

# Faith and Practice

of  
Baltimore Yearly Meeting  
of the  
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Proposed Revisions  
2010 Draft

Baltimore Yearly Meeting  
17100 Quaker Lane  
Sandy Spring, Maryland 20860

**Cover:** Each meeting within Baltimore Yearly Meeting is invited to craft a small quilt square. These squares are assembled and adorn the skirt of the Clerk's table at Annual Session. If your meeting is not included, please obtain a square at the BYM office and design one to add to our collection. It would be nice to have every meeting represented.

## Preface

*Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all, with the measure of light which is pure and holy may be guided; and so in the Light walking and abiding, these things may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.*

*The [Quaker] Elders at Balby: 1656*

This manual of Faith and Practice of Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends is composed of statements of faith and of advice on organization and practice considered relevant for this present time. It is issued in the expectation, however, that another generation of seekers on the road toward Truth will make changes.

The Baltimore Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice Revision Committee began a process of wide consultation in 2002 with the nomination of five Friends to carry on this important work. Through publication both on the Yearly Meeting web site, through workshops held at Annual Sessions, and through consultation with individual members of many monthly meetings the revised Queries, Advices and Voices are visibly in the process of review.

While this printed volume might suggest that the process is complete, that is in no way the intent of the Committee. It just happens that publishing our work in this manner is significantly less expensive than is making photocopies. This present book is our current 'State of the Committee' report and will hopefully be followed by updates reflective of your own comments and suggestions.

It is certain that each of the Advices, each of the Queries, and each of the Voices is going to have different meanings to each individual. This **draft** copy is just that, a **draft**. All this is presented in a very different format than what is in our current Faith and Practice. We hope that it will be meaningful and help Friends understand each individual's role within the Religious Society of Friends.

The origin of the 'voices' are specified in a new section on the sources and we hope that readers will seek out the original material. Many items refer to key concepts such as 'the inner light' and 'that of God in everyone.' Words which have particular meaning in the Quaker community are explained in the Glossary.

Our purpose is to introduce the reader to our faith and our practice: what inspires us; our images of God; our ways of conducting our work and worship in community, in unity. We welcome your interest in this work, and encourage you to give us your advice.

## Introductory Statement

The Religious Society of Friends holds as the basis of its faith the belief that God endows each human being with a measure of the Divine Spirit. The gift of God's presence and the light of God's truth have been available to all people in all ages.

Friends find this manifestation of God exemplified in Jesus of Nazareth. The Divine Spirit became so wholly Jesus' own that his teaching, example, and sacrificial life reveal the will of God to humanity.

As within ourselves we become conscious of the same Spirit (the "Inward Light" or the "Christ Within"), and as we submit ourselves to its leadings, we also are enabled to live in conformity to the will of God.

Love, the outworking of the Divine Spirit, is the most potent influence that can be applied in human affairs, and this application of love to the whole of life is seen by the Society of Friends as the core of the Christian gospel.

The immanence of God implies that all persons are children of the Divine and brothers and sisters one of another. All have the capacity to discern spiritual truth, and to hold direct communion with God. No mediator, rite, or outward sacrament is a necessary condition of worship. Inspiration and guidance may be realized through meeting with others in group worship where vision is made clearer by the shared experience of those present.

The Society of Friends has no formal creed but seeks continuing revelation. Over the years Friends have made many attempts to set down the nature of their faith. Some of these statements, like the letter of George Fox to the Governor of

Barbados in the 17th century or the Richmond Declaration drawn up by one group of Friends in the late 19th, have been grounded in Christian orthodoxy. Others, like the writings of Isaac Pennington in the 17th century or of Thomas Kelly in the 20th, have a close kinship with the insights of mystics of many ages and many religious traditions. None speaks for all Friends or for all times. We are a religious fellowship based on common religious ideals and experiences rather than on creed or liturgy.

Each person must prayerfully seek individual guidance and must follow the Light found within. Each will be helped by studying the developing interpretations of God in the Bible and the ideas of the great spiritual leaders of all faiths. Help may be found as one ponders the life and the teaching of Jesus.

We welcome to our fellowship all seekers who in spirit and in truth try to find and follow the will of God and who are in sympathy with the principles and practices of Friends.

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Note: Sections in **bold** are included in this draft. Other sections are being worked and will appear in subsequent drafts.

# I. Living Our Faith

## 1. A Brief History

The seventeenth century was a time of political and religious ferment in the British Isles. The formalism of the Church of England had become a hindrance to many spiritual seekers, and new sects were coming into being. The Church itself was in some confusion between Puritan and anti-Puritan tendencies. In mid-century the Puritans prevailed, both politically and religiously. They dethroned and beheaded King Charles I and instituted the Commonwealth, which ruled the British domain for more than a decade. It may have been significant in the religious controversies that the “authorized” version of the Bible, the so-called “King James” Bible of 1611, had made the Scriptures available to more English-speaking people than ever before.

