



IYM Quakers

Leaders Guide



Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends

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The Indiana Yearly Meeting Evangelism and Outreach Committee has encouraged the development of a curriculum for use by Friends churches in Indiana Yearly Meeting to introduce new attendees to Quakerism in general and Indiana Yearly Meeting in particular. This series, IYM Quakers, has been developed with this in mind.

Written by Doug Shoemaker, General Superintendent of Indiana Yearly Meeting, this curriculum is now available free of charge to any church wishing to use it as a tool to help new-comers as well as long-time members review and discuss what it means to be an IYM Quaker.



*The Heart of Quakerism:
A Personal Relationship with Christ*

Getting Started

Focus: This series of sessions entitled “IYM Quakers” is designed for small groups, pastor’s classes or Sunday School classes. It is especially designed for the benefit of attendees who may be new to Friends. The sessions aren’t intended to be solely informational. It is hoped that a group environment will be cultivated where participants can learn about Quakerism while experiencing it first-hand. For this reason, leaders are encouraged to give much attention to cultivating a Christ-centered fellowship within the group.

Getting Started Ideas

- Getting to know you; Warm up the group with an ice breaker to acquaint group members and make them feel at home.
- As the leader, share personally about your reason for being a Friend and how your experience in the Friends Church has impacted your life.
- Be sure to make prayer an important part of each group meeting. Set the tone by beginning this session with prayer.

Introduction: The Heart of Quakerism

Focus: Many people know about Quakers’ historical contributions (Role in colonial America, Pennsylvania, Underground Railroad, etc) and some of our testimonies (Non-violence, plain speech, plain dress, etc) but fail to understand why we live out our faith in the manner that we do. This session focuses on the foundation of who we are as Friends.

Discussion Questions

- You may remember facts about Quakers from history – what has been your perception of Quakers?
- Read Acts 2:42-47; If you were to experience “primitive Christianity revived,” what would you expect to see?

A Promise to Seeking Hearts

Focus: “Seekers” is a term that is often used to describe those who initially found the message of Fox and the early Friends to be so fulfilling. The birth of the Friends movement arose out of hearts that were hungry for a relationship with God.

Discussion Questions

- What do you think Jesus meant in the teaching recorded in Matthew 5:6?
- Like Fox, have any of you had a pivotal spiritual experience where you moved from “seeking” to “finding” that you would be willing to share?

Professors and Possessors

Focus: Friends began out of a cultural/spiritual context that was strong on outward forms of faith (profession) but weak in personal experience of God (possession).

Discussion Questions

- In Matthew 7:21-23 who is speaking and what is the summary of this message?
- How can you know if you know Christ?

New Birth

Focus: The new birth that Jesus asserted as a necessity for Nicodemus was the real experience of the early Friends. Quakers today fall far short of our spiritual heritage if we neglect the heart of Quaker experience – a personal relationship with God.

Discussion Questions

- What do we know about Nicodemus?
- What did Nicodemus understand about Jesus?
- Did this understanding make him a Christian?
- What did Jesus' reply to Nicodemus mean?
- Do you imagine Nicodemus understood the concept of being born again?
- Do you understand the concept?

Conclusion

- Review and summarize the main points of this session.
- Emphasize that your Friends Church is not part of just another denomination, but is part of a movement of God.

Friends & the Sacraments:

The Quaker Approach to Baptism & Communion

The Quaker Barnyard

Getting Started

Focus: Remember that this session is intended to accomplish more than simply impart information. It is hoped that a group environment will be cultivated where participants can both learn about Quakerism and experience it first-hand. Consider focusing upon both the presentation of the material in this session as well as developing a sense of community among the group members.

Getting Started Ideas

- Getting to know you; learn a new piece of information about each group member. Begin by asking each participant to briefly share how long they have been participating in your Friends Meeting, and how they got started.
- Be sure to make prayer an important part of each group meeting. Set the tone by beginning this session with prayer.

Introduction: Friends & the Sacraments

Focus: A curious distinctive of Friends, in comparison to other Christian groups, is our approach to baptism and the Lord's Supper. Some erroneously conclude that Quakers don't believe in baptism or communion. Nothing could be further from the truth. Rather than rejecting the sacraments, Friends understand that all of life is intended to be experienced sacramentally.



