

Quotes & queries for Global Meeting for Worship

Friends are invited to send additional quotations and queries to blog@universalistfriends.org.

Contributors

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Quotes on Quaker worship and centering, v.12 (7/13/2017)

Tom Sander, [Friends Meeting at Cambridge](#),
with initial discernment from Marina Zivkovic and Anne Thompson

The goals of these quotes are: 1) to help deepen the worship experience for newcomers and oldcomers alike; 2) to help each of us in the Meeting hone our craft of worship; and 3) to help us more deeply appreciate that there is not one approach but many approaches to meeting for worship. Even the longest of these quotes take only a minute or so to read. The list is somewhat diverse since different quotes speak differently to different people and better to enable the person with Care of Meeting to choose from among these.

Uses:

- a) This list might be a useful source of inspiration for the person having Care of Meeting (COM);
- b) On the fourth Sunday of each month, the person with COM at FMC would choose one of these quotes (whichever spoke to his/her condition or whichever he/she thought might be useful to the Meeting given recent meetings for worship) to read early in Meeting (in the same way that the queries are read from month to month).
- c) The quote could just be read straight out or preceded by “from month-to-month Ministry & Counsel reads a quote on worship or centering to help the Meeting in deepening its spirituality, today’s quote is...” [The person reading one of these quotes can edit a quote down if he/she feels it is too long or finds some part objectionable.]
- d) These might be useful to quote from or distribute to others.

The quotes are ordered alphabetically by last name, just to make it easier to find a quote. Quotes loosely concerning “centering” appear towards the end (#49 – #61).

Those reading this with additional quotes that they think should be on this list are encouraged to send them to: Thomas.h.sander@gmail.com.

1. “As many candles, lighted and put in one place, do greatly augment the light, and make it more to shine forth, so when many are gathered together in the same life there is more of the glory of God.”
 - Robert Barclay, “Apology” (1678)
2. “I felt a secret power among them which touched my heart, and as I gave way unto it I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up, and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this power and life, whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed.”
 - Robert Barclay, (1675) [Apology, Proposition XI]
- 2a. “In our meetings for worship our attitude of mind will not always be the same. There will be times of seeking to know the Light of Christ guiding our course amid tangled ways of action or thought, times of sorrow for failure and of search for strength to overcome temptation..., to come into a right mind toward those who have hurt us; time also when...in the silence we lie open to what God... shall speak, the eternal word, the heavenly vision setting before us ‘things invisible to mortal sight’. And all this ...coloured or transfused by the sense, subconscious or explicit, of others met with us seeking, failing, finding, even as we, and sometimes a great love glows within us, a mightiness of longing for a coming near to one another for the help of us all. There will be with us some...bewildered seekers, some who are finders and ever finding more of the things of God, some for whom the outward life is going well, but most...battered by the week’s labour, people in anxiety, finding it hard to prevent the

cares of the world choking the good seed...; there will be lonely people longing for friendship and those on whom the storm of temptation is beating sore, some giving way and some coming over it, people who feel ... badly treated and finding it hard to forgive, some who are knowing success in their work as builders of the holy city and some disheartened at the steepness of the way – everyone, however placed, in need of renewed strength. The realization of this will bring the worshipers into community of spirit..., drawing strength from [God] and sharing with one another, knowing bitterness of soul to give way to...peace.”

- Alfred Neave Brayshaw, 1926 Swarthmore Lecture

3. “Though Friends gather in silence... our worship is not based on silence. Rather it is based on expectancy... As we gather, we need a time of centering, of letting go of our familiar cares and preoccupations. Too often, we shut ourselves off from God’s presence with our busyness, our worldly goals, or absorption with our own wills. Our purpose in worship is to be wholly open to the presence and power of God... Sometimes as the group worships together in the silence, members feel drawn together in a profound experience of the presence of God... Such meetings are called ‘gathered meetings’ and ... bind the worshipers together in a community of faith. It is the uniting Presence that makes them memorable... Give yourself over to the silence, both outwardly and inwardly. In the words of *Psalm* 46, ‘Be still and know that I am God.’ ”

- Gordon Browne, 1999 [“Nor’wester”]

4. “The worshiper sits ... in silence. He seeks to compose his wandering thoughts.... Perhaps by repeating a prayer, or a verse of scripture or poetry. As he progresses, he may be able to offer a prayer ... which merges with thoughts [of] the routine problems of his daily life. He must not fear to express selfish desires, for, above all, he must be sincere. He may then find that these desires, when expressed before God, assume a different form, proportion and direction. After a time something may come before his mind, a past event, a future possibility, a saying or occurrence in the Bible or elsewhere on which his attention becomes fixed. This focus of attention is now seen, not in a secular, but in a religious context. It is viewed in its eternal rather than ... temporal aspect.

The will and feelings of the worshiper become stirred as [this] thought... glows with life and power. He no longer feels...he...is searching, but that he is being searched through. There is a growing sense of divine Presence. Truth is not thought about, but perceived and enjoyed. It may be that a point is reached at which the worshiper finds that he must communicate to the meeting what has come to him. Or, he may resolve to act ... in the future in accordance with the Light...received. If he waits quietly and expectantly with the windows of his soul open to whatever Light may shine, he may lose all sense of separate existence and find himself aware only of the greater life on which his own is based. The sense of union with God may come unexpectedly...[but]...more often than is generally supposed for it is frequently not recognized....”

- Howard Brinton, 1952 (*Friends for 300 Years*)

4a. “I felt actively engaged in deep spiritual seeking...I felt as if I was directly breathing Spirit in and out, directly breathing compassion and wisdom in and out, directly breathing love and justice in and out. This experience was immediate and powerful. I was not just thinking about what other people in the past had said about God or religion. Instead, I felt profoundly moved by glimmers of direct connection and attunement to the Spirit, the Inward Teacher...”

- Steve Chase [*Letters to a Fellow Seeker*, 2012]

5. “The meeting house is not a consecrated edifice, and if there is anything holy about it, it must be the lives of the people who meet there. The Friends feel that there must be a vital and sustained connection between worship and daily life. When their ideal is attained, their meeting is merely the community search for that guidance which they covet for every important act of their lives.”

- William Wistar Comfort [date unknown, published posthumously in Comfort’s *Just Among Friends: The Quaker Way of Life* in 1959]

6. “All true worship is inspired by God. The place of worship is the place of dependence, the place of wonder and of power, the place of fellowship and of communion... Worship links us to God and implies faith in a God who is in some sense personal. Personality is the highest category we know and we cannot worship a Being who is less than the highest of which we conceive... Thus the act of worship presupposes on our part a sense of dependence on God and the acknowledgment of our need of him, and this means that the element of adoration and thanksgiving should always be present in worship. Worship in Christian experience is our response to the God of Love.”

- Robert Davis, 1933 [source unknown, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, Fifth Edition, Chapter 2]

7. "Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?"

- T.S. Eliot, "Ash Wednesday" (written 1927, published 1930)

8. "Finding the Light within... can be separated into four main steps with an invitation first to BE STILL:

- a) Mind the Light (pay attention to what's going on inside you, particularly where there's something that makes you feel uncomfortable)
 - b) Open your heart to the truth (don't run away from anything that's difficult or that you don't want to face, but keep a little distance from it: 'be still and cool in thy mind')
 - c) Wait in the Light (be patient, let the Light show you what is really going on, ask questions if what is being offered to you isn't clear or you want to know more, and wait for the answers to come, don't try to explain)
 - d) Submit to the truth (accept and welcome the information or images, and the insights, dreams and perceptions that may come later, and allow them to show the truth)"
- from Experiment with Light [UK Quaker group started by Rex Ambler: <http://www.experiment-with-light.org.uk/>]

8a. "When we settle into silence together, we settle into each others' presence, and the Spirit links us, becomes a bright lake of being in which we rest; whose ripples join us together, and communicate to each... our presence within that Spirit. In a truly gathered meeting... the same thing happens, only on a larger scale: there are long tides in the silence that ebb and flow among us, the little waves of Friends' concerns lapping at our feet like the wash of some passing boat, far out on the mere of our shared stillness. It seems to me impossible to plan for these connections, or to bring them about by any exercise of will; they are gift only, and the best we can do is try to ensure that we don't allow the fretfulness of our own hearts to obstruct them when they do appear."

- Mike Farley, "Ministries of Silence" (2016)

8b. "... Because we are not separate and apart, we need to worship together as well as alone. We are all part of the great family of God and we cannot fully be ourselves without the help of other people. Jesus spoke of himself as the vine and of us as the branches and God as the vinegrower. Each branch is small and may look insignificant, but each is part of the vine, and is essential to the whole and has its meaning as part of the whole. The larger life surrounds and explains and glorifies all our small individual parts. We are essential to God and [God] and ...[other souls]... essential to us. We need the help of other[s]... striving upward, too, and who help us forward by the unseen threads that bind us together. One helps another with or without words and sometimes in our Meeting for Worship we shall know the experience of a thought that has come to us, being voiced by someone else and carried further than we could carry it. This seems strange and wonderful, but it is part of the great unseen life in which we are all linked together."

- Ruth M. Fawell: *Worship and our Quaker meeting*, 1957, p. 3.

9. "Therefore, my dear hearts be Faithful every one in your particular measure of God's Gift which he hath given you and on the invisible wait in silence, and patience, and in obedience to that which open the Mystery of God, and leads to the Invisible God, which no mortal Eye can reach unto, or behold. Therefore as you tender your own souls, and your Eternal God, keep in the fear of the Lord, and be low, that the Plant of the Lord may take root downward in you."

- Margaret Fell, 'Epistle to Friends', 1654

10. "Silence is the inaudible echo of the voices of God which is heard with the ears of the heart. It is not simply the absence of speech but a state of being.... Silence can spill over into our speech as our utterances can spill over into the silence. When the silence penetrates the words with its own quality it enhances them, but when words spill into the silence they may diminish it unless they are truly inspired and give it new meaning the moment they are uttered..."

- Peter and Carole Fingesten, 1987 [in *Plain Living* by Catherine Whitmire]

11. "The first gleam of light, 'the first cold light of morning' which gave promise of day with its noontide glories, dawned on me one day at meeting, when I had been meditating on my state in great depression. I seemed to hear the words articulated in my spirit, 'Live up to the light thou hast, and more will be granted thee.' Then I believed that God speaks to [us] by ... Spirit "

- Caroline Fox (1840), Journal

12. "Sing and rejoice,
you children of the day and of the light;
for the Lord is at work in this thick night of darkness that may be felt.
And truth flourishes as the rose,
and the lilies do grow among the thorns,
and the plants atop of the hills,
and upon them the lambs do skip and play.
And never heed the tempests nor the storms, floods nor rains,
for the seed Christ is over all, and reigns."
- George Fox, Epistle 227 (1663)

13. "Friends, meet together and know one another in that which is eternal, which was before the world was."
- George Fox, Epistle 149 (1657)

13a. "[Quaker] Worship...is entirely without any human direction or supervision. A group of devout persons come together and sit down quietly with no prearrangement, each seeking to have an immediate sense of divine leading and to know at first hand the presence of the Living Christ. It is not wholly accurate to say that such a Meeting is held on the basis of Silence; it is more accurate to say that it is held on the basis of 'Holy Obedience.' Those who enter such a Meeting can harm it in two specific ways: first, by an advanced determination to speak; and second, by advanced determination to keep silent. The only way in which a worshipper can help such a Meeting is by an advanced determination to try to be responsive in listening to the still small voice and doing whatever may be commanded."

- Friends statement prepared for Friends' meeting attended by delegates to the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam, Holland, in 1948.

14. George Gorman (1973) recalls where he first attended meetings for worship: "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....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."

- [source unknown, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, Fifth Edition, Chapter 2]

15. "[T]he sacrament we celebrate is the experience of communion with God in the intimate and transformative moments we call 'gathered'. Friends place an extremely heavy emphasis on the real, living presence of Christ as the initiator and sustainer of the faithful community. Christ's presence is experienced in the community as community — in the transformation of relationships, in the healing of brokenness, in the forgiveness of sins, in the growth of a reconciling spirit, in the gathering of diverse persons into profound unity, in the continuity of the community through history. We receive the grace of divine presence, and respond to it in conversion of life. The Spirit is known among us by the fruits of our transformation.

The grounding principle of Quakerism is the radically real presence of the living Christ in the worshipping community. This is the witness we hold in trust." – Eden Grace, "A Witness Held in Trust", 2002

16. "Worship is essentially an act of adoration, adoration of the one true God in whom we live and move and have our being. Forgetting our little selves, our petty ambitions, our puny triumphs, our foolish cares and fretful anxieties, we reach out towards the beauty and majesty of God. The religious life is not a dull, grim drive towards moral virtues, but a response to a vision of greatness."

- Thomas F Green, 1952 [source unknown, *Quaker Faith and Practice*]

17. "I learned to wait til my whole body was quiet and ready to be moved from within from a deep inner impulse. Expectations, programs, agendas had to be set aside. As the waiting deepened, occasionally I experienced something akin to [Isaac] Pennington's 'rising of the power' and 'purely springing life' which was more than physical, though it was anchored in the physical task of not moving until one was 'moved.'... It is not easy to wait... Paradoxically, it takes effort to stop and wait. It takes attention and determination to set aside the habitual inner voices... The unfolding of the divine Seed within us is so momentous, so unpredictable, that we cannot afford to

clutter our worship with pre-programmed hymns, prayers, and sermons... After we have restrained our reasonings, our judgments, our 'runnings and willings,' the only appropriate response is to wait."

- Teresina Havens, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 304, "Mind what Stirs in Your Heart" (1992)

18. "While all Quakers meet in worship to hear more clearly God's 'still small voice' (1 Kings 19:12), [Unprogrammed] Friends...base our worship entirely on expectant waiting. We take the Psalmist's advice literally: 'Be still and know that I am God' (Psalm 46:10).

"We meet in plain, unadorned rooms because we have found that, in such places, we are less distracted from hearing that still small voice. There are no pulpits in our meeting rooms because we minister to each other. Our benches or chairs face each other because we are all equal before God. We have no prearranged prayers, readings, sermons, hymns, or musical orchestrations because we wait for God's leadings (guidance and direction) and power in our lives."

- Marsha D. Holliday, "Silent Worship and Quaker Values" (2000)

18a. "I am filled with [God's] love and power: [God] opens the windows of heaven, ... rains...showers as silver drops, and as fine Myrrh, as sweet odors; ... nourishes the young,carries the Lambs in ... arms of love: drives gently them that are with young; [God] is true and faithful forever; ... keeps covenant; ... is long-suffering and kind, who can declare [God's] power? I am lost in the incomprehensible being of eternal love."

