First Month: Vocal Ministry, Silence, Prayer

[A]s many candles lighted and put in one place do greatly augment the light and make it more to shine forth, so when many are gathered together into the same life, there more of the glory of God and his powers appears, to the refreshment of each individual. *Robert Barclay, 1671*

Might part of the vocation of the Society of Friends be to keep silence alive as a service for the world?
Kathryn Damiano, 2000

Pray without ceasing; give thanks in all circumstances…. *1 Thessalonians 5:17-18a*

Advices from *FAITH AND PRACTICE* 1993 (Worship)

The heart of the life of the Religious Society of Friends is the Meeting for Worship. It calls for us to offer ourselves, body, mind, and soul for the doing of God's will. Worship is the adoring response of the heart and mind to the influence of the Spirit of God. It stands neither in forms nor in the formal disuse of forms; it may be with or without words, but it must be in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). We recognize the value of silence, not as an end, but as a means toward the attainment of the end, which is communication with God, and fellowship with one another.

In all our Meetings for Worship, we gather in a spirit of prayerful obedience to God, with a willingness to give as well as to receive. In speech or in silence, each person contributes to the Meeting. Worshiping God together, we strengthen one another, and our bodies and minds are refreshed in the Life of the Spirit. Our daily lives are linked with the Meeting for Worship, the Meeting for Worship with our daily lives.

Friends are encouraged to give adequate time for study, meditation and prayer, and other ways of preparing for worship, and to arrive at Meeting promptly with an open and expectant spirit. During the Meeting for Worship, some people may feel moved to speak, to share an insight, to pray, to praise. When we feel led to speak, we should do so, clearly and simply. When another speaks, we should listen with an open spirit, seeking the thought behind the words and holding the speaker in love. After a message has been given, Friends should have time to ponder its meaning and to search themselves before another speaks.

Queries

- How do we prepare our hearts and minds for meeting for worship?
- Do we meet for worship in expectant waiting for the promptings of the Divine Spirit? How do we carry this inspiration into our daily living?
- How do we take care that our vocal ministry is not lightly given? Do we offer vocal ministry under the leading of the Spirit, in the simplicity and sincerity of truth?
- As we listen, or as we speak, are we guided by the inward Light and sensitive to one another's needs? Are we careful not to speak at undue length or beyond our call?
- How do we bring stillness into our daily lives?
- Do we set aside times of quiet for openness to the Spirit? How do we come to know an inward stillness amid the activities of daily life?
- Are we open to new Light, from whatever source it may come?