

# **FRIENDS CONSULTATION ON WORSHIP**

**Earlham School of Religion  
Richmond, Indiana  
December 7-10, 1989**

**Sponsored by  
*Quaker Hill Conference Center  
and  
Earlham School of Religion***

## PREFACE

1989 marks the tenth annual Friends Consultation sponsored by Quaker Hill Conference Center and Earlham School of Religion. This year's topic was Worship. One of the guidelines for previous Consultations has been that persons were allowed to attend only one year, in an attempt to involve as many people as possible. However, each year we have had several requests from previous attenders stating that their experience at the Consultation was so helpful and enjoyable, that they wanted to attend another year. Having this accumulation of requests, combined with this being the tenth anniversary, and the fact that this would be Wilmer Cooper's last year as Coordinator, we felt freedom to make changes in this year's guidelines and planning.

For this year only, those who were invited to attend were limited to alumni from previous Consultations. 342 invitations were sent. Because the large numbers of attenders coincided with the completion of the new building at the Earlham School of Religion, this year's Consultation was held at Earlham School of Religion on the Earlham campus. The building provided a spacious and delightful atmosphere for the the tenth anniversary Consultation.

Several changes in the program and schedule were instituted this year, including two presentations for each of the three main topics. An attempt was made to have one speaker from the unprogrammed and one from the programmed tradition. (Some of the papers in this booklet use "programmed meeting" to denote programmed/pastoral meetings, while others simply refer to "programmed/pastoral meetings.")

Another significant change was in the small group experiences. Each participant was assigned to a small worship-sharing group, whose main agenda was worship. These groups provided a chance to form a deeper relationship with a few Friends and a place to share with others some of the deeper, inner movings of the Spirit. A third change was the scheduling of interest groups. Participants chose two groups to attend, from a list of ten topics.

Friends in attendance numbered 97, representing 23 yearly meetings and 23 states in the United States, five from Canadian Yearly Meeting and two from London Yearly Meeting. From a humble beginning 1980, this Consultation series has become one of the most significant, broadly representative gathering of Friends for the expressed purpose of examining issues of pastoral concern. The "findings" or booklets that have been published each year have been in demand for study groups, Sunday School classes, as well as individual study, across the United States and reaching as far as Australia and New Zealand. On several of the topics, there has been little other contemporary writing done, so the

booklets will hold their value for many years. The Spirit of God clearly seems to be at work in these Consultations to help Friends encounter one another in significant and lasting ways.

We give special thanks to two trust funds from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. The Shoemaker Fund and the Bequests Fund provided grants that were added to the travel pool, which has been essential to make it possible for Friends to attend from a broad spectrum and wide geographical locations.

Quaker Hill Conference Center and Earlham School of Religion are committed to continuing the Consultation series. There are many topics that have not been addressed. The one concern is the continuing need for financial grants to supplement the travel pool. If this need can be met, we see no limit to future possibilities. We invite your prayers and suggestions.

For the Consultation committee,

Wilmer Cooper, Coordinator  
of the Consultation

Eldon Harzman, Director  
Quaker Hill Conference Center

Please note: Additional copies of this booklet and some previous Consultation booklets are available at \$6.00 each from the Quaker Hill Conference Center, 10 Quaker Hill Drive, Richmond, IN, 47374.

Friends Consultation --

1980, On Service	(Out of Print)
1981, On Ministry	(Out of Print)
1982, On Eldering	(Out of Print)
1983, On Membership	(Out of Print)
1984, On Spiritual Authority and Accountability	\$6.00
1985, On Discernment	(Out of Print)
1986, On Doing The Truth	\$6.00
1987, On Overcoming Sin and Evil	\$6.00
1988, On Testimonies, Queries and Advices	\$6.00
1989 On Worship	\$6.00

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## PROSPECTUS

### FRIENDS CONSULTATION ON WORSHIP

Worship is central to the faith and practice of Friends. It is the means by which we celebrate our relationship with God through thanksgiving and praise, and the means by which we enter into prayer and communion with God in order to experience the Divine presence. In this state of "expectant waiting upon the Lord" we endeavor to discern God's truth and guidance for our personal and corporate lives.

Although Friends have much in common with respect to worship, such as our emphasis upon the primacy of the Spirit of God, more than three centuries of Quaker practice have given rise to diverse expressions of worship. Our aim in this Consultation is not only to become acquainted with each other's practice of worship, but to seek together the essential elements of Quaker worship. By so doing we should be able to discover what we have in common and what sometimes divides us as Friends. But more important than past practice is to search for ways to deepen our worship life together and to discover how we can bring it alive for others who may want to join us. Clearly the latter is a problem and a need that all Friends meetings share.

Because this is the tenth in a series of Friends Consultations jointly sponsored by Earlham School of Religion and Quaker Hill Conference Center, beginning in 1980, the invitation is going to all previous attenders, which now number more than 300 Friends from almost all yearly meetings in North America, with fraternal representatives from London Yearly Meeting. The aim is not only to explore a matter of continuing interest and concern to Friends, but to provide a renewal experience for those who have benefited from previous Consultations. We will draw on facilities both at Quaker Hill and Earlham to accommodate all who would like to take part in this Friends Consultation Homecoming.

## FRIENDS CONSULTATION ON WORSHIP

Co-sponsored by  
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and  
Quaker Hill Conference Center  
Richmond, Indiana  
December 7-10, 1989

Clerk: Gordon Browne  
New England Yearly Meeting

### Thursday, December 7

4:00 p.m.	Arrive and get settled
5:30	Vans leave Quaker Hill (QHCC) and Earlham Conference Center (ECC) for Earlham School of Religion (ESR)
6:00	Dinner at ESR
7:00	Introductions and background of Consultation
7:30	<u>PATTERNS OF FRIENDS WORSHIP</u> Wilmer Cooper, Earlham School of Religion Mark Minear, Indiana Yearly Meeting Discussion to follow
9:15	Break
9:30	Worship Epilogue Curt Shaw, Indiana Yearly Meeting
10:15	Vans leave ESR for QHCC and ECC

### Friday, December 8

7:00 a.m.	Breakfast (at place of lodging)
8:00	Vans leave QHCC and ECC for ESR
8:30	Worship-sharing groups
9:15	Interest Groups "I" first session
10:15	Break
10:30	<u>THE NATURE OF FRIENDS WORSHIP</u> Alastair Heron, London Yearly Meeting Celia Mueller, Northwest Yearly Meeting Discussion to follow
12:15	Break
12:30 p.m.	Lunch at ESR
1:30	Vans leave ESR for QHCC and ECC Free time: rest, additional worship time, or informal sharing
3:30	Vans leave QHCC and ECC for ESR
4:00	<u>THE ROLE OF VOCAL MINISTRY</u> <u>IN FRIENDS WORSHIP</u> Louise Wilson, North Carolina Conservative Yearly Meeting Howard Macy, Mid-America Yearly Meeting

5:45 Discussion to follow  
 Break  
 6:00 Dinner at ESR  
 7:30 Interest Groups "I" second session  
 9:00 Hymn Sing  
 9:30 Worship Epilogue  
 Marlene Pedigo, Western Yearly Meeting  
 10:15 Vans leave ESR for QHCC and ECC

Saturday, December 9

7:00 a.m. Breakfast (at place of lodging)  
 8:00 Vans leave QHCC and ECC for ESR  
 8:30 Worship-Sharing groups  
 9:15 Worship  
 10:15 Break  
 10:30 ROLE PLAYS ON FRIENDS WORSHIP  
 Eldon Harzman, Quaker Hill Conference Center  
 Discussion to follow  
 12:30 p.m. Lunch at ESR  
 1:30 Vans leave ESR for QHCC and ECC  
 Free time: rest, additional worship  
 time, or informal sharing  
 3:00 Vans leave QHCC and ECC for ESR  
 3:30 Interest Groups "II"  
 5:30 Free Time  
 6:00 Dinner at ESR  
 7:30 Reports from Interest Groups  
 9:00 Hymn Sing  
 9:30 Worship Epilogue  
 Tom Mullen, Dean  
 Earlham School of Religion  
 10:15 Vans leave ESR for QHCC and ECC

Sunday, December 10

7:30 a.m. Breakfast (at place of lodging)  
 8:30 Vans leave QHCC and ECC for ESR  
 9:00 SUMMARY REPORT BY PARTICIPANT/OBSERVERS  
 Thom Jeavons, Baltimore Yearly Meeting  
 Sara Beth Terrell, North Carolina YM  
 Discussion to follow  
 10:00 Consultation Evaluation and Guidance for  
 Future Consultations  
 10:45 Break  
 11:00 Closing Worship  
 12:00 p.m. Lunch at ESR  
 1:00 Departure

**FRIENDS CONSULTATION ON WORSHIP  
7-10 DECEMBER 1989**

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**QUAKER WORSHIP 1652-1860**  
**Wilmer A. Cooper**

The particular claim of Friends is that true worship is spiritual rather than ceremonial. George Fox believed that he was called "to bring people off from all the world's worships, to know the Spirit of Truth in the inward parts, and to be led thereby; that in it they might worship the Father of spirits, who seeks such to worship him..." Fox continued: "I was to bring them off from all the world's fellowships, and prayings, and singings, which stood in forms without power; that this fellowship might be in the Holy Ghost, and in the Eternal Spirit of God..."<sup>1</sup>

George Fox and early Friends drew their authority for this kind of worship from Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well as reported in the Gospel of John 4:23-24. "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." This frequently quoted passage from the Gospel of John was joined by Fox's admonition that Friends should "meet together in the Name of Jesus, whose Name is above every Name, and Gathering is above every Gathering."<sup>2</sup> In his Epistles, Fox identifies "the Name of Jesus" with "the Light of Christ," sometimes using these terms simultaneously and together.<sup>3</sup> Wherever Fox refers to "waiting in the Light," he maintains that this Light proceeds from Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> So the prerequisite for early Quaker worship was to "meet in spirit and in truth," and to "meet in the Name of Jesus."

Friends were convinced that worship in spirit and truth meant "waiting upon the Lord" in silence and stillness. They believed this was confirmed by the Psalmist (46:10) who wrote: "Be still and know that I am God." Less convincing was their reference to the biblical claim that Job sat together in silence with his friends for seven days and seven nights. (Job 2:13) More convincing is the firsthand witness of several early Friends who testified to silence as essential to worship in spirit and truth. The first quotation is from Edward Burrough:

And while waiting upon the Lord in silence, as often we did for many hours together, with our mindes and hearts toward him, being stayed in the Light of Christ within us, from all thoughts, fleshly motions, and desires, in our diligent waiting and feare of his Name, and hearkning to his word, we received often the pouring down of the spirit upon us, and the gift of Gods holy eternal Spirit as in the dayes of old, and our hearts were made glad, and our tongues loosed, and our mouths

opened, and we spake with new tongues as the Lord gave utterance, and as his spirit led us, which was poured down upon us, on Sons and Daughters, and to us hereby was the deep things of God revealed,<sup>5</sup> and things unutterable was known and made manifest...

The second testimony is from Francis Howgill:

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.<sup>6</sup>

A third testimony is from the Quaker apologist, Robert Barclay, who bore witness to the transforming power of the Quaker meeting upon his first visit:

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 to it, I found the evil in me weakening, and the good lifted up. Thus it was that I was knit into them and united with them. And I hungered more and more for the increase of this power, and life until I could feel myself perfectly redeemed.<sup>7</sup>

Friends did not consider silence an end in itself. Rather it was a means to an end that the worshipper might communicate with God. If one is in a mode of openness and listening before God in worship, which silence makes possible, it is the Quaker claim that human beings can commune directly with God. George Fox proclaimed that "Christ has come to teach his people himself," through the action of the Holy Spirit, and that it is in the context of worship that one can experience holy communion with God. Speaking in All-College Meeting for Worship at Earlham some years ago, Elton Trueblood ended a message on the use of silence in worship by saying, "We should be able to go from this place of worship and say that we have been to holy communion today." Thus communion with God is the end toward which we aspire in worship, and historically Friends believed that silence was the form best suited to facilitate that communion.

Another important aspect of Quaker worship is its corporate character, already referred to in the opening quotation from George Fox where Friends were advised to separate from the "world's fellowships" in order "that their fellowship might be in the Holy Ghost, and in the Eternal Spirit of God."<sup>8</sup> As Friends experienced the presence of Christ in their midst, they also experienced the unity of the gathered fellowship. Francis Howgill described it this way:

From that day forward, our hearts were knit unto the Lord and one unto another in true and fervent love, in

the covenant of Life with God; and that was a strong bond upon all our spirits, which united us one unto another.<sup>9</sup>

Based on this passage from Howgill one Quaker writer has remarked: "'The unity of the Spirit,' 'the bond of peace,' and 'membership of one body' are familiar phrases used [by early Friends] to describe the fellowship known in worship..."<sup>10</sup> Again we may quote two seventeenth century Friends who testify to the importance of practicing corporate worship. Thus Robert Barclay wrote:

Many lighted candles, when gathered together in a single place, greatly augment each other's light and make it shine more brilliantly. In the same way, when many are gathered together into the same life, there is more of the glory of God. Each individual receives greater refreshment, because he partakes not only of the light and life that has been raised in him, but in the others as well.<sup>11</sup>

A similar testimony was given by Isaac Pennington:

The warmth of Life in each Vessel, doth not only warm the particulars, but they are like an heap of fresh and living coals, warming one another, insomuch as a great strength, freshness, and vigour of Life flows into all.<sup>12</sup>

Let me interject that, in preparing this presentation, the source I have found most helpful is a little book by the British Friend, Gladys Wilson, entitled Quaker Worship. It was published in London in 1952 and, unfortunately, is out of print. In considering George Fox's experience of worship, she concluded that he emphasized four aspects: silence, communion, fellowship, and ministry.<sup>13</sup> So far I have dealt with three of these but have not touched on the role of ministry in Quaker worship. Because that is a main topic in our Consultation to be addressed by Louise Wilson and Howard Macy, I will not take it up here except to state affirmatively that ministry was indeed very important for Fox and early Friends. Although the setting of Quaker worship was silent "waiting upon the Lord," many Friends were moved to speak (and preach) in Quaker meeting, sometimes at great length. As they were moved by the power of the Holy Spirit, they proclaimed prophetic messages according to the leading of the Spirit. Friends in the beginning were called seekers, as we often characterize them today, but they were also spiritual finders who felt that they had a Gospel message to proclaim far and wide in the world. This they did prophetically and unashamedly.

Because of the importance of ministry, the leadership of Friends in the last half of the seventeenth century was in the hands of the ministers. This is not the place to discuss what happened to Quakerism during the Quietistic Period from the early

eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century. But during that time the role of leadership in the Society of Friends passed from the ministers to the elders, who became the nurturers and encouragers of a living ministry, and eventually became the keepers of sound doctrine as well. Alongside the elders, Friends appointed overseers whose responsibility it was to determine what was acceptable conduct in terms of outward behavior. As a result of this restrictive stance of the elders and overseers, the early emphasis on a vital spoken ministry became subordinated to these other disciplinary concerns. Thus a living ministry was submerged for several generations.

Returning to the main theme of this presentation, another way to understand Quaker worship is to compare it with other forms of worship in the Christian tradition. According to Maurice Creasey, there are two modes of worship in the Christian tradition: a) Liturgical worship, and b) Free worship. Friends are clearly committed to the latter. In addition to these two modes, Creasey also cites three traditions with respect to the centering of worship: a) worship centered in the Eucharist (the Mass) in the Roman Catholic tradition; b) worship centered in preaching in the Protestant tradition; and c) worship centered in "waiting upon the Spirit" in the Quaker tradition.<sup>14</sup> Howard Brinton speaks of similar typologies of worship in the Christian and Quaker traditions. He cites the Catholic type centered at the altar and communion table; the Protestant type centered at the pulpit from which the Word is preached; and the Quaker type centered in the Divine presence revealed within, or in the midst of the gathered meeting.<sup>15</sup>

For Friends, worship is not determined by holy days or liturgical acts of celebration or re-enactments of past events. Worship is a present "now event" (or experience) of God and Christ within. Early Friends believed that the Old Covenant which relied on ceremonial rites, rituals and sacrifices was replaced by the New Covenant which was instituted by Christ and called for the immediate and real presence of Christ in worship. This calls for the worshipper to enter into a hearing and obeying relationship with Christ, rather than conforming to ceremonial rites and creeds. Worship is not dependent upon the office of a minister or priest but is ordered by the Spirit. God is the actor. The worshipper is the reactor, or responder. Historically, such worship was believed by Friends best to take place in a posture of silence, which we have already discussed earlier. Silence in this sense is a form of worship, though it is clearly less structured than other traditional forms. Silent "waiting upon the Lord" does not have to take place in a sacred building or place. A worshipping group can become a "gathered meeting" wherever the Spirit of the Lord is present and the worshippers respond to the aliveness of Christ in their midst.

When comparing Friends worship with other Christian forms, the most controversial question has been Friends' non-observance of the sacraments (or ordinances) of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Friends regarded these sacraments as a continuation of

the ceremonial rites of the Old Jewish Covenant which the immediate presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit made obsolete and unnecessary. Friends believed that under the New Covenant, all worship was ordered from Christ and his Holy Spirit. Only in a few exceptions have Friends departed from this early Quaker testimony against the outward observance of the sacraments. Rather, Friends have come to believe that potentially all of life is sacramental; that every meal, for example, can be the occasion for experiencing God's presence and God's grace. Friends believe that they can experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and that spiritually they can enter into holy communion with God through the mystical presence of Christ in the midst.

The well known Quaker painting by Doyle Penrose, "The Presence in the Midst," presents in graphic manner the historic Quaker understanding of worship. The painting, with its setting in the famous Jordan's Meetinghouse outside London, has the figure of Christ drawn in the midst of Friends gathered in worship. It is sometimes remarked that the concept of worship portrayed here has a striking resemblance to the Catholic Mass, namely, belief in the real presence of Christ in the midst, or in the Eucharist in the Catholic setting. The Penrose painting lucidly presents the "gathered meeting" around the feet of Christ without the benefit of priest or ordained minister, and without the need for liturgical ceremony. "Silent waiting upon the Lord" in an attitude of expectancy depicted in this painting represents both the attitude and posture characteristic of traditional Quaker worship.

In concluding my part of this historical review of Quaker worship, 1652-1860, let me draw your attention to some far-reaching changes which were taking place in the Society of Friends in both England and America following the middle of the nineteenth century. It is usually assumed that the changes which affected worship and ministry took place only on the American side. Here, of course, I refer to the development of the programmed/pastoral form of worship and ministry which Mark Minear and Howard Macy will discuss. But what is overlooked is a corresponding unrest and desire for change that British Friends were experiencing as they, along with Friends in America, were trying to emerge from a century of Quietistic influence and withdrawal. This unrest in the British Isles, and its corresponding search for new ways to bring Quaker worship and ministry alive again, is best described by looking at a remarkable essay entitled, "Quakerism Past and Present; being an Inquiry into the Causes of its Decline in Great Britain and Ireland" (1859).<sup>16</sup> This was written by the youthful, though very insightful, John Stephenson Rowntree. It won a prize of one hundred guineas from an anonymous donor.

The essay makes the following points: (1) Friends' peculiar form of worship was partly responsible for the decline among Friends. The author questioned whether long periods of silence were appropriate for young and inexperienced worshippers. (2) Fear of the use of Scripture in worship for the purpose of



instruction and edification was a contributing factor to decline. (3) Rowntree cited the scarcity of gifted ministry in meeting as another spiritually debilitating factor. He pointed out that two-thirds of the meetings of London Yearly Meeting had no "acknowledged ministers." Too much emphasis on "extraordinary revelation" as prerequisite to ministry was partly at fault. (4) Friends suffered from a defect in Quaker education which eliminated the fine arts and music from the preparation of young people. (5) Overemphasis on plainness of speech and dress was a hindrance to normal growth and development of young people. (6) Rowntree cited the marked decline in membership caused by disciplinary disownments, especially for marrying out of meeting. (7) Finally, Rowntree felt that Friends had lost a spirit of conquest so characteristic of early Friends, and that fear of proselytizing was partly responsible for negative trends in membership.

Very soon after this essay was published, London Yearly Meeting began to do a turn around on many of these issues, such as allowing mixed marriages and removing some of the restrictions on plainness of dress and speech. Deep seated and long lasting changes did not come, however, until after the Manchester Conference of 1895 of which John Stephenson Rowntree was one of the organizers. If these negative factors were the cause of decline in membership a century and a half ago, perhaps we need to ask what factors are present today which discourage spiritual vitality and growth among Friends today?

I will conclude my remarks about the early Quaker understanding of worship by leaving you with some queries which have been prompted by this survey.