- Francis Howgill, *To the camp of the Lord in England* (1618-1669)

18b. "The Lord of Heaven and earth we found to be near at hand, and, as we waited upon him in pure silence, our minds out of all things, his heavenly presence appeared in our assemblies, when there was no language, tongue, nor speech from any creature. The Kingdom of Heaven did gather us and catch us all, as in a net, and his heavenly power at one time drew many hundreds to land. We came to know a place to stand in and what to wait in; and the Lord appeared daily to us, to our astonishment, amazement and great admiration, insomuch that we often said one unto another with great joy of heart: "What, is the Kingdom of God come to be with men?"

- Francis Howgill's Testimony, in the preface to Edward Burrough's Works, 1 (1672)

19. "God is always visible the moment the inner eye is clear."

- Rufus Jones, 1901 [original source unknown, quoted in *Plain Living* by Cathy Whitmire]

19a. "Worship... [is the] ... mutual and reciprocal communion between the Human soul and God. The problem is never one of going somewhere to find a distant and hidden God. The problem rather is one of human preparation for meeting and communing with a God who is always near at hand but cannot be found and enjoyed until the soul is ready for such an exalted experience. It means, therefore, that the worshipper...to enter into this great attainment, must cease his occupations with external affairs, his thoughts of house...and business, and centre down into ... deeper levels of ...being. This is not worship, but ... preparation..., and there comes, with this awareness of the deeper Life, a palpating sense of joy and wonder, and a surge of appreciation and adoration which form the heart of worship. It was in moments like that in the early Quaker meetings there came tremulous waves of emotion, which set the entire group into a state of quaking, from which the name of the movement was born."

- Rufus M. Jones: *George Fox, seeker and Friend*, 1930, pp. 73-4.

20. "[The early Friends] made the discovery that silence is one of the best preparations for communion [with God] and for the reception of inspiration and guidance. Silence itself, of course, has no magic. It may be just sheer emptiness, absence of words or noise or music. It may be an occasion for slumber, or it may be a dead form. But it may be an intensified pause, a vitalized hush, a creative quiet, an actual moment of mutual and reciprocal correspondence with God."

- Rufus Jones, 1937 [source unknown, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, Fifth Edition, Chapter 2]

20a. "I imagine the arms of the holy spirit, the arms of God gathering us together."

- Kristina Keefe-Perry, *QuakerSpeak*

21. "Deep within us all there is an inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice to which we may continually return. Eternity is at our hearts pressing upon our time-worn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home into Itself. Yielding to these persuasions, gladly committing ourselves in body and soul, utterly and completely, to the Light Within, is the beginning of true life.

"It is a dynamic center, a creative Life that presses to birth within us. It is a Light Within which illumines the face of God and casts new shadows and new glories on the face of humans. It is a seed stirring to life, if we do not choke it. It is the Shekinah of the soul, the Presence in the midst. Here is the slumbering Christ, stirring to be awakened to become the soul we clothe in earthly form and action, and [God] is within us all."

- Thomas Kelly, "Testament of Devotion" (1941)

22. "In this humanistic age we suppose man is the initiator and God is the responder. But the living Christ within us is the initiator and we are the responders. God the Lover, the accuser, the revealer of light and darkness presses within us. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.' And all our apparent initiative is already a response, a testimonial to [God's] secret presence and working within us. The basic response of the soul to the Light is internal adoration and joy, thanksgiving and worship, self-surrender and listening."

- Thomas Kelly, "Testament of Devotion" (1941)

23. "In worship we have our neighbors to right and left, before and behind, yet the Eternal Presence is over all and beneath all. Worship does not consist in achieving a mental state of concentrated isolation from one's fellows. But in the depth of common worship it is as if we found our separate lives were all one life, within whom we live and move and have our being."

- Thomas Kelly, 1938 [original source unknown, quoted in *The Spirit of the Quakers* by Geoffrey Durham]

24. "In the practice of group worship on the basis of silence come special times when the electric hush and solemnity and depth of power steals over the worshippers. A blanket of divine covering comes over the room, a stillness that can be felt is over all, and the worshipers are gathered into a unity and synthesis of life which is amazing indeed. A quickening presence pervades us... and awakens us in depths that had before been slumbering. The Burning Bush has been kindled in our midst, and we stand together on holy ground."

- Thomas Kelly, "The Gathered Meeting" [published later in Thomas Kelly, *The Eternal Promise*, 1977, and reprinted in pamphlet form through Tract Association of Friends]

25. "In silence which is active, the Inner Light begins to glow – a tiny spark. For the flame to be kindled and to grow, subtle argument and the clamor of our emotions must be stilled. It is by an attention full of love that we enable the Inner Light to blaze and illuminate our dwelling and to make of our whole being a source from which this Light may shine out.

"Words must be purified in a redemptive silence if they are to bear the message of peace. The right to speak is a call to the duty of listening. Speech has no meaning unless there are attentive minds and silent hearts. Silence is the welcoming acceptance of the other. The word born of silence must be received in silence."

- Pierre Lacout, 1969 [original source unknown, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, Fifth Edition, Chapter 2]

26. "One example of... being together in prayer is the Quaker meeting... In silence, they try to attune themselves to the 'inner light' within each person and within the group. Even if the meeting ends without a word being spoken, it is, nonetheless, a prayer meeting. Sometimes out of the shared silence a word takes shape, a prayer is breathed. However, it does not matter if or when these spiritual shoots break the surface of the silence. What matters is more than the words, more than the silence itself. I remember sitting in a Quaker prayer meeting and thinking, 'This is a space in which visions are born.' "

- Sister Mary Jo Leddy, *Reweaving Religious Life*, 1990

26a. "If the call comes, there should be no quenching of the spirit; the sense of unworthiness must not exempt us from the service, nor the fear of being unable to find the right words.... Broken and imperfect words springing from the deep place in the heart may wonderfully draw those present into communion with God and with one another."

- London Yearly Meeting Advice, 1949

26b. The living power of a meeting for worship depends not only on the sincere dedication of heart and thought on the part of each individual member, but also on the united communion in the presence of God wherein each one overpasses the bounds of their individual self and knows a union of spirit with spirit, bringing them into a larger life than that which is known in spiritual separateness ... We cannot come to a true understanding of life's purpose apart from knowledge of one another in the deepest place of our being. This was the thought of George Fox as he gave counsel: 'Friends, meet together and know one another in that which is eternal, which was before the world was.' Out of such fellowship there will arise a sense of a common purpose in life, and the united worship will be deepened and enriched by the consciousness that in varied fashion all are ministering in the service of God.

- London Yearly Meeting, 1925

27. "Often we arrive at meeting driven by harassments prior to meeting, the unfinished business of the previous week, our obsessions, and our own willful agendas—and with our eagerness to control the events and outcomes of the coming week driving us onward. As we settle into the collected quiet, the knots may loosen, our obsessively tight focus may open and widen to admit space and light around our drivenness. The stillness may gently wash away what clings to us or what we are clinging to. We may not enter into peace beyond understanding; but we may be cleansed or healed of some of the low-grade craziness of our lives."