George Fox, who initiated the gathering of the people later called Quakers, was born in Leicestershire in 1624. He was an unusually serious boy. As a teenager he troubled his parents by refusing to attend Sunday services, preferring to spend the time in Bible reading and solitary meditation. From the age of nineteen, George Fox went on frequent walking journeys over the midland counties of England, talking about spiritual matters with those he met along the way. Clergymen were often confounded by his incisive interpretation of scripture, and could provide little guidance for the young man. After much searching and despair, he heard an inner voice that said:

*There is One, even Christ Jesus, who can speak to thy condition.*

Here and there he found kindred spirits, and he continued to experience “openings,” such as:

*I saw the infinite love of God. I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, and an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that I also saw the infinite love of God, and I had great openings.*

(George Fox, 1647)

And again:

*[I saw] that every [one] was enlightened by the Divine Light of Christ . . . and that they that believed in it came out of condemnation and came into the Light of Life, and became children of it.*

(George Fox, 1648)

Such revelations led to a belief in a “seed” of the Divine in every human being, usually called by Friends the Inner Light, or the Light of Christ. Fox taught that those who led their lives in strict obedience to God’s will would come to “walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone.” No clergyman, no intercessor, no liturgy or ritual was required. The only need was to experience the Divine Presence nothing else mattered. That Presence became so real to the early Quakers that they marveled that “Christ has come to teach his people himself.” They also discovered that divine revelation came equally to women, men, and children. Some of the most active and intrepid ministers were women.

At first Fox and his followers called themselves Children of Truth, or Children of Light, or sometimes Friends of Truth. Because of persecutions they were often in courts and prisons. Judge Bennett of Derby first dubbed them Quakers in 1650 because in their earnestness they bade him tremble. So they came to be known as Quakers, although they eventually adopted the name Society of Friends, or the Religious Society of Friends. The name “Quaker“ first given in derision has become a badge of honor and is used interchangeably with “Friends.”

On a journey northward in 1652, George Fox climbed Pendle Hill in Lancashire near the border of Yorkshire and saw a vision of “a great people to be gathered.” He continued northward about thirty miles to Preston-Patrick Chapel. There he found the people, congregations of “seekers”, who had been gathering for worship. These people, including their ministers, responded to Fox, and within two years he had sparked the emergence from the area of more than sixty Quaker ministers, men and women, on fire with an old faith become new. Within two more years their gospel had been carried to every county of England, to Wales, to Scotland, to Ireland, to several countries of Europe, and to such distant places as Constantinople and the American colonies.

Margaret Fell, wife of Judge Fell, was “convinced of the truth” in 1652. Swarthmore Hall, the Fells’ home on the northwest coast of England, became a meeting place and refuge from persecution for George Fox and other Quaker ministers. Margaret Fell corresponded extensively with Friends everywhere and helped sustain the equality of women with men in the Religious Society of Friends.

### Early Quaker Testimonies

The testimonies of Friends are a witness by which principles of the Society are translated into a mode of behavior sometimes contrary to the prevailing customs or law. While some of the testimonies adopted in the vastly different culture of seventeenth century England may seem quaint or obscure now, others are as vital today as when they were adopted. Some testimonies emerged later as Friends responded to conditions in a changing world which tended to deny the presence of God in every person or in which complete truthfulness or openness was being avoided. That every individual possesses a seed of the divine is the basis for most Quaker testimonies. In addition to the testimony against slavery, there are others which should be noted here.

One of the first testimonies articulated by Fox and adopted by early Quakers was that of equality of men and women before God. The testimony was evident in their marriage ceremony where both parties recited identical vows, their encouragement of women as ministers of the gospel, and the setting up of separate women's meetings for business. The latter was resisted by many at first, but ultimately adopted because it was felt that women would not speak in a mixed meeting. Women, along with the men, suffered imprisonment in the early years for their adherence to the testimonies and sometimes for simply having meetings for worship. Although women Friends have been recognized ministers since the inception of Quakerism, the testimony of equality of both sexes has been fragile. The separate women's meetings were rarely equal to the men's, and paralleled Quaker women's status in their homes. The actions of the women's business meetings were subject to final approval by the men while the men's business meetings controlled the money and property. Inspired by the original testimony, Quaker women in the nineteenth century rose to the forefront of the antislavery, women's suffrage, and temperance movements, often evoking the express disapproval of their meetings. In Lucretia Mott's words:

*Let women then go on not asking as a favor, but claiming as right, the removal of all the hindrances to her elevation in the scale of being let her receive encouragement for the proper cultivation of all her powers, so that she may enter profitably into the active business of life. . . . Then, in the marriage union, the independence of the husband and wife will be equal, their dependence mutual, and their obligations reciprocal.*

Lucretia Mott, 1849

In response to a plea that "the entire equality of women be recognized," the Hicksite branch of Baltimore Yearly Meeting in 1870 restructured its committees to allow fuller participation

by women. In 1890 the Orthodox branch deemed separate women's meetings to be no longer needed, and by 1903 the Hicksite branch had also merged the separate meetings for business.

