



QUAKER PROCESS

1. Threshing Session

To thresh is to use a machine or flail to separate grain or seeds from straw. Quakers use a threshing session to separate the valuable spiritual "seeds" from the straw. It is really the Quaker version of a brainstorming session. People are encouraged to express ideas, even if they are not fully formed. The atmosphere is respectful, but not necessarily as spiritual as other processes. A threshing session is often used to explore an issue for the first time, in order to get a ideas on possible directions meeting might take.

2. Worship Sharing

Worship sharing is a gathering of Friends who wish to discern the prompting of the spirit on a particular subject. It is more "worshipful" than a threshing session, and silence is encouraged between each speaker. A worship sharing might be held after a world event that moved meeting. It might also be held to seek guidance as meeting considers a particular issue. See "Welcome to Worship Sharing" provided.

3. ~~Business~~ Meeting for Discernment

"The Society of Friends began not as a structured organization, but as a fellowship of Friends of Truth. As the need arose for service to members or others, Meetings were established and named for the times or intervals of their regular sessions, as Monthly Meetings, Quarterly Meetings, or Yearly Meetings... Meetings for ~~business~~ ^{Discernment} are held on a spirit of worship. This does not mean they must be overly solemn or devoid of humor. It means they should be conducted in a spirit of inward recollection out of which will come a flexible and informal dignity fitting to the conduct of the work of a Religious Society... Friends act on a basis of the 'sense of the Meeting' rather than by decision of the majority." (BYM Faith and Practice p. 41)

^{Meeting for Discernment}
In a ~~business meeting~~, we look for "unity" on a subject. This is different from unanimity or consensus. It is up to the clerk of meeting to get a "sense of meeting." Some may disagree but "step aside" on a matter, allowing action to move forward. Sometimes a decision is "held over" if unity cannot be reached, or the issue needs to "season" more.

(over)

4. Clearness Committee

A clearness committee is used by an individual seeking "clarity" on an issue. A committee meets with a person who is unclear on how to proceed in a keenly felt concern or dilemma. The person seeking a clearness committee works with the Care and Counsel committee to form a group comprised of 4-6 individuals.

It is assumed that each of us has an Inner Teacher who can guide us. Therefore, the answers sought are within the person seeking clearness. It is also assumed that a group of caring friends can serve as channels of divine guidance in drawing out that Inner Teacher. The purpose of the committee members is not to criticize or to offer their collective wisdom; they are there to listen without prejudice or judgment, to help clarify alternatives, to help communication if necessary, and to provide emotional support.

5. The Family Meeting

While not an "official" Quaker process, many families at meeting have instituted family meetings as a way to aid in decision-making. It seems like a natural outgrowth of our Quaker practices. Family members join together at regularly scheduled meetings to discuss values, plans, chores, compliments, and concerns. It is an opportunity for all to be heard on issues arising in the family. A good resource on parenting and the family meeting is The Parent's Handbook by Don Dinkmeyer and Gary McKay.