



Spiritual preparation for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017

Introduction

Over the past two Yearly Meetings we have been thinking about living out our faith in the world. We have learned that this requires us to be truthful, to speak truth to power, to act from the right place, and to seek support from like-minded groups in order to build movements that can slowly change the world.

In 2017 we will consider what action we can take and join, how we can use the tools we already have to elicit change, and how we can support each other (both Quakers and others) in doing so.

There are three spiritual preparation activities, with an explanatory summary at the start of each. We encourage you to undertake all three with your meeting, but if you can only carry out one activity we suggest the third as direct preparation for Yearly Meeting. All timings and activities are simply suggestions, and Friends should feel free to follow their leadings on how best to use their time.



Suggested reading

- Naomi Klein's *This changes everything*
- Alastair McIntosh's *Soil and soul* and more recent books and articles
- Helen Steven's 2005 Swarthmore Lecture: *No extraordinary power*
- George Lakey's *Toward a living revolution: a five-stage framework for creating radical social change*
- Ben Pink Dandelion's 2014 Swarthmore Lecture: *Open for transformation*
- Barry Morley's *Beyond consensus: salvaging sense of the meeting* (Pendle Hill Pamphlet 307), which addresses the need to test concerns and seek unity in that testing, and the possible consequences of accepting consensus)

Spiritual preparation activities

Activity 1: Heart and vision

In groups of three or four, spend 15 minutes in worship-sharing, considering the following: William Penn (*Quaker faith & practice* 23.02) reminds us that “True godliness don’t turn men out of the world but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavours to mend it...”

If we were, individually and collectively, living lives of “true godliness”, what would that look like?

Activity 2: This light that pushes me

In groups of up to six, consider the statements and questions below. You may prefer to make this activity more of a discussion. It could last for up to 20 minutes.

“We are all activists and we are all worshippers. Our worship and action spring from the same spiritual source. The light not only illumines us but pushes us to seek change.” (Extract from from minute 36, Yearly Meeting 2015.)

The process of recognising and testing what love and truth require of us may mean a long period of painful uncertainty.

Questions (to be considered in groups of three or four):

- Have you ever felt pushed towards a particular course of action or area of concern? How did that feel?
- Were you involved with Quakers at the time? Did you use any Quaker discernment or testing processes to guide you? What was your experience of these processes?
- Do you consider yourself to be ‘spiritual’, or an activist? Do you find the distinction helpful in considering your own journey and experiences?
- What are you feeling called to do at the moment?

Activity 3: Working with others

Using the following text as a starting point, consider the questions below in groups of up to six. This discussion could last around 30 minutes.

Through our experience, we know that change happens and lasts when people come together and stay together in coordinated movements that insist on change. We join those movements, which we see as doing God’s work. We look for that of God in organisations as well as individuals; a movement is people. We bring our tools and skills with us. We may be there for the long or the short term. We may work locally, nationally or globally.

The way we work is as important as the work we do. Through our experience of living out our faith in the world, we have developed ways of working that reflect our Quaker values. You might think of them as our Quaker skill set or ‘tool box’. For instance, Quakers used ‘accompaniment’ in QPSW’s Circles of Support and Accountability work with sex offenders, and this technique is also used in the work of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel.

- What are you already doing? What is your meeting already doing to help movements to grow?
- What skills do you use or might you use when working, as a Quaker, with other groups?
- Do you consider any of these to be distinctively Quaker skills?
- Are there skills you know of from your Quaker experiences that could be of service to other groups?
- Do we worry too much about making a contribution that is distinctively Quaker?

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