It was the practice in the 17th century for men to remove their hats in the presence of their social superiors and even of their peers, but not of their inferiors. Friends refused hat honor in the presence of anyone, a practice which caused them much trouble, especially when they went before the king with their petitions. The practice in meetings for worship was to sit with hats on, but to remove the hat while speaking or praying.

Another sign of inequality of the times was in the use of personal pronouns. The flattery of the plural forms you and your was regularly used in address to a single person of equal or higher rank, but to one of lower rank the terms thou, thee and thy were used. Friends used the singular, more familiar "plain speech" to all. This practice set them apart in succeeding centuries as the rest of the English-speaking world took the other course and came to use the plural forms indiscriminately.

The peace testimony was stated in 1660 in England when Friends declared they would not fight for any cause whatsoever. This testimony of non-participation in war in any form has been maintained by the Society of Friends ever since. In a world in which social, economic, and political conditions often lead to conflict and war, the peace testimony remains central to the broad structure of social concern.

*All bloody principles and practices we do utterly deny, with all outward wars, and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world. That spirit of Christ by which we are guided is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the spirit of Christ,*

*which leads us into all Truth, will never move us to fight any war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world.*

George Fox, 1660

The testimony of plainness in speech and living was adopted from the beginning. Friends wore clothes that were merely modest and functional, avoiding ostentation and decoration. The same principle carried over to their homes, meetinghouses, and furnishings. Art, music, drama, and dancing were considered vanities which took the minds of Friends away from the sober, godly life or were a reminder of the excesses of the established church. Since the period of Quietism, when plainness was a badge of a “peculiar people” and a hedge against an evil world, the emphasis has shifted to simplicity and informality.

A testimony against the taking of oaths came directly from the New Testament, Matthew 5:34-37 and James 5:12.

*But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.*

James 5:12

Speaking the truth on all occasions has been a cardinal Quaker principle, and Friends believe the practice of taking oaths implies that a person might be telling lies on other occasions. This testimony caused Friends much distress, for in the first half-century of Quakerism, a neighbor could accuse a Quaker of being disloyal to the crown and have the accused taken into court and asked to swear the oath of allegiance. Refusal to take the oath might be followed by forfeiture of property, half going to the informer. In spite of such consequences, the testimony against taking oaths was generally observed. Because of Friends’ actions throughout

history, most jurisdictions today acknowledge anyone's right to affirm rather than swear.

Friends were always aware of the evils resulting from the consumption of alcohol. Drunkenness was considered to be a condition in which a person was not his or her true self. Friends became part of the temperance movement in the nineteenth century and maintained committees on temperance until recent times. Temperance meant abstinence, which was felt by many to be the only sure way to avoid addiction.

George Fox reminded Friends that the days of the week and the months of the year are named for pagan gods and ancient Roman emperors. As Christians they should not pay homage to these gods in the conduct of their everyday lives. Thence developed the custom of numbering the days of the week as First Day, Second Day, etc., and the months as First Month, Second Month, etc. Contemporary Friends have largely discontinued this practice.

Holidays, Friends maintain, are no more holy than other days. Some, particularly Christmas and Easter, had retained many of the trappings of the pagan holidays which had occurred at nearly the same time of year as the Christian ones, so Fox admonished Quakers to conduct their business on the supposedly holy days as they ordinarily would, and some Friends schools continued to hold classes on Christmas into the twentieth century. Gradually, however, recognition of major Christian holidays has become accepted by most Friends.

Many other activities commonly engaged in by the rest of humanity have been considered to be contrary to the testimonies of Friends. One example is gambling and speculation, because the gains therefrom are not earned through one's own labor, can cause serious loss to others, and can become an addiction; another is membership in secret societies because they are not open in their activities, are exclusive, and may tend to encourage the formation of conspiracies or may reduce sympathy for some portion of society.

