

Experiment with Light: Light group review process

In a similar way as Qfp12.16 recommends for Meetings, good Light group practice includes a periodic (preferably at least annual) Light group review. Such a review provides an opportunity for all involved to ensure that they can get to the Light group and that it runs well. It also provides an opportunity to keep the Local and Area Meeting informed.

Existing advice is contained in 'What is a Light group?': <http://experiment-with-light.org.uk/whatislg.pdf>, p3:

8. **Reviewing the group:** Does your group arrange for occasions to review the way the group is run and how it is developing? Some queries that might arise are:

- Is the meeting-place, whether someone's home, or a meeting house, still the best place to meet? Is the time of day and day of the week the best for the members who now attend? Are any prevented by either time or place?
- Who is responsible for hosting and other arrangements? Can this responsibility be better shared out? ⚡ Is the group able to welcome new members? How is this done? How are newcomers introduced to the process so as to make it clear?
- Are communications with the Local and Area Meeting clear? Do members of the Local and Area Meetings know the group exists and what it does? Is the presence of the group beneficial to the Meeting as a whole?
- Have you considered making your individual experiences of the group the focus of an Experiment with Light meditation together? This can help us all to see more clearly and share from the heart.

Keeping other Friends informed

Attached at Appendix A is an example of a Light group's review reports for three years, which were sent to the Local Meeting and the Area Meeting for note. Sending it to the business meeting not only keeps Friends informed, but also provides an opportunity for Friends to ask questions and for the Light group to allay any unfounded fears about the Light group. In fact, as Friends in the LM and AM involved are kept informed and have that opportunity, fears and suspicions have not arisen. The report was circulated with the minutes of the LM and of the AM.

The review process itself

The review process can be undertaken to suit the Light group, but it is recommended that a date be arranged where most, if not all, members of the Light group can be present. This can be arranged in person, by email or by using a doodle poll: <https://doodle.com/>.

The group might decide to undertake the review on a Sunday after Meeting for Worship at the LM, or one of the LMs in the AM. This provides a deep spiritual foundation for the review and also gives the Light group visibility in the LM, especially where Friends from other LMs in the AM are visiting. As most Friends go to Meeting for Worship most Sundays, having the review on a Sunday means more Friends are

likely to be present. The group could then have a shared lunch either at the Meeting House or at one Friend's home.

It is recommended that after lunch the review itself be conducted by way of an Experiment, with a brief preliminary time to agree the way the review will be conducted and who will do what, a meditation, time alone and worship sharing, the only difference from normal practice being that notes pertaining to the Light group's running can be taken during worship sharing as the basis of a report.

The meditation can be adapted from the meditation on the individual or the meditation on the group can be used, whichever meditation is most familiar or agreed by the group. But there is also room for experimentation, for example, by using 'the bells' version, which is without words.

The time alone and worship sharing ensure the review is grounded in our usual practice.

After the day of the review the agreed note-taker can circulate the notes (first ensuring that any personal and confidential information is excluded) to all members of the group. Once they are agreed, they are then forwarded to the LM Clerk with a request to put the review on the next business meeting agenda for note and circulation with the minutes. In the case of an AM group, the review notes can go direct to the AM Clerk similarly. If the group is an LM group only, Right Ordering would be to ask the LM Clerk to forward the LM minute of note to the AM with a request to note the report at AM and circulate it with the minutes.

High Flatts EwL Review 2015

Present: [6 Friends]; Prevented: [1 Friend]

The review was undertaken by an initial 'dump the day' with suggestions of what we might consider in our period of silent reflection. This was followed by one hour's silent reflection, and then we spoke of our reflections about the operation of High Flatts Light group.

We agree that the group offers support and comfort. It continues to be a well-disciplined group, making the practice more effective. The base at High Flatts is appreciated with no need to change the basic arrangements. We appreciate the different experiences that we are privy to in the Light group and acknowledge the way our Quakerism is expressed in everyday life. We decided:

- To try different versions of the meditation, and to record the retreat version of the meditation.
- To meet four times per year on Saturdays possibly outside e.g. at Spring Vale Community Garden and at members' houses.
- For a trial period to meet on the first Monday in each month so the whole group can gather together . * The pattern would be 1st Monday, 2nd Tuesday and 4th Wednesday
- To have a retreat together. **
- To have a celebration of the practice by arranging shared lunches on two Sundays per year. ***

* Helen to explore this possibility with Thelma and Melissa

*** We have arranged this for 16th August

** All will attend the Quaker Week EwL retreat

Extract from High Flatts Light group 2016 & 2017 review notes sent to LM and AM

High Flatts Light Group review: 21 August 2016

Nine members of the group were able to participate in the review, held at High Flatts Meeting House. We started by joining in Meeting for Worship (during which we heard QFP 2.81), followed by lunch. In the afternoon, we decided to conduct the review by having an Experiment with Light, structured in the usual way, focusing upon our experience of the Light group. What came to us in the Experiment was then shared with all members of the group in accordance with QFP 12.21. Our worship sharing forms the basis of this report.

