

Guidance for Light groups

These are notes to support the 'How to set up a Light group' session on an Experiment with Light workshop and are suggestions/ recommendations based on the experience of a wide range of groups.

Workshop

Experience suggests that a Light group is more likely to be successfully sustained if a core group of Friends from the Meeting (or Area Meeting, if it is to be an Area Meeting group) have experienced a workshop together. If you would like to arrange a workshop, please contact potential facilitators through the website: www.experiment-with-light.org.uk

Relationship with Meeting(s)

Friends not immediately drawn to the Light group may feel excluded once it is set up. They may even perceive it as divisive, so it is wise to bring the idea to the Meeting as a whole at the very beginning, or at least to consult Elders. This enables any misunderstandings about Experiment with Light to be dealt with, and to hear the objections of any Friend who is opposed (which might particularly be the case if the Light group is 'closed' – see below). Where the establishment of the group has not been before the whole Meeting (and even where there has been Elders' support but no business meeting minute) sometimes conflict has arisen.

When a Light group runs with Meeting's minuted agreement, the spiritual life of the Meeting is enriched. This also can apply when the Light group's existence is welcomed on resolution of conflict (which is the usual outcome when that happens – usually recorded in a minute). This would be expected when the spiritual lives of the Friends in that Meeting are enriched. It is also recommended that the Light group reports to its Meeting periodically.

Things to consider and decide

Consider as a group what feels helpful for you as a group. Remember you can review and change as you go along. It is helpful once you have agreed how you feel you would like to run as a group, you also agree a date or point in the future when you will meet to discuss how you each feel it is going.

The group to agree its protocol

Members will need time to learn to trust each other and feel that they are not being judged, so the strong recommendation is to conduct the worship-sharing under the discipline of *Quaker Faith and Practice* 12.21 4th and 5th paragraphs, especially speaking only from one's own experience in the meditation, listening with attention, absolute confidentiality, and no commenting on what anyone says in the Sharing session.

Experience suggests that when Friends do comment directly on another's sharing, it stops the process for the person who is sharing. It is helpful to allow space between contributions, allowing them to arise out of and fall back into silence. Asking for clarification of anything that is not clear after the Friend has finished sharing can be helpful, but lapsing into discussion is not.

Where to meet

If at the Meeting House, the Light group may be more identified with the Meeting and seem more like a Meeting activity. If at Friends' homes, consider whether to move around rather than be reliant on one Friend. It is possible the Friend hosting may feel less able to fully participate if they feel they are providing 'hospitality'. If the idea of different venues is agreed it will require strong lines of communication with Meeting and with Friends who may for some reason miss one particular Light group meeting, so that they are not excluded inadvertently.

How often to meet

For example twice a month means that if a Friend misses one meeting, it is not too long until the next opportunity to Experiment. Monthly may mean some members feel better able to commit to being part of the group. Any agreement about frequency can be regularly reviewed.

Regularity

Consider whether to fix regular dates, e.g. first and third Tuesday/second and fourth Wednesday/first Thursday and third Friday (accommodates Friends with other commitments) mean that the co-ordination of diaries doesn't become complex.

Timing of meeting

To meet in the day excludes some working Friends, but an evening may not suit retired or older Friends so the group needs to time its meetings according to Friends' circumstances. A Light group will usually take about two and a half or three hours (see form of Experimenting below).

Closed or freeflowing group?

Whether the group will be 'closed', that is, not open to newcomers once it has started Experimenting, or 'freeflowing', that is open to anyone from the Local or Area Meeting. This may be something that the Meeting decides as part of the process of the Light group being established.

The advantage of a closed group is that Friends can develop very close understandings and share very deeply. The disadvantage is the appearance of exclusivity.

The advantage of a freeflowing group is that it is inclusive. The disadvantage is that when newcomers join, Friends have to spend time explaining the process. It may also be necessary to use a different version of the Experiment for newcomers (see below).

The group might decide to be closed for a period, say 12 months, then open for newcomers to join and become closed again for another 12 months.

The following Section is feedback from Light groups about what has worked well for them.

Consider whether responsibility for the running of the group should be shared between its members. One model is that a different Friend hosts each

meeting and organises – but not necessarily makes - tea and coffee (brings ingredients etc if not provided at venue), sets room out, chooses version of Experiment, starts the process – see below 'clearing', starting cd or reading the Experiment.

Form of Experimenting:

- Start with Friends telling each other about their day/week/recent life: this **clears** what is less important from the issues which may need to be considered in the Light. If the group is large, this can be quite brief – the host invites the contributions. Could have tea with this part of the meeting. (20 mins)
- Meditation from cd/tape or read (40 mins)
- Time alone in silence – walk outside, draw, write, or just sit (not reading). Some groups have tea as this starts or draws to a close. (15-20 mins, or until everyone is back in the group and still again)
- Worship sharing (as above - *QFP*12.21 4th&5th paras). How many in each sharing group depends on the size of the group. Up to 8 can work, but obviously it takes more time the more Friends there are to share. 4, 5 or 6 is ideal. 3 is ok. 2 may be too small on a regular basis. If the Light group is large, Friends can divide into smaller sharing groups, which may remain as set for all Light group meetings, or be decided on each occasion. If divided into smaller sharing groups, it is helpful to come back together for final reflection of each other's experience, silence and stillness. If there a number of sharing groups the time allocated for sharing is best agreed before the tape starts, so the full group can come together finally around the same time. Sharing in one group can be as long as it takes, bearing in mind any agreements made about how long the group meeting should normally last. (It would be unusual to complete the sharing in under 40 mins.)
- Choose the host for the next meeting and deal with any admin matters.

Version of the meditation (and see resources handout)

There are three different versions of the meditation on the individual, each with a long and a short version. There is also a meditation on the group and a meditation on the world. As Friends Experiment longer, they tend to find they need fewer words. There is one version with only bells to mark each stage (and no words) for very experienced groups.

Finally...

The main thing is to agree between you what you would like to do – only you know what will suit your Meeting and your Friends. The silent time alone immediately after the meditation and the way in which the worship sharing is conducted are, however, important: being too casual is likely to get in the way of the Light.

Please do feedback your experience – we'd love to hear what works for your group.

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