is unpleasant can occur only when you aren't doing them. Once you are standing in front of the sink with your sleeves rolled up and your hands in the warm water, it is really quite pleasant. I enjoy taking my time with each dish, being fully aware of the dish, the water, and each movement of my hands. I know that if I hurry in order to eat dessert sooner, the time of washing dishes will be unpleasant and not worth living. That would be a pity, for each minute, each second of life is a miracle. The dishes themselves and the fact that I am here washing them are miracles!

If I am incapable of washing dishes joyfully, if I want to finish them quickly so I can go and have dessert, I will be equally incapable of enjoying my dessert. With the fork in my hand, I will be thinking about what to do next, and the texture and the flavor of the dessert, together with the pleasure of eating it, will be lost. I will always be dragged into the future, never able to live in the present moment.

Each thought, each action in the sunlight of awareness becomes sacred. In this light, no boundary exists between the sacred and the profane. I must confess it takes me a bit longer to do the dishes, but I live fully in every moment, and I am happy. Washing the dishes is at the same time a means and an end – that is, not only do we do the dishes in order to have clean dishes, we also do the dishes just to do the dishes, to live fully in each moment while washing them.

Thich Nhat Hanh

^{*} from *Peace is Every Step: the Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* by Thich Nhat Hanh, published by Rider. Reprinted by permission of The Random House Group Ltd.

Taking Out the Trash

The trash bin is overflowing under the sink. It's time to feed the big outdoor garbage can again. How quickly it happens...how astonishing that every week my bins are full to the brim with the wastes of my daily existence. Here I am dumping everything from carrot peelings to junk mail. What a mess I make! I try to remember that You planned waste as an essential part of life. It, too, is holy. I want to keep in mind the pine tree by the front door and how it keeps dropping its numberless needles - a tall and humble prayer. I want to shed my waste with quiet reverence like the pine. I want somehow to have a conscience, a responsibility, for what it means personally, socially, and ecologically to have this much trash EVERY WEEK. Help me to stop this hurry to get my psychological and actual trash out of sight and out of mind and learn instead. This task is a kind of surrender... surrender to the knowledge that by being alive and human I do make a human mess as a pine tree makes its kind of mess. Let me surrender any fake and pristine sense of not affecting my fellow beings and my environment with my waste. Let me own my part of the landfill... the one outside of town with the bulldozer and the psychological one we all share. Keep me mindful of what I take into my home, the items bought to substitute for real living – the food and drink I consume instead of examining my feelings. Help me slowly to surrender all excess.

Gunilla Norris

Excerpts from *Being Home: Discovering the Spiritual in the Everyday*, by Gunilla Norris, Copyright © 1991, 2001 by Gunilla Norris. Paulist Press, Inc., New York/Mahwah, NJ. Reprinted by permission of Paulist Press, Inc. www.paulistpress.com

Silence and Waiting

Exploring the Quaker experience of worship, silent waiting and spoken ministry.



This unit invites you to explore the Quaker experience of worship, silent waiting and spoken ministry. Our shared worship is the foundation of our experience of life as a spiritual community. We may well worship or hold silence alone but we believe that in worshipping together we are opening ourselves to a more powerful experience. We are a mixed gathering, people with disparate backgrounds, and we are at many different places on our inward journey; however, all Friends would experience worship as a core element in their spiritual practice.



Silence and Waiting unit aims

This unit aims to help you:

- become more familiar with the Quaker practice of worship and silent waiting
- find out how other Friends experience worship and ministry
- reflect on your own understanding of and relationship to silence and worship

Overview

The fundamental shared experience of the Quaker way is the silent meeting for worship. We seek a communal gathered stillness, where we can be open to inspiration, to God's presence, and to finding peace of mind and a renewed sense of purpose for living. Quaker worship is spontaneous and flexible in its freedom from credal structure and liturgy. It is unique as an exercise in silent corporate contemplation that draws individual worshippers into a depth of unity, while they remain fully themselves.

People arrive at a meeting as separate individuals with their own particular joys and anxieties, and the group begins to 'gather'. Those present settle quietly and begin 'waiting on God' together, becoming open to one another at a deep level. This may happen quickly, or it may take most of the hour.

The silence is different from that experienced in solitary meditation. The listening and waiting in a Friends meeting is a communal experience of shared seeking of the Divine.

Silence is valued by Quakers because it allows us for a while to be aware of the inner and deeper meaning of our individual and shared lives and creates a space in which we can begin to sense the Divine within us. We are able to begin to accept ourselves as we are and to find some release from fear, anxiety, emotional confusion and selfishness. The silence is more than an absence of sound: one can be aware on one level of external sounds but these sounds are not distractions. They are absorbed, often unconsciously, as people try to be open to that of God within them.

Worship is the response of the human spirit to the presence of the divine and eternal, to the God who first seeks us. The sense of wonder and awe of the finite before the infinite leads naturally to thanksgiving and adoration.

Quaker faith & practice 2.01

For some Friends this quotation fully expresses their understanding of worship while for others its emphasis upon a 'God who first seeks us' may be challenging. For many Friends worship is a strong guiding force in their lives as it enables them to experience a sense of connectedness with the Divine. For others a profound sense of the healing and unifying power of silence is central to their understanding of what we are doing when we meet together to silently wait. For most Quakers, this diversity of experience is to be celebrated.

Early Friends spoke of the leadings of the Divine Light that 'shows us our darkness and brings us to new life' (*Advices & queries* 1 in *Quaker faith & practice* 1.02). This power of the Light to change our lives is enormous, and a vital part of the Quaker experience of silent worship. Both for early Friends and many contemporary

Friends the importance of worship as a time for discerning and understanding how we respond to the choices and dilemmas of life is central:

Wait to feel the light of life where the light begins to lead, do thou there begin to follow.

Isaac Pennington, Works vol 11

Our silent waiting has a liberating quality. It is an active experience in which we become more present. Our silent waiting may open us to leadings of the Spirit.

Out of the silence may arise words, if Friends feel led to offer spoken ministry, but some meetings for worship remain completely silent: spoken words in meeting aim to express aloud what is already present in the silence.

Such words as these have at least as much power as silence to gather into stillness.

Caroline E. Stephen, Quaker faith & practice 2.39

Anyone may feel the call to speak, adult or child, Friend or first time visitor. There is a wide variety of sources of spoken ministry and the acceptance of them is an important part of Quaker worship. Since the Society is part of the Christian tradition, people may speak of the life and teaching of Jesus. They may use words from other sources or refer to events in daily life. Because ministry may arise from personal experience and insights there will be different approaches.

A fundamental part of the Quaker discipline of silent waiting and listening is to try to 'receive the vocal ministry of others in a tender and creative spirit,' reaching for the 'meaning deep within it' (*Advices & queries* 12 in *Quaker faith & practice* 1.02), rather than listening with our normal critical ear. Sometimes these words of ministry may speak directly to our heart, at others they may not seem relevant to us, but those words may be a vital source of comfort, challenge or inspiration to others.

The hope is that by the close of the meeting, all will feel united through our experience of silent waiting together, and be aware that we have come close to the Divine, whatever our understanding of it.

Quaker distinctives

Distinctives 1

The nature of Quaker worship

Chapter 2 of *Quaker faith & practice* speaks about Quaker worship. You might like to read the following selection of extracts:

- a giving and receiving: *Qf&p* 2.11
- response to a vision of greatness: *Qf&p* 2.07
- communing with the divine: *Qf&p* 2.08
- inspired by God: *Qf&p* 2.09
- all one life: *Qf&p* 2.36
- corporate waiting and listening: *Qf&p* 2.37

You could also read the guidance of *Advices & queries* about meeting for worship. If you prefer to listen to *Advices & queries*, there are mp3 audio files available in this unit of the online Becoming Friends course. The sections are as follows:

- A&q 1–7: the inner life
- A&q 8-13: meeting for worship

Distinctives 2

Why silence?

The following sections of *Quaker faith & practice* reflect on what it is that Quakers value about silence:

- silence active and redemptive: *Qf&p* 2.12
- nourishment and refreshment: *Qf&p* 2.13
- prayerful expectancy: Qf&p 2.14
- an intensified pause: *Qf&p* 2.16
- silence sets you free: *Qf&p* 2.17

You might like to take one extract at a time and really allow space and time to reflect deeply on it.

Distinctives 3

Friends' experiences of meeting for worship

Friends might speak of the movement or development of the silence that happens in a meeting for worship; the quality of silence can be felt to change and deepen throughout the worship. Our waiting becomes more active and we become more present as the silence deepens.

You might like to

- read extracts about Quakers' experiences of meeting for worship, which are on pages 211–215
- or listen to the audio clips about experiences of meeting for worship on the Becoming Friends online course

Distinctives 4

The 'gathered' meeting

You could watch the video 'An introduction to Quakers' made by Friends at Watford Quaker Meeting, which includes discussion about Friends' experiences of meeting for worship and the idea of a 'gathered' meeting. You can access the video in a number of different ways:

- online at
 - www.watfordquakers.org.uk/videos.html
 - www.quakerweek.org.uk/intro/quaker-worship
 - www.youtube.com as 'Introduction to Quakers'
- on the DVD *An introduction to Watford Quakers*, available from the Quaker Centre bookshop (see Further exploration for contact details).

You can also read about the 'gathered' meeting in *Quaker faith & practice* 2.38, 2.39 and 2.47.

You might like to discuss with your Becoming Friends companion the idea of a 'gathered' or 'covered' meeting and their experience of it.

Distinctives 5

Spoken ministry in meeting for worship

Sections 2.55–2.73 in *Quaker faith & practice* reflect on spoken ministry in meeting for worship. Here is a selection of extracts you might read:

- guidance about true ministry being led by the Spirit: *Qf&p* 2.60
- George Fox on spoken ministry: *Qf&p* 2.73
- ministry is what is on one's soul: *Qf&p* 2.66
- the experience of finding oneself moved to minister: *Qf&p* 2.58
- hearing ministry we dislike: *Qf&p* 2.68

You could take one extract at a time and really allow space and time for it to speak to you.

Discovery 1

Experiencing different meetings for worship

It can be interesting to experience meeting for worship in meetings of different kinds and sizes, or in different locations. You may find that your experience of both silence and spoken ministry in meeting for worship varies considerably in these contexts.

If your local meeting has a number of meetings for worship throughout the week, try attending one that you have not been to before.

Try attending a meeting for worship at a different meeting house, either near you or when you are away from home. You could:

- ask your Becoming Friends companion, or an elder or overseer
- look in the Book of Meetings (available in most meeting houses)
- or search for a meeting online at: www.quaker.org.uk/fam

You might try a meeting for worship outdoors. Early Friends often met outside and were aware of how a deep connection with the earth can enable our inner silence to grow. There are present-day outdoor meetings for worship, for example at Speakers' Corner in London (monthly) and Faslane naval base in Scotland (occasional). Some local meetings hold a meeting for worship outside or in their town centre during Quaker Week.

You could reflect with your Becoming Friends companion on your experience of different meetings for worship.

Discovery 2

Discussion about our experiences of meeting for worship

You might like to ask one or two Friends in your meeting about their experience of meeting for worship and how it is different from keeping silence on your own. You could ask them about ways in which they feel we are connected in the silence. For example, some Friends will uphold each other in love, some might imagine the lines of connection between us, others might see us as 'covered' by the loving presence of God.

You could do this during the coffee time after meeting for worship, or you might like to ask your Becoming Friends companion to help you set up an informal meeting with other Friends.

Alternatively, you could consider these introductory questions:

- What is your experience of meeting for worship?
- How is this experience different from keeping silence on your own?

then go to the Silence and Waiting unit forum and post your own thoughts on the issues raised. You might like to comment on other posts on this forum too.

Discovery 3

Sharing our experiences of silence and waiting

What is your own experience of the quality and depth of silence and attentive waiting changing and developing throughout meeting for worship? You could ask your Becoming Friends companion or other Friends about their experience of silence and waiting in meeting for worship. The following questions provide starting points for discussion:

- Are you aware of any shifts in the quality or depth of silence or waiting during meeting for worship?
- What seems to influence those changes?
- What do you understand by 'waiting' in meeting for worship?
- What might we be waiting for?

You could also join in a discussion about experiences of silence and waiting on a Quaker discussion forum:

- the Britain Yearly Meeting forum at: www.quakerweb.org.uk/forum
- www.friendlink.org.uk (aimed mainly at young Quakers)
- the Silence and Waiting unit forum

Discovery 4

How do Quakers become still in meeting for worship?

The process of settling into a focused silence is called 'centring down' by Quakers. Some Friends enter the silence with an awareness of their breathing, while others mentally focus their intentions, or pray for each of the Friends

gathered with them. Many Friends will be informed by an understanding of meditation from various religious traditions but also hold to the distinctiveness of our corporate waiting worship.