- Patricia Loring, *Listening Spirituality*, Vol. 2 (2009)

28. "The heart should be as open to the unpredictable movements of the Spirit in worship as it is in times of private prayer. Part of the exercise is the attempt to attend to what is happening within and to discern what is of the Spirit, what is of something else – and how to bring that "something else" into the Light for illumination, transformation, or whatever God is calling for....[T]he movements of the heart in worship may be quite similar to those...ritualized in the liturgies...in other churches. The difference is that the Quaker worshipper waits for confession, contrition, petition, intercession, praise, thanksgiving or other movements to be brought forth in herself by the Spirit. There is no expectation that all of these movements will take place at a single [Meeting for] worship. There may be only one."

- Patricia Loring, *Listening Spirituality*, Vol. 2 (2009)

29. "Quaker worship is a process of centering in silence, stepping aside from our egos, letting go of our thoughts and ideas, turning to the Inward Light, watching and listening for what it shows us, attending to the 'small breathings,' attending to any inner leadings, receiving gratefully, offering ourselves, speaking only if we are given a message to share... We grow in this process; we learn how to be more sensitive to the 'small breathings,' we gradually become more aware of our real selves (and our false selves) and our connection to the spirit, our hearts are opened and we gain awareness of our connection with all the world, we gain compassion, we are led and guided though it may feel very undramatic. We are brought into awareness of unity, and eventually our sense of connection with God is so deep that we know God deeply."

- Middlebury Meeting, "Quaker Worship in Unprogrammed Meetings" (no date)

30. "Art thou in darkness? mind it not, for if thou do it will fill thee more, but stand still and act not, and wait in patience till light arise out of darkness to lead thee."

- James Nayler, (1659), 1616-1660 [in Nayler's *Glory to God Almighty who Ruleth in the heavens*]

31. "Meeting is the chance to escape from the trivial thoughts of everyday living, and to find answers from yourself or from God. Some people are scared of the silence. Without the noise that serves to reassure us, that blocks out thoughts we'd rather not have, we're vulnerable and find it's time to face ourselves....[I]t's easy to minimize the effect [God] has on our lives – except in the silence where [God] can be heard. Don't feel restricted by the silence, it is there to set you free from the pressures of life. No one is judging your movements, your thoughts... Freedom of expression is the freedom to worship God on your own terms. Value the opportunity to think unguided by the world. Learn what you feel you need to know, let other information pass. No moment of silence is a waste of time."

- Rachel Needham, 1987 [original source unknown, *Quaker Faith & Practice*, 5th Ed., Chap. 2]

31a. "The first that enters into the place of your meeting . . . turn in thy mind to the light, and wait upon God singly, as if none were present but the Lord; and here thou art strong. Then the next that comes in, let them in simplicity of heart sit down and turn in the same light, and wait in the spirit; and so all the rest coming in . . . sit down in pure stillness . . . and wait in the light"

- Letter of Alexander Parker to Friends, 1660

31b. "Those who are brought to a pure still waiting upon God in the Spirit are come nearer to the Lord than words are, for God is a spirit. . . In such a meeting there will be an unwillingness to part asunder, being ready to say in yourselves, it is good to be here. . ."

- Letter of Alexander Parker to Friends, 1660

32. "Give over thine own willing,
Give over thine own running,
Give over thine own desiring
To know or be anything,
And sink down to the seed
Which God sows in thy heart
And let that be in thee,
And grow in thee,
And breathe in thee,
And act in thee,
And thou shalt find by sweet experience
That the Lord knows that
And loves and owns that,
And will lead it to the inheritance of life,
Which is God's portion."

- Isaac Penington, 1681 [*The Works of Isaac Penington*, "Some Directions to the Panting Soul"]

33. "Only wait to know that wherein God appears in thy heart, even the holy seed, the immortal seed of life; that that may be discerned, distinguished, and have scope in thee; that it may spring up in thy heart, and live in thee, and gather thee into itself, and leaven thee all over with its nature; that thou mayst be a new lump, and mayst walk before God, not in the oldness of thy own literal knowledge or apprehensions of things, but in the newness of his Spirit."

- Isaac Penington, 1658 [in *Letters of Isaac Penington: Son of Alderman Penington of London, and an Eminent Minister of the Gospel in the Society of Friends, which He Joined about the Year 1658*]

34. "Give over thine own willing, give over thine own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything, and sink down to the seed which God sows in thy heart and let that be in thee, and grow in thee, and breathe in thee, and act in thee, and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that and loves and owns that [the seed] and will lead it to the inheritance of life... There is but a little thing (like a grain of mustard seed), a weak thing, a foolish thing, even that which is not (to man's eye) to overcome all this; and yet in this is the power. And here is the great deceit of man; he looks for a great manifest power in or upon him to begin with, and doth not see how the power is in the little weak stirrings of life in the heart."

- Isaac Penington, 1661 [from *All Such as Complain That They Want Power*]

34a. "There is that near you which will guide you. O wait for it! "

- Isaac Penington

35. "Look not out, but within... Remember it is a still voice that speaks to us in this day, and that it is not to be heard in the noises and hurries of the mind; but it is distinctly understood in a retired frame."

- William Penn, 1644-1718 [Penn's Introduction to the *Journal of George Fox* and in *Rise and Progress of the People Called Quakers [1694]*]

36. "The waiting and listening are activities in which everybody is engaged and produce spoken ministry which helps to articulate the common guidance which the Holy Spirit is believed to give the group as a whole. So the waiting and listening is corporate also. This is why Friends emphasize the 'ministry of silence' and the importance of coming to meeting regularly and with heart and mind prepared."

- John Punshon, 1987 [original source unknown, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, Fifth Edition, Chapter 2]

37. "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.

"Silent worship and the spoken word are both parts of Quaker ministry. The ministry of silence demands the faithful activity of every member in the meeting. As, together, we enter the depths of a living silence, the stillness of God, we find one another in 'the things that are eternal', upholding and strengthening one another."

- *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 1967, 1994

38. "True worship may be experienced at any time; in any place – alone on the hills or in the busy daily life – we may find God, in whom we live and move and have our being. But this individual experience is not sufficient, and in a meeting held in the Spirit there is a giving and receiving between its members, one helping another with or without words. So there may come a wider vision and a deeper experience."

- *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 1925, 1994

39. "Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God, whose light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life"

- Advice 1, *Quaker Faith & Practice*

39a. "Receive the vocal ministry of others in a tender and creative spirit. Reach for the meaning deep within it, recognising that even if it is not God's word for you, it may be so for others." –

- Advices & Queries 12, *Quaker Faith & Practice*

40. "No moon tonight
I light a candle
and listen to the
dark"

- Alexis Rotella, in *Akitsu Quarterly*, Fall, 2014

41. "What happens in meeting for worship is inward attention to Stillness, Breath, Word, and Space, and the persistent return of attention to these, plus the effort to discern leadings, resistances, fears, and motivations. We clear a space... We rely on silence and fresh words emerging from the silence to carry us into the Holy Stillness. The silence can hold us and provide comfort, safety, a place to heal, but eventually it will open up to a vastness. We feel our way to the silence within for the still small voice to work its transformation. We do this by a discipline of attention, anticipation, patiently turning away from idle thoughts, feeling within our spirit for the quickening of Life. If a few words form there, we ask if the message is to be shared, and is it truly grounded in the Light? How much am I to say, and no more? It is this Life, Presence, Truth, we seek, and to settle for anything less is an idolatry of form."

- David Snyder, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 397 ("Quaker Witness as Sacrament")

42. "A Friends' meeting, however silent, is at the very lowest a witness that worship is something other and deeper than words, and that it is to the unseen and eternal things that we desire to give the first place in our lives. And when the meeting, whether silent or not, is awake, and looking upwards, there is much more in it than this. In the united stillness of a truly 'gathered' meeting there is a power known only by experience, and mysterious even when most familiar. There are perhaps few things which more readily flow 'from vessel to vessel' than quietness. The presence of fellow-worshippers in some gently penetrating manner reveals to the spirit something of the nearness of the Divine Presence. 'Where two or three are gathered together in His name' have we not again and again felt that the promise was fulfilled...? And it is out of the depths of this stillness that there do arise at times spoken words which, springing from the very source of prayer, have something of the power of prayer – something of its quickening and melting and purifying effect. Such words as these have at least as much power as silence to gather into stillness."

- Caroline E Stephen, *Light arising*, 1908, pp. 68-9, also *Quaker Faith & Practice*, Fifth Edition, Chapter 2]

43. "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 was 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 least I had found a place where I might, without the faintest suspicion of insincerity, join with others in simply seeking [God's] 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 place of the most soul-subduing, faith-restoring, strengthening, and peaceful communion... that I have ever known."

- Caroline E Stephen, 1890 [original source unknown, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, Fifth Edition, Chapter 2]

44. "Gradually I realized that the most powerful ministry is a wordless radiation of the Love of God. As I began to experience this secret, undramatic, invisible ministry flowing out from me, I realized that my sometimes dramatic gifts in the ministry had depended all along on the secret, silent ministry of a woman here or a man there who

never spoke in meeting. With humility I came to understand how their ministry of being deeply present to God and then radiating the Love of Jesus Christ is the most important ministry of all, for it helps everyone in the meeting to come into a state of living communion and transformation. Words are important of course - they can be a matter of life and death - but they are only words. What really counts is the powerful transformation of human character which can occur in a meeting deeply gathered....”

- Bill Taber, 1998 [original source unknown, *Baltimore Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice*]

45. “The Door Within describes the experience of a ‘gathered’ or ‘covered’ meeting - the experience of being united with a group which is ‘waiting on the Lord’.... It may feel as if we have stepped effortlessly into a renewing stream which reaches back and forward across time. The sharp boundaries of the self can become blurred and blended as we feel ourselves more and more united with fellow worshipers and with the Spirit of God. The Door Within...brings a person into a transformed life of both faithful attention to the divine presence and faithful obedience to the divine will. During this time we may experience amazing grace and new perceptions, including becoming aware of something about ourselves which troubles or pains us. The Door Within shows us that the Light which shows us our confusion and brokenness is the same Light which sets us free of it.”

- Bill Taber, “Four Doors to Worship” (1992)

46. “William Penn used words for the apprehension of the Light that do not indicate a tremendous overpowering experience, but rather delicate and almost imperceptible movements in the mind and heart: stirrings, breathings, beginnings, tender motions. If we expect something loud and unmistakable, we may miss the reality of a gentle flow. ‘Crush not the tender buddings of it in your soul. Remember it is a still voice that speaks to us in this day... Do not overrun in your desires...the holy and gentle motions of it.’ “

- Elizabeth Gray Vining, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 167 (“William Penn: Mystic: As Reflected in His Writings”) (1969)

46a. “O little Love, overcome; overcome all your hearts, that Life may fill your vessels, that bowles of compassion and tenderness may flow one into another, that every Soul may swim in the fulness of Love, that all may be filled with the eternal Power, that the new Wine of the Kingdom may be poured from vessel to vessel, that all your Cups may over-flow with the Consolation of God.”

- Dorothy White, 1662

47. “The Religious Society of Friends...is at heart a corporate spiritual journey. It is only in our joint practice, in our joint experience, and our joint testimonies that we have communities of believers who can do the work that God has set us out to do.... What makes a word authoritative is the baptizing power of the spirit of truth. Not the person speaking it. One does not exercise spiritual authority in the Religious Society of Friends. One is exercised by spiritual authority, if one is humble enough to follow the Guide closely. But it is an event in which God’s presence and guidance are received by us... It is a humbling experience to feel the perceptible guidance of God; to know that our Creator and our Sustainer yearns to be intimately involved with each one of us each moment; to know that God is reaching out to us individually and corporately -- that if we quiet ourselves enough we will hear the conversation that is already going on.”

- Lloyd Lee Wilson, “Spiritual Authority in our Meetings” (2013)

48. “We highly prize silent waiting upon the Lord in humble dependence upon him. We esteem it to be a precious part of spiritual worship, and trust that no vocal offering will ever exclude it from its true place in our religious meetings. Let not the silence ... be spent in indolent or vacant musing but in patient waiting in humble prayerful expectancy before the Lord.”

- Yearly Meeting in London, 1884; 1886 [original source unknown, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, Fifth Edition, Chapter 2]

Queries Related to Centering:

49. “...[Y]ou can only enter fully into the silence if you can quiet the busy, anxious, thinking part of your mind and become not merely outwardly but inwardly silent. In this troubled life that state is not always easy to come by, but when it is attained, even in a small degree, it opens the way into shared silence of the meeting. Sometimes this ‘centering down’ happens easily, almost of itself, but often it requires a conscious effort, and according to their different needs and temperaments, Quakers adopt various means to help them. Some look at the thoughts and images arising in their minds and then put them aside. Some begin by holding up others in their mental arms, so to speak, desiring that all shall be well with them. Others recall an event or encounter that has meant much to them, or a peaceful scene or a loved painting or piece of music. Some simply hold on to a single word, such as

'God' or 'love'. Admittedly, there are times when no methods of centering down seem to work. The meeting seems cold and lifeless; or quite often, trivial and irrelevant thoughts dash around in your mind like flies: feeling sore about a tiff with somebody, planning what to do next week, or wondering whether you have turned off the oven - whatever it is comes demanding your attention....Just put them gently aside, return to the gate by which you set out on the inward journey and start again. If this doesn't work, still don't be discouraged: if you do no more than begin again and again the hour will not have been wasted."

- Richard Allen, "Silence and Speech" (1992)

50. "Each made it to their work to retire inwardly to the measure of grace in themselves, and not being only silent as to words, but even abstaining from all their own thoughts, imaginations and desires."

- Robert Barclay, (1675) [Apology, Proposition XI]

51. "I go among trees and sit still.
All my stirring becomes quiet
around me like circles on water.
My tasks lie in their places
where I left them, asleep like cattle.

Then what is afraid of me comes
and lives a while in my sight.
What it fears in me leaves me,
and the fear of me leaves it.
It sings, and I hear its song.

Then what / am afraid of comes.
I live for a while in its sight.
What / fear in it leaves it,
and the fear of it leaves me.
It sings, and I hear its song...."

- Wendell Berry [in Berry, *Sabbaths*, 1987]

52. "In our word-saturated era, some find that images are a more direct route to enhanced sense of God's presence...Some Friends have found their way to the center within through images of the living water, the lamb of God,..or the lilies of the field. I know a Friend who centres down with an image of Jesus washing the feet of all in the room."

- Michael Birkel (2004), "Silence and Witness"

53. "The practice of sitting together in silence is often called *expectant waiting*. It is a time when Friends become inwardly still and clear aside the activities of mind and body that usually fill our attention in order to create an opportunity to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is not a time for 'thinking,' for deliberate, intellectual exercise. It is a time for spiritual receptivity, so it is important not to clog one's mind with its own busy activities. Nonetheless, thoughts will occur in the silence. Some thoughts will be distractions and should be set aside. But some thoughts or images or feelings may arise that seem to come from a deeper source and merit attention. If you are visited by a spiritual presence, if you seem to experience perceptions that are drawn from a deeper well or are illuminated with a brighter light, then let those impressions dwell in you and be receptive to the Inward Teacher. Each person finds his or her own ways of 'centering down,' or entering deep stillness during meeting."

