

## OPENING EXERCISES

### What is Opening Exercises?

It is a prologue to Meeting for Worship, scheduled a half hour before worship (25 minutes to allow time to regroup for worship) during the program year which may be from the second Sunday of September through mid-June. Topics can be wide ranging.

Examples:

- explanation of an aspect of Quaker practice or beliefs
- an inspirational poem or other art form
- an intergenerational story like *Old Turtle* or *A Cup of Christmas Tea*
- skit or Godly Play done by the youth
- recounting a social justice leading
- sacred or meditative music
- witness to a Quaker testimony in our work life or avocations
- information about a Quaker organization or a Meeting committee

Some of the best Opening Exercises feature audience participation or a visual or auditory element, and recognize our inter-generational community. Humor is always a plus.

### What is the purpose of OpEx?

Opening Exercises can begin the process of bringing us together in the Light. The spiritually enriching or thought-provoking messages often resurface in Meeting for Worship or stimulate subsequent discussion.

Another objective is to teach Friends about Quakerism – meeting for worship, worship-sharing, testimonies and Quaker practice, the Quaker process, the work of Quaker organizations.

A third objective is to create a recurring environment where attenders and members interact with others in Meeting, making connections and learning about one another.

### Who leads OpEx's?

Any member or attender can lead Opening Exercises. Sometimes, a Friend invites a guest speaker. The 25 minute time frame makes it less daunting for presenters.

### Who organizes OpEx's?

Worship & Ministry or Religious Ed often takes this responsibility, with each committee member taking 1 or 2 months. That Friend can also be on point for preparations such as:

- Resources - if needed, arrange for a pianist and/or projector
- Publicity - a brief description of the presentation, emailed and announced in advance

## What can a meeting do with limited resources?

- ★ Leverage QuakerSpeak, a wealth of short videos on Quaker faith and practice
- ★ Conduct occasional worship-sharing on a query, biblical excerpt or some other spiritual topic;  
many Friends aren't familiar with this powerful practice. (see participant guidance on next page)
- ★ Invite guest speakers from social justice organizations, other meetings, your college YAF's
- ★ Music Sunday, e.g., hymn sing (hire a pianist if don't have one), listen to recorded music (e.g., various Hallelujah compositions at Christmas); live adult or student musicians; youth sing-alongs of camp songs

Consistency and planning make it work. The ideal is weekly but twice a month with a coffee half hour the other Sunday(s) is a good alternative.

Here's a handout for worship-sharing. Many Friends don't understand how it works. It's not a discussion or a forum for debate. Following this measured, contemplative method can make it a powerful experience.

- Facilitator read a **query or a passage**
- Friends quietly **absorb it** for awhile.
- Reach into **your sacred center** before speaking out of the silence.
- Speak from your own experience; **concentrate on feelings and changes** rather than on thoughts and theories.
- **Do not respond to what anyone says**, to praise or refute.
- **Ration your contribution** to allow many to speak.
- **Listen carefully** to what others say.
- Leave a **brief period of silence between** speakers.

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October 2023