You could:

- discuss with your Becoming Friends companion the ways they 'centre down' or enter the silence
- ask other Friends in your meeting the same question over coffee, or ask your Becoming Friends companion to help you set up an informal opportunity for group discussion

Experiment with different approaches to settling into and maintaining your own inner silence. Notice what works well for you.

One possibility is to centre yourself using a simple breathing practice. You'll find a guide to this practice on page 275.

Discovery 5

Spoken and sung ministry

Each worshipping individual brings their presence to meeting whether spoken or unspoken and it affects the meeting as a whole. Try to notice what you are bringing to the quality of the worship each week.

You could ask your Becoming Friends companion or another experienced Friend about:

- their experience of feeling led to minister in meeting for worship how do they know when it is right to stand up and speak?
- their experience of hearing spoken ministry in meeting for worship have there been occasions when spoken ministry has really spoken to them personally, or been difficult to come to terms with?

As we listen attentively to any ministry that arises in meeting, we can renew our awareness that we listen not only to the words but where the words come from. Ministry can stay with us throughout our week.

You could experiment with writing down what you saw to be the key element of the ministry for you on your spiritual/faith journey.

Deepening 1

Reflections on silence in the whole of our lives

Our world is very noisy and it can be hard to make a place for silence in our lives.

- Notice the ways in which you may avoid silence through the use of the radio, television, computer or other distractions.
- How much space for silence is there in your relationships?
- Could you find ways of building moments of silence into your day?
- Do you experience silence differently in the city, in natural or wild places, with people, on your own?

You could explore this further by:

- responding in writing
- drawing or using another creative method
- going online and blogging
- discussing these issues on a Quaker discussion forum:
 - the Britain Yearly Meeting forum at: www.quakerweb.org.uk/forum
 - www.friendlink.org.uk (aimed mainly at young Quakers)
 - the Silence and Waiting unit forum
- sharing some of your reflections with your Becoming Friends companion when you next meet

Deepening 2

Speaking in meeting for worship

Have you ever felt led to speak in meeting for worship? You might like to reflect on any times when you have considered the possibility of being led to give spoken ministry. What would enable you to speak? What would hold you back?

There is modern Quaker guidance about speaking in meeting for worship, which you'll find on page 216. Do you find this guidance helpful?

You could share some of your reflections with your Becoming Friends companion when you next meet.

Deepening 3

Silence and worship online

There are many websites which offer experiences of silence, prayer or worship online. You might try the following sites:

- an online Quaker meeting for worship at: quakerworship.org/default.asp
- an online labyrinth 'walk', with different contemplative activities along the way at: www.rejesus.co.uk/site/module/labyrinth
- a prayer site based on short bible readings at: http://sacredspace.ie
- a daily prayer download at: www.pray-as-you-go.org
- a Buddhist pebble meditation at: www.youtube.com search for 'Pebble for your pocket meditation'
- Taize chants and prayers to listen to or download at: www.taize.fr/en_article681.html (to download mp3s, right click on the name of the track, then 'save target as' or similar and choose where to save on your computer/mp3 player)
- guidelines for centering prayer at: www.youtube.com search for 'Thomas Keating Centering Prayer guidelines intro'

You could reflect on this experience of online silence and worship by:

- discussing it on a Quaker discussion forum:
 - > the Britain Yearly Meeting forum at: www.quakerweb.org.uk/forum
 - www.friendlink.org.uk (aimed mainly at young Quakers)
 - the Silence and Waiting unit forum
- responding through writing or creative activity
- sharing some of your reflections with your Becoming Friends companion when you next meet

Deepening 4

Knowing your worshipping community

If the presence of each of us changes the quality of the silence we experience, it is important to acknowledge each other's presence. Depending on the size of your meeting, you may or may not know everyone by name.

- If possible, notice or name who is present and who is absent at meeting next time you go.
- You might 'send light to' or pray for those who are not with you in worship.
- You could reflect on the other Quaker meetings that are near and imagine them also sitting in expectant waiting. Extend your thoughts even wider and think about the meetings all over Britain, Europe and the world, imagining how we are connected by our silent expectant waiting.

You might like to reflect on this experience with your Becoming Friends companion when you next meet

Deepening 5

Practising the discipline of silent waiting and listening

Quakers have a distinct practice of listening – waiting in silent attentiveness. Experiment with how you listen to others in your life, noticing when you are really listening to someone and when your mind is wandering. All listening can be part of our listening to the Spirit.

You might like to spend some time alone reflecting on your experiences of listening, using the questions in 'Listening in a new way', which you'll find on page 217.

You could share these reflections with your Becoming Friends companion, who might also do the exercise; or you could write, journal or make a creative response.

There is an exercise in listening prayer in Appendix 1 – Spiritual Practices on page 268. You could practise this with your Becoming Friends companion or another Friend, listening to each other with focused, prayerful attention.

Further exploration

If you would like to explore the subject of silence and waiting further here are some other resources

Advices & queries 1-7 and 8-13 (in Quaker faith & practice 1.02).

The amazing fact of Quaker worship, George Gorman, Quaker Books, 1973 (Swarthmore Lecture).

A book of silence, Sara Maitland, Granta Books, 2008.

Coming home: an introduction to the Quakers, Gerald Priestland, Quaker Books, 2003.

Focusing: how to open up your deeper feelings and intuition, Eugene Gendlin, Rider, 2003.

God is silence, Pierre Lacout, Quaker Books, 1970.

Ground and spring: foundations of Quaker discipleship, Beth Allen, Quaker Books, 2007 (Swarthmore Lecture).

An introduction to Watford Quakers (DVD), part 1 'An Introduction to Quakerism', Just Film, 2007. Available at: www.watfordquakers.org.uk/videos.html or www.quakerweek.org.uk/intro (or on www.youtube.com as 'Introduction to Quakers').

Light to live by, Rex Ambler, Quaker Books, 2002 (about 'Experiment with Light').

A light that is shining: an introduction to the Quakers, Harvey Gillman, Quaker Books, 2003.

Listening spirituality 1: personal spiritual practices among Friends, Patricia Loring, Openings Press, 1997

New light: 12 Quaker voices, edited by Jennifer Kavanagh, O Books, 2008. Individual themes such as *Twelve Quakers and Worship*, *Twelve Quakers and Simplicity* also available in the *Twelve Quakers and...* series, Quaker Quest 2004–2007.

Quaker faith & practice chapter 2, 'Approaches to God – worship and prayer'.

Quaker identity and the heart of our faith, Quaker Life Study Materials, Quaker Life, 2008. Includes Beth Allen on 'An exploration of the nature of Quaker worship'. Available online at

www.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/Faith-and-practice-proceeding.pdf or in hard copy by contacting Quaker Life on 020 7663 1140 or email: ql@quaker.org.uk.

The quaking meeting: transforming our selves, our meetings and the more-than-human world, Helen Gould, Australia Yearly Meeting, 2009 (James Backhouse Lecture).

Radio 3 programme about silence with Rowan Williams (Sunday 22 February 2009). Download or listen at:

www.christianmeditation.org.uk/public_html/web/news_media.php.

Searching the depths: essays on being a Quaker today, edited by Harvey Gillman and Alastair Heron, Quaker Home Service, 1996. 'The meeting for worship' chapter by Elizabeth Barnett.

Many of these titles are available from the Quaker Centre bookshop:

Friends House 173 Euston Road London NW1 2BJ

Tel: 020 7663 1030 Fax: 020 7663 1001

Website: www.quaker.org.uk/bookshop Email: quakercentre@quaker.org.uk



Many of them will also be in your local meeting house library. You could ask your Becoming Friends companion to help you track down titles that interest you.

Closing activity

As you finish your exploration of silence and waiting, you are invited to reflect on what you have gained through this unit, how your understanding of both yourself and Quakerism has changed, and what areas you would like to explore further.

This closing reflection can be a very good opportunity for sharing with your Becoming Friends companion, or you may prefer to write in a journal or book of spiritual discipline (there's guidance for journalling in Appendix 2 – Guidance on page 282), or to reflect using creative methods such as drawing, collage, modelmaking or working with materials such as textiles or wood.

You might like to use one or more of the following questions as a focus for your reflection:

- What have you gained from your work on this unit, whether as a result of positive or more challenging experiences?
- In what ways has your understanding changed as a result of your work on this unit?
- Are there areas that you would like to explore further either as part of your own spiritual journey or relating to Quakerism?
- Has anything arisen that you would find it helpful to reflect on with your Becoming Friends companion?



Extracts for Distinctives 3 Friends' experiences of meeting for worship

1

Quaker Meeting
Someone said
our bodies are like reeds;
we must let the breath
of the divine blow through us
become like piccolos and flutes;
make a living music.

Today
I feel the sharpness
of morning air,
listen to the sky soughing,
notice how leaves
on the tree tremble.

Denise Bennett, *Quaker Monthly*, October 2008, p272

2

On one never-to-be-forgotten Sunday morning, I found myself one of a small company of silent worshippers who were content to sit down together without words, that each one might feel after and draw near to the Divine Presence, unhindered at least, if not helped, by any human utterance. Utterance I knew was free, should the words be given; and, before the meeting was over, a sentence or two were uttered in great simplicity by an old and apparently untaught man, rising in his place amongst the rest of us. I did not pay much attention to the words he spoke, and I have no recollection of their purport. My whole soul was filled with the unutterable peace of the undisturbed opportunity for communion with God, with the sense that at last I had found a place where I might, without the faintest suspicion of insincerity, join with others in simply seeking His presence. To sit down in silence could at the least pledge me to nothing; it might open to me (as it did that morning) the very gate of heaven. And, since that day, now more than seventeen years ago, Friends' meetings have indeed been to me the greatest of outward helps to a fuller and fuller entrance into the spirit from which they have sprung; the place of the most soul-subduing, faith-restoring, strengthening, and peaceful communion, in feeding upon the bread of life, that I have ever known.

Caroline E. Stephen, 1890: Quaker faith & practice 2.02

3

Quaker Meeting At half past ten the talking stops; slowly we settle down. Hard seats, few are cushioned, an hour is a long time. Only our breathing and the ticking of the friendly clock disturb the silence. Sitting in a circle, the others close, I am aware of their presence as they are of mine. Reaching inward to their utmost being, seeking the Spirit, seeking the Inner Light. Or wondering what to get for dinner. I look at the polished table, the scent of old wood. Someone has brought a cyclamen in a pot. In its bright reflections A flame burns, but still I'm no closer to the thing I seek.

Yet all these everyday objects, hard seat, the clock, the breathing, wood scent, flower, pot.
Even the uncertain passage of time and thoughts about dinner.
None of these nor even the words themselves reach out, or make demands, corral or take possession; they do not ape our driven grasping human condition.

No, they simply are themselves, unseeking unsought. Perhaps I, like them, forgoing all urgency must wait in silence as the inner light seeks me out. Its invasion illuminating my free capitulation.

Amyon Corbould-Taylor and David Stuart, *Quaker Monthly*, August 2008, page 209

I usually try to start by sitting comfortably so I will not be distracted by bodily fidgeting. I try to relax and breathe deeply.

After a few minutes I check who is there and briefly pray for each of them. Then consider regulars who are not there, and pray for each of them.

Then I try to clear my mind and wait for what surfaces – sometimes insights come to me that I had not realised by 'worldly worrying'. Sometimes new ideas surface, that had been crowded out by daily concerns. Sometimes other people minister, sometimes their ministry addresses my meditations, sometimes it is completely different. Sometimes I fall asleep. There is the excitement of the unexpected, the unstructured nature of worship, knowing we can all equally approach God, or whatever we call our approach to the 'divine intent', that we have many varied beliefs, but respect each other, and can share our insights and help and guide each other on life's journey.

a Quaker, 2008

5

Some Friends are able to recall with clarity the first occasion on which they attended a Quaker meeting. While I cannot remember when or where I did so, I do have a vivid recollection of the meeting which I began to attend regularly.

It was held in a rather hideous building: the meeting room was dingy. We sat on rickety chairs that creaked at the slightest movement. The whole place gave little hope that those who worshipped there might catch a glimpse of the vision of God. It was in stark contrast to the splendour of the Anglican churches to which I had been accustomed, where through dignified ritual the beauty of holiness was vividly portrayed.

However, it was in this unlikely setting that I came to know what I can only describe as the amazing fact of Quaker worship. It was in that uncomfortable room that I discovered the way to the interior side of my life, at the deep centre of which I knew that I was not alone, but was held by a love that passes all understanding. This love was mediated to me, in the first place, by those with whom I worshipped. For my journey was not solitary, but one undertaken with my friends as we moved towards each other and together travelled inwards. Yet I knew that the love that held me could not be limited to the mutual love and care we had for each other. It was a signal of transcendence that pointed beyond itself to the source of all life and love.