1. Do Friends in my meeting continue to seek to worship God "in spirit and in truth?"
2. Do Friends in my meeting worship "in the Name of Jesus" as did early Friends? Put another way, do Friends still hold that Quaker worship is Christian worship?
3. Do Friends have a strong sense of the transcendent presence of God in worship as did early Friends? George Fox had an overwhelming sense that in every meeting he attended "the power of the Lord was over all." Could it be that Friends' preoccupation with "that of God in everyone" has eclipsed our awareness of the transcendent and transforming power of God?

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Gladys Wilson, Quaker Worship, (London: Bannisdale Press, 1952), pp. 8-9.

<sup>2</sup>T. Canby Jones, ed., "The Power of the Lord is Over All," The Pastoral Letters of George Fox, (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1989), Epistle 288, pp. 283-284.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Epistle 33, pp. 25-26.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted by Wilson, Quaker Worship, p. 29.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>7</sup>Robert Barclay, Apology, ed. by Dean Freiday, (Elberon, NJ: Private Publication, 1967), p. 254.

<sup>8</sup>Wilson, Quaker Worship, pp. 8-9.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>11</sup>Barclay, Apology, p. 280.

<sup>12</sup>Wilson, Quaker Worship, p. 42.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>14</sup>Maurice A. Creasey, "Worship in the Christian Tradition," Quaker Worship in North America, ed. by Francis B. Hall, (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1978), p. 1.

<sup>15</sup>Howard Brinton, Friends for 300 Years, (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1952), p. 59.

<sup>16</sup>Rufus M. Jones, The Later Periods of Quakerism, Vol. II, (London: Macmillan & Company Ltd., 1921), pp. 947-950.

**PATTERNS OF FRIENDS WORSHIP:  
1860 TO 1887 AMONG PROGRAMMED/PASTORAL FRIENDS  
Mark Minear**

I must confess that I am somewhat tempted to have a little fun with this presentation. We could have some laughs telling stories from over a century ago about pianos getting secretly moved in and out of meetinghouses, or how Friends would jump right over the pews to hurry to the mourners' bench in response to a "call" during a meeting for worship, or about how a meeting might come to terms with how long a travelling minister should hang around the community giving leadership in the meetings for worship.

And perhaps we will need a sense of fun and humor as we seek to work creatively with the tensions faced by the various traditions of worship among Friends and represented here tonight! At the Consultation of '82, Tom Brown, of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, shared a story with some of us while standing in line one night for refreshments. He asked: "Do you know why Quakers sing hymns so slowly?" His answer: "So they have time to read ahead and see if they agree with the words." We all laughed, yet understood with sensitivity the meaning behind it. I have told that story for a few laughs over the years, because it has always seemed to me that Quakers do sing lethargically. Just this past year I told it at First Friends in the context of fun and yet to genuinely encourage us to consider the messages of the hymns that we sing. And I was lovingly, yet firmly, eldred by a Friend in the meeting who was from the unprogrammed tradition and who did read ahead to see if he was in agreement with the words. YOW! The tensions still exist. And, most likely, our spiritual ancestors of 100 years ago experienced a great deal of pain in seeking God, experimenting with faith and practice, personalizing faith and practice, feeling their dilemmas, following their leadings, disagreeing with one another, and even parting ways.

I want to share with you the developments in the patterns of worship among American Quakers during the last half of the 19th century. Keep in mind, because I certainly will, that my own Quaker tradition (Iowa Yearly Meeting, Friends United Meeting) tracks back to Orthodox, Gurneyite, evangelical, revivalistic, programmed worship, and the pastoral meeting type of Quakerism. I want to help us see that the two most controversial developments which would bring lasting change within the Society of Friends -- 1) programmed worship and 2) the pastoral system -- were actually two separate developments. One preceded the other, but they merged together. Today, we use the phrases "programmed meetings" and "pastoral meetings" almost interchangeably, failing to remember these early transitional years.

Wilmer Cooper listed several concerns of 19th century Quakerism written by the young John Stephenson Rowntree of England in 1859. The concerns of Friends in the midwestern United States were very similar; but England and the Midwest were very different in the 1850's.

1860. Now that's a very significant number. 1860 is the number of our house on S.W. "I" Court here in Richmond. It is also the year in which Abraham Lincoln was elected president on the eve of the U.S. Civil War. Wilmer Cooper says to pick up the story at 1860. I think there is a clear reason why that year represents a turning point. Actually, Sunday, October 7, 1860, at 7:00 p.m., to be exact, a meeting for worship which lasted for over six hours during the Indiana Yearly Meeting sessions would be the single most important event unleashing the new developments. Of course, there are many factors that go into the background of what happened on that day that made it the breakthrough it was. Some of them are: 1) the westward movement on the frontier and the distance from "mothering" monthly meetings and yearly meetings and, hence, from the distinctive Quaker tradition, 2) the reaction to what seemed to many as the deadness of Quietism and its "quieting of the creaturely activity," 3) the ecumenicity experienced out of necessity by many Friends in the rural areas on the frontier, 4) the ongoing reaction of Friends to the dividing of the Quaker pie in the separations of 1827-28, 1845, 1854, etc., and 5) the nurture of intentionality for faith and practice through various avenues which seemed to bring new life such as Sunday School, mission work, Bible and tract societies, Bible study classes, prayer meetings, daily home devotionals, educational institutions, etc.

As I mention individuals in my presentation tonight, I probably won't give much background on them. But I do want you to know them as people who hungered for God. They passionately longed to know God, to experience worship as alive, and to see the fruits of worship in ministry. One such person was Rhoda Coffin, who was 34 years old when she gathered with Friends just days prior to the 1860 Indiana Yearly Meeting gathering. She recorded in her reminiscences:

The younger people had no means of showing their love to God by any active service. They were required to use certain models of dress and language, abstain from all relaxations and amusements, music and singing were prohibited. Even singing a hymn at home was very doubtful, not to be encouraged, an evidence of "creaturely activity" of which there was great fear. It was a narrow path, a "guarded education," but the guards were so strong and high that the breathing of the pure air of contact with other Christians was almost shut off. The pure flow of Christ-like thought was obstructed by repression. ...There were many hungering and thirsting for the water of life, but few to give it. It was, however, soon to flow freely.<sup>1</sup>

During these sessions, visiting ministers gave very significant leadership. Among these travelling ministers were: Sybil Jones from New England Yearly Meeting who (as her nephew Rufus Jones put it) "was to be a chosen instrument in inaugurating the awakening itself"<sup>2</sup>; Rebecca T. Updegraff, from Ohio Yearly Meeting, whose family was in close Christian friendship to the great revivalist Charles Finney and whose son was the notorious David B. Updegraff; and Lindley Hoag, from Iowa Yearly Meeting, who would inspire such persons as Esther Frame to consider public ministry. Elbert Russell wrote that it was the visiting ministers, Updegraff and Hoag, who brought forth the request to the business session to have a special meeting for worship to urge the older ministers to keep quiet and to allow the younger Friends to speak forth. It was seconded by Sybil Jones and several Friends from the Cincinnati Meeting. Rufus Jones says the minute developed out of a small group that had gathered at the Coffin home immediately prior to yearly meeting. This group included Rhoda and Charles (who would become a well-known evangelist and the first Superintendent of Iowa Yearly Meeting who raised the number of released, paid pastors from 3 to 50 between the years 1886-90), Harriet Steer, David Judkins, and Murray Shipley (from the Cincinnati Meeting and brother-in-law to Joel Bean who in the 1880's would struggle with the tensions of the revivalism in Iowa which was so strongly nurtured by John Henry Douglas). As Rhoda had written in her journal:

At the beginning of the Yearly Meeting of 1860 a company met at our house to consult as to what should be done, or rather could be done...after a season of prayer and consultation we decided to send a written request to the Yearly Meeting for the privilege of holding an evening meeting for sacred worship in the "Old" Whitewater Meeting House for those in the younger walks of life.<sup>3</sup>

After some opposition and much discussion, the requested special Sunday evening meeting for worship during the sessions was finally granted; and it was understood that the older attenders were to keep silent, not to preach or be heard on this occasion, and that the "babes and sucklings should have a chance to break forth."<sup>4</sup> Exactly how many attended this meeting for worship is uncertain, the estimates varying from 1,000 to 3,000 persons. Rhoda estimated that there were one thousand persons in attendance. Rufus Jones wrote that there were more than one thousand. Luke Woodard recorded that the seating capacity, including the galleries, was 1,500 or more; and it was densely filled. Elijah Coffin recorded in his journal that there were "not less than two thousand present, a memorable time."<sup>5</sup> And another first hand participant wrote that the seating capacity was estimated between two and three thousand, and it was completely filled. This anonymous attender recorded quite an interesting account of that evening's meeting.

A solemn hush pervaded the vast assemblage. Many afterwards stated that they could feel the Divine

presence. Presently a young person gave an expression to his aspirations for a life of greater devotion to the cause of Christ. In rapid succession he was followed by others from every part of the huge building. Not only were there heard testimonies, aspirations, exhortations, confessions, but there were numerous prayers for guidance to a higher life, for forgiveness of past sins, for an outpouring of the Spirit. In those days, when some one knelt in prayer, the entire congregation rose, took off their hats and turned about so as to face the rear of the house. I still remember the reverberation caused by the rising and turning of this large audience. When the prayer, usually quite brief at this meeting, came to an end, there were the same noise and confusion when seats were resumed. After many prayers had been uttered, one of the ministers in the gallery suggested that for the remainder of this meeting, in order to save time, Friends should keep their seats during the times of prayer. And so for the remainder of the meeting the clatter of the shuffling of five or six thousand feet was unheard. The meeting began at seven in the evening and continued till after midnight. During those five hours several hundred testimonies, prayers, confessions, yearnings, votive offerings were heard. There were still burdened hearts but the ministers with reluctance thought the time had come for the close of this memorable meeting. Thus was launched that great movement whose results at that time could not be foretold.<sup>6</sup>

The Friends' Review said, editorially, that this evening meeting was "a season of remarkable awakening and divine favour."<sup>7</sup> The correspondent from Indiana Yearly Meeting to the Friends' Review penned the following words in regard to these sessions:

Our Yearly Meeting this year has been unusually large, and it is the general opinion that we never before had such evidences of the prevalence of real, vital religion amongst us. It has been spoken of as a genuine revival. Great harmony has prevailed; indeed, the character of the meeting throughout has been such, that things have ascended that we lived to see this day.<sup>8</sup>

Someone even sang a hymn on the night of this well-remembered meeting for worship, a practice unheard of in Quaker meetings in the preceding 150 years. A new beginning was clearly inaugurated. The leaders of this awakening were primarily in their 30's, yet still considered "young" Friends. (In the early Friends movement the average age of the Valient 60 was about 24. James Parnell, the first Quaker martyr, was 16 when he died.) But these younger Friends, of whom almost all were born into Quaker homes and raised in Quaker meetings, would be the leaders

of a new generation of Friends during the next 30 years as Orthodox, Gurneyite, American Quakerism would undergo a radical transformation. Perhaps the words of John Henry Douglas, written reflectively in a letter to a friend more than 50 years later, best reveal the significance of this gathering in 1860:

In the providence of God a very strong encouragement was given to the revival spirit and work by that never to be forgotten Sabbath night evening during Indiana Yearly Meeting in 1860....It is well written up in Rhoda M. Coffin's journal. This meeting was attended and approved by many leading Friends among them Lindley M. Hoag, Sybil Jones, Rebecca Updegraff and others. It had been on my heart for years and I could not rest until it was granted. Then the revival wave rose higher and higher in many parts of America.<sup>9</sup>

After these yearly meeting sessions, Sybil Jones met with over 150 of these young Friends in the home of Rhoda and Charles Coffin. This began a weekly gathering of such spiritual activity -- prayer, worship, and ministry -- that would continue in their home for over four years.

This weekly gathering is indicative of the way the renewal eventually affected the meetings for worship. The separation of 1828 sent Friends to their Bibles with renewed zeal. Participation in Bible societies and the holding of Bible meetings were some of the intentional ways that Joseph John Gurney's ministry would influence American Quakerism. "Never pass a day without reading a portion of Scripture in private,"<sup>10</sup> was at the heart of Gurney's teaching. But Gurney even went to the next step of planning for careful systematic instruction in the Bible, or Bible study. In the 1850's the Friends' Review would report that First-day Schools had become a great spiritual force. In 1857, for example, 138 meetings in Indiana Yearly Meeting reported having Sunday Schools and only 23 were without them. In the next year only six meetings were without Sunday Schools. Devotional times were being renewed in many Quaker homes. Reading circles, tract-reading meetings, or socio-religious meetings, as suggested by the Friends' Review, were becoming gatherings of spiritual vitality through the yearning and seeking of younger Friends. Classes at educational institutions might begin and end with seasons of participatory prayer. Even social gatherings in Quaker homes were reported to end in a time of prayer.

Allen Jay, for instance, taught a First-day class. He recorded in his autobiography:

It was while working with those young people that I first offered vocal prayer in public. I felt the need of it. Sometimes the spirit of prayer would come upon us, and several of the members of the class would engage in prayer. This revival influence was finally felt in the academy, and several of the young people at

times were heard in prayer during the morning devotions at the opening of the school...Thus, in a quiet way, in this little Quaker community out by itself on the prairie, during the years 1859 and 1860, began this wave of revival work that a few years later began to spread abroad over our branch of the Church in various places.<sup>11</sup>

In his essay "The Rise of Semi-Structured Worship," Richard E. Wood reflected on the changes from the Revival years:

At about the same time, important Gurneyites took other steps designed to improve their worship experiences. Some questioned traditional practices in public vocal prayer on the grounds that they were distracting. It had been customary for the individual praying audibly to kneel while the congregation stood, the men, who still frequently wore their hats in worship, removing them. Objections also appeared in Quaker periodicals to the loud, high-pitched, rhythmical speaking which characterized the preaching of at least a few of the older recognized members, though leading members of a few congregations still preferred this "sing-song" style and described it as the "heavenly tone". Meanwhile, the sheer quantity of preaching during worship increased dramatically, evidently stimulated by the new emphasis on such activities as devotional meetings, First Day schools, and tract distribution.<sup>12</sup>

Even though the Civil War would put a hold on some of the changes brought about by the Revival Movement, in 1867 Friends would see the renewal of "General Meetings," which were "threshing meetings" for teaching, discussion of central truths, and outreaching evangelistic work. The programmed tradition was nurtured by the intentionality of such gatherings. The meetings for worship were transformed by the spiritual activity that was taking place outside of the meetings for worship themselves.

Revivalism utilized the intentional techniques initiated by Charles Finney, such as the mourner's bench, the altar of prayer, testifying, the inquiry room and congregational singing. David B. Updegraff was probably one of the most forceful travelling evangelists as well as the single most controversial Quaker leader during these days. In 1875 Henry Hartshorne, then editor of the Friends' Review out of Philadelphia, wrote to Updegraff to elder him in regard to the changes Hartshorne saw as he travelled in the Midwest:

After going through all of Western Yearly Meeting, attending all of its devotional meetings, and attending a large meeting at Spiceland and several at Indianapolis, and lastly three or four days at Indiana Yearly Meeting, there was nothing which seemed to me impossible to reconcile with the essential principles of the early Friends and the precedents and principles



of religious work and worship in the New Testament, until I was present at the two meetings in the meetinghouse at Richmond on 7th and 1st day evenings; -- the one mainly conducted by J. Henry Douglas and the other by thyself. I was not there during the whole of the former -- but was until just before the close of the latter. Now, my dear Friend, I am bound to say, candidly; that that was not a Quaker meeting, in any sense except only that it was conducted by members of the Society of Friends, and in a Friends' meetinghouse. No precedent for any like it can be found in any history or biography of the days or successors of George Fox; and the method of personal leadership, dictation, urgency of individual pressure -- calling out for expression, -- to say nothing of the maximum of singing and minimum of silence -- was diametrically opposite to that characterizing the early Friends; and irreconcilable with the fundamental principles.<sup>13</sup>

In 1883 Elwood C. Siler, one of the most active revivalists in Western Yearly Meeting, wrote that "a regular teaching ministry was necessary to the growth and development of the church, and that congregations could not thrive on silent prayer alone, and prophecy in the sense of a few words dropped by way of exhortation and encouragement."<sup>14</sup>

And Calvin W. Pritchard, another leader among revivalist Friends, enthusiastically described the changes as he saw them:

Revivals must have leaders, and evangelists were placed in charge; singing is indispensable to such a work, and meetinghouses soon rang with songs of praise; the feeling of the people must be tested, and they were called to respond by rising or kneeling; the penitent form and inquiry room became a necessity, and they were brought into service; large accessions were made to the church and new churches built up, making a demand for more definite pastoral care, and congregations provided pastors, supporting them in their work. All this was new in the Friends' Church, unless something like it existed among the first Friends. So manifestly indispensable were these new methods that the Yearly Meetings readily adopted them and adjusted their legislation and work to the new conditions; they appointed pastoral and evangelistic committees, placed superintendents over fields, and soon had the whole Church well organized under the new system....The mode of worship is necessarily modified. Pastors and leaders are at the head of services; singing is a regular exercise; seasons of silence are short.<sup>15</sup>

Before this new era came along, Friends of the previous century seldom spoke of their inner experiences. They had a sense of awe in reference to what occurred in their spiritual lives. Now, with the Revival Movement, it quickly became

customary to report what was happening. Friends were strongly urged to testify, to tell of their experience, and to share what God was doing with them, for them and through them. Instead of long periods of silence, the meetings for worship became lively. Previously, Friends would wait in agony long before they would break the silence with a vocal utterance. Vocal prayer had become such a weighty matter, and Friends would only kneel to pray when the moving of the Spirit was so powerful that it could not be resisted. Such intimidations seemed to be lifted, allowing Friends greater freedom to speak without as much agonizing if they were being led by the Spirit or not. And since Friends were developing their speaking skills in other meetings -- General Meetings, tract-reading meetings, Bible studies, Sunday Schools, etc., they were given the confidence to more easily respond to the promptings of their hearts.

These were also days of numerical growth for the Society of Friends. Earlier Friends had lived pretty much apart with an air of exclusiveness and peculiarity, but now they became quite interested in the life of their communities, desiring to draw unchurched people into their meetings, and making an effort to adapt their methods of worship to meet the needs of persons who had not been educated and trained as Friends. Congregational singing became a common feature. It began in the Sunday Schools where the children were permitted to sing. When it emerged in worship, hymns were sung informally, individually by soloists, and without an instrument. By 1878 there was an openness to congregational singing if Friends felt led by the Spirit to sing together as a group. Musical instruments, which were considered as "unspiritual," found their way into meetinghouses after 1890. And many of the new converts, who came among Friends through the revival efforts, were not used to the long stretches of silence. Rufus Jones put it in a straight forward manner:

They (the new converts) were not altogether edified by the capricious, rambling, mentally unorganized speaking which was in vogue in many meetings. It did not feed them or instruct them, while in not a few localities the larger freedom which prevailed in meetings for worship gave opportunity for eccentric persons -- cranks of many types and varieties -- to occupy the time and tax the patience of the faithful membership. The newcomers had less patience than the birthrite members had shown. They considered the tedious repetitions and eccentric speaking insufferable, and they soon made their attitude frankly clear. Long habit had rendered seasoned Friends more or less unconscious of the flaws and failings of their age-long system and methods. They did not reflect upon their instinctive processes. They did not stand off and look from the outside at the methods which existed in their traditional forms of worship. Their new members, who often constituted half of the meeting, had no such instinctive habits. They reflected; they knew what they wanted, and they soon made their feelings known.<sup>16</sup>

I believe that it is helpful to see that these two controversial developments in the mid 19th century (programmed worship and the pastoral system) were separate developments. Programmed worship had its beginnings in the Revival years of the 1860's. The pastoral system, though written about in the early 1870's, would not actually begin until 1880 and thereafter. We especially see these developments considered as separate discussions at the Richmond Conference of 1887. The following is from the Conclusions to the Conference under the discussion of the fourth subject: "Meetings for Worship, and the Method of Conducting Them." It is important to note that though there was not complete agreement throughout this discussion, the sense of the representatives gathered at this Conference of the twelve Orthodox/Gurneyite yearly meetings was that programmed worship was here to stay, tolerance must be the grace of the day, and hopefully cautions would maintain some of the essence of Quaker worship "in spirit and in truth."

We reverently and thankfully accept the teaching of our blessed Lord, that "God is Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Upon this is based the expression of George Fox, "Hold all your meetings in the power of God."

While the requirements of various places may differ, it was the opinion of the Conference that to-day, as of old, the guidance of the Head of the church should be sought by those assembled. Waiting upon him for direction, with the prayer arising from each heart, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" the various gifts of His believing children will be exercised to His glory, and the edification of the church.

The ministry of the word, the prayer for help, the reading of the Scriptures, the hymn of praise, or the silent waiting upon the Lord for strength, may, any or all, be used by the Spirit, to the exaltation of the Lord Jesus as a Prince and a Savior, for the blessing of the congregation.