- Earlham School of Religion Quaker Information Center [from website, no date]

54. "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 [original source unknown, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, Fifth Edition, Chapter 2]

54a. "The processes of inward prayer do not grow more complex, but more simple. In the early weeks we begin with simple, whispered words. Formulate them spontaneously, "Thine only. Thine only." Or seize upon a fragment

of the Psalms 'so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.' ...Repeat them inwardly, over and over again. For the conscious cooperation of the surface level is needed at first, before prayer sinks into the second level as habitual divine orientation...If you wander, return and begin again. But the time will come when verbalization is not so imperative, and yield place to the attitudes of soul which you mean the words to express..."

- Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion* (1941)

54b. To pray is to be vulnerably open to God's unpredictable grace.

- Patricia Loring, *Listening Spirituality*

54c. "Centering Prayer offers practice in letting go of one's thoughts. Repeatedly consenting or surrendering to the presence and activity of God within eventually leads into a deeper, wordless, unified state of consciousness, an awareness of the presence of God in all things.... Let the divine energy of that prompting take you deeper...so that you can become vessels of greater currents of the energy of the Holy Spirit. Then the vocal ministry and prophetic witness that eventually comes can become a more powerful expression of the Spirit."

- Michelle Martin, "[Streams of Living Water](#)" (5/20/15)

54d. "Dear God, I cannot love Thee the way I want to. You are the slim crescent of a moon that I see and my self is the earth's shadow that keeps me from seeing all the moon. The crescent is very beautiful and perhaps that is all one like I am should or could see; but what I am afraid of, dear God, is that my self shadow will grow so large that it blocks the whole moon, and that I will judge myself by the shadow that is nothing. I do not know you God because I am in the way. Please help me to push myself aside."

- Flannery O'Connor, (journal, 1946,)

55. "I don't know exactly what a prayer is.

I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
Into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
How to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
Which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
With your one wild and precious life?"

- Mary Oliver, 1990 ["The Summer Day" in Oliver, *New and Selected Poems*, 1992]

55a. "Stay quiet like a flower
so the nightbirds will start singing."

- Rumi

56. "When your heart is wandering and distracted, bring it back quickly to its point, restore it tenderly to its Master's side, and if you did nothing else the whole of your hour but bring back your heart patiently and put it near our Lord again, and every time you put it back it turned away again, your hour would be well-employed."

- St. Francis de Sales [original source unknown, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, Fifth Edition, Chapter 2]

57. "God said, 'Be still, and know that I am God'. Then came the conflict of thoughts for the morrow, and its duties and cares; but God said 'Be still'. And as I listened, and slowly learned to obey, and shut my ears to every sound, I found, after a while, that when the other voices ceased, or I ceased to hear them, there was a still, small voice in the depths of my being that began to speak with an inexpressible tenderness, power and comfort."

- John Edward Southall, attributed, c 1900 [original source unknown, quoted in *The Spirit of the Quakers* by Geoffrey Durham]

58. "The first thing that I do [in Meeting for Worship] is close my eyes and then still my body in order to get it as far out of the way as I can. Then I still my mind and let it open to God in silent prayer, for the meeting, as we understand it, is the meeting place of the worshipper with God. I thank God inwardly for this occasion, for the week's happenings, for what I have learned at God's hand, for my family, and the work there is to do. I often pause to enjoy this presence. Under God's gaze I search the week and feel the piercing twinge of remorse that comes at this, and this, and this. I ask forgiveness for my faithlessness and ask for strength to meet this matter when it arises again. There have been times when I had to re-weave a part of my life under this auspice."

- Douglas Steere, "Quaker Meeting for Worship" (1944)

59. "When I have finished these inward prayers [for God to hold others in love], I quietly resign myself to complete listening: letting go in the intimacy of this friendly company and in the intimacy of the Great Friend who is always near. At this point, one could use Robert Barclay's words in describing our silent sitting together, 'As our worship consisted not in words so neither in silences as silence, but in a holy dependence of the mind upon God; from which dependence silence necessarily follows in the first place until words can be brought forth which are from God's spirit.' I do not know what takes place here. Often I am sure it is nothing at all. But there are times when a certain slowing-down takes place, a certain healing seems to go on, certain tendering, a certain 'dependence of the mind upon God.' This, however, may come in at any point in my own directed prayers and take precedence over them. Someone asked another how long he ought to pray, and received the answer, 'Long enough to forget time.' "

- Douglas Steere, "Quaker Meeting for Worship" (1944)

59a. "Most Friends know how worse than futile it is to fight against distractions...These noises and these inner mental intrusions are a part of our outer and inner lives that are simply there. If accepted, acknowledged, and quietly ignored as we move on into worship, they fade into the background. Some prefer to enfold outer distractions into a prayer, 'Oh God, may my heart wing its way as swiftly to Thee as the flight of the jet..whose moan has punctured our silence.' 'Oh God, kindle in our hearts here and now a childish joy that will match that of those gay playing children whose shouts we have heard.'"...Some find it helpful to ask God what this mental distraction, if...persistent, is really able to communicate to them, what unfaced fear, what unfulfilled obligation, what leading into greater faithfulness is concealed in it, and find themselves in [God's] presence having been opened even more deeply to [God's] will by this intrusion."

- Douglas Steere, "On Listening to Another" (1943)

60. "...[We] may use a variety of methods, using whichever one[s] seem appropriate at any given time. Yet, in spite of all this seeming variety and lack of a single practice, most of these approaches include three important qualities:

- The first is *desire*, a profound yearning to be in the Presence.
- The second is *focus*. Whatever technique or lack of technique people may use ... they all aim toward a relaxed, alert attentiveness in the presence of God.
- And the third is *trust*, a synonym of faith, for it takes trust to go out into the deep water; it takes trust to let go and rest or float in the Deep and Living Water of the Stream."
 - William Taber, 1992, "Four Doors to Meeting for Worship"

60a. "In the stillness of the quiet, if we listen we can hear the whisper of the heart giving strength to weakness, courage to fear, hope to despair."

- Dr Howard Thurman, "Science of the Mind" (2008)

61. "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 think of myself like the tree planted by the 'rivers of water' in *Psalms* 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 labor 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 heart overflows with a desire to give...something in return. I have nothing to give but my own being, and I offer [God] my thoughts, words and actions of each day, and whisper 'Please take me as I am'."

- Tayeko Yamanouchi, 1979 [original source unknown, member of Japan Yearly Meeting, quoted in *New England Yearly Meeting Faith & Practice*]

Contributions from Sally Stueber Merrill

1. "Art thou in darkness? mind it not, for if thou do it will fill thee more, but stand still and act not, and wait in patience till light arise out of darkness to lead thee."