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



Conclusion

Are you a Quaker? If you depend upon a personal relationship with Christ rather than rituals, you may be. If your relationship with Christ has caused you to see the world differently and care more for those who are rejected or oppressed, you may be. If you daily experience Christ and are drawn to gather regularly with others for worship, you may be a Quaker.

You are invited to consider membership in the Society of Friends by making a commitment to membership in your local congregation.

Discussion Questions

- Traditionally Friends have not practiced water baptism or The Lord's Supper. According to your understanding, why is this so?
- Some Christians find genuine meaning in use of the outward symbols of the sacraments. What are some of the benefits of the use of outward symbols?
- Friends have long recognized that use of outward symbols may not always be positive. What dangers are inherent in practicing water baptism or participating in The Lord's Supper?

Friends and Baptism

Focus: The Friends non-use of water baptism cannot be understood without an understanding of the experience of spiritual baptism.

Discussion Questions

- Review these scriptures and, in your own words, describe how these prophecies were fulfilled. Matthew 3:11, Mark 4:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33, Acts 1:5
- How is the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" experienced today?
- Has every Christian experienced spiritual baptism, or does it represent a level of Christian experience that some believers have not yet attained? What scripture can you cite to support your thoughts on this question?
- If one is unsure if he/she has experienced the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit," how can he/she come to a place of certainty?

Friends and Communion

Focus: Ideally, when the Lord's Supper is observed the participants should experience an awareness of Christ's presence and genuine communion with Him. Friends assert that this experience of spiritual communion is essential, while outward ceremonies pointing to it are not.

Discussion Questions

- Many Christians find meaning in observing rituals such as the Lord's Supper. Others routinely participate in such ceremonies with little genuine spiritual effect. Is it better to maintain ceremonies that may become empty, or to neglect ceremonies that have the potential of being meaningful?
- Quaker history gives evidence to many Friends who lived out of a moment by moment communion with Christ. In your observation, do Friends today still do this well?

Conclusion: Friends and the Bible

Focus: The Quaker view of baptism and communion initially arose out of the experience of the early Friends rather than a response to biblical teaching. When the Friends compared their experience to the Bible, however, they concluded that it was not contradictory at all. In fact, the spiritual realities of baptism and communion appear to be the real emphasis of biblical teaching in this area.*

Discussion Questions

- Are Friends being faithful to biblical admonitions such as Matthew 28:19 and Acts 2:38? Why or why not?
- Can Friends maintain our approach to the sacraments and at the same time maintain a commitment to obeying biblical teachings?

The Commitment of Membership

Focus: Over time many have come to focus on the rights and privileges of church membership, but a more helpful perspective understands the responsibilities of membership. This section focuses on commitments inherent in joining a church.

Discussion Questions

- Read Romans 12:4-5; What does "belonging to others" mean?
- List a number of ways that members can protect the unity of their church.
- Should every member be involved in personal outreach? How can members who are more introverted effectively be a part of the evangelistic mission of the church?
- Can you identify individuals in your church who are effectively using their gifts in ministry?
- Why is it important for members to faithfully attend and generously give to the church? Why is it important for members to live Godly lives?

Steps to Membership

Focus: *Faith & Practice* contains a clear process for becoming a member of a Friends church. This section is based upon excerpts and summaries of this section in *Faith & Practice*.

Discussion Questions

- Why do Friends expect members to have a personal faith in Jesus Christ?
- Some might view the Friends process for becoming a member as cumbersome. Why do Friends give such careful consideration to the process?

Membership:

Becoming a Member of the Society of Friends

Getting Started

Focus: This concluding session provides an opportunity to rejoice over the good fellowship that the group has enjoyed over the previous weeks. This session also provides an opportunity to paint a strong picture of membership which participants can be invited to embrace.

- Share your own reasons for being a “member” of the Society of Friends and of your own Friends Church.
- Express appreciation to group members who have spent recent weeks reviewing the faith, history, and testimonies of Friends.
- Share praises and prayer requests, then spend some moments in prayer.