But a loving caution was felt to be needful, lest our zeal lead any of us into an undue activity of service, which would prevent our hearing the still, small voice of the Spirit, and hinder the work assigned to each one in the church.

Especially in regard to singing, reference was made to the danger of using words which may not be suited to the condition of those present, or of allowing a merely cultivated taste for music to lead into arrangements inconsistent with spiritual worship by the whole congregation.<sup>17</sup>

I hope you feel with me some of the tensions experienced in the development of the changes in the meetings for worship by

these Friends of a century ago. Wilmer Cooper ended his presentation with some queries. I would like to leave you with some tensions and the hope of working creatively with such tensions.

1. The tension between "intentionality" and "spontaneity" in Gospel Order and how one prepares or plans for worship.
2. The tension between the individual experience of God's Presence and the corporate, shared experience of God's Presence and how human leadership following the Divine Leader influences worship. With this comes the tension of the "leading" of the Spirit and the "grace" in being a human who is volunteering to be an instrument.
3. The tension between the past with its faith and practice linked to a particular time and place and the present (as well as future) with its challenges and opportunities in a new and different time and place. For example, the tension of differences within Quakerism in England, on the East Coast, and in the Midwest in the mid 19th century as well as differences between the 1850's and the 1650's.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Mary Coffin Johnson, ed., Rhoda M. Coffin: Her Reminiscences, (New York: Grafton Press, 1910), pp. 79-80.

<sup>2</sup>Rufus M. Jones, The Later Periods of Quakerism, Vol. II, (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1921), p. 893.

<sup>3</sup>Johnson, Rhoda M. Coffin, p. 80.

<sup>4</sup>Jones, The Later Periods of Quakerism, p. 896.

<sup>5</sup>Johnson, Rhoda M. Coffin, p. 81.

<sup>6</sup>A. H. Votan, "Allen Jay," in Quaker Biographies, Ser. II, Vol. III, (Philadelphia: Friends Book Store, 1920), pp. 77-78.

<sup>7</sup>William J. Allison, ed., Friends' Review, 14, (October 1860), pp. 104-105.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>9</sup>Errol T. Elliot, Quakers on the American Frontier, (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1969), p. 381.

<sup>10</sup>Joseph Bevan Braithwaite, ed., Memoirs of Joseph John Gurney, (London: Headley Brothers, 1902), p. 348.

<sup>11</sup>Paul J. Furnas, "Allen Jay: 1831-1910," (Lecture delivered at the 50th anniversary of the West Richmond Friends Meeting; Richmond, Indiana, 1959), p. 14.

<sup>12</sup>Richard E. Wood, "The Rise of Semi-Structured Worship," in Quaker Worship in North America, ed. Francis Hall, (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1978), p. 58.

<sup>13</sup>Henry Hartshorne, Letter to D. B. Updegraff, 9 Oct. 1875; Hartshorne Papers, Quaker Collection, Haverford College, Haverford, Pennsylvania.

<sup>14</sup>Thomas D. Hamm, The Transformation of American Quakerism, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 126.

<sup>15</sup>Jones, The Later Periods of Quakerism, pp. 920-921.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 916.

<sup>17</sup>Allen Jay; Mahalah Jay; and Thomas N. White, eds., Proceedings, Including Declaration of Christian Doctrine, of the General Conference of Friends, held in Richmond, Indiana, U.S.A., 1887, (Richmond, Indiana: Nicholson and Brothers, 1887), p. 20.

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## THE NATURE OF QUAKER WORSHIP

Alastair Heron

Wilmer Cooper and Mark Minear have equipped us to appreciate the origins and evolution of the Quaker approach to corporate worship. In our third session Louise Wilson and Howard Macy will be leading us toward discussion of our contemporary principles and practice in relation to the vocal ministry, as it is found during "unprogrammed" and "programmed" Quaker worship. Thus "framed" -- so to speak -- between the facts of our shared heritage and the specifics of one important aspect of our current practice, Celia Mueller and I have been asked to share the task of focussing the Consultation on the actual "nature" of Quaker worship.

Not for us the relative security of well-documented history, extensively re-evaluated in every generation; not for us the familiar actualities, of what happens when the human voice is heard from the assembly of Friends, whether arising from the modern ritual hour of silence-based worship, or from the varying but relatively brief period of "open worship" finding a place in our fully programmed services. We shall need your caring, your openness, your understanding as we offer our responses to this "opportunity." We must use it to share with you our personal reflections about the less tangible inherent essence of Quaker worship, when we try to identify this, mainly apart from its traditional dependence on a matrix of silent waiting. We must hope to spare you from an immersion in dull Quaker grey, and instead by grace to be vouchsafed a time together in the Light, a time when we are inwardly enabled to lay aside the too-familiar and be led by the Holy Spirit into fresh pastures.

Just a hundred years ago, a convinced Friend of ten years' standing sat down to write the preface to a short book which became a Quaker classic. This preface ended with the words:

I wish to trace, as far as my experience as a "convinced Friend" enables me to do so, what is the true life and strength of our Society; and the manner in which its principles, as actually embodied in its practice, its organization, and, above all, its manner of worship, are fitted to meet the special needs of an important class in our own day.

And what was the "important class?" It was no less than "the multitudes in this day of shaking of all that can be shaken, and of restless enquiry after spiritual good." The short volume addressed but six topics: organization, the Inner Light, worship, free ministry, special testimonies, and "our calling," to each of which a chapter was devoted. For my present purpose I

find it valuable to draw first on the chapter about Quaker worship, not least because its opening paragraphs relate directly to the dilemma which I face at this time. Of these, the first reads as follows:

Our manner of worhsip is the natural (as it seems to me the inevitable) result of the full recognition of the reality of divine inspiration -- of the actual living present sufficient fullness of intercourse between the human spirit and Him who is the Father of spirits. Who that truly expects to hear the voice of God can do otherwise than bow in silence before Him?

The religious language is not mine but that of the time; the actual question I can accept and emphasize. The next paragraph -- surprisingly perhaps -- draws on the Sermons, published in 1726, of a Bishop Butler, who wrote:

Devotion is retirement from the world God has made, to God alone; it is to withdraw from the avocation of sense, to yield ourselves up to the influences of the Divine presence, and to give full scope to the affections of gratitude, love, reverence, trust and dependence...

Our own author continued:

No words could more fully or worthily express the intention of a Friends meeting -- one of those "meetings for worship" which...are "held on a basis of silence," but in which free course is allowed to whatever Divine influence may prompt of vocal prayer, preaching, testimony or prophecy; those meetings in which each one, it is felt, should in the first place enter into the inmost sanctuary of his own heart, and be alone with God; being still, that His voice may be clearly heard within, before the lips can rightly be opened to show forth His praise or His counsels to others. From the depths of that stillness do from time to time arise words uttered in simple obedience to the upspringing of the fountain from within. This is what we mean by being "moved by the Spirit," and I do not see how a worthier or a truer expression could be found for the perfect ideal of spiritual worship.

And what do I see, a hundred years after Caroline Stephen<sup>1</sup>, and "my dilemma?" Briefly, it is this. If one removes "the basis of silence" (despite her noting it as a pre-requisite for our hearing clearly the voice of God within "before the lips can rightly be opened"), in what way does Quaker worship then differ from that of the vast majority of those with whom we share our Christian heritage? It remains a dilemma for me even as I unite wholeheartedly with her, when she writes: "I do not pretend to feel, as did some of the early Friends, that all pre-arrangement is itself unlawful or sinful" and is readily prepared to admit



...that the extreme of simplicity and freedom maintained in our own meetings might not prove helpful to every one (and that she has) no desire to conceal the too obvious fact that we continually fall very far short of our ideal.

Yet she has no alternative but to

...avow my own conviction that that ideal of public worship is the purist which has ever been recognized, and also that it is practically identical with that which seems to have been recognized in the days of the apostles.

To this she adds a few words which stand as a humbling challenge to all of us who worship in the "unprogrammed tradition:"

I further believe that there are many, in these days especially, to whom it is the one manner of worship which is still practically possible, as being absolutely free from anything entangling to the conscience or open to controversy.

It is a humbling challenge because that description only holds as long as our meetings for worship continue to be meetings for worship, and do not become largely or partly secular occasions in which controversy can arise.

So where do I find myself, nearly forty-eight years from becoming a Quaker by conviction within the unprogrammed tradition, and still largely in unity with the position thus described by Caroline Stephen? I find myself happy to recognize that the worship taking place in many, probably most, "programmed" Friends meetings and churches is manifestly worship, even as carefully defined by Bishop Butler in 1726; but also aware of the need to ask how it may clearly be distinguished as peculiarly Quaker. The difficulty seems to focus on the act and manner of corporate worship.

If we turn to the Quaker position on the sacraments of baptism and eucharist; to division of responsibility and authority as between clergy and laity; to required assent to credal statements; or to the basis and methods of our meetings for church affairs, the current similarities between Quakers of the "programmed" and "unprogrammed" traditions are more than adequate to make our overall position distinctively Quaker. There is much about which we are largely in unity among ourselves, and on which we find ourselves not in unity with other parts of that church universal with which we share our origins.

But we are here concerned with "the nature of Quaker Worship" -- and there is little doubt that it is our corporate worship that is to be addressed. So I must look to Celia Mueller and other Friends to answer my question, to resolve my dilemma, by explaining to me as a willing learner the ways in which our

present programmed worship is distinctively Quaker. And I hope that all participating in the Consultation who come from unprogrammed meetings will join me in this, with open minds and hearts, and all the genuine humility of which we are capable.

What actually happens during any act of corporate worship, whether programmed or not, whether in a Friends meeting or a Roman Catholic cathedral or a Hindu temple must depend to a varying extent on the spiritual condition and approach of all the individual worshippers present. The less structured a form of worship, the greater the demands it must place on the individuals; the more important it is that they come together "with heart and mind prepared" -- and that they choose to accept an inward discipline which focusses their own act of worship within the corporate act. The more structured a form of worship, the more possible it becomes for the ritual and its content to achieve a momentum of its own, and for those present to be carried along by it.

But the spiritual depth of what takes place will differ from one occasion to another in the same setting, even though on both occasions there were several hundred taking part in the ritual. It was not for nothing that Jesus is reported as warning his Jewish hearers to put things right with others, before laying their gifts on the altar. Substitute "before going to Friends meeting for worship," and it begins to matter less whether we are talking about one that is programmed or not. Is that still the case when we turn our attention to what the individual does or does not do during the week to nurture her or his spiritual life? I believe that it is still the case.

Is our emphasis on the "Inward Light" both distinctively Quaker and a vital element in our corporate worship? An answer to this question has become progressively more difficult during the last forty years, probably during the last twenty. For those Friends who identify that "Inward Light" with the "Word" of John's gospel, with the Holy Spirit active in the individual human being, with the Christ whom early Friends recognized as having "come to teach his people himself" -- the answers to both parts of the question are likely to be "Yes." Quakers have continued corporately to reject any church hierarchy as a valid source of spiritual authority largely on these grounds. Some, but not all, have continued to regard the Scriptures as an inspired though not final source of spiritual authority, believing that the ways and purposes of God continue to be revealed through the Holy Spirit to individuals and to the worshipping group. But there are now many in membership of Quaker meetings who have either gradually lost such convictions, or have never held them. How dependent on such convictions, based on first-hand personal experience, is our distinctively Quaker corporate worship?

So let us try to look together in somewhat more depth at what some of the salient features of distinctively Quaker worship might be. To begin with, Wilmer Cooper last night quoted from

that little book by Gladys Wilson, and she had the word communion right there in her list. I think we would all agree, however we define it, or however we try to express it, it is an essential element of our worship. But here I would like to introduce the old term "inspiration." In the chapter on "The Inner Light" in Caroline Stephen's book, she has this to say:

The fact of inspiration is denied by no Christian -- the full recognition of its present and constant operation is in some degree a peculiarity of Friends. It is not uncommon outside the Society to hear expressions implying that Divine inspiration is a thing of the past; a quite exceptional gift, familiar only in apostolic times. I can hardly understand the idea that God did occasionally long ago speak to human beings, but that he never does so now,

And a page later (be on your guard: don't let unfamiliar words you do not like "switch you off!"):

Nothing, I believe, can really teach us the nature and meaning of inspiration but personal experience of it. That we may all have such experience if we will but attend to the Divine influences in our own hearts, is the cardinal doctrine of Quakerism... It is a belief which it is hardly possible to inculcate by anything more or less than a direct appeal to experience, to the witness within; and there is the further difficulty, that the experience to which we can appeal only as sharers in it, must be expressed in language very often and very naturally misunderstood.

And -- a hundred years later -- we think we have a new problem!

Well, that is only preface to what is a lot more difficult. I think one of the salient features of Quaker worship should be -- and at our most inspired and best, it is -- a combination of admitting inwardly to God that we realize where we have gone astray, and where we need to be forgiven and enabled to do better; to indicate inwardly to God that we are willing to turn again. If you have identified the words that I have managed to not use, that's good! Our Friend, Thom Jeavons<sup>2</sup> here amongst us today, contributed an article to the Friends Journal some years ago in which I find these words:

Just as we must admit our mistakes and try to make amends when we have hurt or failed another person with whom we share a relationship of trust, so we must confess our failings and try to put things right when we want to continue to grow in faith and continue to know a sense of communion with God.

Here I should probably quote something that I wrote recently<sup>3</sup>:

So what have I been taught through the years that might be relevant now? First, that at some point a commitment must be made, and once made never withdrawn. Second, that failure is inevitable because all-too-often I want my own way more than the way of God, sometimes knowing this and sometimes not. Third, that failure is never final: one is scooped up in those loving arms or brought to one's senses in the fellowship of a fellow wayfarer and set going again. And finally that in our modern terms it all depends on our priorities, because we have a problem almost unknown to our spiritual forebears -- the allocation of our time and energies in a fine-meshed net of unrelenting human activity.

Next, if we are looking for the distinctively Quaker in our worship, it is reasonable to suggest that another of those salient features is the requirement that each one of us in that worship accepts a commitment to responsibility for it. Our sisters and brothers in other parts of the Church universal will, I think, in their love and honesty towards us, recognize that this individual commitment is something that means much more than "a great deal" to us Quakers, and probably that we are in fact more dependent on our acceptance of individual responsibility in our corporate worship than they are required to be.

I want to end by offering three key words for the integrity of Quaker worship. The first of these is the word faith. For me, faith has never been any kind of "package," any identifiable collection of specific religious beliefs: in my Canadian essay<sup>4</sup> I have said what it does mean to me:

...the free act of placing my trust in God, when the deepest issues of my existence, my identity and my ultimate worth are at stake -- and I know that objective evidence or "proof" cannot be forthcoming to justify my action, is in fact irrelevant.

And Thomas Merton<sup>5</sup> (in New Seeds of Contemplation) has this to say:

Faith has to be something more than an assent of the mind. It is also a grasp, a contact, a communion of wills. By faith one not only assents to propositions revealed by God, but one assents to God himself. One receives God. One says "yes" not merely to a statement about God, but to the invisible, infinite God himself.

Faith is not just one moment of the spiritual life, not just a step to something else. It is that acceptance of God which is the very climate of all spiritual living. It is the beginning of communion.

Which brings us full circle: communion, inspiration, confession, commitment, communion. Is it the combination that

makes Quaker worship distinctive, or are inspiration and commitment really "key words" because the mutual contribution of individual and group experience is so important?

But finally I must use two of my little supply of "four-letter words for Quakers" which are crucial to Quaker worship. One is the word open. We positively delight to claim that we are always open to fresh light. I am sorry, but that is not my experience when travelling among Friends. In my travels on three continents over the last six years the frequency with which I have encountered a degree of non-openness among Friends has been grieving and at times terrifying. And yet, and yet -- Quaker worship, whether we are doing it on our own in private or corporately in meeting, utterly depends on each one of us being always genuinely open to what God has to say. We must stop pretending: and we must sustain one another in re-discovering the glory of true openness.

My other four-letter word is love. I never dreamt nearly forty-eight years ago that I would ever find myself having to face the reality that love is sometimes in very short supply amongst my fellow-Quakers. I have recently encountered, and had confirmed in my most recent travels that what had come to me as a shock, was in fact no novelty. I refer to instances of individual Friends being reproached in front of the Meeting -- or even during the meeting for worship -- for using in their vocal ministry the "Christian" language that they had been accustomed to use for much of their lives.

I must ask -- can one publicly reproach another human being in such circumstances, and still be loving? The Quaker meeting for worship -- and everything we value as Friends -- is utterly dependent on a constant outgoing love one to another, which is able to cope with wherever each one may be on their pilgrimage of faith; which understands that we shall not always find the words that the other one finds congenial -- whichever way it is, in what must be a two-way traffic.

This is where we must start, Friends -- not with those verbal polarities, those labels, which are at present receiving so much publicity. They are but symptoms, this is the root cause of our dis-ease. If we haven't got enough love, it is to God each one of us must turn and say, as humbly as we can: "I cannot love enough -- but thou canst enable me."

## References

<sup>1</sup>Caroline Stephen, Quaker Strongholds, (London: Kegan Paul, 1890), pp. 51-55; 27-29.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas H. Jeavons, "Peculiarly Quaker Sacraments," Friends Journal, March 1, 1983, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Alastair Heron, "Where Do We Seem To Be?," Friends Quarterly, April 1989, pp. 250-1.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Speaking To Our Condition: A Ministry to Friends. Canadian Quaker Pamphlets No. 30, 1989, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas Merton, New Seeds of Contemplation, (London: Burns & Oates, 1962), Chapter 19.

## THE NATURE OF FRIENDS WORSHIP

Celia M. Mueller

The time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and God's worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth. (John 4:23 & 24)

This expression of Jesus found in the gospel of John has resonated with Friends for generations. We see worship in spirit and truth as an ideal and have approached that ideal in different ways during different periods of our history and among the different branches of the Society of Friends. Today I would like to share with you how I have experienced that struggle toward the ideal in my journey with programmed/pastoral Friends.

By way of background let me share with you that I was brought up in a Christian family with both parents actively involved in lay leadership in the Presbyterian church. My personal faith came to life towards the end of my high school years and I can still remember the frustration I felt with our Presbyterian worship services which allowed next to no time for personal reflection and prayer during times of corporate worship. I felt myself more of an observer/listener than an active participant in the worship experience. Having read little more than George Fox's Journal and Thomas Kelly's Testament of Devotion, I met Quakers Don and Ellie Green while in Princeton Theological Seminary. Following seminary, some 14 years ago, I joined the Friends family. From Princeton Theological Seminary, I first went into ministry at Berkeley Friends Church in Berkeley, California. I worshipped and worked in youth ministry at Berkeley Friends from 1975 to 1980. Then I served as a pastor on the pastoral team at Friends Memorial Church in Seattle, Washington until mid 1983. Since that time I have served on the pastoral team at Reedwood Friends Church in Portland, Oregon.

Worship has been a priority in each of the Friends churches (meetings) in which I have been involved. Over the years, numerous issues, related to the content and structuring of the Sunday morning worship experience, have found their way into countless conversations. What I offer you then comes out of my own experience of the nature of programmed/pastoral Friends worship.

The Quaker concern that the Spirit of God is to be the direct initiator, mover, persuader and influencer in particular acts of worship, and the worship experience as a whole, has been a vital key to my understanding of all that we do in worship and all that we refer to as worship. To set up preaching schedules

and other programed elements in worship, that are genuinely free of mere human motivation, is a goal that is rarely obtained but very worthy of our time and energies. With this in mind, programmed/pastoral Friends find God's spirit to be capable and desirous of: 1) leading in planning meetings for worship, 2) impressing a message upon the heart of a pastor or other worship leader prior to the worship gathering and/or 3) slowly unfolding a message to a pastor or worship leader well in advance of the meeting for worship. This aspect of leading is often coupled with that of God directing someone to speak more spontaneously during the course of the worship experience itself.

At Reedwood our whole philosophy of worship is discussed and prayed over at length during pastoral team retreats once or twice each year. Specific aspects of any given worship experience are discussed the week prior to worship and are reviewed following the worship experience. From time to time team members meet to discuss worship concerns and particular topics team members individually or jointly feel they are being led to address at some future date in worship. The elders occasionally spend time in their meetings discussing different aspects of worship and how to enhance worship. Pew cards are filled out weekly by those worshipping on Sunday mornings and will occasionally give expression to concerns about a given aspect of worship. Such concerns are weighed carefully by team members and elders.

Worship is the center of our corporate life. For programmed/pastoral Friends, hymns, special music, choruses, offering, pastoral or congregational prayer, Bible reading, the prepared message and open worship are all tools of the Spirit of God, used to turn people's hearts and minds Godward. These elements are intended to enhance direct communion with God individually and corporately and are often means by which the priesthood of all believers is experienced in the corporate body.

