

Session 4: July 15, 2018 – Looking for God

Returning: Mike, Amanda, Betty, Wendy, Josh, Mary, Bruce, Tammy

We welcomed several newcomers. In the course of general introductory conversation, we realized that we represented a spectrum of world views. In a sense, we stumbled upon a conceptual boundary, one that challenges us to find a common way of articulating our truths.

That conceptual boundary distinguishes between what can be known *empirically* through science, and what may be known *intuitively* yet evades empirical observation or description. Experience in the latter realm is traditionally spoken of as “religious” or “spiritual” or “mystical.”

One of us spoke succinctly about the challenge of articulating what one knows inwardly: We have to make noises with our mouths to communicate ideas from our minds.

People tend to see that distinction as opposition, as if it were pointing at two mutually exclusive views of reality: science *versus* religion. However, the Quaker way shifts our focus away from conceptual concerns. Instead, it asks:

- “What is it we are coming together for?”
- “What reality do we long to share with a trusted gathering of Friends, even though we may experience and perceive and interpret and express it differently?”

One of us recalled the value in traditional religions of *collective ritual*. For example, anyone who attends any Roman Catholic mass knows to expect the same liturgy, which allows them to trust in the fellowship of other worshipers, which in turn opens the possibility of experiencing and sharing “the Christ.”

Query: What is it about the Quaker way that can serve us as collective rituals do those who have them?

Optional Reading – Thoughts on reframing & reclaiming the term “religion” delves into the history of this supposed opposition between science and religion. It also looks further to cite two writers who suggest how we might distinguish between the two types of knowing without defining them as opposites.