Introduction

Focus: For their first years Friends did not have formal membership, but early Friends recognized the value of providing this opportunity. Membership once assumed both commitment and accountability to the wider Society. Such a view of membership still has value today.

Discussion Questions

- Read Ephesians 2:19-22 and 4:25; According to these verses what does it mean to be a “member”?
- Would you describe membership in a local congregation as unimportant, important, or essential? Why?

- Are Friends “right” in their approach to the sacraments in a way that means other Christian groups are “wrong”? Why or why not?

Conclusion

Friends believe that we have not forsaken biblical teaching nor have we forsaken the broader Christian community in our unique approach to the sacraments. Friends hope to embody the heart of New Testament faith in our emphasis on the spiritual realities of baptism and communion.

***For those interested in further biblical teaching in this area:**

The New Testament is filled with teaching that contrasts the inadequacy of external rituals associated with the law and the inward spiritual realities of New Testament faith. Some particular passages emphasizing these differences are Romans 2:28-29, Galatians 5:1-6, 6:15, 1 Corinthians 7:19, Philippians 3:3, and Colossians 2:11-12.

Scriptural passages pointing to the primarily spiritual nature of baptism are in abundance. In addition to those previously cited in this session, see 1 Corinthians 1:14-17, 12:13, Ephesians 4:5, 1 Peter 3:21, and Acts 19:1-6.

There are fewer passages that particularly point to the spiritual nature of The Lord’s Supper, although an underlying theme of the entire New Testament is that of spiritual communion with God. It is interesting that the instruction of Jesus in John 13:14, to wash one another’s feet, has been spiritualized by most Christian groups, while His words, “Do this in remembrance of me,” spoken at the very same occasion have been interpreted by many as instituting a ritual intended to be physically repeated.

*The Friends Peace Testimony:
Blessed are the Peacemakers*

Getting Started

Focus: Just as important as sharing information in this group is the sharing of Christian fellowship. As your group continues to meet, make intentional effort to provide a climate where every participant feels comfortable and identifies with others in the group. You may want to consider planning a gathering for your group members in addition to the regular group meetings. Here are some suggestions for such a gathering:

- A service project in which all could participate
- A meal or a party in a home or restaurant
- A “road trip” visiting IYM Quaker sites of historical significance (Surrounding Friends Churches, Levi Coffin House, FUM offices, etc)

Getting Started Ideas

- Have a prize ready for any group member who can recall the names of all other group members and how long they have participated in your Friends Meeting (see Session 2 “Getting Started ideas”). If no one can recall this, review names/backgrounds again.
- Discuss a possible gathering for your group (see sample ideas listed above) in addition to your regular meetings.
- Give opportunity for praises and/or prayer requests. Pray together.

- How can a Christian discover his or her gifts and ministry?
- Can you cite examples of individuals in your congregation who are actively exercising their gifts in ministry? Share some examples.

A Different View of Decision Making

Focus: Friends are not organized as a democracy where majority rules. Rather, we seek to operate as a theocracy where God rules. Friends business structure is not intended to give authority to men or women. It is intended to assist us in discerning the leading of God’s Spirit in all of our decisions. The pastor’s role is not to make decisions for the congregation, but to help the congregation discern God’s guidance.

Discussion Questions

- Do you have any first-hand experience of how Friends business procedures work in your church? How well do they work?
- How can a pastor help prepare a congregation to make decisions?
- How can a Friends pastor provide leadership without being authoritarian?

Conclusion

Friends in Indiana Yearly Meeting have adopted the pastoral system, but must never neglect the role of every believer in ministry.

Discussion Questions

- According to 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 and Hebrews 13:17, what should my attitude toward spiritual leaders be?

Discussion Questions

- Friends functioned for much of our history without pastors. What are the benefits that pastors have brought to the Society of Friends, and what problems have come along with the pastoral system?
- How dependent is your church upon pastoral leadership? Is this level of dependence healthy or unhealthy? Why?

A Different View of Ordination

Focus: A survey of the Bible reveals that often when God wanted to intervene in human history a leader was raised up to serve as God’s spokesperson. We might argue that George Fox and many of the early Friends were likewise God-ordained leaders that God called forth. We believe that God continues to call, equip, and empower selected individuals to public leadership roles in ministry.