Many of the tools mentioned are used to help focus hearts and thoughts in a manner conducive to real worship. The aim for programmed/pastoral Friends is that which facilitates ministry one to another in the name of Christ and direct communion with the spirit of God. Many of us from varied Friends traditions share these same goals, yet our worship experiences are varied. For this reason I would like to examine the nature of a number of the specific elements in Friends programmed worship.

What follows speaks most directly of the scheduled worship times Friends enjoy together on the first day of the week. This will be the frame of reference I speak out of, although much of what I will discuss has very real implications for the many other formal and informal expressions of worship found within a community of programmed/pastoral Friends.

First I would like to examine the elements most often found in programmed/pastoral worship as they bear witness to the true essence of worship. Among these elements are music, message bearing, silent waiting, Scripture reading and prayer.



Several years ago after our pastoral team spent much prayer and discussion about the place of music in worship, Arthur Roberts wrote the following, which was then used as a bulletin insert:

Music used in worship includes Psalms (some of them millennia old), hymns (some centuries old), and contemporary spiritual songs. Individuals and groups add their vocal and instrumental talents to congregational singing. ...Whether it be prearranged or spontaneous, Friends want musical ministry to be Spirit-led as well as artful. Here are some guidelines for receiving musical ministry.

- 1) Music is one of several modes of worship. Balance its ministry to you with Bible reading and exposition, silent and vocal prayer, exhortation, prophetic speaking and testimony.
- 2) Through music we celebrate God's creation, His [God's] covenant, and our salvation. Let such celebration take priority over aesthetics or entertainment.
- 3) True artistry enhances the message, subordinates the messenger and glorifies the Creator.
- 4) Show gratitude for authors and composers as well as for performers.
- 5) Let music reinforce but not manipulate emotions.
- 6) All cultures can praise God through music; be enriched by variations of form and style. Don't be culture-bound.
- 7) Take care not to use choruses to avoid truth. Sometimes silence rather than sound facilitates a difficult commitment to moral and spiritual insight. (A. O. Roberts)

The theological teaching of any given hymn or song adds to the worship experience to the degree that it is consistent with our experience and understanding of the nature of God, the church and/or God's creation and hence gives expression to what we know through experience. The theological teaching adds to worship when it helps us focus on a particular attribute of God or aspect of our Christian experience that is an appropriate Spirit-led focus for the particular time of worship we are in or are preparing for.

Inclusive language in our music (and in any other form of vocal ministry) is another significant consideration for real worship. Sexism, racism, nationalism, age-ism, and subtle discrimination against those with handicaps often appear in

religious music and other forms of vocal ministry. In the same vein, some music provides very limiting concepts of God which often do not give full expression to the diverse aspects of God's being that we experience in our spiritual journeys. As we journey forward in our faith, music that seemed an appropriate expression of our religious experience at one time may seem to place too many limits on our expanding understanding of the nature of God, the church and God's creation.

Such considerations, when processed deliberately before God and with one another, enhance the likelihood that music will give expression to the divine/human encounter rather than being used to manipulate emotions or to simply fill time or space in our worship gatherings.

Must music be present for true worship to occur? Probably not, yet its almost universal use would seem to point to the appropriateness of its use as a vehicle for expressing deep human emotion. Used by the Spirit of God, it seems a most useful medium for true worship.

Message bearing is another significant worship element in the programmed/pastoral Friends tradition. Most often those who have been released for public or vocational ministry, sense that message bearing is a significant part of their calling. Having sensed a general call to be proclaimers of the gospel through pastoral ministry, pastors must continually spend time in waiting and prayer to discern the particular message (if any) that God would have them share in a particular gathering for worship. When Friends gather for worship, however, we hold to the conviction that the pastor does not serve as THE PRIEST; for we do not believe there is just one priest, nor are we bereft of mediators of the gospel. The Friends tradition speaks clearly of the priesthood of all believers. ("But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into God's wonderful light." I Peter 2:9.) Hence, all are responsible to God, and to the community, to listen to the spirit within and be involved in the ministry of reconciliation and message bearing.

Again, taken from a bulletin insert are the following words:

Should you be a message-bearer sometimes? These questions may prepare you to be.

- 1) Is Sunday worship a prayer concern all week?
- 2) Do you pray for Spirit-led worship and ministry?
- 3) Do you enter worship reverently and expectantly?
- 4) Do you receive what God says through others?
- 5) Are you willing to be a message-bearer?

- 6) Will you bear the weight of a concern for weeks or months until God's opportune time? Or let your ministry arise quickly at a meeting gathered in the Lord's power?
- 7) Will you speak as distinctly, concisely, fervently, and compassionately as possible, trusting God for results?
- 8) Are you willing to apply any message to yourself first?
- 9) Are you willing to bear God's message privately as well as in public? (Queries by A. O. Roberts)

Another characteristic of programmed/pastoral Friends worship is that of waiting in silence. Many people come to the Friends tradition out of a noisy, rushed culture and from backgrounds that give them little experience or knowledge of the value of silence. Hence, many programmed/pastoral meetings limit silent waiting to only a minute or two. While this may be more than is experienced elsewhere in our lives, my experience is that this is not a satisfactory amount of time for serious worship.

[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. The actual meeting of [humanity] with God and God with [humanity] is the very crown and culmination of what we can do with our human life here on earth. (Rufus M. Jones 1937; Chrisitan Faith and Practice in the Experience of the Society of Friends)

Silent waiting (like message bearing) is a learned discipline. In my experience it has been a genuine and necessary element of programmed/pastoral Friends worship. Often referred to as "Communion after the manner of Friends," "Open Worship" or "Unprogrammed Worship," it is that time in a worship service when all external aids are set aside and worshippers wait expectantly for what God will do in their midst. Because the silence is so often broken by those eager souls ready to have their thoughts validated by others in meeting, continual instruction for the use of silence is necessary. And a continual tension seems present in the determination of how much time is necessary for silence. Too little time does not allow people to move from their own shallow thoughts to the deeper promptings of God's spirit. Too much time for people untrained in the use of silence becomes a vacuum, and boredom, lethargy or distracting thoughts set in. At Reedwood we find it is rarely adequate to allow less than 5 or 6

minutes for silence, and rarely do we spend more than 25 minutes in this worship posture.

Prayer and Scripture reading are two other tools used on a regular basis in programmed/pastoral worship experience. Both find expression in the programmed portion of the worship service and in the period of open worship found in most programmed services. Most programmed/pastoral Friends would feel that worship was incomplete without these two elements. Bible reading clearly links us with those who have gone on the faith journey before us and gives us glimpses of the God who is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Genuine prayer is prompted by God who knows our need to express our praise and adoration and to confess our sins and ask for forgiveness and new life and power. These worship expressions will be referred to again as we turn to our next area of consideration.

We have examined several of the worship tools present in our programmed/pastoral worship experiences. Next I would like to briefly consider the ordering of the worship elements in a programmed/pastoral worship service. It has been my experience that thoughtful placement of a prayer or hymn in a worship service can enhance true worship. Again, speaking from my Reedwood experience, we have identified three significant needs that must be met in the corporate worship experience. First we have the need to interact with each other; second we have the need to interact with God and lastly, of utmost significance, is the need to be open to God's interaction with us.

At Reedwood we have tried several times to remove active fellowship or koinonia from our worship experience and to let it find expression in other contexts instead. While fellowship does take place in many other contexts, we have yet to worship together without fellowship or simple person-to-person interaction taking place. We have discovered that when this need is not addressed intentionally, that is, when we do not assign it a place in the worship experience, it transpires at inappropriate times. For example, if people have not found ways to express their connectedness before we enter our period of open worship, prayer requests, sharing, announcements and testimonies will find their way into open worship and we will be distracted from doing the listening and/or speaking that we are called to do there. Having a time to greet one another, share announcements and prayer requests and the like, help us reestablish community. Because our worship is corporate, this reconnecting is valid and necessary. Often our first hymns tell of our Christian experience and affirm our ties to one another. For example, "Come Christians, join to Sing" might be the first hymn in worship. (Later on our thoughts are God-focused as we might sing "Be Thou My Vision.") Affirmation of our corporateness, then, is one of the characteristics of true worship. We are not individual ships that happen to bump into each other in the night: we are a gathered people who together worship the one true living God.

Next there is our need to interact with God. Pastoral/programmed Friends usually plan time for vocal prayer and may also include time for silent prayer. The one praying out loud may be a pastor, but may just as appropriately be any Spirit-led member of the meeting. In prayer, we bring our thanks and praises, our spiritual, emotional and physical needs, and the needs of those around us locally and globally, before God. In prayer, we affirm our commitment to Christ as the head of the church, and invite God's continued activity in our individual and corporate lives. Oftentimes hymns or choruses are also used as vehicles to express, to God, the love and reverence and need we have for God.

Finally there is our need to have God interact with us. The intention of the Scripture-reading and the prepared message or sermon is the same as that of the vocal message arising out of open worship and the silence of open worship itself: that God would speak to our hearts individually and corporately. Experience has taught us that none of these vehicles is adequate when those gathered are not open to the Spirit of the living God. Powerful words can fall on empty ears, and silence can be a medium for day-dreaming and other distracting pursuits. True worship takes place not because certain worship forms are used, but because men and women earnestly desire to commune with God, and have responded to God's initiative and opened themselves to God's interaction with them at the deepest levels of their beings.

In conclusion, let me speak briefly to the matter of preference and conscience as they relate to the true nature of worship. As much as we would have as our goal that all of worship be above mere human motivation, my experience has led me to the belief that God leaves certain things to our preference while others should be clearly done out of a sense of obedience to the Spirit of Christ. Within my own programmed/pastoral meeting there are Friends who find choruses and Scripture songs very meaningful avenues of expressing their love of God and their desire to draw close to God in worship. Others find such music trite and distracting and find older more traditional hymns more meaningful. A great deal of prayer and thoughtful examination has not led to a clear sense that God must have choruses sung to be appropriately worshipped or that choruses must be eliminated for real worship to transpire. What we seem to have are human preferences born out of our different emotional temperaments, past experiences and uniquenesses. For now we have decided not to allow any one person or group of people to have their preferences catered to at the expense of others. Instead we encourage all to recognize the difference between matters of preference and matters of conscience and, as best we are able, we are to cling to our convictions and hold loosely to our preferences. To return to the above example, we have decided God's creation gives much evidence of God's delight in creative differences and variety. Hence we will try to reflect such in our selection of music and other worship expressions.

Genuine worship as experienced among programmed/pastoral Friends is found through the employment of several tools to the end that we might experience God in direct unmediated communion and that we might also mediate to each other the grace of God as each of us assumes his or her responsibility as a minister of the gospel. While it may be hard at times to concisely reflect what has transpired during a time of worship, renewed spirits, changing perspectives, transformed lives and an increase in love of God and neighbor born out in the dailiness of life, are evidences that worship has taken place and God's spirit has been at work in our midst.

"True worship is intensely active. It consists in offering ourselves to God -- body, mind, and soul -- for the doing of [God's] will. We have a gift to bring to [God] and not only a grace to receive...May we come into the presence of Christ as disciples -- in earnest devotedness and lowly teachableness -- and into the presence of one another as [brothers and sister] in a living fellowship of love and sympathy. 'One is your Teacher and all ye are [brothers and sister].'" (Worship & Ministry, 1899; Christian Faith and Practice In The Experience of the Society of Friends)

**THE ROLE OF VOCAL MINISTRY IN FRIENDS WORSHIP**  
**Louise Wilson**

After I accepted the invitation to be a part of this Consultation, a friend loaned me a copy of Quaker Ministry 1691 to 1834 by Lucia K. Beamish. Just after that another friend gave me Samuel Bownas' book A Description of the Qualifications Necessary to a Gospel Minister. I am grateful to both friends. These books have been helpful to me in the preparation for this occasion. I also found myself rereading passages from Fox, Barclay, Woolman and others, as well as Friends who have lived in the 20th Century.

At Westown School and at Guilford College I occasionally spoke in meetings for worship. There was always a certain throbbing in my heart, a quickening of my pulse. I was never sure what I was to say when I stood up. When I sat down I did not remember just what I said, but I did feel peaceful.

Ten or twelve years later, the promptings came more often. I was faithful to respond. In 1953 Virginia Beach Friends Meeting began. It never concerned me at the time that I spoke often. I only spoke when I felt led from within. Many years later, when I was no longer speaking as often, I realized that had I not spoken in those early days we might never have had a meeting in Virginia Beach. I did not realize at the time that I was a vessel through which the foundation for Virginia Beach Friends Meeting was being laid. And recently, I have understood more fully why George Fox and other early Friends preached often and long. The foundation of the Society of Friends was being laid.

As I reflect on those early years of Virginia Beach Friends Meeting, I am touched by our abandonment to God. We were young, unlettered, and filled with the Spirit. My cup was running over all the time. The holy fire burned within me. In my enthusiasm it was hard sometimes to know whether I was following the Lord or whether He was trying to catch me! We were "infants" in our spiritual lives, in our vocal ministry and in ministering to one another.

Remembering those times in the 50's helps me to see some of the precious things we had, and some that we have lost by more study, more experience and our learning about how to be more cautious and more inclusive outwardly. We used to know that "Christ had come to teach His people Himself now!" Today those of us who believe and know that "Christ has come to teach us now" too often keep quiet, so as not to offend anyone who does not think he is present today. Or even more sad, is the fact that we

may remain quiet just in case there are those who do not believe in Christ at all.

In the early days of our meeting, we shared in helping the meeting become a vessel of the Holy Spirit. Out of the gathered silence, vocal ministry emerged. The words seemed to be a by-product of our unity. It never occurred to us to judge one another's messages. We trusted the Spirit behind the words, knowing the words were only a part of the message, and that the Spirit would teach us and draw us close to one another as we drew close to the Lord. We seldom used "religious language." We were living into the experience of the message.

I am not speaking of Virginia Beach Friends Meeting because we were (or are) a special meeting. I am speaking of it as an example of God's breaking through differences, barriers, and age levels. We came to meeting for worship waiting on God to gather us inwardly. It was much like Edward Burroughs' experience:

The kingdom of heaven did gather us and catch us all, as in a net, and his heavenly power at one time drew many. 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? And will he take up his tabernacle among the sons of men, as he did of old?"

You see, I believe what happened in the 17th Century and what happened in the 1950's is available to us today. In the early 50's, I followed without question; today I follow, only to know later. As we risk discovering corporately what Fox called the Seed of God, the living Christ, the fire of the Holy Spirit within, we will know as Fox knew, "that there is one, even Jesus Christ who can speak to our condition."

Isaac Pennington, who came into the Quaker movement during Fox's lifetime, made it clear that he had no sense of leaving the Christian life behind, but that he came into Quakerism to have it intensified, to have the experience rather than a mere knowledge about the transforming power of Christ within.

Like Robert Barclay, we can experience this power (and I use his words): "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."

Samuel Bownas, 18th Century Friend wrote,

A spiritual minister is and ought every day to be like blank paper, when he comes into the assembly of the Lord's people, not depending on any former opening or experiences, either of his own or others that he has



heard or read; but his only and sole dependence must be on the gift of the spirit, to give, and bring to his understanding matters suitable to the present state of the assembly.

For Bownas, the minister was not superior to others, and this equality springs both from the Light that is in everyone, and from the refusal of Friends to extol natural reason. Bownas did believe that revelation from God was of absolute necessity to guide a minister; and that God's power and Light inspired the mind with the How and the What to say, and that a minister speaks with the Spirit and with understanding also.

Bownas wrote:

This word that is in the heart and mouth of inspired ministers, is that by which they must be acted, if they do right in the work of the ministry, and indeed, without this word in the heart to open the understanding, there can be no right preaching.

Braithwaite reminds us where Bownas's preaching was rooted:

If victory through the cross and through the spirit of Christ was the main-stay of Fox's vocation, and gratitude the first incentive of Thomas' story, it might be said that Bownas found his call to minister through the fresh illumination given him of the meaning of Scripture.

I remember sitting at my Uncle Walter Brown's feet one day after meeting. I asked about the Scripture he had quoted and spoken of during worship. He reminded me that we do not learn Scripture in order to repeat it in meeting. It is like the Bible gives us a bottom for all of our experiences and unless we are familiar with the words they surely will not come forth in spoken ministry.

Many times I talked with William Bacon Evans. He was a minister of a few words, spoken with power at the appropriate moment. He once said to me: "I have never quoted Scripture in meeting for worship that I did not already know by heart!" Where there is the undergirding of Scripture in a meeting, the spoken word has substance and power.

In 1751, after 54 years as a minister, Bownas wrote a letter to a friend stating that the Society of Friends had few young ministers (as compared to his youth). He wrote that he felt his own ministry had been better the first 20 years than any time since. He was not able to see any fruit or good effects coming from what he was doing, even though he felt accepted and well received by others. He could not say where the fault lay. He felt little purpose in continuing in his journeys to visit among Friends meetings.

Lucia K. Beamish gives two possible explanations. I bring them to you because I think Bownas' thoughts and Beamish's comments somewhat reflect Quaker vocal ministry in the 20th Century.

- 1) Quaker audiences in 1751 were more worldly and less interested in religion than those of a half century earlier.
- 2) The message of Bownas may have become more and more subjective. Although in 1702 he had reminded his fellow ministers at Kendal that "the true ministers preach not themselves but Jesus Christ our Lord," it is possible that he had himself lost touch with the Living Fountain, through age, fatigue, sorrow at the death of his second wife, or possibly growing prosperity (which came about through marriage) and he became more and more absorbed in business ventures.

Reflecting on Bownas we might say: Quaker audiences in 1989 are more worldly and less interested in religion, as such, than those in the mid 17th Century.

What message reaches Quaker audiences today? Just as Jesus spoke in parables, and Paul spoke in allegories, and our fore fathers spoke of the history of the church and its people, we can speak in like manner as we draw from our experiences as they relate to God. The Word is always New when given by God, and carries with it power, hope, strength and joy. It falls upon open minds and hearts and awakens that which sleeps, allowing the seed within to stir and to begin to grow. There are always people who are ready to hear such spoken ministry. There are always those who long to drink from the Living Fountain. People have always responded to authenticity. They do absorb the tone of the voice, they do feel where the words come from. Our vocal ministry becomes nurturing and sustaining as those who are led to speak do not break the silence as Thomas Kelly said, but continue it; for in Kelly's own words

The divine life who was ministering through the medium of silence is the same life as is now ministering through words. And when such words are truly spoken "in the life," then when such words cease, the "uninterrupted" silence and worship continue, for silence and words have been of one texture, one piece. Other speakers only continue the enhancement of the moving presence.

Like in Bownas' time, the messages in our meetings today are more subjective. Even though we are occasionally reminded that "true ministers preach not themselves, but Jesus Christ," we are more apt to speak of our own journeys.

There have been times in my 35 years in the ministry when I have written a letter or conversed with a friend sharing the

concerns Bownas felt. There have been times when I have felt totally unable to speak, knowing all ears and hearts to be closed. However, I differ from Bownas in that I have hope, for God continues to reveal Himself to me in the lives and circumstances that surround me. I agree with Braithwaite when he writes: "Friends have passed through long periods of traditionalism and institutional rigidity, but the living voice of the Spirit has never been wholly silent among them."

Early Friends believed that any person who was so moved by the Holy Spirit might participate in vocal ministry. Today we believe that anyone who is truly moved by the Holy Spirit may participate in the vocal ministry, and we would also agree with Barclay when he said, "We do believe and affirm that some are more particularly called to the work of the ministry."

It was clear to Fox that the main value of Quaker ministry lay in the recognition that all committed Friends will receive at some time, and in some circumstance, a call to ministry as an integral part of their discipleship. Steven Crisp, Samuel Bownas and others felt this to be true. As Beamish wrote,

It may be only the brief infrequent witness of spontaneous utterance in or out of meeting or the vocation to a continuous service of public speaking, writing or both. Fox knew that the content of all ministry must spring from personal experience and sensitivity to the spirit, and from an intimacy with Scripture that confirms and supports that experience. The soil out of which all ministry must spring was for him that of silent, expectant worship.

Out of the Living Silence, vital vocal ministry emerges as everyone waits to be gathered by God. In William Penn's words: "It is the living ministry that begets a living people and it is a living ministry that will still be acceptable by the meeting and to its members."

I grew up in a meeting where one or two people prayed aloud each Sunday, on bended knee, with head bowed or lifted up, a voice "seemed not to speak, but to be spoken from" (as was said by Charles Lamb of a Quaker Minister). Vocal prayer poured forth from the heart, tendering all who gathered. I can remember times when the prayer moved us from an intellectual plane to the depths of our beings. I remember the stillness that followed when we felt cleansed by the Holy Spirit. It was as though words had lifted us to where the voice had come from. Seth Hinshaw wrote,

Vocal prayers should gather up and express the deep spiritual needs and hungers of the worshipping group and express them in such a way that everyone present can identify with the petitions, and thus participate in them.

