

# Deepening in Spirit, Growing in Love:

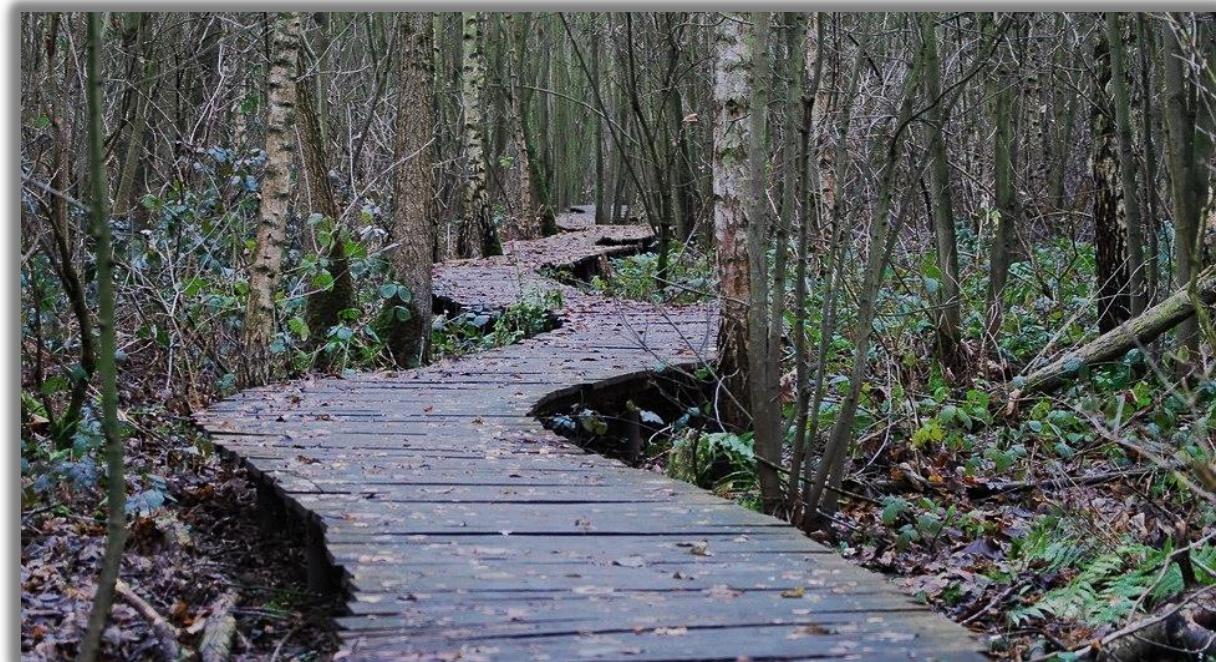
## Ways to Further Your Spiritual Experience in Pittsburgh Friends Meeting

There are probably as many reasons for attending Pittsburgh Friends Meeting as there are people who attend. For example, wanting to be a member of a community with peaceful values; to work for peace and justice in the world; to raise children who are compassionate and respectful of differences; to experience the sacredness of all creation; to “rest in the Presence”; to be part of a deeply rooted religious tradition based on the freedom and challenge of ongoing revelation; to be more loving.

Most people first come to the community as attenders of Sunday worship. On Sunday morning, we gather as a community for worship, hoping perhaps for insight or guidance from the Spirit. We don't try to steer the process in a particular direction, but simply wait in the Light for whatever arises in our awareness.

Some eventually find that one hour a week is not enough time for spiritual deepening and growing in love. Fortunately, there are many more pathways to deepening that are often embraced by Quakers, as described in this booklet. Some are long-standing, such as our Meetings for Healing. Others, like the EarthCare group, have emerged as we seek solace for our grief about damage done to the earth and its non-human creatures, and guidance for our attempts to heal that damage. Which pathways “speak to your condition”?

**For more information and to make suggestions for future versions of this document, please send email to [PFMdeepening@gmail.com](mailto:PFMdeepening@gmail.com)**



## Worship with Attention to Healing

**The Friendly Spiritual Healing group gathers on-line in Zoom at 7 p.m. every Tuesday evening**

The gathering is an hour-long meeting for worship with attention to healing and, like meeting for worship, begins with a period of silence. Then, individuals may speak and ask that those present “hold (someone) in the Light,” mentioning a concern, which may involve the (un)named person’s physical health, or some other problem or issue. There may also be a global or local issue.

A brief silence normally follows before another name or issue is voiced. The person (or persons – perhaps a couple or a family) may be members/attenders of our meeting, or friends or relatives of the speakers, or the speaker’s self. Names don’t have to be used.