Discussion Questions

- What qualifies and equips a person to be a pastor?
- What do you know about Quaker “Recording” and how does it differ from ordination in other denominations?
- Are there Friends in your church that God is setting apart for a public ministry? In what ways can those who have such a calling be “sent off” by the church?

A Different View of Ministry

Focus: Friends haven’t always had pastors, but we have always acknowledged the ministry of every believer. Quaker pastors are at their best when they are unleashing the potential of a church full of spiritually gifted ministers.

Discussion Questions

- What does Ephesians 4:11-12 teach us about the role of a pastor and the role of other Christians?

Introduction: The Friends Peace Testimony

Focus: In recent years many have been drawn to Friends because of our peace testimony. This includes some who do not share our foundational Christian beliefs, yet resonate with our anti-violence stance. It is also true that in recent years many have been drawn to Friends because of our Christian message, but struggle with our peace testimony. This session focuses on the peace testimony as a Christian testimony, not just a distinctive of a few small groups including the Friends.

Discussion Questions

- In the teachings of Jesus recorded in the New Testament, what examples can you recall of teaching that would promote peace and non-violence?
- Can you cite any teachings of Jesus that might promote or condone the participation of Christians in warfare?

The Peace Testimony in Action

Focus: The Peace Testimony is not primarily negative (i.e. being against violence/warfare) but a positive affirmation of what we actively work toward.

For Friends the peace testimony is not just a theory; it is a deeply held personal conviction shaping how we live our lives. Examples of how this was lived out by George Fox and William Penn help us understand this testimony. In this section group members are being asked to identify how the peace testimony is being (or could be) lived out today.

Discussion Questions

- In your opinion, why were early Friends like George Fox and William Penn inclined to resist participation in military efforts?

What Makes a Friends Pastor Different?

- Can you cite other examples in Friends history of efforts to live out the peace testimony?
- Read Matthew 5:9. What are some ways that we can be “peacemakers”?

The Struggle for Peace

Focus: Friends have generally agreed that the pursuit of peace is a noble Christian goal. We have not always agreed, however, on how this can best be done. Some Friends resist paying war taxes, pursue “conscientious objector” status when faced with military conscription, and generally might be described as “peace activists.” Other Friends have at times voluntarily enlisted in the military, seeking to win or keep peace through military efforts. How Friends should live out our peace testimony is not as simple as it might seem.

Discussion Questions

- The above focus section describes opposite perspectives on how to live out the Friends peace testimony. What are the strengths and weakness of each position?
- Romans 12:18 instructs Christians to live at peace with everyone “if it is possible, as far as it depends on you.” What do you think this means?
- Case study; In the 19th century Friends in America faced a dilemma. Some felt it was necessary to participate militarily in the civil war as a means of defeating slavery. Others, while opposed to slavery, could not justify participation in the military. What would you have done?
- Case study; During World War II many Friends performed alternative service rather than participate in the military. Other Christians, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, chose to assertively become involved in defeating the forces of Adolph Hitler and ending the holocaust. What would you have done?

Getting Started

Focus: At this point the group has spent considerable time together and has processed a good deal of Quaker history and faith together. Are there members of this group who need to be invited to participate in some other small group once this series of sessions has concluded? Use this session to highlight other small group opportunities available for group members in your church and invite them to participate!

- Begin this session by asking for a volunteer to review the “Quaker Barnyard.” If necessary enlist the group’s assistance in identifying each personality and why they are important in Quaker history.
- Share praises and prayer requests, then spend some moments in prayer.

Introduction

Focus: Friends don’t know exactly what to do with the pastoral system. It seems to be a late addition, an add-on to our spiritual heritage. While Indiana Yearly Meeting was on the cutting edge of adopting the pastoral system, there is no long-standing theology or philosophy of the unique role of a Friends pastor. This session will look at three ways that the pastoral arrangement works differently among Friends.

innovations of Gurneyite Quakerism. These Friends, sometimes identified as Wilburites, are non-pastoral and highly value worshiping out of silence, practicing simplicity, and living out other traditional Quaker testimonies.