This I have often felt.

Quakerism today is calling out for the power and vitality that was expressed through the spoken Word. Many of us are aware of a shallowness in our meetings. We have no desire to walk away from Quakerism, it is just that we want something more. We are hungry for a community of faith where our words and our actions are in harmony with God and with one another; where, whether spoken or unspoken, we reflect that One whose Word was made flesh.

This task is the responsibility of all Friends: To take the time and effort to prepare ourselves to listen and to hear the word, to hear the Still Small Voice within, and to have the courage to rise in fear and trembling and with joy, to speak it clearly...to speak it clearly.

## VOCAL MINISTRY IN THE PROGRAMMED MEETING

Howard Macy

Worship stands at the heart of our life together as Friends. In worship we gather up and celebrate our experience of God among us. In the spirit of worship we conduct business and teach and serve. Where worship is strong and full of life, it may draw others to join us, as it did Robert Barclay three centuries ago and as it does in many places today. Worship, at its best, focuses and strengthens our life together as the people of God.

So it is fitting that our commitment to and concern about worship should capture our attention and should gather so many veteran conferees. I'm delighted to be a part of it and to be asked to share a paper to bump our thinking along.

Although it is sometimes referred to as silent worship, we know that Friends worship has always included vocal ministry. Further, in all times I think we could rightly refer to some examples of vocal ministry as "sermons." But it has only been for about 100 years now that many Friends have expected that each meeting for worship should include a sermon from an appointed preacher.

Perhaps after 100 years, the expectation of appointed sermons should no longer be viewed as a novelty. But we still have mixed feelings about this change. Even "programmed" Friends sometimes feel (or are encouraged to feel) that appointed preaching is an aberration from truth, an unfortunate accommodation to frontier ministry, a suspect and second-rate form of vocal ministry, or just an unwelcome (and sometimes windy) disturbing of Friends peace.

One of the results of this lingering ambiguity about preaching even among Friends preachers seems to be that we haven't thought carefully enough about the role and character of preaching in programmed Friends meetings. We have neglected this issue or have taken our cues about preaching from other Christian traditions. So I want to think with you today about how Friends' understandings of worship and vocal ministry can shape the role and character of preaching in our meetings. More briefly, what guidelines can help assure appropriate and effective preaching?

Before turning to such guidelines, however, let me make two points to prevent us from distinguishing too sharply between vocal ministry in programmed and unprogrammed meetings. First, traditional forms of vocal ministry are still part of many programmed meetings for worship. Often this ministry is powerful and helpful. Sometimes the silence, and the ministry rising out

of it, entirely displaces the sermon and other elements planned for worship.

We must also say, of course, that traditional vocal ministry often falters, and there are barriers to sustaining it effectively. For example, many meetings are impatient and simply do not allow enough time in the service for ministry to arise. Generally there is also inadequate teaching about, and experience with, silent waiting as part of worship. Unfortunately we often see subtle (and not-so-subtle) distinctions drawn between the appointed ministers (the professionals) and the rest of the folk (the amateurs). Where these distinctions prevail, it intimidates, it lowers the expectations of the quality of ministry in open worship, and it predisposes many to assume that they won't speak in meeting. A physical factor becomes a barrier in some meetings. Large, auditorium-style meeting rooms are often not conducive to ministry out of the silence. It's just too hard to hear.

I share these hindrances to traditional vocal ministry mostly to encourage programmed Friends to explore ways to overcome them. The barriers need not stand, and our meetings would gather strength from a vital, broader-based vocal ministry. We are the poorer if we expect all of our vocal ministry to come through one or two persons.

A second note. Though, on the surface, traditional vocal ministry and preaching seem quite different, when they are properly understood, they have a lot in common. Ministry out of the silence appears to be spontaneous, offered by whomever is led, and tends to be briefly and sparsely developed. On the other hand, preaching appears to be prepared (not always), is offered by an appointed speaker, and tends to be longer and more fully developed. However, effective public ministry of either sort shares common roots. The best we have known about traditional vocal ministry can also help shape our preaching. With this in mind, then, let's consider some guidelines or insights about preaching.

#### I. Effective preaching (or ministry) arises out of worship and leads back into worship

Preaching should grow out of worship and should serve the movement and purposes of worship. Preaching is not an end in itself just as silence is not an end in itself. Both serve to help us in our worship.

What is worship? It is our response to God's initiatives of grace toward us. It is bringing ourselves to meet God -- vulnerable, expectant, listening, ready to be obedient. Worship is also (to paraphrase William Stringfellow) to witness to and celebrate God's presence in the world -- a Presence not just in our meetings, but in the world of our everyday existence. Worship serves, in part, to rejoice in and remind us of the

context of our lives in the Living Christ. And our messages, however mundane or profound, should reflect that.

So preaching should point people Godward, toward a fuller understanding of and response to God's character and purposes and presence. It should be an opening of -- a pointing to -- God's will and presence among us in power. It is a pointing to what Reality is, to what our response needs to be. Preaching is a declaration of the Word, in the best sense Friends have used it, of the living, present Christ. In worship, preaching at its best is a way of taking people to Christ their Teacher and leaving them there.

If we see that preaching rises out of worship and leads back into worship, then we are bound to see that preaching is only one element alongside others in worship. With traditional vocal ministry out of the silence, we see that the speaking is only a piece of the larger fabric of worship. Perhaps a few Friends revel in the delusion that people have come to unprogrammed meeting just to hear them speak, but we smile (mostly) at such vanity. Any particular vocal ministry is simply not the centerpiece of worship.

Unfortunately, preaching in the programmed meeting is too often misunderstood at this point. The sermon in many meetings is regarded as the centerpiece of worship. It seems to me, however, that this arises less out of vanity than out of historical developments within Protestantism.

As worship developed in the early centuries of the church, the service came to have two distinct parts, the Service of the Word and the Service of the Table (or the Lord's Supper). The sermon belonged in the Service of the Word alongside several other elements, including Scripture reading, prayers, worship musics, and others. In other words, the sermon was one element among many in one half of the traditional mass. A friend of mine, who is a Baptist preacher's kid, now a converted Roman Catholic, expresses his appreciation for this pattern in this way: "I love the Mass," he says, "because even if the homily is lousy, you still have the liturgy." The other elements of worship remain.

The Reformers brought great changes to worship, and John Calvin, and his churchly heirs in particular, elevated the role of the sermon in Christian worship. As a result, in many traditions the Service of the Table was observed infrequently, and in the Service of the Word, preaching claimed a disproportionate place. The service came to be fashioned around the sermon. That trend has often influenced programmed Friends worship as well, whether consciously or unconsciously.

In one meeting I served as pastor, we had a small group of people who would chat in the vestibule and wander the halls during the worship service, only to slip in just in time to hear

the sermon. They mistakenly thought they had been "to church," as I'm sure they would say it.

Just recently I was talking with a Friends pastor in our area about this, and he told me this story. A member of his church said to him, "Pastor, you don't preach long enough. Cut down on the preliminaries and preach longer." "I already preach about 30 minutes," my friend protested. "How long do you think I should preach?" "Oh, an hour at least!" the man replied. To him, going to meeting means only hearing a sermon.

The object of worship, however, is not to hear a sermon, but to be present to God in praise, confession, and adoration, in vulnerability and attentiveness. Worship is we together celebrating and witnessing to God's presence in the world. The sermon is only part of that.

The practical implications of this insight are several. First, we should honor and plan well for other elements of worship that help us be faithful to its purposes. They should not be simply a herky-jerky miscellany of songs, prayers, and announcements that fail to lead us into worship. They should not be regarded as of secondary importance, or be slighted by haphazardness in their preparation and use. Scripture should be carefully chosen and skillfully read. Musics should be thoughtfully selected and well-prepared. Prayers should rise out of prayerful personal preparation rather than simply being muddled through, filled with verbal and spiritual cliches. Silence should not be slighted for convenience' sake. These elements are not mere "preliminaries." They all help us worship.

Secondly, we should consider where in the service to place the sermon. It does not need to be set as a crown jewel or led up to as a grand finale. In my experience, some variety in the placement of the sermon has proved to be helpful.

Similarly, we should consider the length of the sermon. Briefly put, it should not be so long that it shortens or excludes other elements of worship, all elements which in many programmed meetings are routinely shortchanged.

The spirit of worship should be continued by the speaking, not interrupted or concluded by it. Vocal ministry of whatever sort should lead us even more deeply into worship. That is one reason why speakers should carry themselves with humility, not self-effacing or timid, but deflecting attention from themselves by pointing attention to God.

Continuing the spirit of worship is also why we might consider open worship (or "communion after the manner of Friends," as some call it) an analogue to the Service of the Table, the second great part of the Mass. I know some meetings have experimented with extended periods of silence after the sermon, and I think it is well worth continued experimentation, though silence may helpfully precede the sermon as well.



Preaching or vocal ministry, then, should arise out of worship and lead back into worship.

## II. Preaching grows out of Life and leads into Life

Friends have long insisted that preaching come not out of the letter, but out of the Life. We are talking here of the authenticity and freshness of the preaching. Of the kind of preaching that comes out of the fresh illumination of the Scriptures, out of messages that have laid claim to the speaker's heart, out of spiritual understandings that are part of the preacher's experience.

This is the root of Quaker objections to hammered-together preaching. Some non-pastoral Friends read Barclay's lampooning of trained ministers with glee, I suppose. But not a few pastors read him with both assent and terror. Barclay writes:

...the preacher fills the space of an hour with what he has hammered together in his study. It is done in the strength of his own will and from his own human wisdom and learning... (Barclay's Apology in Modern English, page 244)

And elsewhere:

...the trained minister can acquire a knack of taking a verse of scripture and adding his own barren notions and conceptions to it. He also adds what he has stolen from books, and for this purpose he has to have a great many. Then on each Sabbath-day, as they call it, or oftener, he makes an hour-long discourse. This is called "preaching the Word." (Barclay's Apology in Modern English, pages 204-205)

Thomas Kelly continued this theme when he wrote:

Secondhand sermons aren't real sermons. Only firsthand preaching counts. He is a minister who is given a message within himself, as a fresh insight from God, transmitted through him to others. (The Eternal Promise, page 67)

He warns elsewhere, sympathetically, of preaching "beyond our own experience." (The Eternal Promise, page 146)

Our concern, then, is authenticity, vocal ministry that arises out of the Life. Preaching should be self-authenticating, in a sense. That is, it should carry an authority about it which does not derive from texts, scholarly sources, quotations from recognized authorities, logic, and so on. There is, instead, an inner authority which is given by the Spirit, an authenticity which comes from knowing things by heart.

Of Jesus it was said that he taught with authority, unlike the scribes and Pharisees, whose custom was to load their teaching with appeal to the authority of Torah and later interpreters of Torah. (Matthew 7:28-29) Note that Jesus, by and large, did not mimic the teaching methods of the scribes and Pharisees at this point.

I don't intend to dismiss in any way the importance of sound biblical preaching. Friends have long regarded the Bible as one of God's chief ways of teaching us. But Friends have a distinctive way of understanding how God speaks to us through the Bible. More precisely, we have believed that the Word who is among us will teach us freshly in our hearts. Biblical exegesis and exposition alone won't do -- not the arm's length, technically-correct, supported-by-authorities kind of study and preaching. The message -- a vital and fresh message -- must also have taken root in the preacher's heart.

I don't intend to dismiss careful preparation either. We have often mistakenly understood spontaneity as a single witness to what is genuinely from the Life. The churning stomach, the pounding heart, being thrust up onto our feet, compelled to speak. We take these as signs of genuineness, and often they are.

But spontaneity alone is a shallow measure, and it misleads us when we look on preparation with suspicion. Preparation is necessary for a strong life of worship, and it can rise from the steady work of the Spirit.

Of course, any of us who speak in worship need the preparation of a continuing life of devotion, a life based on the practice of the presence of God.

Beyond that, we also know that vocal ministry out of the silence may be "prepared" in a sense. Persons may have leadings during the week about something that should be shared in meeting if they are given liberty. One Friend has even written about delayed ministry in which a concern or a particular vocal ministry might incubate or be held for months before it is shared. Where vocal ministry is shallow or absent, we can often trace that to the fact that Friends are not adequately preparing themselves in these general and specific ways.

In a similar way, preaching which is authentic and which contributes to worship requires good preparation. I fear that our ambivalence about preparation results too often in preaching which is neither artful nor spiritual -- the worst of both worlds. Reliance on the Spirit may too readily become mere presumption.

Good preaching requires careful study. Biblical study, reading, careful thinking, and prayer all play a part. The right kind of study helps preachers avoid the twin dilemma of dull Bible exposition on the one hand and weak lectures about social

problems on the other. Appropriate outer and inner preparation help raise messages out of the Life and not simply out of the letter. Haphazardness outwardly or inwardly generally assures bad preaching. As one Friend put it, we must speak "out of the overflow," not out of emptiness.

Programmed Friends rely on preaching as one of the ways God addresses us today. Part of the role of the preacher is to bring a message, not a hammered-together, barren message, but a message which grows out of the Life, that reveals the Life, and that draws us toward that Life.

### III. Preaching grows out of life and leads into life

If in worship we take seriously God's presence in the world, then we have to talk about our lives in the world -- the dailiness, the normal, the grinding-it-out, things-are-wonderful-and-terrible, let's-live-it-a-day-at-a-time kind of life. Our talk is not otherworldly in its basic focus, but thisworldly -- God-with-us and Immanuel kind of worldly.

Given this, part of the work of preaching becomes a gathering up of our lives -- of our corporateness, of our experience in the world, -- and holding them in the context of God's life among us. This is where preaching and pastoral care intertwine. One can hardly preach effectively without also having the kind of presence with people that lovingly gathers and understands their triumphs and struggles, their dreams and disappointments, their times of hope and despair. Out of the gathering and sharing of our lives, preaching can convey the response of the Eternal Word who is among us. Through preaching we can hear fresh and specifically appropriate words of guidance and encouragement, of rebuke, forgiveness, and comfort, of new dreams and new tasks. We can hear God's call to life in this world.

In this sense, preaching (or the Word celebrated and witnessed to in preaching) is personal. It is social. It is political (in the broadest sense of that word). It is embodied; it is incarnational. Preaching of this sort is not grasping after some manufactured relevance. Instead, it grows out of life and drives us back into life with greater clarity about God's power and presence and with more readiness and courage for obedience.

### IV. In worship, preaching speaks both to the people and for the people

Friends have long regarded vocal ministry in a rather prophetic sense. The speaker brings a message given by the Spirit for the gathered meeting. Rufus Jones writes of "prophetic ministry...in the deepest sense...ministry which reveals God and interprets life in its nobler and diviner

possibilities." (The Faith and Practice of Quakers, pages 5-7) It is a word addressed to the people, though we do not need to see the messenger as someone over against or separate from the people. Even here the preacher and the preaching can, indeed should, come out of our common life.

This more prophetic view of preaching sees it as God's response to us, God's teaching as we respond to the divine initiative in worship.

But there is also a way in which preaching is for the people, on behalf of the people. In a way the preacher gathers up the sense of the meeting or offers up what we have in common in our life together in God. Here the preacher says aloud for us our words of celebration and witness and expresses the core of our life and faith. And as we worshippers hear it, our hearts can join in: "Yes, that's what I know. That's what I confess. That's my experience. That's the truth! Say it again." There is potentially great power and joy in having someone preach aloud on our behalf what is familiar, what is at the heart of our faith.

This aspect of preaching becomes an act of worship itself. The psalmists speak of praising and giving thanks in the Temple for God's love and power and marvellous deeds. Quite simply, it is worship to celebrate God in this way. So preachers and preached words can gather up our confession (and our confusion) and offer these to God as an act of worship on behalf of -- and as a part of -- the people of God.

Preaching, then, can be to the people and for the people.

Let me give you my two concluding points succinctly. First, preaching in Friends worship is here to stay. Second, in God's power, preaching can help us worship.

First of all, preaching has proven to help Friends in worship for a long time now. Certainly there is plenty of bad preaching. I've heard a lot of it. I'm sorry to say that I've done some of it. But that is not the point. Weak examples of any form of ministry surely shouldn't invalidate the ministry altogether. Perhaps after a hundred years it is time to quit regarding preaching as an aberration and instead embrace it as one of the ways God works among us. Preaching is incarnational. It is one way that God has chosen for the Living Word to be embodied among us. We surely do not do well to take pride in presuming that God's speaking (and our hearing) in silence is a superior mode.

Further, perhaps we could acknowledge that it is in God's prerogative and power to choose and empower some persons for the steady ministry of regular preaching. As long as we insist on messages that proceed authentically out of God's life instead of out of theological carpentry, we have little to fear.

Preaching in Friends worship, in many quarters, is here to stay. Let's learn how to embrace it and bless it and deepen it, not grudgingly, but by being thankful for this and all other means of God's grace.

Finally, in God's power, preaching can help us worship. As it arises out of worship, it can lead us more deeply into praise and celebration and abandonment to God. As it proceeds out of authenticity, it can bring us words of life. As it holds our lives in God's presence and power, it can help guide us into more faithful and empowered living. As it addresses God's words to us and lifts up our words to God, preaching can help us to hear God more clearly, to rejoice in God more exuberantly, and to worship God more fully with all our heart, soul, and strength. Preaching is not God's only way of working among us, but it is a way for which we can give thanks.

**ROLEPLAY I**  
**Eldon Harzman**

**The Situation**

Deepcreek Friends Meeting is struggling with, for want of a better term or more understanding, what is being called a "shallowness of worship." For the most part, the correct words are being said, but there seems to be little feeling or meaning behind the words. The open worship seems to be either completely silent, or people bring things to read to the group. There hasn't been a "covered meeting" for over a year. A few folks think everything is fine as it is, but in recent months attendance has begun dropping off, and money is getting a little short. All these concerns have combined to bring the matter to this Ministry and Counsel session.

**The Task**

**THE TASK OF THIS MINISTRY AND COUNSEL SESSION IS TO DECIDE WHAT IS AND IS NOT HAPPENING AND WHAT IS TO BE DONE ABOUT IT.**

**Role Players**

- Role 1    You are the M&C clerk and have a deep commitment to Jesus Christ, and this Friends Meeting. It hurts deeply to see what is happening and "something has to be done."
- Role 2    You are the pastor, and are aware of the situation. You have given several sermons on the need for deepening commitment, second-mile discipleship, not standing on the fence, etc., but it seems to be falling on deaf ears.
- Role 3    You are also on the nominating committee, and the lack of commitment has evidenced itself in people not being willing to serve on the committees that keep the meeting running.
- Role 4    You think the problems stem from the other people using the building. The AA group leaves it full of smoke, Boy Scouts track mud up and down the halls, the 7th Day Adventists (using the building while their fire damage is repaired) gives a double message to everyone about which is the right day to worship.

- Role 5 You have been reading Fox's Journal and are convinced that Satan has sent evil spirits into the building. Satan has managed to get the "spirit of confusion and the spirit of indifference" into the lives of the members -- and they bring it with them to worship and it has taken hold on the building. The only way to solve this is to have a "called meeting for driving out the evil spirits from the building" and the "healing of the members."
- Role 6 You think everything is fine. All this talk is a sort of fanatical element that has always been around on the fringe of the meeting, and they are pushing, trying to throw the meeting off balance.
- Role 7 You are a new member (having joined because you married a Quaker). You feel that this situation is the result of the lack of centeredness around the sacraments. If the meeting would try serving the Lord's supper, the focus would become clear and everything would fall into place.
- Role 8 You are a successful business person. "If we would just do this like the world does, it would be easy to fix: Ask the customers what they want." Let's do a survey, and then we will have some "hard evidence" to work with.
- Role 9 Your spouse is the treasurer of the meeting, and you "mention" that something will have to be done soon, or the meeting will be out of money. Offerings are not keeping up with expenses, and the reserve will soon be gone. "Perhaps we should ask the Finance Committee to meet with us to see what they think."
- Role 10 You agree there is a problem, but the solution you see is to start a new Sunday School class, a four week elective unit for all the adults to deal with discipleship. The kids could also study this topic for the same four weeks.

## **ROLEPLAY II**

### **Eldon Harzman**

#### **The Situation**

Foxborough Friends Meeting is experiencing a "pleasant problem." There is an increasing number of pre-school and elementary age children attending with their parents. However, the number of children in meeting for worship has increased to the point that it is no longer possible to "pretend" that all is going well. At this time, all children are expected to sit through the hour of worship. Some friends have been commenting to each other about the problem with noise and commotion. There seems to be developing a common agreement that some changes are in order.

#### **The Task**

**THE TASK OF THIS MINISTRY AND COUNSEL SESSION IS TO DECIDE WHERE THE CHILDREN SHOULD BE DURING WORSHIP.**

#### **Role Players**

- Role 1 You are also a member of the Christian Education Committee, and you are the one who brings up the concern to M&C. The CE Committee has discussed this and believes that it is the M&C's responsibility to do something.
- Role 2 You are the clerk of M&C. It seems to you that this is a Christian Education Committee problem: they should be planning a program for the children during worship.
- Role 3 You are 75 years old, somewhat hard of hearing, and have not experienced any problems with the children as things are now.
- Role 4 You are a grandparent of 3 of the children. "When my kids were small we taught them to sit still and be quiet, as these children should be taught to do. We need to work with the parents, to get them to teach their children proper behavior in worship."
- Role 5 You are a single parent of 2 of the children. Worship is one of the few times during the week you have any "peace"



and quiet," and you can't worship with kids squirming beside you. You feel strongly there should be a separate program for the entire hour (but you don't want to give up your worship time to be in charge of it or even take a turn leading it).

- Role 6 You are a parent of 3 of the children. You are torn between wanting children to learn the "Quaker Way;" your inability to Center Down for more than 30 seconds with kids present; and wishing there was a separate program.
- Role 7 You are a post-high school teenager, who sat through worship all your life. You feel strongly there should be a separate program, and that the meeting should pay someone to work with the kids during this hour.
- Role 8 You are a relatively new member to this meeting. Where you attended before, the children stayed for the first half, and then left. It seemed to be the perfect answer.
- Role 9 You are a very new member. Where you used to be, the children were out first, and then came back for the last 15 minutes, so they could experience the depth and beauty of worship without having to stay for too long.
- Role 10 You are newly married, expecting your first child and very concerned that there is no "infant care." Will this change include a nursery?

## INTEREST GROUP INFORMATION

One of the most important parts of the Consultations in past years has been the opportunity to work together in small groups on a common task. Heretofore, persons have been assigned to small groups with the intent of getting a cross section of Friends in each group. This year, attenders signed up for two different Interest Groups based on their own preferences. Instead of giving each group a task to work on, a short list of questions and queries was prepared which were used to stimulate thought and discussion. The groups were free to use or not use these, depending on how they were led to proceed.

Each Interest Group was assigned a moderator who convened the group and helped facilitate the discussion. It was suggested at the beginning that members introduce themselves and briefly share concerns or questions they brought with them. The next thing was to designate someone in the group to keep a few notes on important insights and concerns that arose in the discussion. These were to be summarized in a five minute report which each group was to make to a plenary session on Saturday evening. This report was also to be put in writing (not to exceed one page) to leave with the Consultation planners. These reports have become a part of the published findings of the Consultation.

It was suggested that the group process would be greatly helped if participants shared freely in the group without dominating the discussion. The moderator was encouraged to remind Friends if they strayed from the subject unduly and that it was important to keep an eye on the time in order to keep faith with the rest of the Consultation schedule.

What was expected from the Interest Groups? There was no preconceived answer to this, though it was hoped that the groups would provide an opportunity for participants to share deeply and honestly with each other about Quaker worship as central to our life together as Friends. The groups were intended as a vehicle for that to take place. Important insights and concerns emerged which were shared with the rest of the Consultation Saturday evening, and through these published findings.

What follows are the Group topics with the questions and queries which were prepared in advance. In several cases the moderators helped with the editing as it appears here. In some cases, due to the freedom mentioned in paragraph one above, there are reports only from one group. If it was not known which group it was, this was left blank. And sometimes the reports are combined.

### **Topic 1: "The Use of Silence in Worship"**

Do Friends gather in expectant waiting upon God, believing that life changing experiences can come out of the silence?

Is silence the space we need -- to enter into a hearing and obeying relationship with God?

Is there a difference between the use of silence for meditation, and "waiting upon the Lord" in silence?

### **Topic 2: "Guided Worship in Programmed/Pastoral Meetings"**

What are some of the most helpful ways to be guided into deep and meaningful worship before God?

How can space be provided in programmed worship for spiritual discernment and for allowing God to speak to us?

How can Friends avoid becoming too dependent upon worship leadership for communion with God?

What is important in preparation for worship for all those involved?

What are some of the things in programmed worship that can draw us away from the Center?

### **Topic 3: "What is the Object and Purpose of Worship?"**

Is worship a noun or a verb?

If God is Spirit, can we focus on God as an object of worship?

Is worship ordered for our benefit or God's benefit?

Is the purpose of worship to express our love and adoration for God? To experience inspiration? To enter into a prayerful relationship with God? To prepare ourselves for service to others?

How can Friends avoid making worship, whatever its form, an empty habit?

### **Topic 4: "What Difference Does Worship Make?"**

In what way is worship as necessary to our spiritual life as breathing is to our physical life?

Have I brought a need or a hope to this Consultation that I can ask this group to work on with me? This presupposes that meeting such a need or hope involves worship?

What happens in worship that provides the basis for Friends' ministry and service? We can glibly say that ministry and service must proceed from worship, but just how do we tie these together?

#### **Topic 5: "Repentance and Religious Commitment in Worship"**

What does repentance mean to you? What does religious commitment mean? How have you experienced these in the context of worship?

Given Friends' optimistic view of human nature, how is our need for repentance manifested?

Must commitment to God be preceded by repentance?

What conditions in worship are necessary for repentance and commitment to take place?

#### **Topic 6: "Meeting Renewal Through Worship"**

Is deep and meaningful worship the key to meeting renewal? If so, what else needs to accompany it?

How best can the power of the Spirit of God be released in our meetings so as to transform the life of the meeting?

Do Friends need to experiment with various patterns of worship so as to maximize the possibilities of renewal?

#### **Topic 7: "Meeting for Worship for the Purpose of Business"**

Do Friends really wait upon the leading of the Spirit in business decisions, or do they resort primarily to their own resources and agenda?

What is the difference between gathering the sense of the meeting under the guidance of the Spirit, and the method of reaching decisions by consensus?

How important is the sensitivity and experience of the clerk in whether a Friends business meeting is worshipful and in the right ordering of the Spirit?

### **Topic 8: "Friends and the Sacraments"**

What questions or concerns do you have about the sacraments?

Why should Friends have, or not have, a testimony regarding the sacraments?

What is meant by a sacramental way of life?

What makes worship a vital spiritual experience?

What is the best way for Friends to participate in the ecumenical fellowship of the Christian churches?

### **Topic 9: "Disciplines of Preparation for Worship"**

How do I prepare for worship so that I can sense more deeply the presence of God in myself and in the gathered worship in my meeting/church?

How does the worship life of my meeting/church nurture my capacity to be obedient to God's call in my life?

How does the worship life of my meeting/church nurture its capacity to be obedient to God's call to the meeting as a corporate body?

### **Topic 10: "Thanksgiving and Celebration in Worship"**

Both Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King, Jr., at low moments in their lives, are reported to have said, "Give thanks in all things." Are Friends often too earnest, too guilt-ridden to rejoice in worship? Is not thanksgiving the first act of worship? If so, how can Friends bring it alive in their meetings? How can Friends celebrate in worship, praising God and rejoicing in God's creation and works?

## INTEREST GROUP MODERATORS

	<u>GROUP I</u>	<u>GROUP II</u>
	9:15-10:15 and 7:30- 9:00 Fri.	3:30-5:30 Sat.
<u>TOPICS</u>	<u>MODERATORS</u>	<u>MODERATORS</u>
Use of Silence in Worship	Lloyd Lee Wilson	Ted Hoare
Guided Worship in Programmed/ Pastoral Meetings	David Bills	Cilde Grover
What is the Object and Purpose of Worship?	Patty Levering	Maurice Roberts
What Difference Does Worship Make?	Bob & Dorothy Allenson	Bob & Dorothy Allenson
Repentance and Religious Commitment in Worship	David Brock	Shirley Dodson
Meeting Renewal Through Worship	Ann Miller	Andy Grannell
Meeting for Worship for the Purpose of Business	Sarah Wilson	Stephen Carey
Friends and the Sacraments	Charles Thomas	Charles Thomas
<u>ONE GROUP ONLY</u>		
Disciplines of Preparation for Worship	Jan Hoffman	
Thanksgiving and Celebration in Worship		Gordon Browne

## INTEREST GROUPS' SUMMARY REPORTS

### Topic 1: "The Use of Silence in Worship"

Our two sessions on silence in worship were times of deep sharing in the Spirit. We focused not so much on "silence" as on what happens in the silence, the Life, that connection with the living Christ we are seeking and not always finding in our silent meetings for worship.

How we enter into silence is one key factor. Most important: I must really desire to connect with God. Ways people use silence:

1. Come with a heart full of thanksgiving
2. Pray for the Spirit to infuse the meeting
3. Pray for each person as they enter the room
4. Imagine a peaceful scene near water
5. Put one's body in the position most useful for worship
6. Repeat a phrase such as, "Thou art my God and my all"
7. "Unzip" oneself, uncross legs and arms, await an embrace from God.

We recognized that our ability to center down in meeting for worship is related to our daily prayer and the quality of our spiritual life as a whole. People spoke of ways to develop the inner silence...practicing the Presence while doing dishes, taking a quiet day once a week, or going on a 3-day retreat. Ideally, we all long for daily worship with family or community, but this is rare. The best most of us can do is to have a prayer group or sharing group once during the week.

Distractions during worship brought up the suggestion to try and give thanks for the restless child or noisy plane. Giving thanks for every message, particularly those which might disturb some people, helps to center the meeting in love.

We considered how you tell the voice of God from the voice of the devil, how to know if the message is my own self speaking or comes from God. One person confessed great discomfort when someone said he or she was clear they heard God. "I am one who does not know," she said. We agreed speaking in meeting is risky and we often do not know. We must do the best we can in that state of not knowing. Assurance or non-assurance may come later, with a sense of peace or a sense of disturbance. As William Bacon Evans put it, "You keep on listening and you act on what you hear and gradually that voice becomes less like the voice of a stranger."

As we talked about why some of us have dramatic experiences on our spiritual journeys and others do not, a woman said, "Some of us are very stubborn. There is no virtue in having to be hit over the head to learn the lesson."

After sharing so deeply with each other, we expressed gratitude for the Consultation. Some of us could not say these kinds of things among members of our own meetings. We also recognized and gave thanks to the "cloud of witnesses" that surrounded us and to the Presence in our midst.

## **Topic 2: "Guided Worship in Programmed/Pastoral Meetings"**

### **Group 1 Report**

As we went around the circle of participants for the first time, several Friends from pastoral meetings were concerned that there be more use of silence in programmed services and several Friends from non-pastoral meetings wished to learn more about pastoral worship.

The first question we considered was, "What things in programmed worship draw us away from the center?" It is difficult to summarize the discussion on this point. I will move on.

In response to the question, "How can Friends avoid becoming too dependent upon worship leadership for communion with God?," we agreed that members of the congregation could be involved in planning worship.

We agreed that members of a pastoral meeting could be helped to use the silence by offering them verbal guidance for the centering process and then gradually withdrawing that support. We also felt that opportunities for small groups to worship with one or two Friends experienced with open worship would be helpful. Unprogrammed Friends present expressed that some brief prepared material might helpfully be offered at the beginning of unprogrammed meetings.

During this discussion of the use of silence in programmed worship, there was at one point the sense that some in the group had begun to say that unprogrammed worship is better than programmed. This we did not wish to continue.

Our hope was that there be a clear connection between worship, and ministry and outreach.

### **Group 2 Report**

Seven Friends introduced themselves and their background experience among programmed and unprogrammed meetings. We found



that most of us shared a fairly wide experience of the variety of Friends ways of organizing their worship. We were surprised at the range of ways that unprogrammed meetings are organized. We have found that the extent of preparation, or lack of preparation, makes a greater difference in our gatheredness.

We were hopeful of finding, in our discussion, some collective wisdom on how meetings may be arranged to yield a more deeply gathered group. We discussed the ways that people make themselves ready for worship and specifically for ministry. We shared some kinds of daily preparations. Some of us found scheduling the time of Saturday evening was essential; others did not schedule this time, but found that preparation came, dependably. Prayer could both prepare one for a pastoral presentation, and if shared, could serve as an invitation to share in corporate worship. Sensing the direction that the pastoral team was heading, made a focused preparation by the congregation possible and helpful.

One of the arranged things that can be helpful, is vocal prayer that addresses the needs of the meeting. A sermon that comes out of the person's own experience, "on the edge of what she knows," can guide the congregation to the edge of what they know. This requires a special relationship to the meeting -- knowing the members and being known by them. Similarly, it is important to know travelling ministers well, to be easy in inviting them to preach. A complete and prayerfully prepared travelling minute is helpful in this, helping to see whether the minister's leading is likely to speak to the condition of the meeting.

A ten minute period where choruses are sung is helpful to some; others prefer silence. The singing is more satisfying if inclusive language is used. For some, this may be felt to be essential. We are sensitive to the importance of keeping open and tender in our differences, and to hold the saving grace of humor, and be prepared to help those who may have a period of anger. We all need to be heard and affirmed, and this may be a time of need for being prayerfully helped to reconnect to God. This may include helping someone to see the good in a past they are burdened by.

### Topic 3: "What is the Object and Purpose of Worship?"

#### Group 1 Report

The purposes of worship include: to give praise to God, to experience communion with God in order to learn God's will, to be formed together into God's people for God's service, to encounter the living Christ, to prayerfully seek God, to practice the presence of God. We like Fran Hall's statement that worship is, "the soul's response to the felt presence of God."

It should be obvious from that statement who or what the object of worship is. Our discussion, however, on the object of worship was less clear. We noted how some language we use to describe God (such as Lord) is inconsistent with some contemporary experience. Language reflects our image of God but also inevitably distorts our experience of God. Which distortions are acceptable? In eliminating certain language for God do we also limit the ways in which we understand God working? I.e. by "trashing" language do we also completely "trash" concepts and thus deny the real lived experience of God?

We have to, we must, talk about our experience of God in worship, both corporate and private. But we cannot speak authentically without true spiritual experience. Ultimately, however, we are united in worship by our common experience of the Divine, of that which is eternal.

## Group 2 Report

We found this was too difficult and extensive a topic for us to address in a single session. This was partly because some of us were unsure that we had ever worshipped, or we lacked a clear understanding of knowing when we were in the act of worship.

We were confident in the knowledge that we prayed to God and that the act of praying required us to come with the right attitude. Whether we classified ourselves as "Seekers," "Friends Receiving the Light," or "Walking with God" we all agreed that we enter prayer with an attitude of humility, readiness and openness. This also implied that "we come with heart and mind prepared." And we shared a sense that our varied experiences of individual worship and prayer are essential preparation for fulfilling corporate worship.

We were reminded of the two-way process of seeking between God and worshippers as described by Rufus Jones and Francis Hall, and we recognized that worship and prayer are the responses to the presence of God. We were clear that because each one of us brings our own strengths and gifts into meeting for worship, we each make a unique response to God's presence in the same way as God speaks to each of us in a unique and individual manner.

In addition, we noted that one of the calls to attend meeting is our sense of responsibility to others in the meeting.

The question "What is the outcome of our worship?" was addressed. We shared our sense of refreshment, feelings of great joy, thankfulness for those in attendance, grace to continue God's work, renewal and expectation of returning to future meetings for worship, increased responsiveness and caring for those around us and a real sense of oneness with God and with each other.

By the time we closed, we realized we had opened ourselves to each other, been vulnerable, shared our inner experiences and reached a moving sense of mutual trust, love and caring for all those in the group. We were indeed reluctant to let go and be parted from each other and from the time of worship we had experienced together. We had indeed lived the words of Elisha Bates, namely: "We are not designed to live apart from God."

#### **Topic 4: "What Difference Does Worship Make?"**

##### **Group 1 Report**

Our underlying assumption was that worship does make a difference.

If it is to make a difference:

1. Worship must be in Spirit and Truth. The object of our worship is God who is transcendent but immanent in the gathered meeting and in each of us.
2. Our search is a double one. We not only seek the Spirit but are sought, for we were created because the Spirit needs us.
3. We must be open to the mystery at the center of existence. Why are we conscious beings? We can not predict or control the outcome. Is there an analogy offered us by the business world? The greater power one has in business the more imponderables one must weigh in making decisions. In the spiritual realm, does power come in proportion to the imponderables we are willing to accept and face?
4. Our faith community must nurture the spiritual growth of each other as we would nurture the growth of children in a family.
5. Vocal prayer can deepen the life of worship as nothing else can.

From worship we can expect astonishing things to happen.

1. Animosity can be replaced by acceptance of differences and deep relationships developed.
2. Our lives can be reoriented. We can be freed from the world that continually tries to co-opt us.
3. We can experience healing of our woundedness.
4. We can be led as John Woolman was:
  - a. In worship he was led to see the deep connections in the way we and the world act. (Intense use of land for profit and loss of fertility, for example.)

- b. He was so disturbed that he had no inner peace.
- c. He was driven to seek clarity and the strength of humility to do the will of God as far as he had need to know it.
- d. He acted upon this vision after laying the matter before the meeting and receiving approval and support.
- e. Having obeyed, his inner peace was restored.

## Group 2 Report

The group discussed issues of worship in our lives, not only meeting for worship. Questions were raised as each shared personal concerns and views. Some of these were:

Is worship important? What changes can make a difference in worship?

How do we evaluate our leadings? How can we come to trust our experiences?

How can we strengthen our worship toward more power in our lives and our world? What forms of worship can help toward renewal?

Can all of life be worship? How can life and worship be joined into a whole?

What is the effect of attenders on worship, and of worship on attenders? What is the quality of our care for attenders.

What is the meaning of voluntary, chosen, commitment to the quality of worship?

Is the meeting for worship the essence of community?

To what extent is worship for our enjoyment? To what extent is worship for the enjoyment of God?

We discussed pleasure and enjoyment in and from worship. A statement from The Westminster Confession of Faith was recalled: "The chief end of man is to love God and enjoy him forever."

## Topic 5: "Repentance and Religious Commitment in Worship"

### Group 1 Report

Recognizing that this is a huge topic, one that we cannot explore in a short time, we confined ourselves to two queries:

1. How have we experienced religious commitment in the context of worship?
2. What does repentance mean to us as Friends?

For many in our group, religious commitment was not experienced in the context of corporate worship. It has been instead a private matter between self and God (e.g. spiritual journal) and not told within our meetings for worship. We believed our change would show from changed lives. For many this has been a gradual commitment which has been helped along by retreats and worship, but has been mostly solitary. Some have experienced psychotherapy or counseling as leading to a change in commitment or sense of repentance. Several expressed uncertainty or reluctance to share these moments of personal transformation with our full faith communities. It has seemed easier to share with small groups within a meeting, like prayer groups or ministry and counsel. We had to ponder why? Fear of showing our worst side, weakness, darkness, imbalance, ugliness, stubbornness, pride? Perhaps this hesitancy has been greater among unprogrammed Friends, where systems of restraint allow hiding, denying "sins," pretending all is well. We realize that some Friends do not recognize sin.

However, three members of our group reported experiences of transformation/commitment out of three special kinds of worship settings (including sense of turning around to face God's truth):

- a. Meeting for celebration of marriage -- where a prayer given for the marrying couple was heard as God's message for a visitor, who made a lasting commitment to change his methods of communication in vital relationships.
- b. Meeting for celebration of a life (memorial service) -- where an individual realized that we are never alone in facing life's challenges, including death; that we are meant to ask for and be help for each other. Her sense of dependence on the Guide and Comforter can be pinpointed to that particular memorial meeting.
- c. Meeting for worship for business -- when a faithful clerk shared his pain, an attender was moved to new insights about crucifixion and the human role in it.

We understand repentance to involve naming those behaviors, actions, and feelings that keep us from feeling united with God. For some, this takes time -- we have to stand in pain while God's Light shines upon our errors. But we see later that God has waited for our honesty. Hence we think the process, whether sudden or gradual (which may depend upon temperament), is RECOGNITION -- REGRET -- CHANGE -- FORGIVENESS -- COMMITMENT. We affirm the need of Friends and their meetings to name and to proclaim this process.

We propose these questions for further reflection: When am I able to receive (or claim) God's grace and celebrate it with the people of God? Can we claim (or receive) a space/time in worship where we can turn from wrong, unwholesome attitudes and actions? If the good news is that God wants our entire selves (best and worst,) why do we hesitate to present our worst? When we recognize change through repentance, forgiveness and commitment, isn't that a time for worship? We affirm the need of Friends and their meetings to name and to proclaim this process.

## Group 2 Report

I hate to confess to feelings of inadequacy; but this is one of those occasions when I fear the report you are about to hear will be a pale shadow of the meeting that took place. There was little disagreement and a great reluctance to part. We were blessed with a number of experienced Friends.

