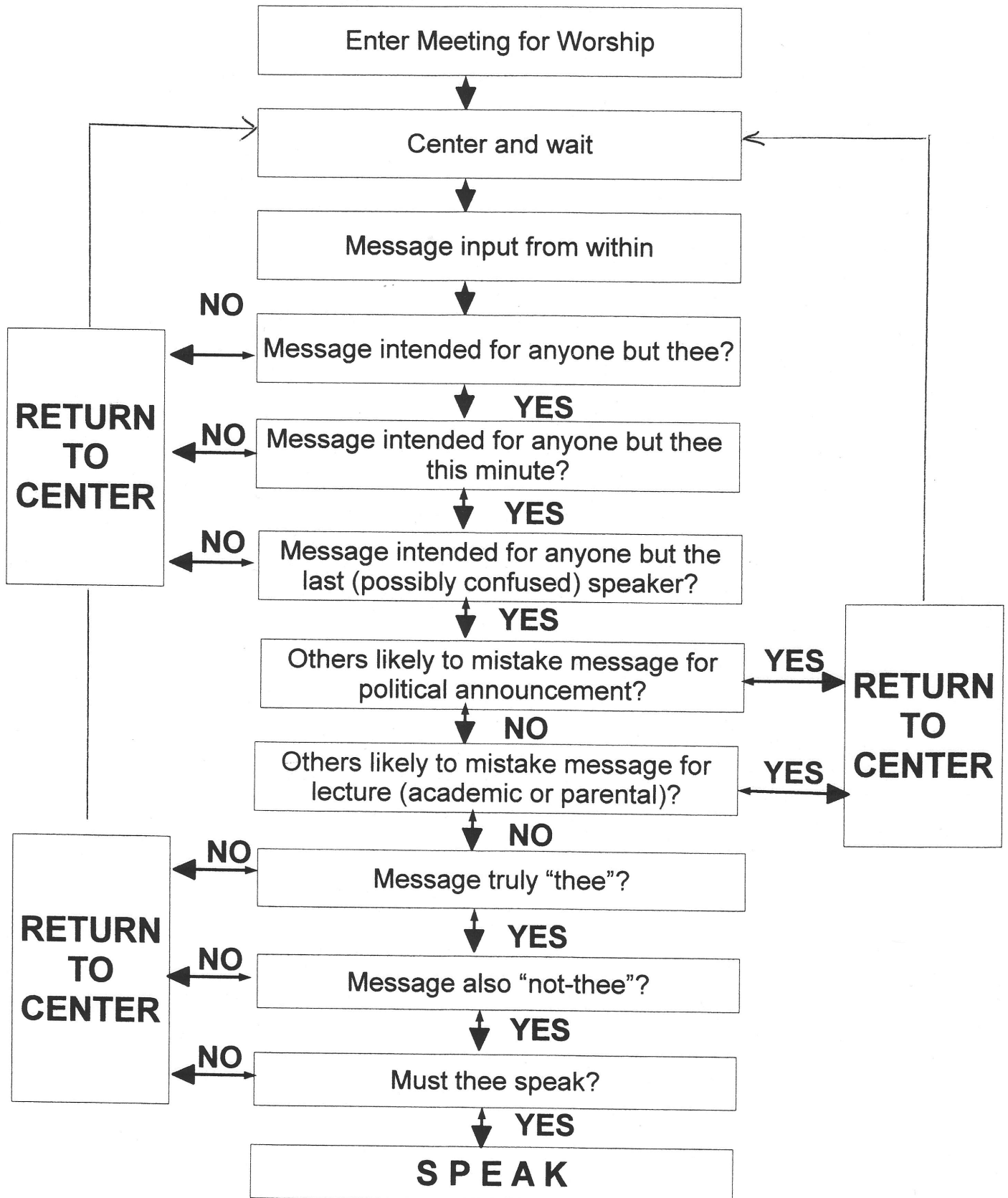


# SPEAKING INTO THE SILENCE

by Stanley Chambers & Carolyn Myall



# Ten Commandments for Speaking in Worship

By Jim Flory

Twin Cities Friends Meeting

1. Thou shalt not speak til all have had time to settle into the silence, unless thy message might speak to the little ones who leaveth early.
2. Thou shalt not speak immediately following another worshiper's message, thus violating the 3 minute, 33 second minimum required message reflection period.
3. Thou shalt curb thy impulse to judge, correct, respond directly to, or in any other obvious way, point out what thou perceiveth to be the error in the previous spoken message. Thou canst find time for discussion outside of Meeting if thou searchest diligently.
4. Thou shalt not speak out of vanity, but in all humility. Remember that a parable or a story often melts the heart.
5. Thou shalt not immediately rush thy strongly felt insights and religious experience into spoken words. Mystical experience tendeth to be ineffable requiring much time before it can be communicated, and then perhaps only poetically.
6. Thou shalt not ramble on and on when thou speakest without the danger of thy message falling on unlistening ears. Consider the simple elegance of the arrow as it flies swiftly and surely to the target.
7. If many have spoken, thou shalt carefully weigh in thy mind the possibility that thy message is an early arrival intended for the next meeting for worship.
8. Thou shalt not turn thy meetings for worship into encounter groups or Hyde Park political gatherings.
9. Thou shalt not speak more than once per meeting. If thou findest this temptation to persist, consider giving thy messages more time to feather before thou pusheth them from their nest.
10. Thou shalt disregard all previous commandments if thou art so led.

## Speaking from the Silence in Quaker Meeting for Worship

*Thoughts from members of Minneapolis Friends Meeting*

*The quotes below were taken from interviews videotaped in 2011 by David Woolley and Terry Kayser. You can watch the video online at [minneapolisfriends.org/video](http://minneapolisfriends.org/video)*

**Barbara Coffin:** I think it was Douglas Steere, one of our deep-thinking Quakers, who said that you come to meeting with no intention to speak and no intention not to speak, and you wait until it seems that you must. And the way I have experienced it is that I feel some thought come to me, and I just let it sit there. And then I feel my heart start to beating, and I say, Now really, is that right? And then finally I just feel, yeah, I've gotta say this. And sometimes that's right and sometimes that's wrong. And sometimes after I've spoken I think, Oh, I shouldn't have said that. And then sometimes after I think that, someone will come to me after meeting and say, I really felt what you said was good. So it's a matter of judgment and what happens.

**Chester McCoy:** Typically what I'll do, you know, I sit and it becomes more and more seasoned in my mind. Then a strange thing happens - I feel this rocking back and forth motion. You know, almost like, okay, should I really be giving this message? Is this something that the spirit wants to come out of me and deliver it, and who is it intended for? And when I can't stand it anymore I stand up and I speak the message that I've received, and then I settle back into the silence. There's times when I feel moved to speak and I don't. And another strange thing happens. Someone else speaks about what I was thinking about speaking about.