Another corollary of the fundamental Quaker belief that there is the seed of God in every person is the testimony against paid ministry. George Fox in his early searching found the established clergy to be both corrupt and incompetent in spiritual matters. The Society recognized from its early times that some members possessed gifts of ministry, but abhorred any monetary reward for the practice of ministry as a trade rather than a calling. Friends might be released to travel in the ministry by provision for expenses and support of their families, but any sort of salary for such service was unheard of until the late nineteenth century.

### Quakers in Maryland and Virginia

The first Quaker known to visit the colonies of Maryland and Virginia was Elizabeth Harris, who came in 1655 or 1656 and found an immediate response. She was followed by a stream of others traveling in the ministry of the new faith. Many people of Maryland and Virginia joined the new movement. Although few early records of Virginia Yearly Meeting exist, it appears that George Fox initiated the first movement toward organization in that colony during his visits in 1672 and 1673.

In Fourth Month 1672, John Burnyeat, who was about to return to England after a lengthy ministry, called a General Meeting (to last several days) on West River, south of present-day Annapolis, for all Friends in the Province of Maryland. It happened that George Fox and several other English Friends had been visiting in Barbados and Jamaica, and arrived in Maryland in time for that historic meeting, which marks the beginning of Baltimore Yearly Meeting of Friends.

In his *Journal* George Fox recorded this event:

*Then there was a meeting appointed by John Burnyeat about three score miles off, which held four days, which we went to though we were weary. And there came to it ... many considerable people of the world, and a glorious meeting we had. After the public meeting there were*

*men's and women's meetings [for business] and I opened to Friends the service thereof and all were satisfied.*

(George Fox, 1672)

Although little opposition was met in Maryland, which tolerated any Christian sect, the situation was different in Virginia, where only the established Church of England was allowed. There was much persecution, particularly on the Eastern Shore, forcing the Quakers to migrate northward into Maryland. Elsewhere in Virginia, the Quaker movement prospered in spite of opposition.

By 1700 there were about 3000 Quakers in Maryland, possibly the largest religious body in the colony at that time. The Yearly Meeting for Maryland held two sessions annually, one at West River and the other at Third Haven (now Easton) on the Eastern Shore. After 1774 sessions were held but once a year, alternating between the eastern and western shores of the Chesapeake Bay. In 1785 the western shore meeting place was transferred from West River to Baltimore.

With the building and improvement of roads on the Eastern Shore, Friends there were drawn toward Philadelphia as a center of commerce. At the same time the Friends from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting who were migrating to Northern Virginia, Western Maryland and adjacent parts of Pennsylvania and establishing meetings there, found Baltimore to be their urban magnet. In 1790, by mutual agreement of the two yearly meetings, all Maryland's Eastern Shore meetings were assigned to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and all meetings in Northern Virginia, Western Maryland, Nottingham Quarter and meetings farther west in Pennsylvania were assigned to Baltimore Yearly Meeting.

Even the name of the organization changed over the years. First it was *West River Yearly Meeting*. It became *Maryland Yearly Meeting* in 1763. After 1790 it was known officially as *The Yearly Meeting of Friends held in Baltimore for the Western-shore of Maryland and the Adjacent Parts of Pennsylvania and Virginia*.

## Compensation of Native Americans

Unlike Friends settling with William Penn, who purchased their land fairly with freely signed deeds, those moving into the Shenandoah Valley found no natives remaining with whom to negotiate. As early as 1738, Quaker settlers in that area were pricked by their conscience as to how their lands had been procured, and by 1778 many of them had subscribed to a fund designated “for the benefit of the Indians, who were formerly the Native Owners of the lands on which we now live, or their descendants if to be found, and if not, for the benefit of other Indians.” Likewise, English Friends of tender conscience helped add to the fund. In 1795, Baltimore Yearly Meeting first appointed an Indian Affairs Committee, one of its charges being to administer these funds. This endowment remains to this day, as does the concern of these early Friends, and the effort for mutual understanding and cooperation continues to be actively pursued.

## Slavery, Civil War and Reconstruction

Many Friends in the southern colonies, and some in the north, were slave owners. However, through the labors of John Woolman (1720-1772) and other concerned Quakers, members of the Society gradually became convinced that it was contrary to the love exemplified by Jesus that any human being should be held in bondage. Baltimore Yearly Meeting in 1777 concluded that any members holding slaves were to be disowned; Virginia Yearly Meeting made the same decision in 1784 after Friends persuaded the Virginia legislature to pass a law permitting manumission, and by 1790 nearly all Quaker slave-holders had indeed freed their slaves. Life in slave states became difficult for those who had freed their slaves. For this and other reasons, many Quakers from Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, and some from Maryland migrated west. The Society disappeared in Georgia and South Carolina and became greatly reduced in North Carolina and Virginia.

