

Preparing Your Meeting for Called Worship

The intention of this document is to support local Quaker meetings, churches, and worship groups in creating opportunities for worship for the wider community during turbulent times.

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A Preparation Checklist

1. **Develop a transparent and timely method for holding a called meeting for worship.**
 - a. Use the meeting's prior discernment on issues of concern to identify what events your meeting wishes to respond to with called worship so that you are prepared to act without delay when the need arises.
 - b. If your group does better with routine than responding to time-sensitive emails, consider having an established practice in response to tragedy. *(For example, after each mass shooting, there is a candle-lit meeting for healing the following Thursday at 7 p.m.).*
 - c. If your meeting space is shared with other groups, establish a backup location or plan for worship apart from Sunday morning.

2. **Decide who will be responsible for key roles.** Roles include:
 - a. **Initiating** *(prior to the called meeting for worship)*: responsible for calling the worship and informing Friends from the meeting. This will most likely be the clerk, a member of Ministry and Counsel, or a designated elder.
 - b. **Publicizing** *(prior to the called meeting for worship, as soon as possible after it has been initiated)*: responsible for publicizing the worship in a timely way. Work with the person responsible for opening to make sure there is clear signage outside the worship space, especially if it's not a usual meeting space.
 - c. **Opening** *(prior to the called meeting if at a different location)* responsible for securing access to the building *(day of the called meeting for worship)* open the doors to the worship space and turn on heat, if needed. Have Quaker outreach and orientation materials available and a guestbook with a pen near the entry.
 - d. **Greeting** *(during the called meeting for worship)*: welcomes people at the door, particularly making sure to say hello to people who have not

been to the meeting before and to direct people toward any written materials that are available for the event (*for example: schedule of what the time will look like, a written handout describing what a “called worship” is, etc.*) *For more ideas, see [Tips on Welcoming Families](#).

- e. **Facilitating** (*during the called meeting for worship*): responsible for framing the time at the beginning of worship. Read a brief description of worship, expectations for giving messages, and why the meeting has called this worship. This person may also facilitate a pre-worship activity to help participants center. (*For example: asking everyone gathered to name emotions they are feeling or turn to someone near them and share what brought them to this worship.*)
- f. **Care of worship** (*during called meeting for worship*): responsible for holding the worship in prayer, paying attention to where extra attention, care, or follow-up might be needed both during and after the worship. This person, or better yet, two people, are also responsible for discerning when the worship is over. *Given that it is likely that there will be people in attendance who may require pastoral care, and the worship itself may be more tender than a typical worship, this is a role that should be filled by a Friend who has been identified as having gifts, skills, and training in eldering and pastoral care.* *A helpful article on spiritual care after violence can be found here: <http://cct.biola.edu/blog/spiritual-care-after-violence-growing-trauma-lived-theology/>
- g. **Childcare** (*during called meeting for worship*): if you plan to make childcare available during the called worship, have a no-prep child-friendly activity ready for these occasions such as coloring mandalas.
*If your meeting does not yet have a child safety policy in place you may wish to consider what type of policy will meet your needs. As an example, the policy used by the Yearly Meeting can be found here: <https://neym.org/youth-ministries-and-child-safety> and you can contact Beth Collea at recoord@neym.org if your meeting needs support in the process of developing your own policy.
- h. **Closing** (*after called meeting for worship*): responsible for making sure to lock up after the called meeting for worship.

3. **Decide where your meeting wishes to post these worship announcements.**

There may be many non-Quakers in your local community who are seeking places for silence and prayerful gatherings after upsetting events—think about how to reach these people as well as Friends. *Make sure to include a link to additional information about what to expect in Quaker worship and in the meeting space (parking, directions, accessibility).* While each meeting will have its own ideas, here is a list of suggestions:

- a. Create a *public* Facebook event

- b. Send a notice to the local colleges' campus office for spiritual or religious life
- c. Put a notice in local coffee shops, grocery stores, and businesses (if time allows)
- d. Send an e-mail to your state's council of churches or your area's interfaith organization (for the Boston area, use Massachusetts Council of Churches, <http://www.masscouncilofchurches.com/> and Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, <http://www.gbio.org/>; for other areas, search "Your Town/Area Interfaith Organization")
- e. Post on appropriate local list-serves, forums or groups (e.g. Parent list-serves, Peace list-serves, etc.)
- f. Send an e-mail to the New England Yearly Meeting Office (office@neym.org) for sharing with Friends more broadly

4. Establish a procedure for welcoming, connecting with, and supporting new attenders after worship.

- a. Examples include: making sure that greeters make note of and intentionally approach newcomers after the worship to check in with them. It might also take the form of setting up an "afterthoughts" point-person, or area for continued conversation about the worship experience; inviting everyone after meeting to do a short reflection or connection activity, such as turning to the person next to them and saying a word from the heart; and having "exit greeters" on the way out to thank people for coming.
- b. If your meeting has individuals who are trained in pastoral care and trauma who are available to provide pastoral care in these situations, make sure the Friends with care of worship and the exit greeters can help worship attenders identify them as needed.
 - A good overview of pastoral trauma care can be found here: <http://fepci.denverda.org/Classroom/UnitThree.htm>.
 - To find a Psychological First Aid training, go here: <http://www.nctsn.org/content/psychological-first-aid>.
 - To read an overview about Psychological First Aid, go here: http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/CRP-PFA_Guide.pdf
 - For more information on cultivating a trauma-informed meeting/church contact Callid Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond, MA) at callid@theopoetics.net
- c. Gather a list of resources available in your area for people who are looking for more care than the meeting can offer, such as local support groups.

Sample plan for a called meeting for worship

We have decided that in the event of _____ one of the ways our meeting will respond is by holding a called meeting for worship.

In the event of a called meeting for worship, we will hold the worship at _____(location) on _____(day) at _____(time)

In the event of a called meeting for worship the following Friends will support the worship in these specific ways (include the person's name and contact information).

Initiating: _____

Publicizing: _____

Opening the meeting house: _____

Greeting and seeing people out the door: _____

Facilitating: _____

Care of worship: _____

Closing: _____

In the event of a called meeting for worship, the *publicizer* will be responsible for posting information about these events (including the time, date and place) to the following places: _____

In the event of a called meeting for worship we will make sure the following resources are available: _____

In the event of a called meeting for worship we will help people feel connected by (*for example: "asking people to turn to the person next to them and share one thing they are bringing with them into the space"*):

In the event of a called meeting for worship we will explain our expectations as follows:

Remember that even though many people in attendance may have attended a worship before, there are likely people who may be unfamiliar with this type of worship, and even if everyone in the room seems to be familiar with what is expected, it is always a new group of people any time you gather together,

and it makes sense to remind people of expectations, to make space for feelings, and to help ground people in a shared vision for the time together. Tip: If your meeting has had a marriage under its care, and has introduced worship for that event, you may want to use the same or similar introduction to the practice.

In the event that someone in crisis comes to our called meeting for worship we will respond in the following ways to get them the help and support that they may need:
