

# Guidelines for Meetings with Worship Groups under their Care

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## **What Does It Mean to Have a Worship Group “Under the Care of the Meeting?”**

Quakerism tends to be a grass roots faith. Worship groups have been known to spring up spontaneously, and grow into vital meetings on their own. But the process of germination and growth is helped enormously by the active involvement of an established meeting which takes the new worship group “under its care.”

So what is involved in caring for a worship group? Here are some guidelines for meetings considering this ministry opportunity.

1. Always remember that new worship groups are vital to the future of Quakerism. Established meetings should look for opportunities to plant new worship groups and should joyfully welcome such opportunities when they arise. Sometimes meetings worry that they will be weakened if the energy of some of their members is diverted into a new worship group. Experience shows that the opposite is true. The energy of the newly planted is more likely to spill over into the parent meeting and revitalize it. Any leading to start a new worship group needs to be seen as a sign of life and vigor and should be lovingly responded to.
2. If your meeting is approached about helping to start a new worship group, either by one of your own members or by a Friend or Friends from outside, the first step is to appoint a clearness committee. The clearness committee would meet with the Friend or Friends making the request to explore what is being proposed and why. Remember that this may be an important opportunity for the meeting.
3. If the new group has already been established, the clearness committee will want to explore with the Friend or Friends what is being requested of your meeting.
4. The next step is to explore whether there are at least two or three other people who are willing to help establish or nurture the new group, depending upon what’s being requested or needed. These might be people who are willing to be part of the group or meeting members who are willing to expend energy in helping it get started and nurture it while remaining part of your meeting. Once this group is identified, the clearness committee meets again, to help the volunteer Friends clarify their mission and work.

The clearness committee will want to consult your yearly meeting's *Faith and Practice* to see what procedures and processes it lays out for new groups and meetings having such a group under its care.

5. If the leadings are clear and the group is ready to proceed, the clearness committee recommends to the meeting for business that your meeting take the new worship group under its care.
6. Your meeting should then prepare the Friends who are starting or nurturing the group advice and counsel as needed. This should include asking the Friends to give periodic reports on the group's development. Friends who have been asked to provide nurture should visit regularly with the new worship group.
7. Friends from the worship group should plan to attend meeting for business at the parent meeting, and report regularly to the parent meeting on their activities and concerns.
8. Membership in a worship group is usually held by the parent meeting and marriages taken under the care of the parent meeting. Usually only established monthly meetings are able to exercise this kind of semi-legal authority.
9. When the worship group is strong enough to manage its own business independently, it may ask the parent meeting for recognition as a monthly meeting in its own right. The process is often laid out in a yearly meeting's *Faith and Practice*.

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