As a result of the westward movement, Baltimore Yearly Meeting set off Ohio Yearly Meeting in 1812, the first Friends Yearly Meeting west of the Alleghenies. In 1844 the remnant of Virginia Yearly Meeting decided to become a Half-Year's Meeting within Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Orthodox.

During the Civil War Baltimore Yearly Meeting Friends suffered not only because of their refusal to participate, but also because many of their farms and homes were in the path of the fighting. Young men faced disownment by their Meetings if they enlisted in the army, or imprisonment if they refused to be drafted or hire a substitute. In the North, President Lincoln's understanding of the dictates of conscience moderated the persecution somewhat, but in the South many Friends died in prison because of their refusal to join the army.

After the war Friends responded to the overwhelming need of the freed slaves for food, clothing, and education. They also provided aid to Quakers in the devastated states of the South, particularly North Carolina, during the Reconstruction Period.

### "Quietism," Division and Reunion

Through the 18th and part of the 19th centuries the Society changed from a vital movement of convinced Christians bent on spreading the Light of Truth, to a group feeling threatened by contamination from an indifferent world. The emphasis shifted to discipline for survival, so that the Truth as seen by their forebears would not be lost. Marriage outside the Society or before a "priest," being seen in a church, participation in war or militia drill, failure to attend meeting, incurring debts, drunkenness, brawling and fornication were typical grounds for the disownments which greatly reduced the Society.

But new ideas inevitably crept through the walls built around the Quaker communities. Tensions arose between Friends: sometimes between younger and older, rural and urban, or wealthy and less well-to-do Friends. Sometimes there were divisions even among Meetings in a Yearly Meeting.

Theological controversy arose over Christian authority. Which should have primacy the direct revelation of the Inner Light, or the Scriptures? One's direct experience of God, or personal salvation through Christ's sacrifice? Elias Hicks became the apostle of Christian authority through the Inner Light.

In 1827 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting split into "Hicksite" and "Orthodox" Yearly Meetings, and the following year Baltimore and several other Yearly Meetings did likewise. Four-fifths of the constituency in Baltimore became Hicksite. This controversy did not divide the small Virginia Yearly Meeting, which remained Orthodox.

A further division occurred in the 1840's and 1850's between a conservative branch of Orthodox Friends associated with the name of John Wilbur, and a more evangelical branch of Orthodox Friends who had come under the influence of traveling evangelists, notably Joseph John Gurney from England. This Gurneyite movement partly accounts for the existence today of Friends with an evangelical theology. The Wilburite group long maintained the testimonies of plain dress and speech, and continued the traditional worship based on silence, as did all Hicksites. After 1870 a number of Meetings adopted a programmed form of worship and engaged the services of pastors. This movement only slightly influenced the two Baltimore Yearly Meetings, though it is still widespread elsewhere.

Feelings ran high between the two principal groups, and Meetings not inclined to divide were eventually forced to choose sides. Not until 1866 were the two Baltimore Yearly Meetings able to appoint committees to work together amicably on the sale of the Yearly Meeting pasture land in the city. The fact that two members of the Janney family, each representing one of the separated Yearly Meetings, served on these committees, illustrates the depth of the division.

With the passing of years, the early bitterness between the two Baltimore Yearly Meetings gradually became less acute. Both Yearly Meetings participated in service groups such as the

Associated Committee of Friends on Indian Affairs and the American Friends Service Committee. Eventually the annual sessions of the two Yearly Meetings were held simultaneously, enabling them to have some joint sessions and to appoint some joint committees. After World War II some new Monthly Meetings affiliated with both Yearly Meetings, and most divided local Meetings reunited, taking dual affiliation with both Yearly Meetings.

In 1957 the two Baltimore Yearly Meetings began holding their sessions jointly in the same location. Finally, on January 1, 1968, after 140 years of separation, including three years of intense planning for reunion, the two Baltimore Yearly Meetings became again one Yearly Meeting.

#### Statement on Spiritual Unity, 1964

During the process of reuniting, the following statement from the Committee of Ten, 1964, was accepted:

*The Committees appointed by the two Baltimore Yearly Meetings to study together the question of what in our religious experience would justify the union of the Yearly Meetings see that much spiritual basis for unity now exists among us. This is evident in the uniting of a number of local meetings, so that at present almost half the membership of the two Yearly Meetings is in united Meetings; in our Young Friends movement; in the joint work of our committees; in our cooperative efforts of many kinds; and in many shared experiences of worship. All these joint activities obviously would not exist without some measure of unity of spirit.*

*Our two Yearly Meetings have a wide, rich, and diverse heritage, chiefly from historic Christianity interpreted by Quakerism. We not only tolerate diversity, we encourage and cherish it. In every local Meeting we struggle, usually patiently, with the problems that arise from our divergent convictions; and we usually find*