George Gorman, 1973: Quaker faith & practice 2.03

At meeting for worship relax and let your baby be with you; my small daughter called it 'the best cuddle of the week' when I couldn't rush off and do something busy. It's not easy for the parents to believe that their child's gurglings actually help the meeting rather than interrupt it. Nonetheless, that is true, and you shouldn't give way to the temptation to take a happily babbling child out of the meeting (though howling is something different!).

Anne Hosking, 1986: Quaker faith & practice 2.50

7

When I sit down in meeting I recall whatever may have struck me freshly during the past week. This is in part, initially at least, a voluntary and outward act. It means that the will is given up to service; and it is quite possible to stop everything by taking an opposite attitude. So thoughts suggest themselves – a text that has smitten one during the week – new light on a phrase – a verse of poetry – some incident, private or public. These pass before the door whence shines the heavenly light. Are they transfigured? Sometimes, yes; sometimes, no. If nothing flames, silence is my portion.

John William Graham, 1920: Quaker faith & practice 2.52

8

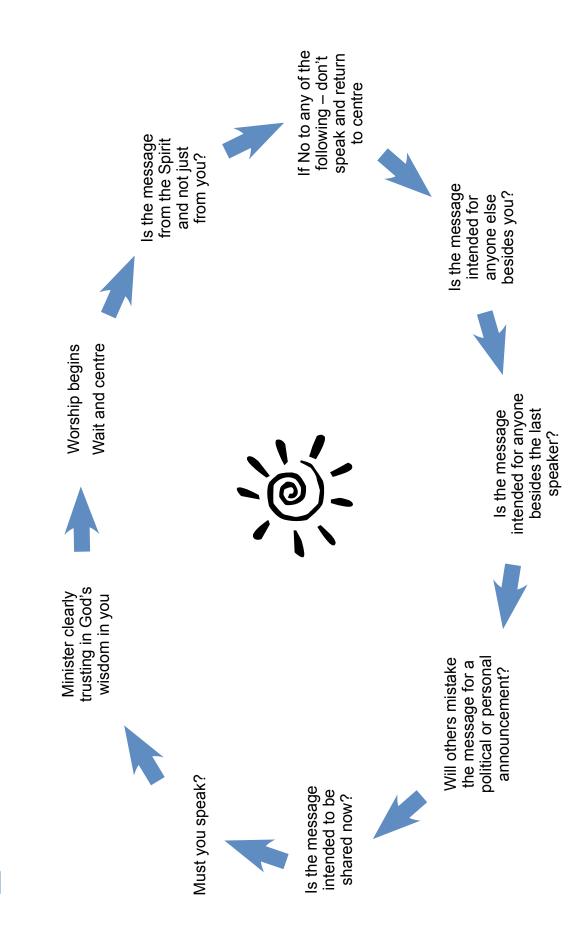
As I silence myself I become more sensitive to the sounds around me, and I do not block them out. The songs of the birds, the rustle of the wind, children in the playground, the roar of an airplane overhead are all taken into my worship. I regulate my breathing as taught me by my Zen friends, and through this exercise I feel the flow of life within me from my toes right through my whole body. I think of myself like the tree planted by the 'rivers of water' in Psalm 1, sucking up God's gift of life and being restored. Sometimes I come to meeting for worship tired and weary, and I hear the words of Jesus, 'Come unto me, all that labour and are weary, and I will give you rest'. And having laid down my burden, I feel refreshed both physically and spiritually. This leads me on to whole-hearted adoration and thanksgiving for all God's blessings. My own name, Tayeko, means 'child of many blessings' and God has surely poured them upon me. My heart overflows with a desire to give him something in return. I have nothing to give but my own being, and I offer him my thoughts, words and actions of each day, and whisper 'Please take me as I am'.

Tayeko Yamanouchi, 1979: Quaker faith & practice 2.54

consolation
God talk
depths and shallow splashing
moments of flame
presence
difficulty and preaching
boredom
the pause, letting go, before action
our longing for Oneness,
even God,
at the core

a Quaker, 2008

Deepening 2: Speaking in meeting for worship



Extract for Deepening 5: Practising the discipline of silent waiting and listening

Listening in a new way

- Who is the last person you really listened to?
- Who was the last person who really listened to you?
- List the people who never listen to you
- List the people you never listen to
- What was the content of the last news report you heard?
- What did you discuss with your partner/friend yesterday?
- What did you discuss at work/school yesterday?
- What was the last piece of music you heard that stays with you?
- How often do you think you have missed information?
- How often do you interrupt?
- How often do you assume you know what is coming up in conversation?
- How often do you need to hear simple instructions before understanding them?
- When did you last hear words that changed you?
- When did you last hear a voice that affected you?
- Who listened to you when you were younger?

Speaking of God

Exploring Quaker experiences of God, and how we try to hear where words about faith come from.

Speaking of God Becoming Friends



This unit invites you to find out more about the variety of ways Quakers conceive of and experience God, and to explore the language we use to describe religious experience. Quakers try to learn from other people's experiences of the Light, reaching beyond the particular words used, to hear what has nourished the lives of others.



Speaking of God unit aims

This unit aims to help you:

- explore ways in which Quakers experience God
- understand how Quakers try to reach for the deeper meaning within the words we use to describe these experiences
- consider and reflect on your own experience of the Divine and how you speak of it

Overview

There is great variety among Quakers in the ways we conceive of and experience God, and the different kinds of language we use to describe religious experience. Some Quakers have a conception of God which is similar to that of orthodox Christians, and would use similar language. Others are happy to use God-centred language, but would conceive of God in very different terms to the traditional Christian trinity. Some describe themselves as agnostics, or humanists, or non-theists, and describe their experiences in ways that avoid the use of the word God entirely. Quaker faith is built on experience and Quakers would generally hold that it is the spiritual experience which is central to their faith, and not the use of a particular form of words (whether that be 'God' or anything else).

The 18th-century Quaker John Woolman wrote:

There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath different names; it is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren.

Quaker faith & practice 26.61

This concept of the universality of the experience of God, though it may manifest itself or be expressed in very different ways in each of our lives, is still a central principle of Quakerism.

Quakers are encouraged: 'treasure your experience of God, however it comes to you' (*Advices & queries* 2 in *Quaker faith & practice* 1.02); and 'take time to learn about other people's experiences of the Light' (*Advices & queries* 5 in *Quaker faith & practice* 1.02). Sometimes this sharing of faith experiences can be challenging for us, due to the limitations of the language we must use to describe them – as noted by Harvey Gillman, a present-day British Friend:

The choice of the words soul, God, spiritual, sacred, holy, authentic, religious, devout, divine, deep, even reverence, awe and others like worship and devotion, depends very much on who is using them, when, to whom, in what context, and for what reason.

Harvey Gillman, Consider the blackbird: reflections on spirituality and language, page 31

So Quakers try to reach beyond the particular words used to describe experiences of God or 'Light', to 'sense where they come from and what has nourished the lives of others' (*Advices & queries* 17 in *Quaker faith & practice* 1.02).

Speaking of God Becoming Friends

In keeping with this understanding about the limitations of language, Quakers do not write creeds or statements of belief for members to sign up to; Quakers generally consider that such fixed statements of belief can never fully represent all Truth, and may limit both current perceptions of Truth and the continuing search for further understanding. While Friends try to learn from the insights of the past, we do not want those past insights to limit present and future understanding.

The variety of approaches to belief and religious experience among Quakers also extends to our approaches to the Bible: for some Quakers, it is a book of wisdom inspired by God; for others, it is of equal significance to holy writings from other religious traditions; while some Friends find its contents difficult, or irrelevant to their lives. For most Quakers, however, George Fox's words about scripture in 1652 still speak strongly to us:

You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of Light and hast walked in the Light, and what thou speakest is it inwardly from God?

Quaker faith & practice 19.07

Quaker distinctives

Distinctives 1

How do Quakers experience God?

The wide variety of ways Quakers conceive of and experience God is reflected in *Twelve Quakers and God*, produced by Quaker Quest. You'll find extracts from this on pages 235–237.

If you would like to read the full text of *Twelve Quakers and God*, see Further exploration for details.

You might also like to read any of chapter 26 'Reflections' in *Quaker faith & practice*, which covers experience of God, in particular *Qf&p* 26.01–26.15.

Distinctives 2

Who is Jesus for Quakers?

The following extracts from *Quaker faith & practice* talk about the meaning of Jesus in the lives of individual Quakers.

- Christ as friend: *Qf&p* 26.47
- Jesus as symbol of God: Qf&p 26.50
- the mystery of God as human being: *Qf&p* 26.53
- a window through to God: *Qf&p* 26.54
- Jesus is the question: *Qf&p* 26.55
- Jesus in our suffering: *Qf&p* 26.59

You could also read *Twelve Quakers and Jesus* or *What Jesus means to me*, which are short collections of very varied Quaker writings about Jesus. See Further exploration for details.

Distinctives 3

What do Quakers believe about God?

The video 'What do Quakers believe about God?', made by Friends at Watford Quaker Meeting, includes some reflections on how different Friends experience and conceive of God. You can access the video in a number of different ways:

- online at
 - www.watfordquakers.org.uk/videos.html
 - www.youtube.com as 'What do Quakers believe about God?'
- on the DVD *An introduction to Watford Quakers* available from the Quaker Centre bookshop (see Further exploration for contact details).

Distinctives 4

Quakers, the Bible and creeds

The video 'Quakers and the Bible', made by Friends at Watford Quaker Meeting, includes reflections from different Friends on the significance of the Bible for them. You can access the video in a number of different ways:

- online at
 - www.watfordquakers.org.uk/videos.html
 - www.youtube.com as 'Quakers and the Bible'
- on the DVD *An introduction to Watford Quakers* available from the Quaker Centre bookshop (see Further exploration for contact details).

The following extracts from *Quaker faith & practice* discuss Quaker approaches to the Bible and Creeds:

- our understanding of the Bible: *Qf&p* 27.34
- take the Bible as a whole: *Qf&p* 27.31
- dangers of formulated statements of belief: *Qf&p* 27.23
- 'Credo' as 'I commit myself to...': *Qf&p* 27.25
- living truth not fettered by words: *Qf&p* 27.26

Distinctives 5

The universal Light

Quakers have found the metaphor of 'Light' important in speaking of our religious experience. Sections 26.42–26.78 of *Quaker faith & practice* cover the 'light that shines for all', and the following extracts in particular explore the Quaker understanding of the universal nature of the Light:

• the light for which the world longs: *Qf&p* 26.62

• the Light of Christ: *Qf&p* 26.65

• Divine principle of Light: *Qf&p* 26.78

• the Light is One: *Qf&p* 26.68

Distinctives 6

Can you be a Quaker if you don't believe in God?

A humanist Quaker explains how he sees his beliefs as entirely compatible with Quakerism in an extract from *Quaker identity and the heart of our faith*. You'll find this extract on pages 238–239.

If you would like to read the full text of *Quaker identity and the heart of our faith*, see Further exploration for details.

Discovery

Discovery 1

Discussion about Quaker approaches to Jesus

Introductory questions:

- Who do you believe Jesus was?
- Who is Jesus for you?

You might consider these introductory questions, then go to the Speaking of God unit forum, and post your own thoughts in response. You might like to comment on other posts on this forum too.

Alternatively, you could discuss the questions with your Becoming Friends companion, or others in your meeting.

You could do this during the coffee time after meeting for worship, or you might like to ask your Becoming Friends companion to help you set up an informal meeting with other Friends.

Discovery 2

Translating and letting go

Section 26.76 of *Quaker faith & practice* reflects on the difficulty of expressing our deepest spiritual truths in words. You could discuss this section with your Becoming Friends companion.

It might be interesting to ask your Becoming Friends companion or another Friend in your meeting to reflect with you on words or ideas that you have each found tricky or liberating on your spiritual journey.

You could do this by both writing down three words or ideas that:

- currently sustain you on your spiritual journey
- were more important to you in the past than they are today
- you feel attracted to or intrigued by, even if you do not use them
- 'press a button' for you or cause a negative reaction
- you use when you speak of that reality which is unnameable

• you do not use when you speak of that reality which is unnameable.

Then reflect on what you have written together.

Discovery 3

Favourite Bible or other sacred writing extracts

You might like to ask your Becoming Friends companion (or another Friend in your meeting) to share with you three favourite extracts each from the Bible or other sacred writing.

- You could take turns to read your extracts with a period of silence between each one, then spend some time sharing with one another how these extracts speak to you and whether any words are especially meaningful.
- You could also do this activity with a group of Friends from your meeting.
- Or you might like to join the online discussion about favourite sacred writings by making a post on the Speaking of God unit forum.

