

QUAKER FAITH & PRACTICE

Worship sharing and creative listening groups

12.21

Some Quaker meetings have discovered the value of small groups in developing the art of listening to God, to others, and to oneself. Such 'worship sharing' or 'creative listening' groups can provide a setting where all who take part are involved in the process of learning about themselves as well as about others. Here silence, too, can heal and restore. For Quakers this approach fits in naturally with our experience of worship.

The terms 'creative listening' and 'worship sharing' are often used interchangeably, the difference between them being perhaps that the latter comes closer to a meeting for worship with a more pronounced emphasis on the worshipping atmosphere.

Careful preparation is needed to establish the basis of such groups, and there are several publications and sources which may give help. Advice may also be had from Quaker Life.

Good practice would normally include: the limitation of the size of the group to a maximum of twelve; beginning and ending the meeting in silence; the requirement of absolute confidentiality; allowing space between contributions; speaking from personal experience; not commenting directly on what another has said; listening with attention; not lapsing into discussion.

It may be that some do not contribute in spoken words. There is a need to respect the possibility that members of the group may not wish to discuss further what they have begun to share in the group. These groups can be particularly useful in allowing us to explore deep and personal thoughts and experiences in a supportive and safe environment.