*ourselves richer for our differences. In most if not all of the Monthly Meetings within the two Yearly Meetings will be found, successfully co-existing, persons as far apart in religious vocabulary and practice as there are anywhere in the Yearly Meetings. Yet these Friends worship together every Sunday, and share nourishment for their spiritual life. Such association is beneficial and even necessary.*

*Friends in our two Yearly Meetings are clear on certain principles which are so basic and essential that we tend to take them for granted and forget that they are essential and probably the only essentials. We all are clear that religion is a matter of inward, immediate experience. We all acknowledge the guidance of the Inner Light, the Christ Within, God's direct, continuing revelation. All our insights are subject to testing by the insight of the group, by history and tradition, and by the Bible and the whole literature of religion. All the Meetings for Worship of our Monthly Meetings aspire to openness to God's communication directly with every person. Worship is primarily on the basis of expectant waiting upon the Spirit, a communion with God in which mediators or symbols are not necessary. We are all clear that faith is directly expressed in our daily living. We all seek to move toward goals of human welfare, equality, and peace.*

*We have a profound, often-tested, durable respect for each individual's affirmation of his own religious experience, which must be judged not only by his words but also by his life. From the stimulus of dissimilarity, new insights often arise. Each Friend must, as always, work out for himself his own understanding of religion; and each Monthly Meeting must, as always, fit its practice to its own situation and the needs of its members.*

## 15 • Baltimore Yearly Meeting of Friends

The consolidated Baltimore Yearly Meeting continued affiliation with both Friends General Conference (FGC) and Friends United Meeting (FUM), two organizations founded near the turn of the century by the two main branches of Quakerism, Hicksite and Orthodox respectively. The Yearly Meeting office was moved from Baltimore to Sandy Spring, Maryland.

## 2. The Life of the Spirit

*And Friends meet together, and know one another in that which is eternal, which was before the world was.*

George Fox, Epistle 149

In one sentence George Fox illuminates the core of Quakerism that informs the life of the spirit, both for each individual and for the Quaker Meeting as a whole. This one simple phrase sets forth the spiritual tasks of Quakers: we are to meet together; we are to know one another in that which is eternal.

Certainly each of us is encouraged to follow our individual spiritual path, our inward search for the light, our deep listening to God within. But we are equally encouraged to bring that Light we have found back to the community, and as a community we are eager to listen to the glimmers of hope, the discoveries of love, the struggles and the acceptance found in those journeys. The community is enriched through this sharing; indeed the Quaker Meeting can be transformed by the words of even the most simple message.

Other religions, other traditions, have emphasized the inward search and the power of discovery. The gift of Quakerism is the realization that we are a community of seekers: we are not alone. The practice of Quakers is to bring the treasures that we find on our journeys back to the Meeting, and for the Meeting to listen with the tender recognition of a shared experience.

### Seekers

The principal characteristic of the human condition may well be that each of us is on a spiritual path, each of us is searching for meaning in our lives, each of us is seeking the essence of Truth. A principal tenet of Quakers everywhere is that seekers who ground their search in love are welcome to

our Meetings, to worship with us, to speak their truth, to share their experiences, and to listen carefully to the movement of the Spirit among us.

Even before George Fox's vision of Quakerism was broadcast throughout the land, groups of Seekers sat together in silent worship in expectant waiting on new revelations. Shunning creeds, rejecting the authority of the established Church, and self-organized without clergy, this community of seekers was ripe for the evangelical messages of George Fox and his growing following of the convinced. Today we are still a community of Seekers; many of the traditions established over the centuries still form the heart of our practice.

Each of us has a unique approach to the Truth and our own understanding of the way to the Light, an understanding tempered by our origins, our experiences and our path through the kaleidoscope of family and culture we have encountered. Each of us culls from the storms and calms of our lives an understanding of the world — an appreciation of our place in the varied culture which forms us. And that understanding forms the foundation of our ability to see the world, to see each other, to hear new words, and to discern how those words impact our own lives.

The passion of Friends is not in limiting or directing Seekers to a particular Truth, a common path. The passion of Friends is in gathering in community to seek truth, all of us humbly listening for the promptings of the spirit. In the silence and in the words and actions of each other we discern the full measure of the light within us and around us. We are not each alone in a world of our own "truth" but united in the common light of the same Spirit. Friends celebrate the variety of paths that we encounter; we rejoice to find kindred souls fully committed to the unique way that they have found. The passion of Friends lies in embracing the diversity of paths, accepting the variety of religious experience which enriches our own understanding of the life of the spirit. Your Truth informs

my own. I am not constrained to accept your Truth as my own, but I am encouraged to listen to your testimony, to discern the value of your approach and how it affects my own path.

