Resources for Nurturing Grounded Vocal Ministry

**This is a living document – PYM Ministry and Care Committee welcomes additional resources and stories being shared with them to add. Please send to: ministryandcare@pym.org*

One of the special things about Quakerism is that we believe everyone can be led to offer vocal ministry, no matter their age, education, or experience. From the very first time someone attends Quaker worship, they are invited to listen for a leading to stand and speak into the gathered silence.

But this is also one of the most challenging aspects for those who are charged with care for our communal worship. If we feel that messages are too many or too few, too lengthy, or too political, there is little we can do to address this directly, especially if the community is not comfortable with the more prescriptive eldering that guided past generations of Quakers. Over time, individual Meetings have developed their own ways of fostering vocal ministry that enriches our worship rather than distracting from it, and we share some of these ideas with you here:

1. Printed handouts

Many meetings post or hand out a printed description of guidance for vocal ministry. Here are several examples of such cards and brochures:

Barnegat: Barnegat Meeting has an extensive literature collection on a table next to the sign-in book. We encourage newcomers to take anything and, at a minimum, the "one of everything" packet, which is the collection of FGC newcomer cards clipped to a Barnegat Meeting brochure. (https://www.fgcquaker.org/fgcresources/practical/newcomer-cards/)

Chestnut Hill: In addition to descriptions of meeting for worship on our website, bulletin boards, and brochures, we place printed cards on the benches before worship. On the front of the cards is a simple description of what happens in meeting for worship, and on the back there are inspirational quotes. Personally, I put the instruction side facing up on the benches close to the door where visitors usually sit and the quote side facing up on the benches where regular attenders usually sit. There are a variety of quotes on the cards so someone will not always see the same text. The cards are printed on cardstock and are sturdy enough that most can be collected and reused, but people are also welcome to take them home, and we recycle them as they begin to look worn. Have these made a difference? I'm not sure, but I have seen people pick them up to read them, and a few times ministry has been given that refers to the inspirational quotes.
>CHFM_WorshipCard.pdf

Germantown: We place welcome cards on the windowsills around the meetinghouse, by one entry door, and on the welcome table in the social room. We also created a pamphlet on what to consider before speaking in worship.
> New Welcome to GMM 2022.pdf
> considerations about speaking draft.pdf

Lancaster: This description appears on the website for Lancaster Monthly Meeting.
> GuidelinesVocal+Ministry.pdf

Lansdowne: At the door, Lansdowne MM gives worshippers a handout that is a lot like a traditional church bulletin, including a schedule of events and announcements. The back cover provides a description of worship.
>Lansdowne Meeting Handout.pdf

Additional resources:
>Getting Ready for Quaker Worship (fromBritain YM)
>Enhancing Spirituality.doc
>Mindfulness in Meeting for Worship - Virginia Beach Friends Meeting

2. Graphics and visualizations

For some people, a visual representation communicates more than text. Here are several examples that can be printed as a handout or displayed as a poster.
>WorshipFlow.pdf
>Speaking into the Silence.pdf
>speaking_in_meeting_flow_chart.pdf

3. Activities & Learning

Hands-on, active learning may be more engaging than printed materials, especially for intergenerational groups.

Melinda Wenner Bradley: When I think about exploring vocal ministry in a multigenerational group, two lenses occur to me: encouraging the sharing of voices and discerning the source of what we're led to share.

For younger Friends:
>Exploring Vocal Ministry with Young People
>Heart~Sharing
>Teaching the Practice of Worship

Chestnut Hill: After we experienced some tensions in the community about how to respond to ungrounded ministry from a visitor, we held an activity after worship that was very helpful. Friends were asked to organize themselves into a line across the room according to their attitudes about vocal ministry. At one end of the room was one extreme: "There are too many

messages. I only want to hear ministry that is truly Spirit-led." At the other end of the room was the other extreme: "There are not enough messages. I want to hear what everyone has to say even if not all messages are truly Spirit-led." Friends found their place along this continuum by discussing with Friends on either side of them. The advantage of this was for everyone to understand that there was a wide range of spiritual needs within our community. No single position was correct, and we would all need to learn to be open to compromise.

Other resources:
Created by Youth in Baltimore Yearly Meeting, this skit explores the “when? how? where?” of vocal ministry with humor:
>Vocal Ministry Skit.pdf

4. Classes and other formal instruction

Whether you have been a practicing Quaker your whole life or you are just discovering Quakerism, there is always more to say about vocal ministry and more to learn from each other. Many meetings offer classes, forums, or other instruction about vocal ministry.

Chestnut Hill: There are classes offered before worship twice a month on a variety of topics, and this is one opportunity to introduce ideas that may help to foster deep and grounded vocal ministry. We have sometimes offered evening "Seekers Meetings" to give newcomers a chance to ask questions. I developed a three-part course that I called "The Quaker Path," which is intended to deepen the understanding of Quaker faith and worship for newcomers and long-time Quakers alike. I held these classes once a month in the evening for three months; although the course was open to all, I personally invited people that I sensed were seeking a deeper understanding and connection.
>CHFM_QuakerPath

Germantown: We have held a short, after-meeting gathering for newcomers, covering the basics of Quakerism. Another thing we did, which attracted both long-time members and newcomers, was called "*Faith & Practice* and Pizza." We met at the rise of meeting for pizza and discussion of the new *F&P* (going through chapter by chapter).
>Quaker Basics 2017.pdf

3. Suggested reading material
Meetings will often offer a shelf of books and pamphlets of material that is helpful for learning more about Quakerism.

Quaker Process for Friends on the Benches *by* Mathilda Navias
Letters to a Fellow Seeker, Steve Chase
Faith and Practice

Chestnut Hill: We have established a "Seekers Corner" in the library, where seekers can browse or borrow books, take a copy of PYM's *Faith and Practice*, and choose from a variety of brochures.

Other resources:

- **Pendle Hill pamphlets** – There are several Pendle Hill pamphlets on vocal ministry including this recent one: "*On Vocal Ministry: Nurturing the Community through Listening and Faithfulness*"
- **QuakerSpeak videos** are also excellent self-guided materials for discussion, and some delve into vocal ministry as a topic. This collection of videos might be helpful.