

Early and more recent Friends have offered suggestions/advice on being open to the Spirit during meeting for worship.

Preparing to receive a message

2014.08                NOTE: Where year and month appear, it refers to an article in Friends Journal; author is listed

Humphries

We come to worship seeking to listen to and be obedient to the Spirit.

Brinton, Friends for 300 years (I believe it is this one)  
66. The soul is waiting expectantly for God. "Soul" is used here rather than 'mind' because mind implies thought, and the whole inner man, the psyche or soul, possesses feelings, intuitions and sensations as well as thoughts. 72ish The true Guide is the Spirit, which like the wind, bloweth where it listeth. 75. He(One) no longer feels that (he himself) (one) is searching, but that he (one) is being searched through. Truth is not thought about, but perceived and enjoyed. In worship we center our attention on that which is deeper than discursive thought. 76.

2004.04

Anderson

"Take heed of being hurried with many thoughts but live in that which goes over them all (FOX)

Fox in DuBois (From: "A Day Book of Counsel and Comfort")  
Do not think, but submit, and then power comes.

2006.08

Drake

shift from thinking to listening, from hearing my own voice to hearing a wordless Presence

2001.04

Jones

The body and mind are not separate. We are embodied Spirit.

78. Brinton (need to find the book) As we climb a mountain, we come nearer to other climbers and finally we find ourselves together with them at the top. The word 'together' does not imply intellectual agreement, but spiritual unity, deep and inward, which sometimes arises unexpectedly in a group.

1999.05

Dougherty

When meeting for worship goes beyond calming, I expect the Light

will instruct.... How do you know when it arrives? One of the sure signs for me is a sense of awe or wonder. The wonder of being, simply being.

Wilson, book Essays on the Quaker Vision of Gospel Order  
35. ...each worshiper brings that amount of silence which (s)he has been able to nurture through daily practices and disciplines, and together the assembly creates a larger silence, in which the eternally present divine Word may be more clearly heard. 36... a truly corporate experience where we enter into a communion with other worshiping souls that enables all of us to enter into the divine presence more fully, and hear the divine Word more clearly, than we could alone.

How to know when to a message is yours to give.

Friends over the decades and centuries have given guidelines to help us know when a message that comes to us during meeting for worship is meant to be shared. One thing is very clear—that one does not come to Meeting intending to speak or intending not to speak. We all need to be ready for openings of the Spirit during worship. This principle is violated if/when someone brings a poem or quote to read in meeting for worship as this contradicts the spontaneity that characterizes leadings of the Spirit.

Here are some quotes from early and more recent Friends that might assist in knowing when a message is meant to be shared:

Bownas, book 1750(reprinted 1989) A Description of the Qualifications Necessary to a Gospel Minister. P.99 ...keep close to thy gift, intently waiting to know thy place, both when to speak and when to be silent; and when thou speakest, begin under a sense of divine influence, whether it be in preaching or praying; and without it, do not either preach or pray.;

Britain YM F+P 2.60 All true ministry springs from the reality of experience, and uses our gifts of heart and mind in its expression. ...ministry is not the place for intellectual exercise. It comes through us, not from us.;

McMullen 1987; Friendly Woman 8(1):4 quoted in Britain YM Quaker F+P, 1995.) Ministry is what is on one's soul, and it can be in direct contradiction to what is on one's mind....It is rooted in the eternity, divinity, and selflessness of the Inner Light;

Wilson book (see above)

38ish The signs of a true leading to vocal ministry can be known only experientially, not intellectually. 39. When that sense of visitation and awareness of a message to be shared are sustained

for more than a few minutes, one may begin to trust that the leading is genuine. I have found it helpful, during the moments after I have given myself up to delivering the message I have been given, but before actually rising to speak (or kneeling to pray), to offer a silent prayer asking that I speak the message God wants me to speak at this time and in this place...??40 (or next quote).

BYM F+P 88 but in BYMrevised

The most satisfactory vocal ministry arises out of a leading that is felt in the silence so strongly that it cannot be ignored.  
Pl44ish

2003.07

Bonner+Holmes

First words come to me from my midsection. They do not begin because I think them with my brain; they emerge from my body; I ask: Have the words spoken by me or another Friend brought us closer to the spirit?; Speak only if you can improve on the silence.

London YM in BYMrevised

Faithfulness in speaking, even very briefly, may open the way for fuller ministry from others

Are there advices regarding vocal ministry itself?

As the following excerpts from Friends writings describe, messages ideally are not from individuals but are given to us by the Spirit to share with the gathering. Messages from the Spirit are typically short. It could be advisable to deliver what one has been given slowly and pause after several phrases to make sure, as Friends sometimes say, that one has not outrun one's Guide.

