

## Decision-Making

*We have sometimes been labelled ‘peculiar’ for our form of worship - sitting in silence until a participant is led by the Spirit to offer a spoken message. But Quakers have an additional peculiarity that is less known. When our organisation needs to make a decision, we will never vote on it. Nor do we have a leader who imposes a decision. So how do we find our way forward? We find our way by listening to each other—and listening for God’s guidance for our Quaker community.*

<https://www.lancasterpaquakers.org/new-blog>

As a community making decisions together, Quakers seek the “Sense of the Meeting,” through a process of communal discernment. They do not vote. This practice of communal discernment is a long-standing practice among Friends everywhere and is the way communities discern the will of God for themselves. This is why there is not an overly top-down hierarchy for Friends. The goal of all Quaker yearly meetings is to support, nurture, and protect the discernment of each meeting.

*Here is how the American Friends Service Committee describe this process:*

Quaker decision-making is grounded in the belief that when several people come together to labour in the Spirit, they can discern a truth that exceeds the reach of any one individual. In making decisions Friends do not simply vote to determine the majority view, but rather they seek unity about the wisest course of action. Over time Friends have developed ways to conduct meetings that nurture and support this corporate discernment process.

To be effective, Quaker process requires that everyone come ready to participate fully by sharing their experiences and knowledge, by listening respectfully to the experiences and knowledge brought by others, and by remaining open to new insights and ideas. This powerful combination of grounded experience and spiritual openness, rationality and faith, allows a deeper truth to emerge. When everyone present is able to recognize the same truth, the meeting has reached unity. The clerk’s job is to sense emerging truth and labour with those present to put that truth into words.

### **A Selection of Quaker Speak Videos on Decision-Making**

[How to Clerk a Quaker Business Meeting](#)

[How Quakers Make Decisions \(It’s Not Just Consensus!\)](#)

[Why Quakers Value Process Over Outcome](#)

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### **Further Reading**

[With a Tender Hand: A Resource Book for Eldership and Oversight](#) by Zélie Gross  
[Spiritual Discernment](#) – Pendle Hill Pamphlet #305 by Patrica Loring

[Quaker Process for Friends on the Benches](#) by Mathilda Navias

[Beyond Majority Rule](#) by Michael Sheeran

Source: [Quaker Decision-Making](#)