Conclusion

What do Quakers believe? You might find different answers to that question depending upon which branch of the Quaker family tree you address. For Indiana Yearly Meeting we would answer that we believe in the fundamental tenets of orthodox Christianity. We would also profess to highly valuing our Quaker heritage but have been influenced greatly by those who have demonstrated willingness to be flexible enough to relate to the times in which we live.

Discussion Questions

- With which group of Friends would you feel most at home: Hicksite, Gurneyite, or Wilburite? Why?
- A quick glance at the Quaker family tree reveals a good bit of diversity among Friends. Do you view this diversity as a strength or a weakness within Quakerism? Why?
- How should we cope with other Quakers who hold very differing views of Quakerism than we do?

Conclusion

While there is room within the Society of Friends for differing levels of outward pacifism, we believe that our relationship with Christ will eventually lead us to seriously pursue peace, often at great personal cost. Not all peace activists are Christians, but all Christians will be led to follow the path of peace.



Equality:

Answering to that of God in Everyone

Getting Started

Focus: By now participants of this group have hopefully developed a rapport with one another and look forward to the fellowship in each session. Take a few moments to focus on community building at the beginning of this session.

Getting Started Ideas

- The “Getting Started” section of session 3 suggested planning some kind of group activity or gathering. Take some moments here to review the plan, or review the event if it has already taken place.
- Review prayer requests from previous sessions. Welcome new requests for prayer or words of praise. Pray together.

Equality: Answering to that of God in Everyone

Focus: Fox’s words, “*walk cheerfully over all the earth answering to that of God in everyone,*” have been often quoted, and for some Friends have become a nut-shell description of their understanding of Quakerism. Some Friends use this quotation to argue that since God is in all people, then all of the varied religions of the world are equally valid. Pushed to the extreme, this quote could even be used to argue the New Age contention that we all are gods. We do not believe this was Fox’s intent, and it clearly does not represent the dominant perspective of Friends in Indiana Yearly Meeting.

Joseph John Gurney and the Gurneyites

Focus: The 1827-28 Hicksite-Orthodox split separated the Society of Friends, but more division was yet to come. The Orthodox branch of Friends experienced further division in the mid-19th century in the Gurneyite-Wilburite split. While the Hicksite split seemed to be centered on faith matters, the Gurneyite split seemed to be centered more on matters of practice. Two of the three largest groups of Friends in America today trace their lineage back to the Gurneyite branch of the Orthodox branch of the Society of Friends. Indiana Yearly Meeting is a member of the largest of these two groups, Friends United Meeting. Evangelical Friends International is also rooted in the Orthodox-Gurneyite tradition. Gurneyites tended to value what we have in common with all Christians more highly than the preservation of every Quaker distinctive. Some fear that such a philosophy will eventually water down our Quaker heritage and result in the ultimate loss of any distinctive Quaker identity. Others worry less about that and are more concerned about promoting a vigorous form of Christian faith with a Quaker flavor.

Discussion Questions

- How can Friends today effectively relate to the times without sacrificing our distinctive Quaker identity?
- How important is it to maintain our distinctive Quaker identity? Why?
- How important is it to relate to the times in which we live? Why?

John Wilbur and the Wilburites

Focus: While Hicksite Friends tend to populate FGC and Gurneyite Friends tend to populate FUM and EFI, not all American Friends are members of one of these groups. Conservative Friends represent a smaller Quaker population that is theologically orthodox, yet has resisted the contemporary

- Review the three major periods of Quakerism: (1) The Rise of the Society 1647-1691, (2) The Age of Quietism 1691-1827, and (3) Revival and Reorganization 1827-present. If you could choose to experience one of these eras first hand, which would you choose? Explain why.
- We have observed that today there is not a single universal understanding of what it means to be a Quaker. Do you see this as tolerable, healthy, or a tragedy? Explain why.

Elias Hicks and the Hicksite Friends

Focus: There were several forces shaping the Society of Friends in the 19th century but the most easily recognizable was the marked difference between an emerging evangelical form of Christianity in America alongside independent, free-thinking perspectives that were also arising. In this context Elias Hicks became uncomfortable with the pressure exerted by Friends influenced by evangelicalism. Understanding salvation as something based on a personal acceptance of Jesus Christ who had died on the cross for the sins of the world seemed to be in stark contrast to the emphasis of Quakerism during the Age of Quietism. Hicks, and many Quakers, preferred a more open-ended faith that depended solely upon the leading of the Inward Light, not required beliefs and experiences.

Discussion Questions

- A great schism occurred between the Hicksite and Orthodox Friends in 1827-1828. Do you think this was a necessary parting-of-the-ways or could these two groups of Friends have found enough common ground to remain united?
- Being led by the Inward Light seems to be a valuable pattern of life offered by Friends. What are the benefits of being led solely by the Inward Light and what are the dangers?

Discussion Questions

- Where does the Bible teach that there is “that of God in every person?”
- Is “equality” a biblical concept? If so, what examples from the Bible affirm this?
- Is having “that of God” synonymous with being created in the image of God?
- In our culture, what kinds of individuals are often treated as “second-class?”

That of God in Every Gender

Focus: In many Christian groups there is an increasing openness to women in pastoral leadership. Friends, however, have acknowledged the ministry of women from our earliest days.

Discussion Questions

- How do we reconcile the ministry of women among Friends with limitations placed on women’s roles in the New Testament?
- Why do you think Paul takes the position stated in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12?
- Read Acts 2:17-18 and Galatians 3:28. Do these verses contradict the teachings of Paul in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy? If not, how can they be reconciled?

That of God in Every Race

Focus: The Friends focus on equality enabled them to recognize the evils of slavery as practiced in early America. Many Friends risked great personal loss to grant the African American slaves their freedom.

Discussion Questions

- How is God described in Deuteronomy 10:17-10?
- Do the following examples represent ungodly prejudice or legitimate concern?
 - 18th century plantation owners who regarded their negro slaves as property.
 - 1960s American churches who opposed the civil rights movement
 - Residents of your community who resent an increasing Hispanic population
- What is the difference between ungodly prejudice and legitimate concern?

Conclusion:

Focus: History shows that Friends have found many instances where they simply could not treat individuals that all of society regarded as second-class in such a manner. While we gratefully acknowledge this before-their-time sensitivity to under-valued groups in the past, it takes courage to be supportive of unpopular people groups today.

Discussion Questions

- Read Acts 10:28. Who was God preparing Peter to accept?
- Can you identify groups of people who most need Friends to accept/assist them today?
- What examples can you cite in your church of “walking cheerfully over all the earth answering to that of God in everyone?”

5. A **dairy cow**; not just any dairy cow, but a Guernsey, reminding us of Joseph John Gurney, an English Friend influential in a more evangelical movement among American Quakers who have been described as Gurneyites.

6. A **pig**; reminiscent of the lead character in the story “Charlotte’s Web,” the pig, Wilbur, reminds us of John Wilbur – a New England minister who opposed the innovations of Gurney and advocated a conservative traditional form of Quakerism. Those influenced by him are known as Wilburites.

B. Invite the group to share praises and prayer concerns before opening the session in prayer.

Introduction

Focus: Tradition can be a blessing or a curse. At times Friends have experienced the blessing of tradition and at other times the curse. Friends began as a spontaneous movement reacting against the empty traditions of the church of their day. The early days of Quakerism were marked by very non-traditional expressions of Christian faith and life. It is ironic that in subsequent years Friends have struggled with Quaker traditions that have grown up around the movement. Today there are several expressions of Quakerism. While all Quakers have a common heritage, there is not one single common understanding of what it means to be Quaker today. Some view this as tolerable, others see this as a tragedy. This session aims to help us understand where Indiana Yearly Meeting has come from and what version of Quakerism we embrace.

Discussion Questions

- Based upon Mark 7:5-13, what do you think Jesus would think about our current traditions?

*The Quaker Family Tree***Getting Started**

Focus: This session will be different than all the others due to its historical focus. The greatest challenge will be to avoid presenting a dry history lecture, but instead to help the group understand why there are differing perspectives about what it means to be Quaker. The objective of this session is to clearly identify where Indiana Yearly Meeting fits in this Quaker family tree.