Shirley Dodson opened by reading Margaret Fell's account of George Fox's preaching at Ulverstone the first time she heard him speak. We talked of the rarity of repentance, of the vital importance of discernment in ministry leading to repentance (although there is a safeguard in that the message works only if true), of how much more true-repentance is than just a simple admission of a mistake.

The first recorded words of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, immediately after his baptism, were "Repent and believe the Gospel." Repentance is a deep change of direction and intention and commitment. It is often helped by contact with other faithful people. Its impact may be delayed over weeks or months and oftentimes it is a gradual sense of small changes. The need for it comes from disobedience to God, from what is traditionally called sin. The deep need is for movement from a self-centered life to a God-centered life, and the book, Creative Prayer, by E. Herman was mentioned as being particularly helpful.

One group member commented that "sometimes the most faithful thing we can do is to say no to something that we love." Sometimes it is tempting to shut God out, and to take charge of our own lives, or at least of a corner of them; but shutting God out, even of one area, moves us away from contact with Him, and this action will, eventually cry out for repentance. Throughout life there is a continual need for this active turning away from self and towards God. Sin is essentially self-centeredness. Seen aright, the word is powerfully positive because it allows us to admit to serious errors; to address them and their destructive effects in our lives; to accept the forgiveness God constantly offers; and then to go on, wiser perhaps, but free of the burden. This is not meant in the dreamy sense of repeatedly failing in the same way, where sympathetic, discerning ministry can assist true growth; but rather in the sense that as one grows and lives, some mistakes will inevitably be made, and that only repentance keeps one free to move ahead.

One group member recalled drawing in the margin of a notebook a long chain of trap-doors, so that one walked a little, then fell through a trap-door; walked a little more on the lower level, fell through another; and said how aptly this described one phase of the process of repentance. Yet the sequence of falls does end, and if one continues faithful and patient, a new peace flows in when the falls are over. Repentance is always concrete, in terms of specific actions, specific people. Problems mentioned by group members included a clinging to old forms of security (financial and personal); seeking to achieve perfection in terms dictated by other people; inability to confess to anger; too easily agreeing with views widely expressed or commonly held in a group. God is always more ready to forgive than we are to repent, but when we come in vulnerability to a recognition of our own poorness, brokenness and need of help, then, indeed the good news of the Gospel becomes for us the Power of God.

We never went beyond the first of our assigned list of questions.

#### **Topic 6: "Meeting Renewal Through Worship"**

##### **Group 1 and Group 2 Combined Report**

The key to meeting renewal through worship lies in our individual and corporate willingness to trust being changed by the Holy Spirit.

This essential truth emerged in both groups from consideration of the following three questions.

First, what is a renewing community in worship like in reality? The following are the characteristics:

- a) General lack of inhibitions
- b) Wide participation in vocal ministry
- c) Less concern with forms, length of time
- d) General feelings of trust
- e) Generous spirit of hospitality
- f) Avoidance of hypotheticals
- g) Focus on the Presence in the present
- h) Corporate pulling together
- i) Knowing of each other in that which is eternal
- j) A place where young and old, new and experienced be moved, heard, and rejoiced in...
- h) A place where newcomers find their Author

Second, with this sense of renewal clearly in mind, what stands in our way are a variety of one species: fear. The following are some of the chief varieties:

- a) Fear of not pleasing the meeting
- b) Fear of change, i.e. "we don't mind change as long as things remain essentially the same"
- c) Fear of our emotions running out in front or even away from us
- d) Fear of our critique by "family" both literally and figuratively

Third, we tried in both groups to deal constructively with fear. There were two key suggestions, i.e.,

- Lifting up our fears in prayer both individually and collectively
- Moving directly away toward hope

In this latter regard we saw the sources of our hope in three ways.

- a) Opening ourselves to that which we cannot yet imagine
- b) A reality beyond physical death
- c) Focus on our children who are bearers of our collective hopes

In summary, renewal in worship for the community of Friends lies in risking, i.e., an opening of ourselves to leading, power, and light of the Holy Spirit which dispells our fears.

### **Topic 7: "Meeting for Worship for the Purpose of Business"**

#### **Group 1 Report**

- The sensitivity of the clerk is important to the right ordering of the meeting
- Need to space contributions to make sure each is heard -- the clerk should not recognize someone immediately after another has spoken
- It helps if Friends stand to speak
- Need to wait for recognition of clerk
- Person should not speak more than once on an issue
- You don't buy a dog and bark yourself -- let committees do their work
- Members in the body of the meeting share a responsibility for the process



- One idea is to put a sheet explaining right Friends business order on each seat
- Lay over items to avoid too hasty action
- Refer matters to committees before meeting considers them
- Too often, Friends resort primarily to own resources, and agenda, rather than waiting on the leading of the Spirit
- It can be helpful to ask a leading question to which you may know the answer, but on which others need clarity
- Consensus is a secular process; sense of meeting is Spirit-directed
- Yearly meeting business process can be assisted with an agenda committee or new business committee
- Can help to experiment with different business meeting formats, such as worship-sharing and round robin

## Group 2 Report

Our belief in the immanence of God leads us to act out our faith in all of our lives, including our meetings for business. We all carry personal responsibility for this part of our corporate life of faith.

In our meetings for business we seek the will of God, which is not divided. So there is a unity in God, and it is our own imperfections which sometimes make it difficult for us to perceive this unity.

The purpose of our meetings for business is to build up the community of faith through seeking God's will for us as a community. We are here to worship and not to get through an agenda. The meeting for business is over when the worship is over. We wondered if people dribble out at the end of our meetings for business because they came to get business done, so when it's clear we won't get it finished, they feel free to leave. Perhaps we need to release the remaining agenda if the worship is over.

We reminded ourselves that we are seeking unity in our meetings for business, not unanimity; a sense of the meeting, not consensus. Discomfort with some action that the meeting as a whole seems ready to take is part of the sense of the meeting. One person may not necessarily stand in the way of a decision: because a person states that s/he stands in the way does not make it so. Further discernment is necessary to come to clarity on whether the objection has enough spiritual weight to make the meeting wait for further light. If so, a decision at that point would not be in right order and the matter would be laid over; if

not, the sense of the meeting would be to proceed with one person uncomfortable with that action.

In any case, the discomfort of one or two persons with a decision is part of the "sense of the meeting." Since the purpose of meetings for business is to build community, everyone present needs to be included in the sense of the meeting.

We reminded ourselves of the traditional practice of minutes of exercise -- which we also called "process minutes" -- to affirm where the meeting is at a given moment when there is as yet no clarity to act. These minutes simply state the various perceptions in the meeting on a given matter at that moment, and can be helpful in building a sense of the meeting. Often if we can clearly affirm where we are, it frees us to perceive new light. We heard that reading such minutes in North Carolina Conservative Meeting gave a clear sense of the steps in growth toward unity in opposition to slavery.

We contrasted these minutes of exercise with minutes which polarize. If a minute is proposed to the meeting by a committee with the implication that the acceptance of the minute is the goal, then Friends are seen as either "for" or "against" the minute. This polarization does not contribute to the sense of unity in seeking God's will which is essential to our business process. A minute of exercise might state the proposed minute, but then describe fully the range of responses to it in neutral terms, waiting for the Spirit of God to open a way forward from there. We need to remember that we are always resting in the unity of God and are held there despite our differences on a given question.

We affirmed that the sense of the meeting reflects those gathered to worship together seeking God's will in the matters brought before them. It is in the gathered meeting where the Spirit of God can lead us into truth. There can be no "proxy votes," no call to the clerk stating discomfort with a proposed minute and implying that this objection by phone can prevent the meeting from acting. What we expect in our meetings for business is that we will be transformed by the power of God into a unity we did not perceive before the meeting. We wondered if those who are not willing to come into that Presence which speaks to the gathered meeting are also not willing to be transformed. People who are not present to experience the power of God at work bringing Friends into new truth cannot be part of a sense of that meeting. Our capacity and willingness to be transformed is part of the wisdom of laying over a matter on which Friends cannot find unity in a given meeting, for sometimes transformation will occur in willing hearts in the intervening month.

We differed on whether only members of the Society can be part of the sense of the meeting.

We agreed that the meeting needs to be punctuated by worship, especially between agenda items. This can happen when

minutes are written immediately after each item and then approved.

We affirmed the importance of the clerk, not as a person, but as a function. The function of the clerk is to embody the meeting both as it seeks unity and when it reaches a sense of the meeting. This is why it is important to have persons, who wish to speak, recognized by the clerk -- not because the clerk is the "head," but as a reminder that the person wishing to speak is speaking to the meeting, not to an individual. Sometimes people who speak, unrecognized by the clerk, will turn their body toward the person to whom they are responding, thus breaking even the physical sense of a meeting gathered with a center. So recognition by the clerk encourages the speaker to stand and speak to "the meeting" by addressing remarks to the clerk's table and not to a person in the body of the meeting.

Recognition by the clerk also gives the clerk the opportunity to pace the meeting with worship and to allow the time necessary for both the clerk and the meeting to absorb what one person has said before another person speaks.

We also affirmed how important a person with a gift for clerking can be to the right ordering of business and sense of holding business in the context of worship.

Finally, we affirmed the beauty of our business process when rightly conducted. It is yet another spiritual discipline which can build up our community of faith by leading us deeper into communion with that unity which is in God.

## **Topic 8: "Friends and the Sacraments"**

### **Group 1 Report**

Why did we attend this interest group?

- 1) Hunger for Sacramental Celebration
- 2) A wish to join with other Ecumenical expressions
- 3) Sacraments are a way of witnessing in the Quaker community. This involves experiencing the receiving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19) and experiencing this as Baptism in the Holy Spirit
- 4) Friends do experience communion in the gathered meeting for worship, and we shared examples of this
- 5) Friends wanted to explore the testimony that all of life is potentially sacramental and how we might live that more fully

- 6) Friends wanted the experience of worship in the present power of Jesus, not to question doctrine nor learn how to access that power.

We heard that the Quaker Testimony of Sacraments is often viewed as a negative approach, yet when compared to the Catholic which is a historical re-enactment, and to the Protestant, which is a "remembrance," the Quaker form is understood to be -- Christ is with us now. Is that not positive?

We wanted to express that the Quaker Testimony was indeed positive for us, that we could name the experience we had known.

We acknowledged that it is not possible to talk about sacraments without "Christ-talk," and this we needed more of.

#### Affirmations

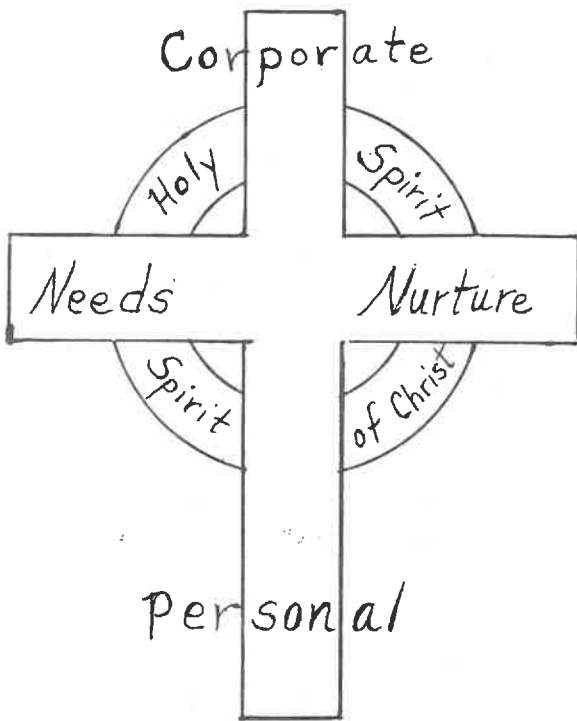
- A) We affirm the efficacy of Quaker Testimony on Inward Sacraments. The evidence that this is experienced in our meetings might be:
  - 1) Joy in the meeting
  - 2) Powerful ministry in the meeting
  - 3) Tendency to prevail upon the Holy Spirit in prayer
  - 4) Love of one another practiced in the meeting
  - 5) Unity of "the People of God" -- those in the meeting community.
- B) We want to urge Friends to study, prepare and experience the expression of sacrament more.
- C) We need to share the experiences of sacrament more openly and confirm them in others.

Special Concern: Is there a place for a sacrament on death such as a prayer to release those close to death?

#### Additional comments on the sacraments:

- 1) Friends who too much separate the spiritual from the physical can learn from the Catholics the unity of the spiritual and physical in worship.
- 2) Sacraments, which make the past present for us to take part in, are not limited to the church of Christ; for instance, in the Passover Seder, the Exodus becomes present for all of us.
- 3) The presence of God's spirit in silent Quaker worship is made real when two or more Friends feel led to bring the same message, often in nearly the same words.

## Topic 9: "Disciplines of Preparation for Worship"



Like a Celtic Cross, there is an upright axis, a crossbeam axis and a ring of glory. In our image, the upright represents the personal-corporate axis of worship, the latter always grounds in the former, but with the two resonating and interacting with one another. The crossbeam represents the needs-nurture axis, again resonating and interacting with one another. Both axes are tied together into a unified whole by means of the Holy Spirit or Spirit of Christ, which, if removed would seriously weaken the entire structure. The side toward us is the side of outwardness, that away is the side of inwardness, for ours is a three-dimensional structure, and at its center is a vibrant, living heart.

Discipline is any practice that liberates the Spirit. Fox was called not to bring people off from forms, but only from forms without power.

Personal -- The personal practice of worship only follows if the need for it, to develop one's spiritual health, is felt to be sufficiently great. Such practice requires an intentional allocation of time and place and continuation of that rhythm in spite of distractions until it becomes habit. It means feeding through words and images to the spirit behind. Be expectant, ready to worship at any moment, even if for only that length of time. Qualities to cultivate include: silence (a time of sorting out), humility, obedience (to the search for God's will), patience, discernment and faithfulness (to the call once discerned). It can result in living on two levels (Thomas Kelly) or practicing the presence of God (Brother Lawrence), or even multitasking (in modern computer imagery). Techniques may vary from person to person, time to time, and place to place, but often include: meditation, prayer, Bible reading, journaling, rereading Quaker authors and testimonies, use of liturgical readings and practices, walking through the world or being aware of the environment, awareness of religious art and icons, visiting someone in the hospital or prison or picking up a hitchhiker, or having a special time with someone from within or without meeting. A little time each day is better than a lump on a rare occasion.

Corporate -- The personal, as we have seen, leads into the corporate. Meeting for worship can be hallowed by setting it amidst silence so that even one's arrival at meeting is already under the discipline of silence. The life of the meeting during the rest of the week is important in carrying one over from one meeting for worship to another. This can include covenant or accountability groups, clearness committees, potlucks or other social events, forum or other platform events, singing or other scenes of joy and thanksgiving, and worship amid which meeting for business takes place. The more meaningful the corporate response, the greater the need there is for a personal discipline with which to complement it.

### **Topic 10: "Thanksgiving and Celebration in Worship"**

Thanksgiving comes out of gratitude. When a deeply felt need is filled either by God, or another person acting as a channel of God's overflowing love, thanksgiving occurs.

Another source of thanksgiving and celebration is a God-given recognition of our own Inner Fire resulting in a realization of self-worth. Negative speaking or thinking about ourselves or other members of meeting will undermine the source of our corporate thanksgiving. On the phone during the week turning this negativity around can help generate a thankful spirit in meeting.

Individual members have to be able to be thankful for even painful things before the meeting will be able to give thanksgiving.

Actions that can help generate thankfulness in meeting include:

- Stop talking about what we do not have
- In meeting at bad times ask oneself, "Is there not one thing you are thankful for?"
- Four Friends who pray about meeting during the week, go to meeting, sit in the four corners and fill the space with thanksgiving
- After the first hymn, Friends greet one another, appreciating their presence
- Hugs and Friends whose lives are entwined greet each other
- An attitude of focusing on strengths, not weaknesses

We were aware that we can't tell the Presence what we want to happen in meeting. When people are in pain we hear them, love them, and silently thank God that God is working in their lives, but not tell them to "thank God for all things."

Friends are not good at celebrating. When Christ invites us to the party, we don't know how to party.

Celebration -- A kind of celebration that Friends are good at is memorial services. A sense of joy and celebration, like gratitude, is related to our knowing and loving each other. Worship leaders among programmed Friends can be intentional about leading their congregation into expressions of joy and celebration during the worship time. Unprogrammed Friends may surround their times of quiet waiting worship with other activities that build up the sense of community and give expression to joy.

Some events where a special celebrative moment in worship (or an entire worship celebration) might be appropriate are:

- Bringing new babies to meeting
- Celebrating the return of an out-of-town member
- Moving -- lighting candles at altar

## WORSHIP-SHARING GROUPS

### 106 Recreation Room

Mary Cadbury, Convener  
Ann Miller  
Renee Crauder  
Betty Austin  
Monette Thatcher  
Howard Macy  
Andrew Grannell  
Gary Salk  
Walter Schutt

### 108 Marshburn Meditation Room

Beth McDonald, Convener  
Janette Shetter  
Carol Holmes  
Barbara Olmstead  
Louise Wilson  
Ed Nicholson  
Ted Hoare  
Martin King  
Jay Worrall

### 110 Carey Seminar Room

Barb Platt, Convener  
Marilyn Schiffman  
Jan Hoffman  
Ruth Taber  
Miriam Brush  
Maurice Roberts  
Wilmer Cooper  
Bob Allenson  
Lloyd Lee Wilson  
Kenneth Burton

### 201 DeCou Classroom

Patricia Brown, Convener  
Patty Levering  
Charlotte Fardelman  
Ann Swain  
Ed Balogh  
Eldon Harzman  
Richard Hall  
Ed Bell  
Robert P. Fetter

### 202 Kendall Classroom

Marilynn Bell, Convener  
Cilde Grover  
Marilyn Neyer  
Cynthia B. Taylor  
Viola Hathaway  
Mark Minear  
Robert Wilson  
Stephen Cary  
Richard Preston  
Gene Hillman

### 203 Classroom

Johan Maurer, Convener  
Sarah Wilson  
Shirley Dodson  
Margaret Springer  
Curt Shaw  
Terry Worden  
Sterling Olmstead  
Larry Ingle  
Dan O'Brien



### **205 Trueblood Classroom**

Bruce Thron-Weber, Convener  
Trayce Peterson  
Mary Littrell  
Elaine Carte  
Carol Zimmerman  
Diana Gurley  
Charles Thomas  
Terry Smith-Wallace  
William Strachan Jr.

### **PARTICIPANT/OBSERVERS**

Are not assigned to any  
particular group, but may  
participate in all groups.

Thom Jeavons  
Sara Beth Terrell

### **206 Resource Room**

Bill Hummon, Convener  
Marlene Pedigo  
Tracy Booth  
Marianne Lockard  
Virginia Redfield  
Hugh Barbour  
David Bills  
Nigel Dolby  
Bill Samuel

### **210 Mullen Study Lounge**

Deb, Suess, Convener  
Dorothy Ann Allenson  
Dorothy Garner  
Rona Kicklighter  
Keith Esch  
Harold Carson  
Gordon Browne  
Geoffrey Kaiser  
Alastair Heron

### **211 Correvant Conference Room**

Charles Ansell, Convener  
Celia Mueller  
Barbara Bazett  
Marilyn Parker  
Marian Baker  
Steve Ross  
John Hubbard  
David Brock

**PARTICIPANT/OBSERVERS SUMMARY REPORT**  
**Thom Jeavons and Sara Beth Terrell**

On the evening of December 7, Friends from 23 yearly meetings, representing 23 states, Canada, and England, gathered at Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, Indiana for a Friends Consultation on Worship. This was the 10th Consultation in an ongoing series and different in two significant respects from previous gatherings. Including almost 100 Friends, this was twice as large as the previous gatherings, and all of those present were veterans of previous Consultations.

The benefits of the fact that everyone present had attended one of these nine preceding Consultations were immediately obvious. Both familiarity with the process and familiarity with at least a few other attenders contributed to a high level of trust. Attenders were torn between renewing old acquaintances and settling in to the opening worship. This was the best evidence of one measure of grace that enriched the whole conference: that people demonstrated a greater preparedness to love and to hear one another across boundaries.

With a brief period of worship and introductions the work of the Consultation began with presentations by Wilmer Cooper and Mark Minear about the development in historic patterns of Quaker worship. Wilmer focused on the early period of Quakerism. He lifted up for us the central Quaker convictions about worship: i.e. that true worship was "in Spirit and in Truth" and "in the name of Jesus" (which is the same as the Light of Christ). Moreover, true worship is spiritual and not ceremonial. He also reminded us that for early Friends silence was never seen as an end in itself, but always as a means to the attainment of communion.

