

## What is Meeting for Worship?

The spiritual center of Olympia Friends Meeting is its Meeting for Worship. We are part of the liberal unprogrammed Quaker tradition, where Meeting for Worship takes place on the basis of silence, with no minister, as we believe the Light is available to all, and all may minister. We believe that in this opening of our hearts to the Spirit, we are contributing to the common worship of all present, as well as to our own renewal. This time may pass in silence, or individuals may be moved to speak briefly out of the silence. Leaving a space of time between each person speaking allows the ministry of each to be respectfully heard.

Meeting ends after an hour or so, when a designated Friend shakes hands with a neighbor, and we all join hands around the circle. Refreshments accompany a social time following Meeting for Worship.

Our children are an important part of Friends Meeting. They join us for the first fifteen minutes of Meeting for Worship, then are led to the children's program, with childcare for the youngest.

*"A Friends meeting, however silent, is . . . a witness that worship is something other than 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."*

- Caroline E. Stephen, 1908

## Where did Quakerism come from?

Quakerism started in England in the 1650s, during a time of civil war and religious turmoil. It grew out of the preaching of George Fox, who rejected the hierarchy and rituals of existing churches, and challenged all people to encounter God directly.

## Are Quakers Christians?

Not all of them. Quakerism has deep Christian roots, and most Quakers consider themselves Christian, but many do not. Quakers range from those who call themselves Christians to those who identify themselves as non-theists. Unprogrammed meetings are often characterized by great theological diversity, while still experiencing profound spiritual community.

## Do Quakers have a creed?

No. Quakers have tried to avoid written creeds, especially in unprogrammed meetings. We want people to attend very carefully to what the inward guide is trying to open to them, and to express whatever truth they discover as honestly as they can in their own words. Pre-formulated statements can short-circuit this process and may hamper true spiritual growth. Friends speak of "that of God" in everyone and strive to reach it.

*"For 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." - Robert Barclay 1648-1690*

## Why are Quakers called Friends?

The official name is Religious Society of Friends. "Friends" comes from Jesus' statement: "You are my friends if you do what I command you . . ." (John 15:14-15). "Quaker" was originally a nickname.



Portions of this brochure are adapted from the website of Friends General Conference.

## What are Friends attitudes toward sacraments and Scripture?

Friends do not believe in the outward sacraments of communion and baptism as variously practiced in Christian churches. We seek an inward reality. We believe that all of life is sacred, and that all great human experiences are of a sacramental nature. We value scripture as it helps us to encounter the Spirit that inspired it. We do not believe that the words themselves are sacred, but only the Spirit. We believe there are many different doors to enter into an experience of the sacred.

## What is the peace testimony?

When George Fox was asked to take sides in the English Civil War, he answered that he lived "in the Life and Power that takes away the occasion for war." Quakers seek to avoid violence on both the personal and the societal level and affirm that the Spirit that takes away the occasion for war is available to everyone, everywhere, in all situations.

## What are the other testimonies?

Quaker testimonies are not formulated rules, but ways of being in the world. Quaker testimonies of peace, equality, simplicity, integrity, and community flow from our faith. Thus, Quakers respect the sanctity of all human beings and the equality of all, value diversity in opinions and lifestyles, and oppose all kinds of violence while seeking non-violent solutions to conflict.

## Who attends Quaker meetings?

All who might find the Quaker Meeting for Worship helpful in their spiritual search are welcome. We come from a wide variety of religious backgrounds; most of us were not raised as Quakers. No one is pressured to become a member. Attenders take active roles in the life of the meeting. If someone wants to join, they write a letter to the meeting's Care and Concerns committee to begin the process. All seekers are welcome.

## How do I become more active?

One of the better ways to come to know the Quakers is to join one of the many smaller group activities. Dates and times are announced in the newsletter. All are welcome. Discussion groups may meet in homes. New ones start from time to time; some, such as a Bible study group, continue for many years, but welcome new people at any time. On the first Sunday of the month, the meeting holds a potluck breakfast at 9 a.m. at the meetinghouse. Periodically, there are special presentations or discussions held after Meeting for Worship.

Committees carry out the business and spiritual work of the meeting. Members and attenders take responsibility for the life of the meeting and help with committee work as they are led. Our committees include: Children's Committee, Care and Concerns, Worship and Ministry, Peace and Social Justice, Outreach, and Finance Committee, among others.

A very good way to learn about Quaker concerns and the process of decision-making by the "sense of the meeting" or consensus is to attend Meeting for Business. Local Quaker meetings are called "monthly meetings" because they gather once a month to conduct business. The second Sunday of each month, Meeting for Business is held starting around 11:30 a.m., guided by the meeting's clerk.



## How does Olympia Friends Meeting fit into the wider Society of Friends?

There are several opportunities for getting to know Quakers beyond the local meeting, at gatherings to which all are welcome, and which include excellent programs for children. These include: Pacific Northwest Quarterly Meeting, North Pacific Yearly Meeting, and Friends General Conference Gathering.

Olympia Friends Meeting is part of **Pacific Northwest Quarterly Meeting**, which includes local monthly meetings and worship groups in Washington and Northern Idaho. The Quarterly meeting gathers two weekends a year in the spring and fall at a camp in a canyon near Ellensburg for spiritual sharing and fellowship.

Our Quarterly Meeting is part of **North Pacific Yearly Meeting**, which also includes Quakers from Oregon, Montana, and Idaho. The Yearly Meeting gathers annually for several days in the summer for fellowship and business. This is a wonderful time to meet the broader Friends community in the Northwest. <https://npym.org/>

Olympia Friends Meeting is a member of **Friends General Conference (FGC)**, a national association of liberal unprogrammed Quaker meetings. Each summer in early July, the FGC Gathering is held, a stimulating week-long event that features many opportunities for participation in workshops. FGC's website and online bookstore are very good sources for more information about Quakerism: <https://www.fgcquaker.org/>

There are also other Friends organizations that address broader Quaker concerns. Among them:

- **Quaker Voice on Washington Public Policy** brings the Quaker voice, guided by testimonies and spiritual devotion, to the formation of public policy in Washington state. Website: <https://quakervoicewa.org/>
- **American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)** works nationally and internationally on peace and social justice issues. Website: <https://www.afsc.org/>
- **Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)** is the Quaker lobby in Washington D.C., bringing a Quaker perspective on national policy. Website: <https://www.fcnl.org/>

*"Let us then try what Love will do."*

July 22, 2018

-William Penn

# Welcome to Olympia Friends Meeting



*"Be patterns, be examples ... then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one."* George Fox, 1624-1691  
(Founder of Religious Society of Friends)

**Meeting for Worship:  
Sundays at 10:00 a.m.**

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Visit our website:  
**[www.olympiafriends.org](http://www.olympiafriends.org)**