Discovery 4

'Speaking of God' in my local meeting or online

You could ask your Becoming Friends companion or an elder in your meeting to help you set up a small group session to explore local Friends' experiences and thoughts about God (or you may prefer to simply discuss this with your Becoming Friends companion).

- Before the group session, you or your companion could ask Friends to write a paragraph or two about their own experience of or beliefs about God (like those used in Distinctives 1 in this unit).
- In the session, Friends would read their paragraphs out, then spend some time in worship sharing mode, sharing with one another any responses, insights, experiences or challenges relating to what has been said.

Guidance for worship sharing is found in Appendix 2 – Guidance on pages 283–284.

Alternatively, you could read some young Quakers' thoughts on God at: www.newstatesman.com/200612180102 or www.fgcquaker.org/quakers-and-god and post a response on those sites, or start a new thread on the Speaking of God unit forum.

Discovery 5

'Experiment with Light' groups

'Experiment with Light' is a Quaker practice whereby Friends 'wait in the Light' for guidance and insight about our lives. You can read about it in *Light to live by* by Rex Ambler. See Further exploration for details.

Your Becoming Friends companion could help you find out whether anyone in your local or area meeting has been to an 'Experiment with Light' group or course. If so, you could ask them about the practice and their experience of it. If there is a group or course currently running locally, you might try it out yourself.

Or you could arrange to go on a course about 'Experiment with Light'. See if there are courses coming up at:

 Charney Manor Tel: 01235 868206

Website: www.charneymanor.demon.co.uk

 Swarthmoor Hall Tel: 01229 583 204

Website: www.swarthmoorhall.co.uk

Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

Tel: 0121 472 5171

Website: www.woodbrooke.org.uk

Deepening

Deepening 1

Responding to an awareness of God

Our response to an awareness of God is the focus of the following extracts:

- Advice from early Quaker Isaac Pennington in *Quaker faith & practice* 26.70.
- A piece by 20th-century American Quaker mystic Thomas Kelly, which you'll find on page 240.

How does either of these speak to you?

Deepening 2

Writing your own statement of belief

While Quakers do not have creeds, it can be interesting and revealing to write your own statement of belief or religious commitment as part of a spiritual practice.

You might like to read an extract from a modern statement of belief and try writing some phrases for your own statement. This need only be very short but can still be a significant focus for understanding your own religious position.

You'll find an extract from a statement of belief on page 241.

You could also reflect on this experience with your Becoming Friends companion when you next meet.

Deepening 3

A letter about your journey so far

Many Quakers have experienced other faith traditions during their lives, or have made significant changes along their spiritual journey. This can leave us with things to celebrate, or difficulties that we wish to leave behind.

Try writing a letter – it could be addressed to God, to yourself, or to a person who is significant for you, expressing in your own words what it is that you:

• wish to leave behind or want healing about

- wish to celebrate or be grateful for
- hunger or hope for now
- want to bring with you from your journey so far

You might wish to reflect on how you have got on with this exercise at a future meeting with your Becoming Friends companion.

Deepening 4

Responding to words and images of Jesus

Who is Jesus for you? You could read and reflect on an extract from Luke's gospel, where Jesus asks his followers 'And you, who do you say that I am?' (Luke 9:18-20). What would your answer be?

You could use words about or images of Jesus to help you reflect on this question, asking yourself 'What does this word or image mean to me?'

- There are Jesus word cards on pages 242–244
- If you prefer using images, you could use the Jesus postcards included with the *Hearts & minds prepared* pack (there should be a copy in your local or area meeting) or search online at http://images.google.co.uk for 'Jesus Christ' or alternative depictions of Jesus such as 'African Jesus'

You may like to take some time to reflect deeply on your own response to this activity. You could:

- respond by drawing, painting, or using another creative method
- respond in music, song or movement
- respond in writing
- go online and blog about your response
- discuss your response on a Quaker discussion forum:
 - > the Britain Yearly Meeting forum at: www.quakerweb.org.uk/forum
 - www.friendlink.org.uk (aimed mainly at young Quakers)
 - > the Speaking of God unit forum
- share some of your reflections with your Becoming Friends companion when you next meet.

Deepening 5

Sacred reading practice

It can be helpful to develop a practice of slow, meditative reading of sacred texts. Traditionally this practice was called 'Lectio Divina' and practised by monks with the Bible. Many modern Quakers find this practice helpful and use it with all kinds of sacred writings as part of their regular spiritual practice.

You might like to try it out for yourself using the Bible or whatever writings are sacred for you.

- You'll find the sacred reading practice in Appendix 1 on page 270
- There is also a short collection of extracts that you can use for sacred reading included on pages 271–274

Further exploration

If you would like to explore the subject of Speaking of God further, here are some suggestions for reading, listening or viewing.

Advices & *queries* 1–7 and 17 (in *Quaker faith* & *practice* 1.02).

The Bible: for looking up any passage from the Bible in a variety of translations, you can use www.biblegateway.com

Charney Manor's website for details of courses, including 'Experiment with Light': www.charneymanor.demon.co.uk

Consider the blackbird: reflections on spirituality and language, Harvey Gillman, Quaker Books, 2007.

Creeds and the search for unity, Rex Ambler, Quaker Books, 2004.

The end of words, Rex Ambler, Quaker Books, 2004.

'Experiment with Light' resources online: www.charlieblackfield.com/light

A faith to call our own: Quaker tradition in the light of contemporary movements of the Spirit, Alex Wildwood, Quaker Home Service, 1999 (Swarthmore Lecture).

An introduction to Watford Quakers (DVD), 'What do Quakers believe about God' and 'Quakers and the Bible' sections, Just Film, 2007. Available at: www.watfordquakers.org.uk/videos.html (or on www.youtube.com as: 'What do Quakers believe about God?' and 'Quakers and the Bible').

Light to live by, Rex Ambler, Quaker Books, 2002 (about 'Experiment with Light').

Listening spirituality 1: personal spiritual practices among Friends, Patricia Loring, Openings Press, 1997.

New light: 12 Quaker voices, edited by Jennifer Kavanagh, O Books, 2008. Individual themes such as Twelve Quakers and God, Twelve Quakers and Jesus also available in the Twelve Quakers and... series, Quaker Quest 2004–2007.

Quaker identity and the heart of our faith, Quaker Life Study Materials, Quaker Life, 2008. Includes 'David Boulton's personal stance in the discussion of Quaker identity'. Available online at: www.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/Faith-and-practice-proceeding.pdf or in hard copy by contacting Quaker Life on 020 7663 1140 or email: ql@quaker.org.uk

Rooted in Christianity, open to new light: Quaker spiritual diversity, Timothy Ashworth and Alex Wildwood, Pronoun Press & Woodbrooke, 2009.

Searching the depths: essays on being a Quaker today, edited by Harvey Gillman and Alastair Heron, Quaker Books, 1996. Especially chapter 2 'To an unknown God' by Andrew Greaves.

Swarthmoor Hall website, for details of courses, including 'Experiment with Light': www.swarthmoorhall.co.uk

A testament of devotion, Thomas R. Kelly, Harper & Row, 1939.

'What Jesus means to me', various authors, *Friends Quarterly*, July 2003. This is included in the *Hearts and minds prepared* pack.

Woodbrooke's website or brochure for details of courses about God, Jesus, Quaker belief, spiritual practice: www.woodbrooke.org.uk

Many of these titles are available from the Quaker Centre bookshop:

Friends House 173 Euston Road London NW1 2BJ

Tel: 020 7663 1030 Fax: 020 7663 1001

Website: www.quaker.org.uk/bookshop Email: quakercentre@quaker.org.uk



Many of them will also be in your local meeting house library. You could ask your Becoming Friends companion to help you track down titles that interest you.

Closing activity

As you finish your exploration of how Quakers experience and speak of God, you are invited to reflect on what you have gained through this unit, how your understanding of both yourself and Quakerism has changed, and what areas you would like to explore further.

This closing reflection can be a very good opportunity for sharing with your Becoming Friends companion, or you may prefer to write in a journal or book of spiritual discipline (there's guidance for journalling in Appendix 2 – Guidance on page 282), or to reflect using creative methods such as drawing, collage, model-making or working with materials such as textiles or wood.

You may like to use one or more of the following questions as a focus for your reflection:

- What have you gained from your work on this unit, whether as a result of positive or more challenging experiences?
- In what ways has your understanding changed as a result of your work on this unit?
- Are there areas that you would like to explore further either as part of your own spiritual journey or relating to Quakerism?
- Has anything arisen that you would find it helpful to reflect on with your Becoming Friends companion?



From Twelve Quakers and God

1

I was brought up in a home where traditional Christian teaching prevailed. Of course I asked questions, and as life went on I found fewer and fewer satisfactory answers. Like so many others I found myself unable to accept much of what seemed important in the practice of my church. In retrospect I think that for me the external practice hid the truth. Eventually, after some really hard searching, I was confronted with the truth. With the word God.

2

I need God in the same way that I need food, drink and sleep. I am absolutely sure that needing God is an integral part of the human condition, and that some people find it harder than others to accept it. They, in their turn, of course, know that I am deluding myself. I believe in God. David Steindl-Rast has said that God is a name for a reality which cannot be named, and that is the closest definition I have ever encountered for the indefinable. For me, God is a reality. I believe in God because I experience it.

3

I can feel the force of God's light at unexpected moments: as I walk down the street, as a stranger smiles in a crowd, as I look at the sky. I feel the power of God in the vastness of the universe, in the minuteness of a grain of sand. I experience my life both as brief as the day-lily's and yet as part of the aeons of history. God is manifest in this relativity of time.

4

I feel God as a power to be drawn on and from which to receive strength. Sometimes in my life, when all else has failed, I have prayed for this strength and felt at peace.

5

Another metaphor for God is a ball of many mirrored facets. We all see a part of it, and what we see reflects back to us a unique perspective, which is a true reflection yet only part of the whole. In this way, I can accept that others will have a different view of God, different words for God, different experiences of God, and yet all these are but glimpses of fragments of the same thing, which is greater than anything we can comprehend.

God is a guiding force in my life. Until recently I could not feel God as love, but I have come to an understanding recently that the love is in the relationship, the connectedness which I experience consciously through others and, vividly, unexpectedly, through acts of synchronicity. Glimpses of connections that I had not previously understood: connections that show me the way, affirm my steps on the path, nurture me, not with the cuddly limited love of my imaginings, but with the mature love and acceptance of my real self.

7

I encounter, rather than believe in, God. But I have chosen, and it is a choice, to bet my life (literally) on the power, the love, the challenge, that I call God. For me it has always been a stark choice. You take it seriously (or try to) twenty-four hours a day or not at all. Like pregnancy, there are no half measures – I can no more be 'a little bit religious' than 'a little bit pregnant'!

8

This experience of the Divine comes to me unexpectedly in flashes, sudden openings, when the penny drops, or things click into place. This is a glimpse of the other, 'rumours of angels', a tangential glancing blow of the holy. No Damascus visions or burning bushes, but humble occasions which I recognise, often long afterwards, as times of inner enlargement when my own spirit has magnified or manifested something greater.

9

In my life experience the Divine has been a reality. The God of love, compassion and tender upholding is one that I have known. But my God is not just personal; S/he is also power or energy, the Divine Source. This Divine Power is part of all creative energy, which cannot be defined or confined, just glimpsed in creation and creative forms. It is a mystical Other, in which and with which I am engaged. Jesus was someone who more clearly knew this Divine Spirit than most, and lived his life in joyful response to it.

10

Sometimes I think I am verging on being atheist, because I think it is quite possible that the inspiring and leading God I believe in could be a product of my mind (and the minds of other people). The human brain is such a marvellous thing, full of mystery, that I don't think it is a problem to find one more mystery in it. But God may equally be outside us all – I really don't know. I don't spend much time worrying about theology – it is the inspiration and the impetus to change the world for the better that really matter.

11

I use many names for the Divine, sometimes lingering with one sacred name, but wary of becoming territorial, my god shrinking to mere possession. Early

Quakers used Light, giving life and clarity, showing me the next steps, and Light is probably the word I use most of all.

12

The ever-present Energy is there to be drawn on by anyone who opens himself or herself to it. It calls us in the direction of love and compassion, understanding and forgiveness, and whatever else supports the unity of life, from social inclusion on local and global scales to care of the natural environment. Opening yourself up is challenging, a direction which is in tension with the opposite drive to control your life, protect and enhance your position and become less vulnerable.

from Twelve Quakers and God, Quaker Quest, 2004



Extract for Distinctives 6: Can you be a Quaker if you don't believe in God?