Subsequently, a printed list of the names and concerns is mailed to those attenders who wish to receive it. New names and concerns that arise during the month between meetings are sent to an attenders’ email list. – *Nancy James*

**Contact:** All are welcome to attend this meeting at the zoom link in the weekly bulletin; the link does not change. Or send email to [PFMdeepening@gmail.com](mailto:PFMdeepening@gmail.com)

**Resources:**

Marcelle Martin, “Holding One Another in the Light” (Pendle Hill Pamphlet [#382](#), 2006)

John Calvi, “The Dance Between Hope and Fear” ([True Quaker Press](#), 2013)



## Worship with Attention to EarthCare

*Our contemplation guides our activism, and our activism expresses and manifests our values.  
--Father Richard Rohr*

The EarthCare Working Group of the Peace and Social Concerns Committee convened four meetings for worship with attention to EarthCare in 2019 (i.e., the Before Times). They were held on the solstice and equinox turning points of the solar calendar, and timed to coincide with sunset, in an effort to connect with natural rhythms.

Our last three meetings involved deep sharing of concerns related to climate change, mass extinctions, and our part in the web of life on earth. We come together asking “what is ours to do?” We give messages about not feeling adequate to meet the challenges, about balance and time, about sorrow and beauty and confusion, about bringing children into this world ... or not. And we wait in shared silence for leadings of the Spirit. We hope for discernment, clarity, comfort, insight, perhaps faith that all will be well, hope.

We’ve met in the meeting house, in the back yard, in a Friend’s home. We’ve listened to music and danced a sacred circle dance, spent an hour in worship, and shared refreshments and conversation. *–Pat Buddemeyer*

**Contact:** PFMdeepening@gmail.com

**Resources:**

Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW)

[www.quakerearthcare.org](http://www.quakerearthcare.org)

Quaker Institute for the Future (QIF)

[www.quakerinstitute.org](http://www.quakerinstitute.org)





## Spiritual Formation Groups

Spiritual Formation groups began at Pittsburgh Friends Meeting in the early 2000's. Traditionally, a group begins and ends with a retreat to acquaint participants with how it's done, and then to reflect on the first year of a group's existence. Initially, our groups went to Olney Friends Center in Barnesville, Ohio. Starting in 2005, these book-end retreats were held here in Pittsburgh, and several new groups were formed.

Mary Davidson shares her experience: "The purpose of spiritual formation is growth in the Spirit which, to me, has always meant a multitude of things: living closer to God, practicing more kindness and generosity, listening more often for inner guidance, and giving up attachments and addictions.

I have been a member of a spiritual formation group for more than 15 years! I get together with other Friends in the group monthly to share my spiritual struggles, insights and occasional epiphanies. We worship together and share individual check-ins on spiritual and everyday life. Often we share reflections on a common reading, a query, some music, a guided meditation or some other activity that calls to our hearts. Group members make a commitment to a regular spiritual practice such as meditation, mindfulness, walking, Dances of Universal Peace, intercessory prayer, service to others, care of the earth, or wherever the Spirit leads. Gently, we try to hold one another accountable."



And from Fran Quinlan: "Long before I attended Quaker meeting on a regular basis, I was a part of Spirit Led groups. For more than 40 years and in 4 cities, I have gathered with small groups to engage in the spiritual practice of deep listening and deep sharing. Deep sharing means to find your own authentic voice and learn to speak from that wisdom source surrounded by the deep listening of the others in the group. Deep listening means to open your heart to the sharing of others without comment or judgement. Sometimes the practice of deep listening opens the door to your own inner teacher. In these small groups, we have a facilitator or two for each gathering. The facilitator(s) think of a theme for our discernment and reflection.

We might have a homework assignment to draw, or write, or listen to music based on the theme. We might use a reading or quotes to inspire our thoughts. We often share a song, sit in silence, and share with each other from the deepest recesses of our spirits.

Being with people in this manner builds a circle of trust and healing where we find the heart's longing for deeper connections to the higher self in ourselves and others."

Nine people from our meeting attended the LEYM Spiritual Formation Opening Retreat led by Marcelle Martin in September 2021, on zoom. The goal of the retreat was "to help us enter more deeply the truth in our hearts and connect more profoundly with the divine Presence in ourselves and in all life." Out of this retreat, a new spiritual formation group has formed. We now have two active spiritual formation groups in our meeting.

**Contact:** New groups form as new people become interested. If you would like to know more about spiritual formation groups, please contact [PFMdeepening@gmail.com](mailto:PFMdeepening@gmail.com)

## Non-Theism Interest Group

The non-theism interest group has been meeting monthly since 2019. Despite its name, the group has welcomed people with all levels of theistic convictions and has discussed such topics as spiritual texts, prayer, mysticism, Humanism, and Quaker Queries and Testimonies.

