

## Suggested Readings on Worship

Reading and sharing our readings is important for many Friends. In learning more about the spiritual experiences and practices of others, we deepen our own understandings, we feel connected and enriched, we are comforted and strengthened. Here are some suggestions for readings, with short annotations, that might appeal to Friends for personal or meeting collections and reflection.

Some suggested readings, taken from the FGC Web site, on the topic of worship:

*Shaped by the Light: The Quaker Experience of Worship, Community and Transformation*

Michael Wajda and Alison Levie

The 2001 Walton Lecture. An exploration of being altered and grounded by worship and the Quaker faith community. SEYM 2001, 23 pp.

*Reflections on Quaker Worship*

Esther Murer

An expanded collection of short essays intended to guide members and attenders in entering into corporate worship. Includes thoughts on tardiness, space between messages, and vocal ministry for children. Formerly titled *From Worship & Ministry*.

*Quality and Depth of Worship and Ministry*

Britain YM Committee on Eldership and Oversight

Friends would say that meeting for worship is central to their spiritual lives—but what is worship? What does "ministry" mean? How can we talk to each other, sharing our understandings of listening or waiting on God? Meetings can feel shallow, unsatisfying, or deep and transforming. Dare we assess quality and depth? This booklet is a distillation of experience and reflection collected from meetings and offered back in the form of queries. This booklet is an essential guide for every worship and ministry committee. Britain Yearly Meeting 2001, 44 pp. Paper

*Practice of Quaker Worship*

Larry Miller

Sections on gathered meeting, settling in, and vocal ministry. Useful tract for new attenders or discussion groups. Quaker Press of FGC 1992, 12 pp.

*Invitation to a Deeper Communion*

Marcelle Martin

Early Friends experienced an extraordinary sense of divine power and presence in their meetings for worship that transformed them inwardly and outwardly, making them agents for significant change. This pamphlet examines what it was about their beliefs and practice that invited direct experience of the Spirit. It also describes explorations by contemporary Friends to seek a deeper communion with God in worship, suggesting that a renewal of worship will help Friends today become powerful witnesses to another way of life. Pendle Hill 2003, 39 pp. Paper

*The Authority of our Meetings Is the Power of God*

Paul Lacey

The author holds in creative tension the individual and corporate responsibilities in our monthly meetings to witness to the power and authority of God. Pendle Hill 2003, 40 pp. Paper

*Dealing with Difficult Behavior in Meeting for Worship: Meeting the Needs of the Many While Responding to the Needs of the Few*

FGC Ministry and Nurture Committee Task Group

Formerly titled *The Wounded Meeting*. When someone disrupts meeting for worship, what can the meeting community do? Explore your options and find caring solutions. Quaker Press of FGC 2002, 27 pp. Paper

*The Dynamics of an Unprogrammed Meeting for Worship*

Mary R. Hopkins

Have you ever wondered how to prepare for meeting for worship or what other people experience during worship? These issues are addressed in this insightful pamphlet, useful for the individual seeker, clerks, committee members, and potential workshop leaders. Find creative solutions and procedures to deepen the mysterious process known to Quakers as unprogrammed meeting for worship. Quaker Press of FGC 1999, 32 pp. Paper

*Twelve Quakers and Worship*

Quaker Quest

The worship of Quakers is waiting on God in the silence and stillness. Seeking after God in this way is not to escape from the world, but to find the spiritual power that heals it. Twelve British Friends write of their experience of worship. The Meeting for Worship is at the heart of the Quaker way and all else is an outcome of that experience. Those wondering about the Quaker way, and what motivates its followers, should find these twelve honest accounts helpful. Quaker Quest 2004, 32 pp. Paper

*Prayer and Worship*

Douglas V. Steere

Douglas Steere encourages a deeper spiritual life through the disciplines of prayer, corporate worship, and devotional reading. He calls us beyond the "incurable mediocrity of soul that fills the Christian ranks." Friends United Press 1988, 77 pp. Paper

*Four Doors to Meeting for Worship*

Bill Taber

Friend Bill Taber describes the heart of worship as "communion with the invisible but eternal stream of reality in which is the living and eternal Christ." In his gentle and inviting way, Bill beckons us to enter and pass through a series of four stages or doors—the Door Before, the Door Inward, the Door Within, the Door Beyond—to enter a reality that awaits us and has existed since the beginning of time.

Pendle Hill pamphlet

## **Some suggested readings on vocal ministry, with annotations from Linda Chidsey:**

### *On the Vocal Ministry*

Ruth M. Pitman

This simple and brief essay on vocal ministry contains a wealth of wisdom, both for those called to minister and for those who hear words of ministry. "Messages which are spoken strive to be God's word for these people at this time..." "God speaks to man, calls him to action and leads him through it." Friend Ruth offers provides guidance related to discernment of whether or not to speak, bodily posture when speaking, appropriate and useful response to spoken ministry, and more. She addresses various forms of ministry, including the testimonial, which praises God for his workings within the life of the individual, and vocal prayer. She observes that the meeting united in the understanding that not every message will immediately speak to each person will be able to absorb disturbances because "each Friend lays what he hears reverently before the Lord with the inarticulate prayer, 'Show me how this is for me.'" Tract Assoc of Friends, 1979

### *On Being Moved by the Spirit to Minister in Public Worship*

Lewis Benson

"The beginning of all ministry motivated by the Holy Spirit is an attitude of prayer." In the opening moments of public worship, the worshiper is free of any sense of necessity to speak. One's whole being is concentrated on a longing to feel the presence of Christ and a fervent desire that all present should experience this Living Presence. Friend Lewis describes the inward act of listening for whether one is being called to speak or if the message is to come from another. If the latter, one's prayer focuses on the person to whom the Holy Spirit is giving the call. He speaks of waiting for the general outline of a message, the opening words, and the physical signs one might experience. When we are hesitant to speak, is the uncertainty from God or does it reflect feelings of weakness and inadequacy? The effect of the minister's words should be to strengthen the sense of being a people gathered to serve, witness, and suffer in Christ's name.

New Foundation Publications #4, Winter 1979 – the Quaker Vision

### *Encounter with Silence*

John Punshon

"John Punshon offers simple but exceptionally powerful thoughts on silence, prayer, discernment, and worship. His resource is the Quaker unprogrammed meeting, but his appeal will be to all who want to move beyond a spiritual superficiality." Alan Kolp, Religious Society of Friends. Published by Friends United Press, 1987

### *Friends for 350 Years*

Howard Brinton

In this classic book on Quakerism, there are rich and accessible chapters on the

meeting for worship and vocal ministry. 1952, revised by Margaret Hope Bacon,  
2002