

Adapted for their “Meetings Toolbox” by FGC with permission from Pendle Hill from *Four Doors to Meeting for Worship* by William Taber

The First Door: The Door Before, covered last month

The Second Door: The Door Inward

Now that we are ready to pass through the second door, the Door Inward, to actually begin the meeting, we may ponder the question, “When does the meeting actually begin?” Perhaps you have had the experience of arriving early at the meetinghouse, taking your seat alone in the empty meeting room and discovering that, as you settled into it, there was already a Presence in the room even though it was not “time” for the meeting to begin.

The most “gathered” meetings for worship actually begin when a few Friends focus on the meeting-to-come, long before the official starting time. Perhaps they have lifted up their meeting in prayer during the previous week. Perhaps they simply pause for a few moments the night before, or when they wake on Saturday morning, to visualize being in the meeting-to-come, remembering that “the Living Stream which we can touch at this moment is the same stream which we shall enter when tomorrow’s meeting gathers.”

Friends find that assuming a restful posture, (for example, with feet flat on the floor, straight back, and eyes either shut or open) is very helpful toward achieving a relaxed focus. Friends may also use other techniques to help them enter fully into the Meeting for Worship. There are many ways to train our minds and bodies to settle. Some include repeating an inspirational passage such as the Lord’s Prayer; using a few words repeated with each breath as a mantra or centering prayer; praying for each person around the room; using mental images, such as imagining love flowing to each member of the circle, connecting everyone with each other and with God; becoming aware of the Living Presence.

However, the most important thing is to eventually let go of trying to do anything, and just be present. As we learn this, technique becomes far less important than our desire to be fully present. It is also true that God may be very close to us when we are least relaxed and focused. Faithfully attending meeting even when we feel little progress continues to allow God’s transforming work to unfold within us.

For discussion:

How do you settle into worship?

What do you find most supportive about this excerpt from *The Four Doors to Meeting for Worship* and why might that be so?

Other thoughts...