A supportive group

Group members feel supported within the group, both practically and emotionally, also described as a place of healing as we share the journey. The group feels safe: there is complete acceptance, trust is developed and love experienced. The Meeting House itself, carrying the presence of centuries of worship, was also felt to augment this experience.

The fruits of our practice

We find that we are changed by our practising Experiment with Light. The ways we are in life and work are different. Our lives are more peaceful, as we develop spiritually. Our Friends contribute to our development through their engagement in the practice alongside us, by upholding, worship sharing and at a deep unconscious level. We noted that although sometimes not much seems to be happening, the process is cumulative. Our group practice offers us a way of discovering each other's gifts and capacities.

The nature of the group

We are pleased that the group is open, and that new participants join us, as this reminds us of the discipline that we follow in our practice, and offers different and varied perspectives. We are also well disciplined, with our purposeful and attentive listening making room for the Light to do the work.

New members of the group

New members to the group sometimes find it difficult to know what to do, and to judge how much to reveal in sharing. We need to develop a strategy for introducing new members to the practice.

A wider perspective

Participants mentioned various aspects of Experiment with Light support that are helpful (the Experiment with Light Journal; that the group operates under the care of the Meeting, etc.), and the feeling that as a group we are in a position to help others to develop Light groups, and established groups in reviews of their practice. A new retreat format was mentioned.

Practicalities

We reviewed when we meet, as not all of us are currently able to get to every Light group meeting. **It was agreed that we would continue with 4th Wednesdays and in October change the 2nd Tuesday meeting to Fridays, starting Friday 14 October.***

As we particularly appreciated meeting in the main Meeting Room on this occasion, **we agreed to hold our Light group meetings there in future.**

Further developments

We agreed to develop a strategy for introducing new members to the Light group.

Extract from High Flatts Light group 2016 & 2017 review notes sent to LM and AM

***NOTE**

High Flatts Light group meetings for the remainder of 2016 are, at 7pm:

Wednesday 24 August
Tuesday 13 September
Wednesday 28 September
Friday 14 October
Wednesday 26 October
Friday 11 November
Wednesday 23 November
Friday 9 December
Wednesday 28 December

There is also an Experiment with Light Retreat at High Flatts in Quaker Week: 10am to 4:30pm
Saturday 8 October.

Extract from High Flatts Light group 2016 & 2017 review notes sent to LM and AM

High Flatts Light Group review: 28 May 2017

Present [8 Friends]; prevented [3 Friends]

We joined with High Flatts Meeting for meeting for worship, then after enjoying lunch together we embarked on a review of our practice. Andrea referred us to the passage in Qfp 19.03 in which Fox described the ocean of darkness and death, and the ocean of light and love which flows over the darkness, acknowledging that we are a mixture of darkness and light, which we confront in our Experiment with Light practice, [referring to the recent Manchester bombing].

Mark reminded us of dear Isaac Pennington's 1667 advice (QfP 10.01), saying how to him it seems to express what we do in the Light group: 'Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.'

Our review took the form of an Experiment with Light meditation, focused upon our EwL practice in the High Flatts group. The bells prompts were used but not found by all to be helpful. Andrea took notes during the worship sharing from participants' feedback. No personal information is reported here.

The way that the High Flatts group practises the Experiment is very disciplined and works consistently well, regardless of how many people are able to attend any group meeting. Attendance is also a matter of personal need and state at the time, so that going to all group meetings for the Experiment is not necessary for all participants. However, it was also felt that there is value in all being able to be together at least occasionally.

Attendance being variable, we have struggled as a group to try to find a 'magic time' when we can all meet together regularly. We now accept that this may not be possible. But have agreed to try a daytime meeting to see whether this might suit the group. As an experiment we have agreed to a Light group meeting on 20 June at 10 a.m. at the Meeting House. This may be particularly welcome during winter months when travelling to High Flatts Meeting House can be daunting, and we feel less enthusiastic about coming out in the evening. We also question whether we need to continue with our current Friday evening meeting, or whether we should return to a consistent Wednesday programme. In general this would be preferable, but we need to ensure that absent voices can be heard and that no one is excluded altogether.

Although we do not have a specific introductory programme for newcomers to the group, we feel that new participants respond well to our disciplined practice. The follow-up from a first attendance to check that the participant was OK was welcomed by our newest participant.

The overwhelming feeling of the group is that it is valuable, especially being aware that people are listening and accepting us. The group is accepting, and enables the feeling of safety to develop for sharing difficult matters. Listening to each other is central, and being able to hear others' worship sharing and 'dump the day' are also important although we are aware that the voice drops when someone is trying to communicate something s/he finds difficult. Generally we feel better after the meditation and find the process very helpful, enabling us to make changes to our lives. Although no specific mention was made of the contribution our Light practice makes to the spiritual life of meetings, this is implicit.

We also find attending other Light groups rewarding, including Huddersfield and Pontefract, both being open groups. We appreciate the depth of experience in our group in introducing the Experiment in other Meetings and in running Experiment with Light Retreats.