Pennington, Light within..

p 26 Therefore there is to be a waiting in silence, till the Spirit of the Lord move to speak, and also give words to speak. For a (wo)man is not to speak his/her own words, or in his/her own wisdom or time; but the Spirit's words, in the Spirit's wisdom and time, which is when he moves and gives to speak. Yea, the ministry of the spirit and life is more close and immediate when without words, than when with words, as has often been felt, and is faithfully testified by many witnesses.

2008.01

Wilson

...the core of vocal ministry is someone being used by the Inner Light/Holy Spirit to recall self and others to our rightful place with the Truth.; vocal ministry....should be of something that

originated in the Divine, not the New York Times, the Economist, National Public Radio or the president of the United States. As well, it should be concise and framed in silence...; In worship, 'speak when spoken through' is a good discipline; the object is obedience to the Divine. In the final analysis we are co-creators with the Divine.

NEYM F+P

p106 Vital ministry is not abstract and doctrinal, it is charged with insight for the meaning and significance of life.... It 'speaks to the condition' of souls. It fortifies the wills of those who hear it. It makes the world look different. From Rufus Jones

1998.11

Larrabee

When the speaking is coming from the Divine, it is usually short and to the point.; If someone isn't familiar with the core of Quaker meeting or doesn't believe that it is possible for the Divine to speak to us directly, one may mistakenly speak from the mind or from one's ego.

BYM F+P 88 but in BYMrevised

It (message) should be delivered with as few words as possible, yet as many as necessary. Pl44ish

Brinton PH booklet (Guide to Quaker Practice)

17: Spoken words should not come as an interruption of the silence but rather as a component part of it.; 19 who utters a message in a Friends' meeting should think of her/himself as an instrument through whom the Spirit speaks. S/He must eliminate her/himself as much as possible in order that what is greater than her/himself may flow through her/him.; 20 Usually a message can be fully given within a few minutes. Often a single sentence, spoken with reverence and conviction, carries more weight than do many words.

2006.06

Gallery

If messages come to me from external circumstance they are not mine and therefore it is never possible for me to begin a message with the word "I". (Afterwards) if someone speaks to me...."Thee was well used, Friend" is the only proper comment to make in these circumstances.

Brinton book p 103 in Friends for 350 Years. The first person singular pronoun is seldom heard in Quaker ministry, nor does the speaker declare his own experience except as his experience may illustrate a more general truth. "S/He seemed not to speak but to be spoken from". 86. The minister is an instrument of that

Spirit which is in his/her hearers as well as in her/himself... so the speaker should offer his/her message, trusting that the Light in her/him will answer the Light in others. The language of the Spirit is symbolic and its suggestions are not so much facts as signs which point beyond themselves to the unseen ground of all existence. 88

### Receiving messages

How can one best be open to the Spirit coming from message that others deliver in meeting for worship? There is a human temptation to categorize a message as soon as it begins, by our past experiences with the speaker and message given by him/her. We need to put aside any such preconceptions to let the Spirit of the present speak to us through him/her. When the Spirit pervades the worshipers message can build on each other in what is then recognized as a gathered meeting. When this happens virtually everyone feels uplifted and strengthened spiritually. Following are advices from other Friends about how we can best receive message and strive for a gathered meeting.

Punshon book Encounter with Silence

p 87 In a well-ordered meeting the ministry and the silence work together. 88 From time to time one hears a minister put into words what one had been thinking onself. ...it is another way of knowing that the meeting is seriously exercised, and it indicates a coming into unity.

Kelley Gathered Meeting pamphlet 1946

As one friend speaks in such a silence, the words are found to join on closely to the thought of the others, so that words become needless and silence becomes a bridge not of separation but of communication. In the gathered meeting the sense is present that a new Life and Power has entered our midst.; We are in communication with one another because we are being communicated to, and through, by the Divine Presence.; When one rises to speak in such a meeting, one has a sense of being used, of being played upon, of being spoken through.; In such an experience the brittle bounds of our selfhood seem softened; and instead of saying "I pray " or "he prays," it becomes better to say "Prayer is taking place." So in a truly covered meeting an individual who speaks takes no credit to himself for the part he played in the unfolding of the worship.;

Wilson book (see above)

40 For myself, a prayer parallel to that which I pray before rising to speak is helpful when I see another Friend rise in meeting for worship. "Lord help this Friend be faithful, help us be receptive, help this ministry inscribe thy Word in our hearts"

2003.04

Poplawska

I also feel with a growing intensity the danger of judging which messages do or do not come from the Light. My faith requires of me to believe that all spoken message have their source in a higher power. If we keep faith in our meetings that all messages--our own and those given by others--are spoken from the Light, then I believe that our faith will lead us into the Light even if some or all of the messages aren't so inspired.

2001.07

Flanagan

Words are not always true, but silence never lies.

2002.12

Buckley

The man in the leather jacket [Fox] taught me to surrender my intellect and let the message minister to my soul.