**George Watson:** When something comes into your mind or spirit that you think might be an important message, you stop and think: Do I generally speak too much? And if you realize that you're in danger of speaking too much, you may decide against uttering it at that time. But if you don't speak very often or if you feel very strongly about what it is that you have to say, then you go ahead and speak.

**Caitlyn Wright:** I usually feel like the times I've gotten up to speak, which hasn't been often, but I feel like I notice it as kind of an anxiety. Like I'll be sitting with something and I'll just be kind of preoccupied with it somehow, and I feel like I have some physical experience of anxiety. And then I think, well maybe, maybe I should say something now. You know, I have thoughts to myself that I might be excited about sharing with someone after meeting, but even in those times I feel like the feeling of it is kind of different. I have a hard time public speaking, so that's part of what it is. But that's how I kind of know that there's something that I really want to say, because I get scared. And then when I do speak I'm kind of scared and maybe don't have a lot of presence of mind at the time, but then when I sit down I feel kind of relieved.

**Sigurd Hoppe:** What's important to me is to make sure that I understand my motives first so I don't get sidetracked into trivial things that have nothing to do with the meeting. And sometimes other people stand up and say the same things before I get to say them, and I'm always pleased and tickled when that happens, you know. But the important thing is to sense what's present for the body of the meeting. And that's what I try to assess, and want to differentiate from any purely personal issues.

**Bird Anderson:** In speaking out of the silence I would say something comes to you that is a thought, or a feeling, that calls your experience into the larger context and is something that you want, or you're moved to share with others. It's not always a comfortable place, but it is never something I've regretted. And sometimes you sort of figure it out in speaking. You know, often the voice that comes to you is one you're listening to as well. It's not something necessarily that you know exactly where it's going, but my experience is that it always has meaning.

**Amy Rodquist-Kodet:** For me, there was something I'd been thinking about, and it wouldn't go away. It kind of just stayed with me. And then I got this sensation in my body, physically, kind of between nausea and just this warm heat in my chest. And it felt like, yeah, I think there is something here that isn't just for me, that there might be something bigger. And so I stood up, and I found it helpful to close my eyes. So I closed my eyes and just said what was on my heart, and then I sat down.

**Jonathan Kodet:** I haven't spoken out of the silence in a meeting for worship. I've really enjoyed the silence, that experience. And I haven't felt, or, I don't know, had a message that I felt would rise to the level of sharing it with everyone else. Something that could improve the quality of the silence.