Quaker identity and the heart of our faith: extract by David Boulton

I have never, since I ceased to be a child in the mid 1950s, been persuaded of the reality of supernatural forces or dimensions, even when they are smuggled in under such euphemisms as 'transcendence', 'the numinous', 'the divine', or 'the mystical'. I can no more entertain the notion of gods and devils, angels and demons, disembodied ghoulies and ghosties, or holy and unholy spirits, than I can believe in the magic of Harry Potter or the mystic powers of Gandalf the Grey. I think William Blake hit the nail on the head when he concluded, in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, that 'all deities reside in the human breast' – the human imagination.

I am satisfied – utterly, deeply satisfied – with one life in this one wonderful, natural world.

I fully understand that belief in a transcendent realm and a transcendent god as the guarantors of meaning and purpose have inspired millions. They do not inspire me. Instead, they seem to me illusions we can well do without, and I find myself raging at the toxic effects of literal, uncritical belief in divine guidance, divine purpose, divine reward and punishment.

Does such unqualified scepticism disqualify me as a Quaker? I don't think so, and you don't seem to think so, since you welcomed me into the Society after a meeting for clearness and a lengthy process of discernment, following my application for membership in which, as a matter of scrupulous integrity, I was clear and open about my humanist convictions. What is it, then, about the Religious Society of Friends that can command the love and loyalty of a dyed-in-the-wool non-theist like me? That can absorb me in its history, inspire me with its radical reforming tradition, 'gather me as in a net'?

In a word, it is the glory of the Society's creedlessness. It's our obstinate, almost obsessive refusal to be tied down to a form of words defining what Quakers believe, or what we think we should believe. Yes, early Friends described themselves as Publishers of Truth, but they were wise enough not to try to reduce truth to a set of articles of faith. We are not so foolish as to believe that what we believe doesn't matter; but our founding fathers and mothers knew that to tie beliefs down in a form of words, a formulary endowed with divine sanction, would be to kick the living daylights out of the Quaker way, truth and life: and to impose a form of words on each other as a badge of Quaker orthodoxy and sound doctrine, an approved dogma, would be to repeat the tragic history of the

confessional churches and institutional religion through the ages. Go down that road and we switch off the lights.

So we have no creed. Not even an irreducible minimum creed. Not even 'Credo in unum Deum'. 'I believe in God' is too crude, too inadequate, too loose. What about 'seeking the will of God'? What about 'answering that of God in every person'? What about being 'open to the Spirit'? Fine, but that's not a creed. Potent poetry, but not a creed.

Poetry? Yes. Religious language is surely best understood as metaphorical, not literal; expressive, not descriptive; nonrealist rather than realist. Poetry opens up what creeds close down. The Quaker humanist who does not believe that God exists may nevertheless love, honour and obey what the image of God symbolises or represents: to quote Blake again,

...Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love Is God, our Father dear. And Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love Is man, His child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart, Pity a human face, And Love, the human form divine, And Peace, the human dress.

And he concludes:

Where Mercy, Love and Pity dwell, There God is dwelling too.

So God becomes for us the imagined symbol of the human values that we recognise as making an ultimate claim upon us. We can respond with all our heart and all our mind and all our strength to the promptings of love and truth in our hearts without first having to sign up to belief in a transcendental prompter. Love and truth are themselves the prompts.

from *Quaker identity and the heart of our faith,*Quaker Life, 2008

Extract for Deepening 1: Responding to an awareness of God

Extract by Thomas Kelly

Open your eyes to the flaming vision of the wonder of such a life.

Begin where you are. Now.

If you slip and stumble, don't spend too much time in anguished regrets and self-accusations but begin again.

Don't grit your teeth and clench your fists and say, 'I will! I will!' Relax.

Take hands off. Submit yourself to God....

Let life be willed through you.

from A Testament of devotion by Thomas Kelly, Harper & Row, 1939

Extract for Deepening 2: Writing your own statement of belief

A personal statement of belief

I believe in God the Oneness of whom we are all part the Mother and Father of us all Creative Energy of Love from whom we all spring the Ground of our Being

I believe in the embodiment of love in our world in people of every kind

I believe in the Spirit of Lovingkindness at work in our hearts bringing peace, compassion and love transforming and challenging us to growth

I believe in the eternity of now the mystery of our connectedness through and beyond time and space

a Quaker, 2008

saviour	cosmic Christ
Lamb of God	friend
teacher	Beloved
Son of God	radical preacher
prophet	man of his time
	Lamb of God teacher Son of God

		×
King	universal Light	
The Way, The Truth and The Life	One with God	
enlightened being	embodiment of the divine	
just a man	Jesus-Sophia (embodiment of divine wisdom)	
carpenter	healer	

*		
	a Jew	Lord
	Messiah	mystery
	God	wandering wise man
	leader of an apocalyptic movement	The Word of God
	Christ – the anointed one of God	

Closing Unit

Reflecting on the learning, saying goodbye and journeying on...

Closing Unit Becoming Friends



This closing unit will offer you opportunities to reflect on your learning during the Becoming Friends course and on the journey you have shared with your Becoming Friends companion. You will be invited to consider steps you wish to take to further your learning and spiritual development from here, and to take time to say goodbye to your companion.



Closing Unit aims

This unit aims to help you:

- Reflect on your learning during the Becoming Friends course
- Find out about Quaker ways of continuing our spiritual learning and development
- Consider steps you could take to further your spiritual journey with Friends
- Celebrate the work you and your Becoming Friends companion have done together



What if I now want to apply for membership?

While the Becoming Friends course has not been specifically aimed at bringing participants into membership of the Religious Society of Friends, you may have found that the process of taking part in the course has led you to consider applying to become a member. If that is the case, then please approach the overseers or elders in your local meeting and they will explain the membership procedure to you.



What if I have realised Quakerism is not for me?

We hope that the Becoming Friends course has been of interest to you anyway and that you will be able to take something useful from it on your spiritual journey from here. If you want any help in finding out about other local faith communities, your Becoming Friends companion should be able to help you find contact details for them.

Guidance for working through this closing unit

- 1. The introductory information (pages 246–247) and overview (pages 248–250) are good places to start.
- 2. The Reflective activity on pages 251–252 provides you with an opportunity to reflect on all your learning during the Becoming Friends course, so this exercise is highly recommended. Take as long as you wish to over it.
- 3. You can then choose one (or more if you like) of the seven Journeying on activities on pages 253–258 to find out more about Quaker approaches to spiritual learning and development, and consider doing your own follow up work after this course is finished.
- 4. You might like to arrange a meeting with your Becoming Friends companion towards the end of the unit so that you can reflect on your learning and your journey together, possibly following the format for the closing session with your Becoming Friends companion given on pages 259–260.
- 5. There's no time limit for working through this unit you can take as long or as short a time as you like.

Overview

Spiritual learning continues throughout life, and often in unexpected ways... Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come?

Advices and queries 7 (in *Quaker faith & practice* 1.02)

For Quakers, seeking to be open to new light and learning is a central part of our ongoing spiritual development, both as individuals and as a community.

Each of us has a unique spiritual journey to make, a unique way of learning and being open to the Spirit; by sharing what we have found along the way, we enable this diversity to enrich us, so that

the Society of Friends might be thought of as a prism through which the Divine Light passes, to become visible in a spectrum of many colours; many more in their richness, than words alone can express.

Quaker faith & practice 18.20

Being open to spiritual learning can be exciting and interesting but also challenging and not always easy. So we try to find ways to support one another in our seeking, and finding, of new light: some of these ways include study groups in local meetings, special interest groups, courses, publications in text and audiovisual formats, online learning communities, and regional or national gatherings. Although you are now coming to the end of the Becoming Friends course, you are invited to explore some of these possibilities for continuing your spiritual learning and development with Friends.

Local and area meetings often arrange study group sessions for local Quakers: these may be planned to suit local learning needs or may make use of national Quaker learning packs. Recent learning packs *include Hearts and minds prepared*, *Good lives*, *Quaker identity and the heart of our faith*, a Testimonies 'toolkit' *Engaging with the Quaker testimonies*, *Responding to climate change* and *Creating community*, *creating connections* (see Further exploration for more details).

Within Britain Yearly Meeting, there are many special interest groups which enable Quakers to follow their interests or concerns with other like-minded Friends. These 'listed informal groups' range from faith based groups, such as the Christian Quaker Renewal Fellowship and the Quaker Universalist Group, to interest groups such as the Friends Historical Society and Quaker Theatre Group, and faith in action groups such as Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs or Quaker Disability Equality Group (see Journeying on activity 1).

Courses are offered by Quaker centres on a wide range of subjects based around exploring Quakerism and the themes of interest to Quakers, such as peace and reconciliation, Quaker history and spiritual journeys. Quaker centres include

Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Swarthmoor Hall, Charney Manor and Claridge House. Courses are offered in different formats including retreats, seminars and conferences, and may be short courses or longer programmes of study; many courses are offered at the centres while others are delivered off-site in local meetings and regional venues around Britain (see Journeying on activity 2).

Quakers aim to support children and young people in their spiritual journeys in ways that enable them to make their own choices and decisions. Meetings may have separate children's meetings or times of all age worship, and there are specific resources, events and gatherings for children and young people within Britain Yearly Meeting. The Quaker Life department at Friends House supports work with children and young people and produces a resource called *Journeys in the Spirit* to help meetings with this work (see Journeying on activity 3). For more about events and gatherings for children and young people see Journeying on activity 6.

Quaker publications can be found in local meeting house libraries and also the Quaker libraries at Friends House and Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre – their catalogues can be browsed in person or online at: www.quaker.org.uk/library and www.woodbrooke.org.uk/library. The Quaker Centre Bookshop also stocks a wide range of publications of interest to Friends (see Further exploration for contact details).

The Swarthmore Lecture was established in 1907 'to interpret further to the members of the Society of Friends their Message and Mission... and ... to bring before the public the spirit, the aims and the fundamental principles of the Friends.' The lecture is given annually at Yearly Meeting, the annual gathering to which all Friends are invited, and is accompanied by an audio recording of the lecture and a book which deals in more detail with the subject of the lecture (see Journeying on activity 4).

Periodicals and journals published by Friends provide opportunities to share news and discuss issues of importance to Friends; these publications include *The Friends Quarterly, Quaker Voices* and *Quaker News* (see Journeying on activity 5).

Being a learning community involves meeting up and spending time together – Quakers enjoy going along to gatherings on local, regional and national levels ranging from Quaker camping trips to conferences about peace work. Details of local and regional events will be given in local Quaker newsletters and websites, while the main national Quaker gatherings are listed in Journeying on activity 6. Another way of being in touch with one another is through Quaker online discussion forums such as the Britain Yearly Meeting forum at: www.quakerweb.org.uk/forum or the young Quaker forum Friendlink at: www.friendlink.org.uk . Many of the special interest groups referred to in Journeying on activity 1 also have email groups for sharing news and ideas.

And, importantly, you may feel that the most significant way for you to continue your journey with Friends is to deepen your own spiritual practice or prayer life.

Journeying on activity 7 offers reminders of some of the disciplines offered during the Becoming Friends course and ways of seeking support along the way.

In the words of a British Friend, Quakers

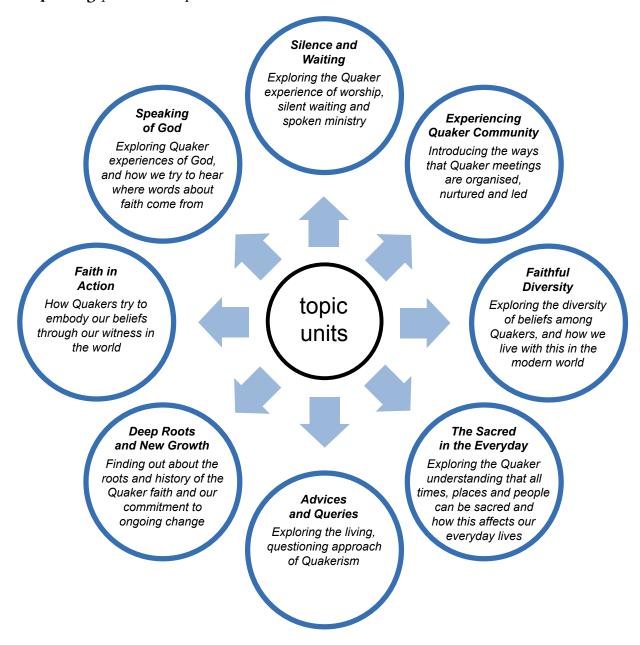
offer a spiritual journey: a journey that is undertaken with others in our meeting and which is reflected in their journeys ... We don't have all the answers: what we have is some very good questions.

Geoffrey Durham, 'The Heart of Quakerism' (see Further exploration page 261)

Whichever ways you choose to move forward in your journey, Friends hope that 'love may grow in you and guide you.' (*Advices & queries 2* in *Quaker faith & practice 1.02*)

Reflective Activity

During the Becoming Friends course you have explored the Quaker Way and your relationship to it by working on a range of subjects that you have selected from the eight topic units shown in the diagram below. Through each subject area, we hope that you have been able to find out more about the **distinctive** Quaker faith and **discover** some of the riches of the Quaker community and tradition, while **deepening** your own spiritual life.



