



AN INTRODUCTION TO SOME QUAKER TERMS & PRACTICES

Below is a very brief introduction to some Quaker terminology and practices that you may hear referred to around campus. There is more information available online, and we hope that any family who wishes to learn more will join Friends Council on Education members and Head of School Rodney Glasgow for the Families New to Quaker Education evening on Monday, Sept. 30 (via Zoom) at 7:00 pm.

What is Meeting for Worship at Sandy Spring Friends School?

At Sandy Spring Friends School, we intentionally provide our students time and space for silent reflection in their busy lives. Students participate in Meeting for Worship at least once a week during the school day. There are also opportunities for parents and families to participate in Meeting for Worship throughout the year. Meeting for Worship is integral to the spiritual practice of the Religious Society of Friends and is at the core of our school. Our form of worship is based primarily on silence. It is a rich and living silence which connects us to each other and to our Guide by leading us to a deeper, more centered inner place. All present share equally in the service. Participants in a Meeting wait in silent anticipation, seeking the truth by listening for the “still small voice of God.” Meetings can be spent entirely in silent reflection, or students or adults may share a message. At the conclusion, the silence is broken by shaking hands with neighbors.

During Meeting for Worship, it is appropriate to hold others in the Light in times of joy, celebration, and life transition. The concept of “light” is essential to Quaker practice, referring to the spirit or the divine light. Our school song, The George Fox song, encourages people to “walk in the Light.” At SSFS, holding a person in the Light can mean lifting them up in your thoughts, praying for them, or silently and intentionally sending positive energy and love.

See the “What is Quaker Meeting for Worship?” video on our website (Who We Are > A Friends School Education), or visit www.quakerspeak.com and search for the video on “What to Expect in Quaker Meeting for Worship.”

What are the “SPICES”?

You may hear students and staff at SSFS refer to the Quaker “SPICES.” This is an acronym that stands for six of the most common and enduring Quaker testimonies: **S**implicity, **P**eace, **I**ntegrity, **C**ommunity, **E**quality, and **S**tewardship.

Who is a “clerk,” and what do they do?

A clerk refers to someone who presides at meetings for worship with a concern for business, or the head of a committee. A clerk of a meeting for business helps move the agenda along, calls on people to speak, and helps guide the group to reach a “sense of the meeting” (see below). Meetings for business may also have recording and reading clerks.

What is meant by the “sense of the meeting”?

In an effort to seek unity, Quakers strive to reach a “sense of the meeting,” rather than voting. Once a topic has been discussed and the clerk feels that a decision has been reached by the group, they state the sense of the meeting as a minute for the meeting’s approval. No vote is taken. Unity is sought, but if it is not attained to a reasonable degree, the clerk can hold the item over for reconsideration at a later time. The clerk must decide on the degree of unity required, basing that judgement on the importance of the subject and the experience and wisdom of those who speak to it.