Getting Started Ideas

A. The “Quaker Barnyard” is a fun tool that has been developed to help folks recall some of the key figures in Friends history. Several have already been mentioned in previous sessions and three new ones will be introduced in this one. Copy and distribute copies of the “Quaker Barnyard” (found on page 31) and identify the following, then indicate who each represents.

1. **A fox;** Represents George Fox, founder of Quakerism.
2. **An animal pen;** Representing William Penn, son of a British Admiral who took the opportunity of a large land grant in America to establish a colony based on Quaker principles. This “holy experiment” is known to us as Pennsylvania.
3. **A man shearing sheep;** This is the wool man, representing John Woolman who is well known for helping Friends oppose slavery long before the institution was formally abolished.
4. **A farmer in bib overalls;** This farmer might be described as a country hick, reminding us of Elias Hicks, the Long Island farmer instrumental in the Hicksite-Orthodox split.

*Spiritual Worship:
Experiencing the Presence in the Midst*

Getting Started

Focus: You have repeatedly been reminded that the experience of your group members is as important as the teaching of lessons to them. Our goal isn’t for group members to have heard about Quakerism, but to have experienced the best of it in these sessions. This particular session lends itself well to this. As a leader, make it your goal to not just talk about Friends worship, but come ready to truly worship together, helping your group experience spiritual worship firsthand.

- Introduce this session’s topic and invite members to spend some moments together in silence.
- Out of the silence sing a chorus or read some scripture.
- In this atmosphere of silence invite praises and prayer requests, pausing to give thanks or prayer for each as appropriate.
- Conclude these opening moments of worship with handshakes (the traditional conclusion of meetings for worship in the unprogrammed Friends tradition).

Introduction: Spiritual Worship

Focus: While it’s true that Friends have a history of worshipping in silence, we should never worship the silence itself. The focus of Friends worship is the real presence of Jesus Christ. Most Indiana Yearly Meeting Friends churches are “programmed,” meaning that at least some parts of their worship services are pre-planned and leaders are designated in advance. Even so, most of these same churches include

periods of “open” or “unprogrammed” worship that is marked by a silent waiting upon the leading of the Spirit.

Discussion Questions

- Tell about an experience you have had in a worship service when you especially sensed the presence of Christ. What contributed to this?
- Matthew 18:20 promises that Christ will be present when two or more gather in His name. How is the presence of Christ experienced differently in a group than when one is alone?

Worship in Spirit & Truth

Focus: The scripture from John 4 tells us God is searching for those who will worship in spirit and truth. God isn't searching for those who worship in the finest buildings or those who worship with the best music. The worship God values most is worship that comes from the heart, which is exactly what Friends emphasize. For Friends, communion is not a quarterly or weekly ritual; it is an every-moment experience of the risen Christ that is magnified as we gather together for the purpose of worship.

Discussion Questions

- Which of these three “titles” would best describe a portrait of worship in your church? (1) The Boredom in the Pews, (2) The Program in the Bulletin, or (3) The Presence in the Midst.
- Do ornate facilities and carefully planned church services contribute to the kind of worship God seeks or distract from it?
- Do simple meetinghouses and waiting in silence contribute to the kind of worship God seeks or distract from it?

Led by the Spirit, Not by People

Focus: The book of Acts demonstrates that at times the early church worshiped in somewhat formal settings (at the temple) and just as easily experienced Christ together in more informal settings (from house to house). At times their worship was marked by teaching and singing, and at other times a sense of awe no doubt brought a holy hush over them as they gathered together. This is how Friends seek to worship, in spontaneous response to the Spirit of God that leads us.

Discussion Questions

- Share a memory of a worship service when it was obvious that the plans of the worship leader or pastor were laid aside in favor of the immediate leading of the Holy Spirit.
- Would your church welcome an interruption in its normal worship routine or would this be upsetting?
- How can one tell the difference between the leading of the Spirit and one's own thoughts or ideas?

Conclusion

Since Friends' worship doesn't depend on a person, a plan, or a place, we can't blame unfulfilling worship on anyone but ourselves.

Discussion Questions

- What can I do to enrich my personal worship experience?
- How can I contribute to the meetings for worship in our Friends Church?
- What evidence is there that those who attend our meetings for worship regularly sense the presence of Christ?