At the beginning of the course, we suggested that you might find it helpful to practise becoming more aware of your learning experiences through means such as reflection, writing, blogging, drawing or creating something, conversations, group sharing (face to face and online).

As you finish your work on the Becoming Friends course, we invite you to reflect on what you have learned during the whole course, how your understanding has changed and what areas you would like to explore further. This is a good moment to look back at any writing, drawing or other records you have of your reflections and learning throughout the course and see what they have to teach you at this stage.

You could use one or more of the following questions as a **focus for your reflection**:

- What has been especially valuable or important in the learning you have done?
- What has been new or surprising for you? What new light, insight, perspective or questions have come to you?
- In what ways do the Quaker approaches you have learned about reflect your own experience and thoughts?
- In what ways has the learning challenged you? What questions has it raised for you?
- Are there areas of Quakerism or your own spiritual journey that you would like to explore further now?
- Has anything arisen from your learning that you would find it helpful to focus on in reflection with your Becoming Friends companion?

You could also take some time to reflect on your own spiritual practice or prayer life. Do you feel led to continue or develop any practice that you have experienced during the Becoming Friends course?

As before, this closing reflection can be a very good opportunity for sharing with your Becoming Friends companion, or you may prefer to write in a journal or book of spiritual discipline (there's guidance for journalling in Appendix 2 – Guidance on page 282, to blog or share online, or to reflect using creative methods.

Journeying on activities

You might like to choose one or more of the following seven activities.

Journeying on activity 1

Find out about a listed informal group

Within Britain Yearly Meeting, there are many informal groups which enable Quakers to follow their interests or concerns with other like-minded Friends.

You can find out about them by:

- looking at the list of groups on the Britain Yearly Meeting website at: www.quaker.org.uk/other-quaker-sites and follow the links to explore some groups' websites
- looking in the annual Book of Meetings, where the groups are listed, with contact details, towards the back of the book; it is in most meeting houses, but if you can't find a copy, contact Quaker Life at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ tel: 020 7663 1140 email: ql@quaker.org.uk for details of groups

Is there a group which interests you? You could get in touch and ask for more information, subscribe to a newsletter or email group, or arrange to attend an event.

Journeying on activity 2

Go on a Quaker course

There are courses available at various Quaker centres and locally in meetings, covering a wide range of subjects. Why not find out about a course and book yourself on it!

You could ask your Becoming Friends companion, or an elder or overseer at your meeting what courses or study group sessions are coming up locally in the near future.

Or check out the websites or ring and ask for the programmes for the following Quaker centres to find out if there are courses coming up that might interest you:

 Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre 0121 472 5171 www.woodbrooke.org.uk

- Swarthmoor Hall 01229 583204 www.swarthmoorhall.co.uk
- Charney Manor 01235 868206 www.charneymanor.org.uk
- Claridge House 0845 3457281 www.claridgehousequaker.org.uk
- Glenthorne Quaker Centre 015394 35389 www.glenthorne.org

Some Quaker centres have bursary funds to assist with the cost of courses, as do many local and area meetings. For example, look in the Woodbrooke brochure or go to www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/financial-help.html for information about financial help with Woodbrooke courses. Don't hesitate to apply for help with costs if you need to – that's what bursaries are there for. You can ask an elder or overseer in your meeting for help sorting out bursary assistance.

Journeying on activity 3

Check out resources for children and young people

You might like to get hold of copies of *Journeys in the Spirit*, the resource for Friends working with children and young people in meetings. What do you think about the information and activities offered? Are there any you would like to try out yourself?

- You could go to www.quaker.org.uk/resources to access samples of *Journeys in the Spirit* online you can also subscribe to *Journeys in the Spirit* on this webpage.
- Or contact Quaker Life on 020 7663 1013 or email ql@quaker.org.uk and ask for a copy of *Journeys in the Spirit* to be sent to you.

Does your meeting use the *Journeys in the Spirit* resource? How it has been received? Speak to one of the overseers or elders to find out. Are you interested in getting involved with work with children and young people in your meeting?

You could also check out the young Quaker website www.yqspace.org.uk or the online forum www.friendlink.org.uk which is aimed mainly at young Quakers.

Journeying on activity 4

Read a Swarthmore Lecture

You could read one or more of the Swarthmore Lectures, for an insight into Quaker thinking on issues of importance to Friends through the years. More recent lectures are also available in audio formats.

- A full list of Swarthmore lectures is available on Wikipedia at: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swarthmore_Lecture or you'll find a list of recent lectures on pages 263–264
- You could have a look at the collection of Swarthmore Lectures in your local meeting house library and borrow any that interest you
- Or contact the Quaker Centre bookshop (contact details in Further exploration) to buy a copy
- You could attend Yearly Meeting to hear the next Swarthmore Lecture live. For information about Yearly Meeting, contact Friends House on 020 7663 1094 or go to www.quaker.org.uk/britain-yearly-meeting

Journeying on activity 5

Read and engage with Quaker publications

You might like to read a recent edition of *The Friend, Friends Quarterly, Quaker Voices* or *Quaker News* and find out what's going on among British Friends. Are there any articles, letters or adverts that especially speak to you? Will you do anything to follow up that interest?

Copies of these publications are available to borrow in most meeting house libraries.

You can access them online or make contact to order them as follows:

The Friend www.thefriend.org
 Tel: 020 7663 1178
 Email: subs@thefriend.org

The Friends Quarterly www.thefriend.org

Tel: 020 7663 1178

Email: subs@thefriend.org

 Quaker Voices www.quaker.org.uk/qv Tel: 020 8446 5772

Email: qv@quaker.org.uk

• Quaker News www.quaker.org.uk/qn

Tel: 020 7663 1119

Email: qnews@quaker.org.uk

Journeying on activity 6

Explore Quaker gatherings

You could find out about Quaker gatherings and consider whether you are interested in attending one. Speak to your Becoming Friends companion, or an elder or overseer at your meeting, to find out about local Quaker gatherings and any of the national Quaker gatherings listed below, or contact direct:

 Junior Yearly Meeting (for young Quakers aged 15 to 18) www.quaker.org.uk/junior-yearly-meeting

Tel: 020 7663 1013

Email: ql@quaker.org.uk

 Yearly Meeting www.quaker.org.uk/ym Tel: 020 7663 1040

Email: rco@quaker.org.uk

 Summer Gathering www.summergathering.org.uk Tel: 020 7663 1040

Email: rco@quaker.org.uk

- Yorkshire Friends Holiday School (for young Quakers aged 13 to 18) www.yfhs.org.uk/index.htm
 Email: secretary@yfhs.org.uk
- other summer schools for Young Quakers see Book of Meetings for information or contact Quaker Life children and young people's team Tel: 020 7663 1013
 Email: ql@quaker.org.uk
- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Conference www.quaker.org.uk/conferences-and-events Tel: 020 7663 1000 Email: qpsw@quaker.org.uk
- Young Friends General Meeting (for young Quakers aged 18 to 30)
 www.yfgm.quaker.org.uk

Tel: 0121 472 1998

Email: yfgm@quaker.org.uk

You can also check out forthcoming Quaker events at: www.quaker.org.uk/events

Is there an event that particularly interests you? You could ask your elders or overseers if you could be considered for nomination as a rep for your local or area meeting at that gathering when it is next held.

Journeying on activity 7

Deepen your own spiritual practice

You may like to continue with or try out one of the spiritual disciplines that have been offered during the Becoming Friends course such as prayer, meditation or journalling. Some possibilities are given below, with a reminder of where they were first mentioned:

- Listening practice: Experiencing Quaker Community Deepening 4, page 268
- Fourfold blessing: Faith in Action Deepening 4, page 173
- Review of the day: The Sacred in the Everyday Deepening 2, page 269
- Mindfulness practice: The Sacred in the Everyday Deepening 4, page 186
- Simple breathing practice: Silence and Waiting Discovery 4, page 275
- Silence and worship online: Silence and Waiting Deepening 3, page 206
- Sacred reading: Speaking of God Deepening 5, page 270

There are also courses on spiritual practice and prayer and retreats available at Quaker centres and locally in meetings.

You could ask your Becoming Friends companion, or an elder or overseer at your meeting, what spiritual practice courses or retreats are available locally. Alternatively, check out the websites or ring and ask for the programmes for the following Quaker centres to find out if there are relevant courses or retreats coming up (there may be bursaries available – see Journeying on activity 2), or simply arrange to spend some quiet time there.

- Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre www.woodbrooke.org.uk
 Tel: 0121 472 5171
 - Email: enquiries@woodbrooke.org.uk
- Swarthmoor Hall www.swarthmoorhall.co.uk

Tel: 01229 583204

Email: info@swarthmoorhall.co.uk

 Charney Manor www.charneymanor.org.uk Tel: 01235 868206

Email: charneymanor@quaker.org.uk

 Claridge House (Friends Fellowship of Healing Centre) www.claridgehousequaker.org.uk

Tel: 0845 3457281

Email: welcome@claridgehousequaker.org.uk

• Glenthorne Quaker Centre www.glenthorne.org
Tel: 015394 35389

Email: info@glenthorne.org

You could also contact:

 The Quaker Retreat Group www.qrg.threetowers.org.uk
 Tel: 01943 863213
 Email QuakerRetreats@waitrose.com

 Quaker Voluntary Action (working retreats programme) www.qva.org.uk
 Tel: 01484 687139

Email mail@qva.org.uk

Finishing the work of Becoming Friends with your companion

Having worked together during the Becoming Friends course, it is important that you and your Becoming Friends companion take time to reflect on your journey together and to say 'goodbye', at least where the Becoming Friends course is concerned –you may very well continue to see plenty of each other in other ways! A suggested outline for a final meeting is given below for you and your companion to adapt as suits you.

Suggested elements for a final meeting with your Becoming Friends companion

1. Worship

Taking time in silence together at the beginning will help to ground your conversation in worship, so that even your last meeting together is a Quaker 'meeting for learning'.

2. Review and evaluation

Consider any of the reflections you wish to share from the Reflective activity, as well as generally reviewing your journey together.

3. Journeying on activity/taking things further

Share with your companion about the 'Journeying on' activity that you chose. What might you want to take further? What might you want to do or know more about? Consider resources in your local meeting, area meeting, Woodbrooke, Quaker Life or other learning opportunities.

4. Any needs and how to meet them

Is there anything that you need in the way of further information, support or guidance, whether about Quakers or your own needs? Your companion may be able to point you in the right direction to find sources of help, such as local elders and overseers, or specific groups or organisations outside of the Religious Society of Friends.

5. Ongoing spiritual friendship?

Your relationship with your Becoming Friends companion is now ending, but if you are interested in finding other opportunities for spiritual friendship, talk to your companion about spiritual friendship arrangements or groups in your meeting or local area.

6. Appreciations and thanks

Take time to mark your appreciation for the gift of each other's time and friendship during the course.

7. Cake and celebration!

Perhaps you would like to share a little something to celebrate the end of the course?

8. Letting go and saying goodbye

It is good to take the chance to say goodbyes (as far as your work together on Becoming Friends is concerned) and acknowledge the end of this particular time you have spent together.

9. Closing Worship

Finish your session together with a few minutes of worship. It is important after all the conversation and practicalities are finished with that you take a moment to return to the spiritual ground for your work together.

Further exploration

If you would like to explore some resources that go into more depth about aspects of Quakerism, here are some suggestions for reading, listening or viewing.

- Creating community, creating connections, Lizz Roe and Zelie Gross, Quaker Books, 2009. Yearly Meeting Gathering 2009 study materials. Available online at: www.ymg.org.uk/workpack-for-meetings or in hard copy by contacting Friends House on 020 7663 1161 or email: rco@quaker.org.uk
- *Engaging with the Quaker testimonies: a toolkit,* Quaker Peace & Social Witness Testimonies Committee, Quaker Books, 2007.
- *Good lives* study pack, Pam Lunn and Lizz Roe, Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 2009.
- 'The heart of Quakerism', Geoffrey Durham: talk to London Quakers, 2009. Text or MP3 download available from: http://www.londonquakers.org.uk/news/lqagm09feature
- *Hearts and minds prepared* study pack, Jennie Levin, Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 2003. Available in many meetings, but no longer for sale as a full pack.
- An introduction to Quakerism, Pink Dandelion, Oxford University Press, 2007.
- The nature and mission of the Church: a response from the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain to the World Council of Churches faith and order paper 198, 'The nature and mission of the Church: a stage on the way to a common statement', Document from Meeting for Sufferings, 7 Feb 2009. Download the minute and the full response from www.quaker.org.uk/nature-and-mission-church.
- *New light: 12 Quaker voices*, edited by Jennifer Kavanagh, O Books, 2008. Individual themes also available in the *Twelve Quakers and...* series, Quaker Quest, 2004–2007.
- Quaker faith & practice: the book of Christian discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, 4th edition, Britain Yearly Meeting, 2009 (first published 1995).
- Quaker identity and the heart of our faith, Quaker Life Study Materials, Quaker Life, 2008. Available online at: www.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/Faith-and-practice-proceeding.pdf or in hard copy by contacting Quaker Life on 020 7663 1140 or email: ql@quaker.org.uk.
- Responding to climate change, Quaker Peace & Social Witness study materials. Available online at: www.quaker.org.uk/environment or in hard copy by contacting Quaker Peace & Social Witness on 0207 663 1000 or email: qpsw@quaker.org.uk

Closing Unit Becoming Friends

Searching the depths: essays on being a Quaker today, edited by Harvey Gillman and Alastair Heron, Quaker Home Service, 1996.