Having cited for us the principles that undergirded a vital and powerful practice of worship in the first days of the Quaker movement, Wilmer went on to speak about the factors that later contributed to the decline of Friends worship. He quoted from an essay by a British Friend in 1859 that suggested that the loss of vitality in the Society of Friends derived especially from the fear of using Scriptures for teaching in worship, the lack of a gifted ministry, and too much silence for the young people. Wilmer closed by posing some queries that suggest that we consider whether we are facing similar difficulties in our meetings today.

Mark picked up the story in 1860. He described how the revival movement among Friends brought experimentation and change to the traditional patterns of Quaker worship. He suggested that it is important to acknowledge that while these changes opened

new channels for the expression of true spirituality, they also brought real conflict and pain to many meetings. He noted that the emphasis on a teaching ministry and on new openness to emotional expression met significant needs deeply felt by those Friends, many of whom were young.

Mark stated that from his reading of this history he saw three key tensions that Friends needed to learn to work with creatively in their various practices of worship. One is the tension between intentionality and spontaneity. A second is the tension between individual and corporate needs and expressions. The third is the tension between honoring tradition and meeting the challenges of a new and different time and place. The tensions Mark described seemed to set up a framework for reflecting on the presentations through the course of the weekend.

In the discussion that followed, a particularly interesting observation was made about the striking parallel between the conditions surrounding the revival of the 1860's and the conditions surrounding many unprogrammed meetings today.

As the first evening closed we moved from talking about worship to having worship. We found that "planned" worship can be, in the fullest sense, "inspired" worship. We were reminded in a graphic and poignant way that the freedom of worship Friends have always desired is not simply a freedom from, but also freedom for, communion. Some of us felt truly blessed, while others were deeply offended by the character of this worship experience. The highly unusual nature of this experience -- where the worship leader in mime portrayed the difficulty in hearing and obeying God, and distributed bread to the worshippers -- raised up and brought home to us in a tangible way the tensions and questions that Mark and Wilmer stressed in their presentations.

Friday morning the participants gathered to work in small groups. We began with worship sharing; then individuals went to interest groups of their choosing.

The Consultation reconvened in plenary session to hear the presentations of Alastair Heron and Celia Mueller about the nature of Friends worship today. Alastair Heron's presentation did three things: he described the attributes that Friends need to develop and bring with them to the practice of worship, stressing the need for genuine humility and active self-discipline. He spoke of the essential elements of the Quaker worship experience as communion, inspiration, and the acceptance of responsibility on the part of each worshipper for the quality of worship. Finally he noted three key words for the integrity of Quaker worship: faith, (meaning ultimate trust), openness and love. Alastair asserted that without these qualities in our fellowship, true worship probably cannot occur.

Celia Mueller spoke eloquently about the understanding of Friends worship embodied in the best practices of the programmed/pastoral Friends tradition. In order to understand the pastoral tradition, we need to recognize that these Friends assume God's leading can be at work in the planning of and the preparation for meeting for worship as well as in the event itself. She emphasized that at its best all the elements of worship are intended to turn the hearts and minds of worshippers toward God and facilitate the ministry of the worshippers.

Speaking from the experience of the ministry team in her own meeting she identified three needs that must be met in the course of programmed worship. These are for the worshippers, one, to interact with each other, two, to interact with God, and three, to be made open to God's interaction with them. She pointed out that in planning specific activities to meet these needs it is well possible that not all Friends will be satisfied. However, in making choices about how to satisfy differing desires we must discern between leadings of the Spirit and personal preferences. She said, "As best as we are able, we must cling to our convictions and hold loosely to our preferences."

The discussion that followed these presentations highlighted the commonalities of Friends worship experiences as experiences, regardless of form. It was observed that many unprogrammed Friends meetings have found it important to incorporate all of the activities that Celia cited as facets of programmed/pastoral worship; however, with the exception of silent waiting, those activities are not explicitly called worship in an unprogrammed setting.

The first part of the afternoon following these presentations allowed Friends time to renew old friendships, take some time for themselves or rest as they felt the need. For some it brought still another powerful experience of worship, provided in a meeting hosted by Conservative Friends present. We reconvened later that afternoon to hear two more presentations by Louise Wilson and Howard Macy about the character of vocal ministry in Quaker worship.

Louise Wilson reminded us of Friends' essential understanding that a minister is an instrument through whom God speaks and that ministry is always and ultimately to be a tool for God's purposes. She pointed out that in that perspective we must remember that the Divine Life that ministers through the silence must still be at work in ministering through the spoken word. Louise closed by raising some difficult questions for Friends, for example, do we believe (with Barclay) that some Friends are more particularly called to the ministry than others? Or, what is the role for elders in contemporary Friends meetings? Surely, though, the most important question Louise left with us was are we willing to rediscover corporately the "Seed of God, the Living Christ, the fire of the Holy Spirit within," the Presence in our midst?

Howard Macy illuminated for us the connections between the traditional understandings of vocal ministry in unprogrammed meetings and the ideals for preaching in programmed/pastoral meetings. He stated -- emphatically -- that, after 100 years, all Friends should recognize that preaching and programmed worship can no longer be considered as aberrations in the Friends tradition. He went on to point out that preaching, like other vocal ministry, must do four things. One, preaching should arise out of worship and lead back into worship. Two, preaching should grow out of the Life and lead back into the Life. Three, preaching should arise out of life and address life. And finally, preaching should speak both to the people and on behalf of the people. Howard reminded us that the ideal for all Quaker ministry is that it should lead "the people to Christ their teacher and leave them there."

After sharing the evening meal together, Friends returned to the interest groups in which they had met that morning for further exploration of their chosen topics. The evening concluded with a hymn sing and another opportunity for corporate worship.

The next morning again began with worship sharing groups. However, Friends went from their worship sharing groups in silence into another corporate worship experience, one added to the schedule at the request of the group. This seemed to be a meeting rich in vocal ministry. Here we began, as a group, to experience more deeply our connectedness with one another and with God.

After a break, the group reconvened to see two roleplays addressing two problems common to many meetings. One dealt with problems with shallowness in worship; the other explored the challenges of incorporating children into the worshipping community. In addition to being a wonderful source of comic relief for all involved, these roleplays also brought out the very real and deep frustrations of Friends as we struggle with these issues in our local meetings. The session was a joyful occasion of insight.

The rest of the day was spent first in another opportunity for small groups to explore particular themes, followed by a session where the deliberations of these various groups was reported to all the participants in the Consultation. It seemed that these small special interest groups provided a very valuable means for Friends to engage together in sharing their own concerns and journeys at a fairly deep level. In a few groups, however, people found that the differences in their basic understanding of who God is and how God works in the world made it impossible for them to pursue the particular topic in any significant depth.

The evening was again closed with a hymn sing and corporate worship.

## Group Process

It was apparent to us that many of the Friends who came to this Consultation brought with them a profound hunger for deeper spiritual fellowship with others. They came with an intense desire to experience the fullness of worship and hoping to have occasion to share the most significant elements of their spiritual journeys with kindred souls. These needs appear to have been met in a number of ways.

From the very beginning of the process, one could observe Friends in pairs or small clusters engaged in intense interactions. There often seemed to be a worshipful quality about these meetings and conversations. Friends seemed to seize on every free moment as an opportunity to deepen old friendships or open new ones.

There were frequent expressions through the course of the weekend of appreciation for the sincerity and authenticity of individuals sharing with one another in the small groups. Although, as in all such occasions, not all of these were as fruitful as one might wish, many of them seemed to provide important opportunities for the participants' spiritual growth and personal renewal.

The irony in the dynamics of these groups that must be noted is that many participants seemed to feel a freedom to talk about some of the most profound and intimate facets of their spiritual journeys with these Friends with whom they were gathered far from home, when they could not talk about these things in their own meetings. We believe this raises an important question about the character of our monthly meetings: why is it that it appears that Friends must step outside our monthly meetings to find a place where they can speak about some of the most vital -- sometimes painful -- aspects of their spiritual experiences?

These groups were different from those in previous years in that people were not assigned to one small group for the duration of the Consultation. Instead, each person participated in two different special interest groups, and in an assigned worship sharing group. This limited the depth that one group could achieve over time, but allowed Friends a meaningful (and in some instances even powerful) involvement with a greater number of individuals.

The power of Friends' need for more worship together was reflected in an uprising of the participants desiring an alteration of the agenda to create another time for worship. This was achieved by rearranging the schedule to allow an extra hour on Saturday morning for just this purpose. This modification of the agenda seemed clearly in keeping with the Spirit's direction.

## Recurring Themes

We observed a number of recurring themes in the course of the conference which it seems can be related to the tensions that Mark Minear cited in the opening session.

For instance, in terms of the first tension between intentionality and spontaneity in our worship, one of the most frequently repeated assertions had to do with the importance of preparation as a prerequisite for true worship, regardless of the form of worship. This is evident in the tension we feel between our expectation that worship will follow a pattern predictable and familiar to us versus our being prepared to receive the Holy Spirit in whatever way it chooses to come to us at a given time. The question is how do we prepare for worship in such a way as to enable us to respond fully to the Spirit's prompting in that occasion but not presume we can know ahead of time precisely what the Spirit will require of us in that occasion?

Another example of this tension comes in the need for unprogrammed Friends to recognize that the Spirit of the Lord can lead people ahead of time in planning and preparing for worship, while programmed/pastoral Friends need to learn to be more obedient to the prompting of that same Spirit when it asks that they lay aside the plans for worship they have made. We recognized our own wrestling in the context of this tension this weekend when we had to decide whether to alter the previously established agenda to create another opportunity for corporate worship.

The second tension Mark cited was between our individual needs and commitments and our worshipping communities' needs and commitments. An example of this was Alastair Heron's observations that "worshippers must come prepared with the discipline to focus their own individual acts of worship within the corporate act of worship." Otherwise in an unprogrammed setting the meeting risks becoming merely a place where people gather to pursue their own program of meditation concurrently. In a programmed/pastoral context we may find people singing the same words or hearing the same sermon, but with their thoughts, in fact, directed towards many different objects of attention.

The third tension centered around the conflict between honoring tradition and meeting the challenges of a new and different time and place. This was made evident to us in a variety of ways. Friends from unprogrammed meetings spoke about the need to find ways to give expression to a broader range of emotions and experiences within their form of worship. This is also apparent in the fact that, after 100 years, many unprogrammed Friends still do not accept as legitimate those programmed/pastoral forms for worship that were established to meet the very real needs of Quakers in a place and time different from that of George Fox and company.

This struggle between traditional versus new styles of worship was brought home to everyone on the first night when the person leading the worship, following the leading of the Holy Spirit, offered worship in a form novel and uncomfortable to most of us. The anxiety and conflict this produced was clear evidence of how difficult it is for many of us to accept the possibility that the Holy Spirit may move us to ministry in a way that is radically different from what we experience as traditional. The importance of our being open to wrestling with this kind of experience was demonstrated by the way that this "strange" experience in the opening worship seemed to push Friends to set aside some of the preconceptions about what worship is and is not that they brought with them to the Consultation. Many Friends noted with appreciation Curt Shaw's willingness to take a risk in following the leading to present this service as he did.

This theme of risk-taking was revisited a number of times. It was observed that Spirit-led vocal ministry in any form of worship often carries the risk of making uncomfortable or even offending others in the meeting. Another way in which the importance of this was evident this weekend was in individuals' willingness to make themselves known to others in the Consultation in a way they would not risk letting themselves be known in their own meeting. As much as we all long for our meetings to be different places, we have to ask if they will ever be transformed in the ways we hope if we are unwilling to take the risk of being known in these ways with the people with whom we live and work.

Clearly related to the issue of risk-taking is the issue of trust. How far do we trust the working of Christ in us? How far do we trust the working of Christ in others? How far do we trust in Christ's power and desire to gather us and teach us, to transform us and to heal us, to use us as individuals and as a "people belonging to God?" (I Peter 2:9)

### Significant Questions

The last points clearly move us into the place of posing questions to challenge our continued reflection on these issues. In that context we would like to share some specific questions that seem to have emerged out of the deliberations of this Consultation of Friends on worship.

1. Do we in fact truly expect to meet the presence of the living God in worship? If not, what is it we expect to have happen in what we call worship?
2. Do we expect the meeting for worship to be a place where we can be both known and loved by God and by one another? Do we also expect worship to be a place where we learn to know and love God, one another and ourselves?



3. What do we see as our responsibility to prepare for the meeting for worship? How do we understand and experience the fruits of worship when we fulfill that responsibility? How do we understand and experience the consequences of our failure to fulfill that responsibility?
4. Do we expect to see the kind of faith community of which we want to be a part simply grow out of our experience of coming together for worship? Or do we believe that we must take responsibility for building a life together as a community that creates the context within which true worship is likely to occur?
5. Do we come to worship hoping to be transformed so that we can become agents of creative transformation in God's creation? Do we see the experience of communion which should be the end of worship as the beginning of our service in the world?

In the concluding session, the group expressed appreciation to Wilmer Cooper and Eldon Harzman for the work they had done in preparing for this year's Consultation. Special thanks was given to Wilmer Cooper for his leadership role in these ten years of Consultations as he noted that he will no longer be involved in this planning process. We also noted Gordon Browne's excellent job of clerking this anniversary Consultation, a job made more difficult by the large number of Friends present.

## APPENDIX

Two resource materials were made available to participants prior to the Consultation.

The first, Quaker Worship in North America, edited by Francis Hall, is a book, born out of the Faith and Life Movement of the Religious Society of Friends, in the mid 1970's. Copies are available from Quaker Hill Conference Center, 10 Quaker Hill Drive, Richmond, Indiana, 47374. Cost \$2.50 postpaid.

The second, is a chapter taken from The Inward Journey of Isaac Penington, edited by Robert J. Leach, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #29. Leach's work is an abbreviation of the writings of Issac Penington, based on the second London Edition, 1761. The following is a reprint of Chapter 6.

### WORSHIP

And this is the manner of their worship. They are to wait upon the Lord, to meet in the silence of flesh, and to watch for the stirrings of his life, and the breakings forth of his power amongst them. And in the breakings forth of that power they may pray, speak, exhort, rebuke, sing, or mourn, and so on, according as the spirit teaches, requires, and gives utterance. But if the spirit do not require to speak, and give to utter, then everyone is to sit still in his place (in his heavenly place I mean) feeling his own measure, feeding thereupon, receiving therefrom (into his spirit) what the Lord giveth. Now in this is edifying, pure edifying, precious edifying; his soul who thus waits is hereby particularly edified by the spirit of the Lord at every meeting. And then also there is the life of the whole felt in every vessel that is turned to its measure; insomuch as the warmth of life in each vessel doth not only warm the particular, but they are like an heap of fresh and living coals, warming one another, insomuch as a great strength, freshness, and vigor of life flows into all. And if any be burthened, tempted, buffeted by Satan, bowed down, overborne, languishing, afflicted, distressed, and so on, the estate of such is felt in spirit, and secret cries or open (as the Lord pleaseth), ascend up to the Lord for them, and they many times find ease and relief, in a few words spoken, or without words, if it be the season of their help and relief with the Lord.

For absolutely silent meetings (wherein there is a resolution not to speak) we know not; but we wait on the Lord, either to feel him in words, or in silence of spirit without

words, as he pleaseth. And that which we aim at, and are instructed to by the spirit of the Lord as to silent meetings, is that the flesh in everyone be kept silent, and that there be no building up, but in the spirit and power of the Lord.

Our worship is a deep exercise of our spirits before the Lord, which doth not consist in an exercising the natural part or natural mind, either to hear or speak words, or in praying according to what we, of ourselves, can apprehend or comprehend concerning our needs; but we wait, in silence of the fleshly part, to hear with the new ear what God shall please to speak inwardly in our own hearts, or outwardly through others, who speak with the new tongue which he unlooseth and teacheth to speak; and we pray in the spirit, and with the new understanding, as God pleaseth to quicken, draw forth, and open our hearts towards himself.

Thus, our minds being gathered into the measure, or gift of grace, which is by Jesus Christ; here we appear before our God, and here our God, and his Christ, is witnessed in the midst of us.

This is that gathering in the name, which the promise is to, where we meet together, waiting with one consent on the Father of Life, bowing and confessing to him in the name of his Son and that fleshly part, that fleshly understanding, that fleshly wisdom, that fleshly will, which will not bow, is chained down, and kept under by the power of life which God stretcheth forth over it, and subdueth it by. So then, there is the sweet communion enjoyed, the sweet love flowing, the sweet peace of spirit reaped, which the Father breathes upon, and gives to his children; the sweet joy and refreshment in the Lord our righteousness, who causeth righteousness to drop down from heaven, and truth to spring up out of the earth. And so our Father is felt blessing us, blessing our land, blessing our habitations, delighting in us and over us to do us good; and our land yields its increase to the Lord of Life, who hath redeemed it and planted the precious plants and seeds of life in it.

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 his portion.

Lord, take care of all thy children. Oh, thou tender Father, consider what they suffer for the testimony of thy truth, and for thy name's sake, and uphold them, and give them victory, and a holy dominion over all, because it belongs to thy seed into which thou hast gathered them, and in which thou hast united them to thyself. Oh, carry on thy glorious work, which thy own mighty arm hath begun, and cut it short in righteousness for thine Elect's sake, that it may be finished by thee, to thine own

everlasting praise. Thy children wait on thee, they cry to thee day and night, that they may be preserved by thee in the well-doing, and in the pure, holy, innocent sufferings for thy truth's sake; until thou say, "It is enough," until thy Holy Spirit say, "It is finished, my lambs, ye shall suffer no more, but now ye shall reign with me and my Son for ever."

Christ is the minister of the true sanctuary, which God hath pitched, and not man. There is a city whose builder and maker is God. The foundation stone, the cornerstone, the top stone of this city or building is Christ. He, therefore, that would know Christ, and be built upon Christ, must find a holy thing revealed in his heart, and his soul built thereon by him who alone can raise this building, who can rear up the tabernacle that hath long been fallen down, who can build up the old waste places, and restore the paths for the ransomed and redeemed of the Lord to walk and travel on in.

Therefore the great work of the minister of Christ is to keep the conscience open to Christ, and to preserve men from receiving any truths of Christ as from them further than the spirit opens, or to imitate any of their practices further than the spirit leads, guides, and persuades them. For persons are exceeding prone to receive things as truths from those whom they have a high opinion of, and to imitate their practices, and so hurt their own growth and endanger their souls. For if I receive a truth before the Lord, by his spirit, make it manifest to me, I lose my guide and follow but the counsel of the flesh, which is exceeding greedy of receiving truths and running into religious practices without the spirit. Therefore the main thing in religion is to keep the conscience pure to the Lord, to know the guide, to follow the guide, to receive from him the light whereby I am to walk; and not to take things for truths because others see them to be truths, but to wait till the spirit make them manifest to me; nor to run into worships, duties, performances, or practices, because others are led thither, but to wait till the spirit lead me thither. He that makes haste to be rich (even in religion, running into knowledge, and into worships and performances, before he feel a true and clear guidance) shall not be innocent; nor the Lord will not hold him guiltless, when he comes to visit, for spiritual adultery and idolatry.

He that keeps not a day, may unite in the same spirit, in the same life, in the same love with him that keeps a day; and he who keeps a day, may unite in heart and soul with the same spirit and life in him who keeps not a day; but he that judgeth the other because of either of these, errs from the spirit, from the love, from the life, and so breaks the bond of unity. And he that draws another to any practice before the life in his own particular lead him doth, as much as in him lies, destroy the soul of that person.

Let nothing judge in thee (concerning thine own heart, or concerning others, or concerning any way or truth of God) but only the begotten of God in the heart. Let the light in which

thou art begotten to God, and which shines upon his begotten, be the only judge in thee, and then thou canst not err in judgment. Be not hasty, be not forward in judgment, keep back to the life, still waiting for the appearance and openings of the life. A few steps fetched in the life and power of God are much safer and sweeter than a hasty progress in the hasty forward spirit.

True obedience, gospel obedience, flows from life, flows from the living faith. If I could obey in all things that God requires of me, yet that would not satisfy me, unless I felt my obedience flow from the birth of His life in me. "My father doth all in me," saith Christ. This was Christ's comfort. And to feel Christ do all in the soul is the comfort of everyone that truly believes in him.

Canst thou pray? How camest thou to learn to pray? Wast thou taught from above? Or didst thou gain the skill and ability by the exercise and improvement of thine own natural part? Didst thou begin with sighs and groans, staying there till the same spirit that taught thee to groan, taught thee also to speak? Wast thou ever able to distinguish the sighs and groans of the spirit's begetting from the sighs and groans of thy own natural and affectionate part?

Prayer is the breath of the living child to the Father of Life, in that spirit which quickened it, which giveth it the right sense of its wants, and suitable cries proportionable to its state, in the proper season thereof. So that mark: Prayer is wholly out of the will of the creature; wholly out of the time of the creature; wholly out of the power of the creature; in the spirit of the Father, who is the fountain of life, and giveth forth breathings of life to his child at his pleasure.