— James Nayler, *Glory to God Almighty who Ruleth in the heavens* (1659)

2. Do you live in thankful awareness of God's constant presence in your life? Are you sensitive and obedient to leadings of the Holy Spirit? Do you seek to follow Jesus, who shows us the way? Do you nurture your spiritual life with prayer and silent waiting and with regular study of the Bible and other devotional literature?
(NEYM Faith and Practice)

3. Steve Chase, quoting early Scottish Friend Barclay, and describing his impression of Friends worship in the 1960s which he attended after he was roughly abused by his scout master for joining a peace demonstration in his Scout uniform:

I loved the experience of Quaker worship, of sitting in silence with other seekers trying to be open to wonder, possibility, love, challenge, guidance, and deep inner peace. Returning to this little band of Galesburg Quakers each week for group worship was a spiritual practice that nourished and excited me. A couple of years later, when I read a book by Robert Barclay, an early British Quaker theologian, I found that people had been having experiences like mine for over three hundred years. As Barclay put it:

"When I came into the silent assemblies of God's people, I felt a secret power among them, which touched my heart, and as I gave way unto it, I found the evil weakening in me, and the good raised up, and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this power and life, whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed." (Scotsman Robert Barclay, d. 1690)

4. As many candles lighted and put in one place do greatly augment the light and make it more to shine forth, so when many are gathered together into the same life there is more of the glory of God, and His power appears to the refreshment of each individual, for that he partakes not only of the light and life raised in himself but in all the rest. (Robert Barclay 1692)

5. From NEYM *Faith and Practice* section, "Worship as experienced by individuals"

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 import. 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 least pledge me to nothing; it might open to me (as it did that morning) the very gate of heaven.
(Caroline Stephen 1890)

6. John Woolman (from Section 2. 05 of NEYM *Faith and Practice*)

One day, being under a strong exercise of spirit, I stood up and said some words in a meeting; but not keeping close to the Divine opening, I said more than was required of me. Being soon sensible of my error, I was afflicted in mind some weeks without any light or comfort, even to that degree that I could not take satisfaction in anything. I remembered God, and was troubled, and in the depths of my distress he had pity on me, and sent the Comforter. I then felt forgiveness for my offense; my mind became calm and quiet, and I was truly thankful to my gracious Redeemer for his mercies.

About six weeks after this, feeling the spring of Divine love opened, and a concern to speak, I said a few words in a meeting, in which I found peace. Being thus humbled and disciplined under the cross, my understanding became more strengthened to distinguish the pure spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart, and which taught me to wait in silence sometimes many weeks together, until I felt that rise which prepares the creature to stand like a trumpet, through which the Lord speaks to his flock.

All the faithful are not called to public ministry; but whoever are, are called to minister of that which they have tasted and handled spiritually. The outward modes of worship are various; but whenever any are true ministers of Jesus Christ, it is from the operation of his Spirit upon their hearts, first purifying them, and thus giving them a just sense of the conditions of others. This truth was early fixed in my mind and I was taught to watch the pure opening, and to take heed lest, while I was standing to speak, my own will should get uppermost. (John Woolman 1774)

7. Kenneth Boulding

Retreat

This silence is an ocean, and we stand
Like doubtful children on its mighty brink.
It's cold to inquiring toes, smooth dark as ink,
Horizon-bare, bounded by no known land. Yet
dare we take our Father by the hand
And wade chin-deep—it's warmer than we think;
Yield wholly to its power—we do not sink,
In liquid arms it lifts us from the strand.
And then with clumsy strokes, we learn to swim
In this new-found, enfolding element,
And when we shoreward turn, the time full spent,
The dust of earth is washed from every limb.
So if death be as buoyant, and as sweet,
We shall not fear the abyss beneath our feet.

(Kenneth E. Boulding 1975)

78. John Greenleaf Whittier

First-Day Thoughts

In calm and cool and silence, once again
I find my old accustomed place among
My brethren, where, perchance, no human tongue
Shall utter words; where never hymn is sung,
Nor deep-toned organ blown, nor censer swung,
Nor dim light falling through the pictured panel!
There, syllabled by silence, let me hear
The still small voice which reached the prophet's ear;
Read in my heart a still diviner law
Than Israel's leader on his tablets saw!
There let me strive with each besetting sin,
Recall my wandering fancies, and restrain
The sore disquiet of a restless brain;
And, as the path of duty is made plain,
May grace be given that I may walk therein,
Not like the hireling, for his selfish gain,
With backward glances and reluctant tread,
Making a merit of his coward dread,
But, cheerful, in the light around me thrown,
Walking as one to pleasant service led;
Doing God's will as if it were my own,
Yet trusting not in mine, but in His strength alone!

(John Greenleaf Whittier 1852, found in Chapter 2 of NEYM *Faith & Practice*)

9. Thomas Kelly

In worship we have our neighbors to right and left, before and behind, yet the Eternal Presence is over all and beneath all. Worship does not consist in achieving a mental state of concentrated isolation from one's fellows. But in the depth of common worship it is as if we found our separate lives were all one life, within whom we live and move and have our being. (Thomas Kelly, 1941)

10. NEYM

Any willing person may come into communion with the Divine without special ritual, at any time, in any place, under any external circumstance. All that is required is desire, humility, and a willingness to wait for the Teacher who is beyond time to come and teach in the present moment. The heart of the life of the Religious Society of Friends is the communal meeting for worship. It is here that we have the opportunity to experience the Sacred Presence in a way that draws us into community and informs our lives, both as individuals and as a religious body. Vital worship depends far more on a deeply felt longing for God than on any particular practice.

Timeless Quaker Wisdom – Compiled by Paulette Meier

“Timeless Quaker Wisdom in Plainsong”

Selected, set to music, and recorded by Paulette Meier
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The CD includes a 38-page pdf with liner notes
and all songs with their musical notations.
Available on-line and from www.quakerbooks.org.

These twenty-one quotations from the writing of 17th century Quakers were chosen by Paulette Meier for her CD, [Timeless Quaker Wisdom in Plainsong](#). Paulette organized them sequentially according to four themes related closely to the process inherent in Quaker spiritual practice.

Centering and Submitting to the Light

1. Be still and cool in Thy own mind and spirit, from thy own thoughts, and then thou wilt feel the principle of God to turn thy mind to the Lord God, whereby thou wilt receive God's strength and power from whence life comes, to allay all blusterings, storms, and tempests. - George Fox (1658)
2. Ye have no time but this present time, therefore prize your time, for your soul's sake. - George Fox (1652)
3. Keep within. And when they say, 'Look here or look there is Christ, go not forth, for Christ is within you. And those who try to draw your minds away from the teaching inside you, are opposed to Christ. For the measure's within, and the light of God is within, and the pearl is within, though hidden. - George Fox (1652)
4. Art thou in the Darkness? Mind it not, for if thou dost it will feed thee more. But stand still, and act not, and wait in patience, Till Light arises out of Darkness and leads thee. - James Nayler (1659)
5. Stand still in that which is pure, after ye see yourselves, and then mercy comes in. After thou seest thy thoughts and temptations, do not think, but submit, and then power comes in. Stand still in that which shows and discovers, and there doth strength immediately come. And stand still in the light, and submit to it, and the other will be hushed and gone, and then contentment comes. - George Fox (1652)
6. Lord, give me and mine the comfortable Enjoyment of thy presence forever, and then try us as thou pleasest: Thy preserving Power is all that I desire of thee, and unto it I commit all, and with thee I leave all; for thou art worthy to dispose of all; and then would Life flow in like a River, to the comforting and strengthening of Soul and Body. - Joan Vokins (1691)
7. Give over thine own willing, give over thine own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything, and sink down to the seed which God sows in thy heart and let that be in thee and grow in thee and breathe in thee and act in thee and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of life, which is God's portion. - Isaac Penington (1681)

The True Nature of Reality – The Kingdom of God Within

8. Oh, love Truth and its Testimony, whether its Witness be to you or against you. Love it, that into my Mother's house you all may come, and into the Chamber of her that conceived me[Song 3:4], where you may embrace and be embraced of my dearly beloved one. Love is his Name, Love is his Nature and Love is his life. - Sarah Blackborow (1658)
9. I saw that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that I also saw the infinite love of God, and I had great openings. - George Fox (1647)
10. They that love beyond the world cannot be separated by it. Death cannot kill what never dies nor can spirits ever be divided, that love and live in the same Divine Principle, the root and reward of their friendship. - William Penn (1693)

11. The Truth is one and the same always, though ages and generations pass away, and one generation goes and another comes, yet the word and power and spirit of the Living God endures forever, and is the same and never changes. - Margaret Fell (1660?)