A very short introduction to Quakerism, Ben Pink Dandelion. Podcasts of lectures, available to download from www.woodbrooke.org.uk/news.php/6/a-very-short-introduction-to-quakerism

Many of these titles are available from the Quaker Centre bookshop:

Friends House 173 Euston Road London NW1 2BJ

Tel: 020 7663 1030 Fax: 020 7663 1001

Website: www.quaker.org.uk/bookshop Email: quakercentre@quaker.org.uk



Many of them will also be in your local meeting house library. You could ask your Becoming Friends companion to help you track down titles that interest you.

For Journeying on activity 4: Swarthmore lectures list

1960	Kenneth C. Barnes	Creative imagination			
1961	Richard K. Ullmann	Tolerance and the intolerable			
1962	J. Duncan Wood	Building the institutions of peace			
1963	L. Hugh Doncaster	God in every man			
1964	Richenda C. Scott	Tradition and experience			
1965	John Macmurray	Search for reality in religion			
1966	William E. Barton	The moral challenge of Communism: some ethical aspects of Marxist/Leninist society			
1967	Kathleen M. Slack	Constancy and change in the Society of Friends			
1968	William Homan Thorpe	Quakers and humanists			
1969	Maurice A. Creasey	Bearings, or, Friends and the new reformation			
1970	Kenneth E. Boulding	Prospering of truth			
1971	Charles Frederick Carter	On having a sense of all conditions			
1972	Richard S. Peters	Reason, morality and religion			
1973	George H. Gorman	Amazing fact of Quaker worship			
1974	Wolf Mendl	Prophets and reconcilers: reflections on the Quaker peace testimony			
1975	Ralph Hetherington	The sense of glory: a psychological study of peak-experiences			
1976	W. Grigor McClelland	And a new earth: making tomorrow's society better than today's			
1977	Damaris Parker-Rhodes	Truth: a path not a possession			
1978	John Ormerod Greenwood	Signs of life: art and religious experience			
1979	John Reader	Of schools and schoolmasters. some thoughts on the Quaker contribution to education			
1980	Janet Scott	What canst thou say? Towards a Quaker theology			
1981	Adam Curle	True justice: Quaker peace makers and peace making			
1982	Gerald Priestland	Reasonable uncertainty: a Quaker approach to doctrine			
1983	Michael Rutter	A measure of our values: goals and dilemmas in the upbringing of children			
1984	Laurence Lerner	The Two Cinnas: Quakerism, revolution and poetry, a dialogue			

1985	Christopher Holdsworth	Steps in a large room: a Quaker explores the monastic tradition		
1986	Quaker Women's Group	Bringing the invisible into the Light: some Quaker feminists speak of their experience		
1987	John Lampen	Mending hurts		
1988	Harvey Gillman	A minority of one		
1989	S. Jocelyn Burnell	Broken for life		
1990	John Punshon	Testimony and tradition: some aspects of Quaker spirituality		
1991	Geoffrey Hubbard	Patterns and examples. Quaker attitudes and European opportunities		
1992	Brenda Clifft Heales & Chris Cook	Images and silence: future of Quaker ministry		
1993	Sydney D. Bailey	Peace is a process		
1994	Margaret Heathfield	Being together: our corporate life in the Religious Society of Friends		
1995	Anne Thomas	Only fellow-voyagers. creation stories as guides for the journey		
1996	Jonathan Dale	Beyond the spirit of the age		
1997	Christine Trevett	Previous convictions and end of the millennium Quakerism		
1998	Young Friends General Meeting	Who do we think we are? Young Friends' commitment and belonging		
1999	Alex Wildwood	A faith to call our own: Quaker tradition in the light of contemporary movements of the Spirit		
2000	Tim Newell	Forgiving justice: a Quaker vision for criminal justice		
2001	Tony Stoller	Wrestling with the Angel		
2002	Jackie Leach Scully	Playing in the Presence: genetics, ethics and spirituality		
2003	Eleanor Nesbitt	Interfaith pilgrims: living truths and truthful living		
2004	Simon Fisher	Spirited living: waging conflict, building peace		
2005	Helen Steven	No extraordinary power: prayer, stillness and activism		
2006	Roger and Susan Sawtell	Reflections from a long marriage		
2007	Beth Allen	Ground and spring: foundations of Quaker discipleship		
2008	Christine A. M. Davis	Minding the future		
2009	Peter Eccles	The presence in the midst: reflections on discernment		

Appendix 1

Spiritual Practices

A blessing (lovingkindness) practice

In the Christian tradition blessing practices involve asking that God's love enfold or protect someone, while in Eastern traditions 'lovingkindness' towards the self and others is practised to bring a deep realisation of oneness with all beings.

- 1. Begin by taking a moment to still yourself and become open to the presence of God/Spirit.
- 2. Bring a person to mind whom you wish to bless, or evoke lovingkindness for. This can be someone you love, someone you hardly know (for instance, someone you met in a shop this morning) or someone you find difficult. You can also practice blessing yourself sometimes this can be the most important place to start.
- 3. Now spend some time in silence simply upholding that person, 'holding them in the Light' (to use the Quaker expression).
- 4. You may then like to use some very simple phrases to focus your upholding of that person; these can be repeated silently or under your breath throughout your period of prayer. Phrases could include one or two like the following:

may you be well may you be free from suffering may you be happy may you be at peace

bless you in your sleeping bless you in your waking bless you in your work bless you in your play bless you in your good moods bless you in your bad moods

bless you when you....

It can be very healing to use a blessing practice towards someone with whom we have argued or have a difficult relationship, or again towards ourselves, choosing relevant phrases such as 'bless you when you stay out all night'

5. Bring the blessing practice to a close by spending a short time in silence, allowing the Light of God's love to shine on you and anyone whom you have been upholding.

A contemplative prayer practice

Contemplative prayer involves any practice through which we seek to be aware of the presence of God/Love and to remain silently and attentively in that presence, completely open to God. Prayerfully repeating a single word or short phrase is one form of contemplative prayer, designed to help us swim out beyond the ego and realise our oneness with the Divine. As we pray, our will keeps consenting to God by returning to the sacred word. This simple but demanding discipline helps reduce the obstacles to an expanded awareness of a fuller level of reality.

- 1. Begin by finding a quiet place where you can sit in a well supported position.
- 2. Close your eyes lightly.
- 3. Sit relaxed but alert. Take time to become quiet and centred. You may find that gently focusing on your breath helps.
- 4. Silently, within your own heart, begin to say a single word or short phrase. You may consider one of the following or choose your own:

Peace One Beloved Amma/Abba (Mother/Father) Love Jesus Maranatha (Come, Lord)

- 5. If a word does not come immediately, allow yourself to wait on a word and trust that it will come. This may take several prayer sessions, but this waiting in itself is a practice of surrender. You can use your breath as a focus until a word comes.
- 6. Listen to your prayer word or phrase as you say it gently but continuously. Allow the repetition to be an anchor for your intention to be open to God's presence.
- 7. Do not try to think or imagine anything spiritual or otherwise. When thoughts or other distractions come, do not try to suppress them but just keep returning gently to your word or breath.

Listening prayer practice

Listening lies at the heart of the Quaker way. This listening prayer practice is simple but challenges us to listen deeply both to ourselves and to another. There is no discussion, only listening. Listening deeply and prayerfully to one another can draw both speaker and listener to a deeper understanding of the sacred thread running through their lives.

- 1. Find a partner to do the listening prayer practice with you and a quiet place where you will not be interrupted.
- 2. Each of you will have 5 minutes to speak while the other person listens without interrupting. Your speaking and listening time will be surrounded by time when both of you will be silent together.
- 3. Agree which of you will speak first and then agree a focus question, such as 'In what ways have you experienced God in your life during the last week? or 'What has been going on in your prayer life this month?'
- 4. Begin the practice with 5 minutes of shared silence to enable you both to become still and centred.
- 5. The first person then has 5 minutes to speak without interruption (and afterwards there should be no commentary on what is said). The first listener keeps time and signals the beginning and end of the 5 minutes.
- 6. There is then a 5 minute silence for centring before the second person speaks.
- 7. The second person speaks for 5 minutes.
- 8. Finish with another 5 minutes of shared, prayerful silence.

A review of the day

Reflecting on the events of each day can help us see the work of the Spirit in our lives – the sacred in the everyday. Like beachcombing, this practice can help us notice all kinds of things which we may have passed over in the busyness of the day. As you prayerfully explore the mystery of yourself in the midst of your daily actions, you can grow more familiar with your own spirit and become more aware of the promptings of Love and Truth within you.

- 1. Begin by taking a moment to still yourself and become open to the presence of God/Spirit.
- 2. Accept and be thankful for any gifts that the day has brought, however small a smile or kindness, work done, a glimpse of beauty, even the resilience that has enabled you to get to the end of the day in one piece!
- 3. Let the Light of the Spirit shine on the events of your day, and on your own actions, attitudes and motives, helping you to be open to growth.
- 4. Now go over the events of the day briefly in your mind, from the moment you woke up until the present moment.
 - With each event, observe not just what happened but also your thoughts, feelings and responses. Don't judge yourself or the event just observe.
- 5. Are there any things in the experience of your day today, however small or seemingly insignificant, that you notice, that particularly catch your attention?

 Be still and allow yourself to be with whatever surfaces in connection with each experience.
- 6. Open yourself to any new ways of seeing or understanding that may arise.
 - Are there ways you responded to or cooperated with the promptings of Love and Truth in your heart? Are there ways you resisted them?
 - Are there ways in which you feel God is calling you to a change of heart? Or to a new response to pain or joy in your life?
- 7. Let yourself really see deeply, allowing the Light to shine on the experiences of your day, speaking to your heart, challenging, encouraging and teaching you.
- 8. Open your heart to the grace to respond to what has come up.

Sacred reading practice (lectio divina)

Sacred reading has been part of the Christian prayer tradition for centuries and is an important spiritual practice for many modern people. It is different from our normal, analytical reading of information and involves a slow meditative reading of a short text – reading not so much with the mind as with the heart.

- 1. Begin by choosing a short extract from a sacred text: this could be the Bible, poetry, other sacred writings or anything that speaks deeply to you.
 - Even this choosing can be done in a way that allows the text to 'choose' you, rather than you making an intellectual selection; for example, you could choose at random from a collection of extracts or use a lectionary or book of daily readings.
- 2. Read the text slowly and meditatively two or three times. Allow the words to soak in.
- 3. Is there a word or phrase that jumps out at you?
 - Allow yourself to become aware of any words that cause a particular response, whether because they speak deeply and positively to you or perhaps cause resistance in you.
- 4. Now read the passage again, lingering over this word or phrase. Pay attention to what resonates in you, to your own response to the words. Stay with the word or phrase and repeat or reread them as often as you wish.
 - It can be helpful to spend 10 or 15 minutes simply meditating on the word or phrase by repeating it (aloud or silently) in this way.
- 5. Allow the words to speak to you at a deep level. What is the Spirit teaching you through this word or phrase and your response to it?
- 6. If you feel drawn to make any kind of response to this deep reflection, give expression to it: this could be in prayer, writing, drawing, or simply speaking to God about it.
- 7. Then spend some time in silent waiting on God not necessarily expecting an answer to any questions, but simply resting in contemplation of the Divine presence in your heart.
- 8. As you move back into the ordinary activities of your day, do you feel called to live out any understanding you have reached as a result of this practice of sacred reading?

Becoming Friends Appendix 1

Extracts for use in sacred reading practice (lectio divina)

Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink' ... The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' ... Jesus replied: 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.'