*And oh, how sweet and pleasant it is to the truly spiritual eye to see several sorts of believers, everyone learning their own lesson, performing their own peculiar service, and knowing, owning and loving one another in several places...For this is the true ground of love and unity, not that such a man walks and does just as I do, but because I feel the same Spirit and life in him...and this is far more pleasing than if he walked in just that track wherein I walk.*

Isaac Penington, 1660

### The Spiritual Journey

Spiritual paths are as varied as are individuals in community. We each have a unique history, a complex of experiences and events in our lives which undeniably form our worldview. We each carry within us a heartfelt of questions — a yearning to make sense of the world and our place in it. There are powerful questions of the heart, queries which cannot be answered intellectually, answers which can only be found in our inward search for truth, for light, for meaning.

*“Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don’t search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.”*

Rainer Maria Rilke, 1903  
in *Letters to a Young Poet*

We live the questions, as we continue our spiritual journey: we are coaxed by the Spirit from each question to the next. At each step, we “live up to that light we have,” dwell in the truth that we have been given, and test our leadings with Friends.

Over and over again George Fox exhorted us to go inward, to find the inward Christ, to “wait upon the Lord, that all of you may grow up in the inward man, and be comforted and cherished there, in the things that are eternal. [Epistle 79] Jesus proclaimed, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.” [Luke 17:21]

That the inward search is solitary, sometimes lonely, is nearly a guarantee. There is no guide until you find the Inward Christ, the Light Within, the Spirit that awaits your questions, anticipates your next dawn, and may lead you to unexpected places.

Elise Boulding reminds us that central to the Quaker way is the experience of discovery, a journey which is lifelong. She emphasizes that what is discovered is not a unique property of Quakerism: “What is unique to the Religious Society of Friends is its insistence that the discovery must be made by each of us individually. No one is allowed to get it secondhand by accepting a ready-made creed. Furthermore, the discovery points to a path and demands a journey, and gives you the power to make the journey.”

## Sharing

Quakerism thus has a threefold role for each of us:

- to be intentional about following a spiritual path grounded in love, going deep within to find the ground of our being;
- to bring those findings back to our community, to share our experiences, to tell what has been revealed;

- to be a member of an intentional community of careful listeners, to hear without judgment what is being shared, to suspend our disbelief and allow the witness of our Friends to change our lives.

We are said to have abolished the laity; we are, each of us, ministers of the Truth. We are each of us encouraged to speak of our journey, where our search has led, whom we have met on the way, what has opened our eyes. For change is inevitable: none of us linger over-long at the same spot. Our spiritual journey can lead to surprising places, unexpected encounters, startling revelations.

Others have observed that it is pointless to praise the practice of Quakerism and preach it if nobody is listening. It is much more needful to teach people the art of listening. And how better to teach the art of listening than to practice it. George Fox advised that we should all 'be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations wherever you come'. Quakers are called to set a pattern of deep listening, and thereby enrich the life of the spirit for all.

Many religions emphasize the importance of engaging the Spirit, of entering on a spiritual path, of considering questions of the heart. How is Quakerism different? How does Quakerism put a unique stamp on that experience?

### The Quaker Way

Friends see the Life of the Spirit not only as a personal search for the Light, but also a corporate one. Each enhances the other. Quaker practice offers many windows that enlighten the spiritual life of the community. Each window presents an opportunity for Friends to get to know each other in that which is eternal.

### Meeting for Worship

The first opportunity in our unprogrammed meetings is our meeting for worship where Friends settle into the silence

in expectant waiting, to see what is now revealed by the Light, to listen for the Word which lies at the heart of our ground of being. While this is a very individualistic search we recognize that each of us, gathered in this meeting, is engaged in a similar quest, safe in a trusted environment where Friends all around us are freely worshiping in their manner. When thus seeking the Inner Light together we can, especially in this place, sense the eternal which is behind the succession of ordinary events.

There are times when the dawning realization comes to us that there is some part of our spiritual journey that calls to be shared among Friends, and it occurs that we are unable to refuse the demand to speak. Stimulated by our own personal experience the message grows beyond our individual concerns and takes on a wider, more universal meaning. We ask, is this a leading? Is it for me or the meeting? Is now the time? Is it ripe for sharing? We rise, sometimes with difficulty, and speak what is in our hearts, with loving attention to the community and a faithfulness to the message.

As listeners we recognize that not all messages are meant for us, that our own spiritual journey does not resonate with the path being revealed to us by another. Yet in reflection we might hold the messenger in the Light recognizing the courage it took to rise, the strength of commitment expressed, and the struggle being revealed in those few words. We ourselves come to meeting neither prepared to speak nor prepared not to speak; but always come to meeting prepared to listen.