**Contact:** [PFMdeepening@gmail.com](mailto:PFMdeepening@gmail.com)

### **Resources:**

Selden Smith, "The Atheist's Guide to Quaker Process: Spirit-Led Decisions for the Secular" ([Pendle Hill Pamphlet #472](#), 2021)



## Spiritual Friendship

“How is it with thee, Friend?”

This old Quaker greeting is for me at the heart of an intentional spiritual friendship. In the midst of our fast-paced, very active lives, it can be a real challenge to just sit with another Friend/friend and ask some variation of this question and to listen deeply to one another.

“To listen another’s soul into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be almost the greatest service that any human performs for another,” said Douglas Steere. I have found this to be true. I was in an intentional spiritual friendship with a meeting member many years ago, and am currently in one that has blossomed over the three years we have been meeting. A spiritual friendship shares much with a spiritual formation group. We schedule regular meetings together. We share worship together. We share our desire to live a more loving life in the Spirit; our challenges in living out the testimonies with compassion; an inspiring book, article or meditation we have found; insights and spiritual discoveries; encouragement for our spiritual practice, or whatever comes up for us.

Along with many other Friends, I have found an intentional spiritual friendship to be food for the journey of living out other relationships and leadings with more commitment, more compassion and more joy. – *Pat May*

**Contact:** PFMdeepening@gmail.com

### **Resources:**

Friends General Conference

<https://www.fgcquaker.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Spiritual-Friendship-FVFM.pdf>

Trish Roberts, “More Than Equals: Spiritual Friendships” (Pendle Hill Pamphlet [#345](#), 1999)

## Spiritual Companion Groups

Spiritual Companion Groups are small groups of 2-4 people who are each committed to experimenting with the Living Spirit in their lives. They each explore allowing the Spirit to guide and shape their daily life and record that experiment in a journal or notebook.

Spiritual Companion Groups meet regularly to exchange attention and witness how different this experiment manifests in each person's life. Tests of discernment include writing the insight or practice, saying it to others, hearing it reflected back in another's voice, and responding to others' feedback. Companions attend to what has arisen in an individual, which then reveals what is true for the group. In a typical meeting, each group member will have 20-30 minutes of focus time where they engage with Spirit (usually a combination of reflecting out loud and centering). Some part of that time is usually designated for the others to reflect back where they heard or saw the Divine at work.

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting has many Spiritual Companion Groups, some which are convened online and can welcome Friends from anywhere, and also can provide resources to groups that are self-organized.

**Contact:** PFMdeepening@gmail.com

**Resources:**

"Experience and the Experiment: Walking in the World as a Friend," a 20-minute [series](#) of three videos (youtube.com/user/ConscienceStudio)

"Companion Groups: Personal Practice Workshop Materials" ([Google document](#), 2021)

## The Meeting's Library

The Sarah Mapps Douglass Library is a wonderful place full of books—both fiction and nonfiction, Pendle Hill Pamphlets, *Friends Journal* and other Quaker periodicals, newsletters, Paulette Meier CDs, and other surprises for all ages and for all degrees of familiarity with Quakerism. The diversity in our library is growing both in the fiction and non-fiction sections, and for young people and adults. Some categories in the library are: Quakerism, Biography, Conduct of Life including couples relationships and family life, Spiritual Life, the Bible, Social Concerns (including a current collection of books on anti-racism, peace and non-violence, and Earthcare), poetry, novels, stories for younger people, and picture books. Our fiction section includes books by diverse authors for diverse readers.

The Library also houses some PFM archival documents, such as the monthly newsletters, visioning documents, and annual reports.

Please come and see what might interest you! - *Pat May*

**Contact:** [PFMdeepening@gmail.com](mailto:PFMdeepening@gmail.com)





## East End Cooperative Ministry Shelter Meals



Pittsburgh Friends Meeting has provided meals once a month since EECM opened its first, men's only, shelter in 1983 in the East Liberty Presbyterian Church. At the beginning, the shelter program was for overnight stays only, on a first-come, first-served basis. Dinnertime was at ten o'clock, and Meeting volunteers often didn't leave until nearly midnight.

In 2013, the shelter moved from East Liberty Presbyterian Church to EECM's new Community House at 6140 Station St in East Liberty. The shelter program now serves all clients regardless of gender, providing counseling and services to secure long-term housing in addition to shorter-term shelter and meals.

Though the pandemic has presented challenges to our shelter meal team, Pittsburgh Friends Meeting's commitment to helping provide hot, nutritious meals for the clients at EECM has continued throughout.