John 4:6-10

What we are looking for Is what is looking.
St. Francis of Assisi

There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in the shape of a flame of fire, coming from the middle of a bush. Moses looked; there was the bush blazing but it was not being burnt up. 'I must go and look at this strange sight,' Moses said, 'and see why the bush is not burnt.' Now the Lord saw him go forward to look, and God called to him from the middle of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' he said. 'Here I am,' he answered. 'Come no nearer,' he said. 'Take off your shoes. The ground where you stand is holy ground.'

Exodus 3:2-6

Closer is He than breathing And nearer than hands and feet. Alfred, Lord Tennyson God is in the water of the lake; he is also in the cracked bed of the lake when the lake has dried up.

God is in the abundant harvest; he is also in the famine that occurs when the harvest fails.

God is in the lightning; he is also in the darkness when the lightning has faded.

Mansur al-Hallaj (poem attributed to Mansur, translator unknown)

In the beginning was the Word,
And the Word was with God,
And the Word was God.
All things came into being through him,
And without him not one thing came into being.
What has come into being in him was life,
And the life
Was the light
Of all people.
The light shines in the darkness,
And the darkness
Did not overcome it.

John 1:1-5

There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven:

A time for giving birth,

A time for dying;

A time for planting,

A time for uprooting what has been planted.

A time for killing,

A time for healing;

A time for knocking down,

A time for building.

A time for tears,

A time for laughter;

A time for mourning,

A time for dancing.

A time for throwing stones away,

A time for gathering them up;

A time for embracing,

A time to refrain from embracing.

A time for searching,

A time for losing;

A time for keeping,

A time for throwing away.

A time for tearing,

A time for sewing;

A time for keeping silent,

A time for speaking.

A time for loving,

A time for hating; a time for war,

A time for peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

You never enjoy the world aright, until the Sea itself flows in your veins, until you are clothed with the heavens, and crowned with the stars: and perceive yourself as the sole heir of the whole world, and more than that, because people are in it who are every one sole heirs as well as you. Until you can sing and rejoice and delight in God, as misers do in gold, and Kings in sceptres, you never enjoy the world....

Thomas Traherne

I am the taste of water.
I am the light of the Sun and the Moon.
I am the original fragrance of the Earth.
I am the heat in fire.
I am the life of all that lives.

Bhagavad Gita

O LORD,

you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue You know it completely, O Lord. You hem me in – behind and before; You have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, Too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
If I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of dawn,
If I settle on the far side of the sea,
Even there your hand will guide me,
Your right hand will hold me fast.

If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me And the light become night around me,' Even the darkness will not be dark to you; The night will shine like the day For darkness is as light to you.

For you created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you When I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, Your eyes saw my unformed body.

All the days ordained for me Were written in your book Before one of them came to be.

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, They would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.

Psalm 139:1-18

A simple breathing practice

Practising mindful awareness of our breath can be a helpful way to become centred at the beginning of meeting for worship and can offer, in its simplicity, a profound experience of connecting with the sacred in the present moment.

- 1. Begin by taking a moment to check your posture. You can, of course, do breathing practice in any position, but it can be very helpful to sit in a well-supported upright position: whatever position you choose, the important thing is to find one that enables you to be both relaxed and alert.
- 2. You may find it helpful to close your eyes gently.
- 3. Take a moment to release any tightness from your muscles you can do this by imagining tension simply flowing away on each outbreath for several breaths. Don't forget areas that are often quite tense, such as shoulders, back and face.
- 4. Now bring your focus to your breathing. Simply let your attention rest on your breath, allowing it to flow naturally. Follow your breath with your full attention as it flows in and out of your body.
- 5. As you watch, notice how each breath is different: sometimes shallow, sometimes deep; smooth or ragged; fast or slow; cool or warm; silent or with a sound.
- 6. You may like to focus your awareness in one place as you watch your breath: the rise and fall of your chest or abdomen, or the feeling of air passing at the back of your throat or through your nose.
- 7. Continue to watch your breath with mindful attention for the rest of the time you have set aside.
- 8. Each time distractions arise, just bring your attention back to your breath, gently and without judgement. There's no success or failure. Just breathing. Simply being present to what is.

Appendix 2

Guidance

Becoming Friends: guidance for meetings

Local or area meetings working with the Becoming Friends process will all have different needs, but we hope that meetings will consider adopting guidelines for its implementation, to ensure the best possible support for newcomers. We offer the following suggested guidelines as a resource and help for meetings (but this is not in any way meant to be an imposed structure – meetings can adapt these guidelines to their own needs).

While it is not essential to have Becoming Friends companions available in a meeting in order to offer the learning materials to newcomers, experience has shown that newcomers are likely to get more from the process if they do have a companion. There will be some online companion support available for those without a local Becoming Friends companion or who prefer to work this way.

When there are no Becoming Friends companions in a meeting, it is all the more important that the meeting engages actively with the Becoming Friends process, for example by being prepared to take part in individual or group conversations with the newcomer as part of learning activities exploring Quaker experience.

1 Recruitment

Becoming Friends companions for newcomers need to be people who are familiar with the Quaker way and reasonably established in the life of the meeting.

It is recommended that Becoming Friends companions are recruited through a combination of:

- interested individuals making an offer, expressing interest or being encouraged by elders and overseers (this will, at least initially, be in response to publicity and information from the Becoming Friends project)
- discernment by elders and overseers
- a training/preparation process.

Recruitment of Becoming Friends companions need not be done through the traditional nominations route, so as not to add to the burden on the local nominations committee or create a barrier to engagement with the Becoming Friends process.

The training/preparation will be an essential last stage of the discernment process, both for the person offering to serve as a Becoming Friends companion and for the meeting.

2. Training/preparation of Becoming Friends companions

Friends offering service as Becoming Friends companions to newcomers need to prepare for the role. Just as *Advices & queries* urges us to come to meeting for worship with 'hearts and minds prepared', so it is with this service.

Courses to prepare Becoming Friends companions will be offered through events at Woodbrooke and Swarthmoor Hall, regional events and courses delivered locally with the support of experienced Becoming Friends companions or a Becoming Friends companion course handbook.

It is recommended that new Becoming Friends companions are not prepared for this role by simply undertaking it alongside an experienced Becoming Friends companion. This does not allow for the necessary challenges of self examination, discernment and reflection that will be part of the preparation process before engaging with a potentially vulnerable newcomer.

Meetings will be asked to provide a letter of support for Friends coming on the Becoming Friends companion courses, to ensure that local discernment has been made, and that the meeting is supporting those taking on this responsibility.

It will be helpful if meetings record when someone has attended a Becoming Friends companion course. This will serve as a local record and can also be provided when a companion applies to access the companions' area of the Becoming Friends online resources.

3. The process in local or area meetings

Local coordination

The Becoming Friends process for supporting newcomers will be coordinated at local or area meeting level, as fits individual meetings' circumstances. In either case, it is essential that an experienced local Friend or Friends be appointed to oversee the Becoming Friends support in that meeting. This could be done by elders and/or overseers, or a local Becoming Friends coordinator may be appointed specifically for this purpose. The meeting needs not only to arrange Becoming Friends companions for newcomers, but also any follow up and support to ensure the system works in their area.

Timing of the offer to newcomers

The appropriate point at which newcomers are offered the support of the Becoming Friends learning materials and a Becoming Friends companion will be for elders, overseers or experienced Friends in the local meeting to discern. This offer can be made at a relatively early stage, since there is no expectation that the new attender should be thinking about membership before being offered this learning opportunity and support. Indeed, it is not intended to be linked

specifically to a newcomer's decision about joining the Society. It may be that the right time to make the offer will be when a newcomer has attended a number of Quaker Quest or other outreach sessions, or when they are beginning to establish a pattern of regular attendance at meeting. Equally, it can just as well be offered when someone is thinking about membership, or has recently joined.

Choice of Becoming Friends companion

The local and area meeting will ideally have a small pool of trained/prepared Becoming Friends companions for newcomers. The newcomer will be offered a choice of companion from that pool (after checks have been made about their current availability). If a newcomer expresses a strong wish for a specific Friend who is not in the existing pool of Becoming Friends companions, that person may be offered training and preparation, if they are willing to undertake the role.

How many Becoming Friends companions per newcomer?

In most cases, one person will act as Becoming Friends companion to each newcomer, although some meetings may prefer to aim for offering two Becoming Friends companions each time.

If one Becoming Friends companion is usually offered to newcomers, there may be exceptional situations where it is appropriate for another person to be present as an additional support or safeguard. There may also be occasions when the gender of the Becoming Friends companion is an issue for the newcomer, and it is necessary to offer an additional person to address this need. In these cases, the additional person need not be a trained Becoming Friends companion. These issues will be dealt with through the careful discernment of elders and overseers, or the local coordinator.

The Becoming Friends learning materials will often provide opportunities for newcomers to find out more about aspects of Quakerism by engaging in conversations with other local Friends on given subjects, thereby encouraging an awareness of a range of Quaker views and experiences in addition to those of their Becoming Friends companion.

How many newcomers can one person support?:

To avoid overburdening Friends undertaking service as Becoming Friends companions, the number of newcomers that an individual companion can support on a 1:1 basis at any one time will be a matter for discernment by the elders and overseers or the local Becoming Friends coordinator.

It is also possible that one Becoming Friends companion could work with several newcomers at once, in particular by working as a small group.

Timescales and endings

In each case, the Becoming Friends companion and newcomer will be encouraged to decide on a timescale for their work together, according to their own needs and availability. This can be very flexible, and may range from a few weeks to several months, but it is helpful at the outset to establish a date for reviewing the process, so that it is not an open ended commitment on either part. In a situation where the companion relationship does not work out, or a Becoming Friends companion becomes unavailable, elders and overseers or the local Becoming Friends coordinator will make arrangements for an alternative Becoming Friends companion to be offered to the newcomer.

Confidentiality and openness

Conversations between the newcomer and Becoming Friends companion are confidential. It will therefore not be appropriate for either newcomer or companion to be asked to give a detailed report on their work together (although it may sometimes lead to an application for membership, when the usual local membership procedures will apply). Of course, both newcomer and companion may agree to share elements of their experience of the Becoming Friends course without divulging personal information. This may encourage others to get involved with Becoming Friends, either as newcomers or companions.

Becoming Friends companions should not invite anyone else to meetings with the newcomer they are supporting, unless this is decided together with the newcomer. There may, however, be occasions when the newcomer may wish to invite someone else along, and this choice can be discussed with their companion.

Evaluation and feedback

There is a simple evaluation form at page 285 for newcomers and companions to complete at the end of their work together, which will be given to elders and overseers or the local Becoming Friends coordinator for review. If meetings wish to give feedback to Woodbrooke and Quaker Life about the use of Becoming Friends in their area, the Becoming Friends project team welcomes such feedback on becoming.friends@woodbrooke.org.uk

Support for Becoming Friends companions

The Becoming Friends companions' network will provide resources and support for companions, including through online discussion forums. It can also be very helpful for Becoming Friends companions to receive support by:

- meeting with other Becoming Friends companions in the local or area meeting
- meeting with supporting elders and overseers or the local Becoming Friends coordinator.

Journalling guidance

Journalling is a way of using words and/or images to explore aspects of our lives. A journal is usually for our own eyes only, so there is no need to worry about how we express ourselves, or whether we are doing it 'properly'.

- 1. A journal can cover any or all of the following (and plenty more the possibilities are endless):
 - a record and reflections on the events of the day, perhaps looking for the presence of God in that day
 - reflections in response to a particular question
 - exploring memories or incidents that have been important to us
 - conversation with / a letter to God, or a person who is significant for us
 - a record of creativity and activity (eg. gardening, craft work, painting)
 - a prayer journal eg. people you want to pray for, practices you have explored
 - a record of things you have been grateful for on a particular day
 - writing about 'griefs' and 'joys' during the day, or any period of time
 - a record of books or articles you have read that have struck you particularly, including any quotations that you want to remember
 - photos and drawings of people, places, animals, projects
 - responses to specific activities on a course such as 'Becoming Friends'
 - reflections on ministry in meeting for worship or sermons, articles etc
 - stories, poems, prayers
- 2. You may want to bear in mind these suggestions when working with a journal (and 'write' includes anything you might do in your journal, such as draw etc):
 - write spontaneously, without judging what you are writing
 - write whenever you feel like it, rather than setting a rule
 - write honestly
 - write about what really matters to you
 - value the different approaches and apparent contradictions that you bring to your writing they may reveal much to you

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.
 - 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.

Evaluation form for Becoming Friends course

Date:
Meeting:
Your role: Newcomer / Companion (please circle or highlight one)
Learning units you chose:
Was there anything you found particularly strong/helpful/positive in your learning experience?
Was there anything you found particularly weak/unhelpful/lacking?
Annu ath an a managarta an an annuation a
Any other comments or suggestions?
Name (optional):

Please complete and return this form to your local Becoming Friends co-ordinator. An electronic version can be downloaded from www.woodbrooke.org.uk/becomingfriends