12. Mind that which is eternal, which gathers your hearts together up to the Lord, and lets you see that ye are written in one another's heart. - George Fox (1653)

Opened Hearts – Life in the Fellowship of Community

13. Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness and bearing with each other, and forgiving one another and not laying accusations one against another; but praying for each other and helping each other up with a tender hand. - Isaac Penington (1667)

14. Let not the sons and daughters, nor the handmaids, be stopped in their prophesying, nor the young men in their visions, nor the old men in their dreamsSo every one may improve their talents, every one exercise their gifts, and everyone speak as the spirit gives them utterance So that all plants may bud and bring forth fruit to the glory of God. - George Fox (1657)

15. And may not the Spirit of Christ speak in the female as well as in the male? . . . Who is it that dare limit the Holy One of Israel. For the Light is the same in the male and in the female. And it cometh from Christ. . . . And who is it that dare stop Christ's mouth? - George Fox (1657)

16. All meet together everywhere, and in your Meetings wait upon the Lord . And take heed of forming words, but mind the Power, and know that which is Eternal, which will keep you all in unity, walking in the Spirit, and will let you see the Lord near you and among you. - George Fox (1653)

Witnessing in the World

17. We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love and unity. It is our desire that other's feet may walk in the same. We do deny and bear our testimony against all strife and wars and contention. - Margaret Fell (1660)

18. Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone; whereby in them ye may be a blessing and make the witness of God in them to bless you. - George Fox (1656)

19. It would go a great way to caution and direct people in their use of the world if we understood more about the creation of it. For how could we find the confidence to abuse it, while we should see the Great Creator stare us in the face, in all and every part thereof? - William Penn (1693)

20. Peace requires justice. Justice requires law. Law requires government, not only within nations, but also between nations. - William Penn (1693)

21. May we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses, and our garments, and try [to discover] whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these, our possessions. - John Woolman (1763)

Contributions by Quaker Universalist Fellowship

1. Quaker Thought:

“. . . charge to you all in the presence of the living God, be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, island, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them...”

— The Journal of George Fox

Paraphrase:

...an advice to all in the experience of the Light, be personal patterns and examples, individually and as meetings, in all geographical and social contexts, that our lives and practice may preach among all people and to them and to us.

2. Quaker Thought:

“Mark this therefore diligently: the yoke is not one thing, and the liberty another; but one and the same. The power of God, the life everlasting, the pure light, the divine nature, is a yoke to the transgressing nature; but it is the ease, the pleasure, the rest, the peace, the joy, the natural center of that which is born of God.”

— Isaac Penington (1661)

Paraphrase:

Mark diligently that the burden is not one thing and freedom another thing, but they are the same. What we perceive as a burden is actually that pure inward wisdom which warns against straying from the true path to freedom.

3. Quaker Thought:

“True worship may be experienced at any time; in any place—alone on the hills or in the busy daily life—we may find God, in whom we live and move and have our being. But this individual experience is not sufficient, and in a meeting held in the Spirit there is a giving and receiving between its members, one helping another with or without words. So there may come a wider vision and a deeper experience.”

— Thomas Kelly, 1925

Paraphrase:

True worship may be experienced at any time, in any place, alone on the hills or in the busy daily life. We may find God, in whom we live and move and have our lines in this individual way. But we testify that this individual experience is not sufficient for our lives. In meeting for worship in the Quaker tradition that is held in the Spirit, there is a giving and receiving between its members, one helping another, with or without words, and so there may result a wider vision and a deeper experience in understanding reality and guidance in practice.

4. 1st Century scripture:

“But for you the anointing that you received from the Christ abides in you, and you are not in need of anyone to teach you; but since his anointing teaches you about everything, and since it is a real anointing, and no lie, then, as it has taught you, maintain your union with him.”

— 1 John 2:27 (*New New Testament* version)

Quaker thought:

“But I brought them Scriptures, and told them there was an anointing within man to teach him, and that the Lord would teach His people Himself.” (82)

– Journal of George Fox (Rufus Jones edition)

Paraphrase:

“All beings are from the same earth. We all come into being anointed with the breath of life. We do not need human notions—our own or anyone else’s—in order to know the real nature of life inwardly.”

5. Quaker Thought:

I do believe that there is a power which is divine, creative and loving, though we can often only describe it with the images and symbols that rise from our particular experiences and those of our communities.

This power is part and parcel of all things, human, animal, indeed of all that lives. Its story is greater than any one cultural version of it, and yet it is embodied in all stories, in all traditions. It is a power that paradoxically needs the human response. Like us it is energized by the reciprocity of love.

It wills our redemption, longs for us to turn to it. It does not create heaven and hell for us, but allows us to do that for ourselves. Such is the terrible vulnerability of love.

— Harvey Gillman, 1988, from Britain's *Faith and Practice*, 26.31.

Paraphrase:

I believe that identified within the scope of human experience there is awareness of a power present, creative, and benign, which humans only incompletely describe with the images, words, and symbols that rise from our personal experiences and the experiences of our community traditions.

This power is apart and within all living and nonliving things, human, animal, and plants. This human description effort and engagement is embodied in all stories, in all traditions. This power is understood as the source of human experience of love and casts a sense of love and engagement over all human experience, providing a framework and resolution process for human behavior in human time.

This power nurtures our human practice and provides a sense of expectation and assurance now and after human death.

6. Penington – “Become little, poor, and naked”

THE Lord God . . . hath chosen a seed or inward principle of life to appear in . . . many who have been overwhelmed with misery . . .

[In] the tender mercy of the Lord, have they felt this principle revealed in their hearts, and their hearts by degrees . . . gathered into the principle, where the life reigns, and where the strength and dominion of death is broken. . .

Now the main thing necessary . . . after the revealing of this principle, and some sense and feeling of it, and the turning of the mind towards it, [is] to wait to be made more and more acquainted with it . . . and to be guided by it. For though this principle be all life, yet it is at first but as a seed, and the appearance of the Lord in it is but as in a seed; very little, low, weak, hard to be discerned, easy to be overlooked and despised . . .

Yet that is not the way, but the soul must become subject unto, and bowed under, this little appearance . . .

[Be] content to be little and low, and to receive little and low instructions from God, and to walk in the path of brokenness and humility before the Lord; for this is his way of fitting for, and advancing into, the high and glorious power of his life. And this my soul is assured of, that none shall enter into, or abide in, his kingdom, but as they become little, poor, and naked, and as they are led by the little child of God's begetting . . .

— Isaac Penington (1663)