**Contact:** [PFMdeepening@gmail.com](mailto:PFMdeepening@gmail.com)

## Working Group Against Racism

The Working Group Against Racism (WGAR) gives Friends the opportunity to live out our testimony of equality by participating in anti-racist activities both inside the Meeting through workshops designed to identify institutional racism and implicit bias in our lives as individuals and as a community, as well as beyond the Meeting by joining with other faith groups in the Pittsburgh area in promoting justice and equity for all. WGAR is the oldest working group at PFM and is always eager to welcome Friends and Attenders with a concern for achieving and sustaining our goal of becoming an anti-racist faith community. Join us!



**"Mind that which is eternal which gathers  
your hearts together up to the Lord  
and lets you see that ye are written  
in one another's heart."**

**George Fox**

**Exploring Reparations Group.** As part of our focus in 2022, WGAR will be exploring what it would mean as a religious community and as individuals to participate in a "Culture of Reparations." We welcome all Members and Attenders of Pittsburgh Meeting to join us in this work as part of an ad hoc committee. Our work will include pooling committee members' knowledge and experience in this area; conducting additional research that would include meeting with community organizations led by POC; and outreach to Quaker Meetings and like-minded religious congregations that are active in the Reparations Movement to gain insight into best practices and local community initiatives and needs.

**Contact:** PFMdeepening@gmail.com

**Resources:** "A Letter from the Green Street Reparations Committee"

<https://www.pym.org/a-letter-from-green-streets-reparations-committee/>

## Help Us Start a New Group

Here are some ideas for other groups that would enrich our Meeting. Plus, if you have an idea not listed here, please send email to PFMdeepening@gmail.com.

### Quaker Fellows

The men attending an adult education session in February 2020 on Spiritual Formation Groups expressed interest in forming a spiritual group for men only. If such a group is formed, the participants can decide about its nature. In a similar group (named “Quaker Dudes”) in Annapolis Meeting, men get together monthly for a potluck and engage with one another to learn and grow spiritually, engage in social action, and plan projects to help the meeting and the community. – *Asghar Aghbar*

**Contact:** There is not currently a Quaker Fellows group at Pittsburgh Friends Meeting. If interested, please contact PFMdeepening@gmail.com

### Faithfulness Groups

Faithfulness Group participants provide each other ongoing accompaniment and mutual support in discerning divine guidance and being faithful.

- The purpose of the Faithfulness Group meetings is to help pay attention to God’s presence and activity in the life of those who are attempting to be faithful in service, witness, daily life, following a leading, or carrying out a ministry.
- During a typical two-hour session, two people will each have the focus of the group for about one hour. Each focus person presents something about her/his experience in their efforts to be receptive to the Spirit and faithfully respond to its leadings.
- The role of the group is to prayerfully listen and, as moved by the Spirit, to ask questions after each presentation that can help presenters explore more deeply their relationship to, awareness of, and response to God/Spirit in carrying out service, ministry, or witness.
- Ideally, the group meets on an ongoing basis; in rotation, each member of the group will have a regular opportunity to be the focus of the group’s prayerful attention. – *Marcelle Martin*

**Contact:** There is not currently a Faithfulness Group at Pittsburgh Friends Meeting. If interested, please contact PFMdeepening@gmail.com

**Resources:**

<https://awholeheart.com/faithfulness-groups/>

## Light Groups (Rex Ambler)

Experiment with Light is a Quaker practice based on early Friends' discoveries. It was devised in 1996 by Quaker and theologian Rex Ambler, following his study of early Friends' writings. At the core of the practice is a meditation that guides Experimenters through the following steps:

- Mind the Light (pay attention to what's going on inside you, particularly where there's something that makes you feel uncomfortable).
- Open your heart to the truth (don't run away from anything that's difficult or that you don't want to face, but keep a little distance from it: 'be still and cool in thy mind').
- Wait in the Light (be patient, let the Light show you what is really going on, ask questions if what is offered to you isn't clear or you want to know more, and wait for the answers to come, don't try to explain).
- Submit (accept and welcome the information or images, and the insights, dreams and perceptions that may come later, and allow them to show the truth).



Experiment with Light is often practiced in Light groups that have sprung up in many places, but there is not currently a group at PFM. – *Pat Buddemeyer*

**Contact:** There is not currently a Light Group at Pittsburgh Friends Meeting. If interested, please contact [PFMdeepening@gmail.com](mailto:PFMdeepening@gmail.com)

### **Resources:**

<http://www.experiment-with-light.org.uk/about.htm>

Rex Ambler, [Light to Live By: an exploration in Quaker spirituality](#) (2002)

*Travel light.*

*Share the Light.*

*Live light.*

*Be the Light.*

--Yogi Bagan