

## Session 1: April 15, 2018 – Introduction

### Handout 1.1 – Excerpts from Rex Ambler's *The Quaker Way*

[www.jacksonvillefriends.org/wp-content/uploads/21st-c\\_Quakerism/1.1\\_Ambler-statement.pdf](http://www.jacksonvillefriends.org/wp-content/uploads/21st-c_Quakerism/1.1_Ambler-statement.pdf)

"Quakers sit in silence because they want to know something that words cannot tell them. They want to feel something or become aware of something that they can really make connection with." (Ambler 11)

#### Group Agreement

Our commitment to safety, mutual respect, clarity, and confidentiality:

non-judgmental	empathy & patience	clarity
no argument	confidentiality	active listening to understand
mutual respect, civility	the right to pass	safe to share when uncomfortable with something
tolerance	I-language	

We are not seeking to come to agreement as a group. Instead, we are seeking to learn from each other's different discoveries, different approaches to the same concerns.

### Handout 1.2 – Quaker Queries & Worship Sharing Guidelines

[www.jacksonvillefriends.org/wp-content/uploads/21st-c\\_Quakerism/1.2\\_Worship-sharing.pdf](http://www.jacksonvillefriends.org/wp-content/uploads/21st-c_Quakerism/1.2_Worship-sharing.pdf)

**Queries** are questions that guide personal and group reflection on how our lives and actions are shaped by Love and Truth. The emphasis is on how to live a life more completely aligned with the life of the spirit.

**Worship sharing** is a method for speaking from our own experience instead of doing intellectual discussion or debate. We use I-statements to remind ourselves that we are speaking about our personal experience, not that of others. We listen in an open and accepting way to the thoughts and experiences of others, without making any critical judgments.

**First query:** What am I curious about that has moved me to take part in this study series? How do I feel about sharing my personal path of exploration with others?

#### Brief introduction to Quaker faith and practice

The phrase ***faith and practice*** identifies a key difference between Quakerism and many other religious traditions. Most traditional religions have ***belief systems***, usually specifically worded statements of what members are expected to agree to—and perhaps even "prove" that they believe. Instead of a belief system, Quakers depend upon a living, dynamic interaction between two realities: what we have learned to trust about sacred reality (faith), and the ways we try to live according to that faith in our day-to-day lives (practice).

#### Discernment practice

This is how we protect each other from delusional beliefs and selfish actions. We affirm that all people can receive direct and continuing revelation of truth, *the same truth*, even if each of us understands it differently. In Quaker discernment we bring personal leadings to fellow Friends for testing. Each person considers silently and shares whatever clarity has been received.

#### Homework

- *Practice* – Pay attention to times when insights or ideas come to you, and see if you can become more aware of how they come to you.
- *Reading* – Introduction and Chapter 1 of Ambler's *The Quaker Way*.
- *Query* – If you could describe your life and your work in terms of "faith" and "practice," how might you do that?