### Worship Sharing

Another window Quakers use to open their spiritual journeys is when we gather for worship sharing. Worship sharing may be integrated in many Quaker activities, such as committee meetings, retreats, or “Friendly 8s” -wherever Friends gather to work, seek Light, or draw closer in community. As a form of guided meditation, worship sharing may focus on a particular query, a topic, a special quotation, an important parable or Biblical verse. It helps us to explore our own experience and

share with each other more deeply than we would in normal conversation. It offers a safe and loving environment where Friends are encouraged to give voice to their inner search. It seeks to draw us into sacred space, where we can take down our usual defenses, and encounter each other in “that which is eternal.”

Simple principles which have evolved over the years make worship sharing a deeply successful practice among Friends:

- Reach as deeply as you can into the sacred center of your life;
- Speak out of the silence, and leave a period of silence between speakers;
- Speak from your own experience, about your own experience, concentrate on feelings and changes rather than on thoughts or theories;
- Do not respond to what anyone else has said, either to praise or to refute;
- Listen carefully and deeply to what is spoken;
- Expect to speak only once, until everyone has had a chance to speak;
- Respect the confidentiality of what is shared.

Friends are encouraged to come to worship-sharing with an intent to open their spiritual path to the meeting, to share what has occurred in their experience, to reflect on the direction of their lives, to give witness to the meaning that has been found. But while we are asked to speak once, we are also asked to listen deeply to many intimate testimonies. When that listening is deeply grounded, when your spiritual ear is attuned to the struggles, the openings, the new revelations of Friends, your life can be changed.

#### Clearness Committees

A more formal practice which is particularly identified with Quakerism is the Clearness Committee: a group of Friends

to hear your concerns, to listen to the difficulties confronting you, to help you venture deeper within in your search for clearness.

Ordinarily a Clearness Committee is appointed when a member of the meeting seeks to reach clarity on how to respond to a concern or dilemma. Clearness Committees have been used when a person applies for membership and when a couple seeks marriage under the care of the meeting. But beyond these traditional events it can be helpful for you to bring your leadings, your questions, your discoveries to the wider community for testing.

As Parker Palmer remarked, “Behind the Clearness Committee is a simple but crucial conviction: *each of us has an inner teacher, a voice of truth, that offers the guidance and power we need to deal with our problems.* But that inner voice is often garbled by various kinds of inward and outward interference. The function of the Clearness Committee is not to give advice or ‘fix’ people from the outside in but rather to help people remove the interference so that they can discover their own wisdom from the inside out.”

We are taught to abandon the pretense that we know what is best for another person. We are taught instead to ask honest and open questions to help that person come to spiritual clarity. We are taught that our task is not to ‘fix’ a problem, but through simple listening to create the conditions that allow a person to find his or her wholeness within. We are taught a way, a Quaker way, to renew community, a way to free people from their isolation without threatening their integrity, a way to create space for the spirit to move among us with healing and with power.

It is a powerful discipline for the listener to try to listen without agenda, without the compulsion to help, abandoning the need or desire to appear knowledgeable, wise, or comforting. There may be no more tellingly difficult spiritual practice than the effort to receive what is being said by someone

else hospitably, without editing, without correction, without unsolicited advice.

### Life in Community

Quaker life offers many opportunities to connect deeply with others, within and beyond the Meeting. When we approach workshops, committees, fellowship, meetings for business, and other events with a ready and open heart, we give and receive priceless gifts. On support committees we help Friends get through difficult times or follow leadings. Even in a simple conversation after meeting we may sense the powerful presence of the Spirit and feel ourselves blessed. Whether the events that draw us together are oriented to work or fellowship, carefully planned or unfolded in unexpected opportunities, Friends seek to remain attentive to the guidance of the Light and the rhythms of each other's spiritual lives.

Each Friend, whether a member or attender, is encouraged to join a Listening Group, Friendly Eights, or Spiritual Friendship. These are opportunities that focus on sharing. We hear each other's spiritual concerns, leadings, stops, and encounters with the Light, giving each our full attention.

Quakers of old often greeted one another "How does the Truth prosper with thee, Friend?" This was much more than an off-hand remark, but a gentle query into the condition of your heart. Like a worship sharing environment, often focused on the experiences of a single individual at a time, these are intimate gatherings of Friends committed to a confidential inquiry into the spiritual aspect of our lives. Rather than giving advice, rather than responding with similar experiences, rather than joining a search for a solution, this practice employs simple but deep listening to help each speaker give voice to a more profound appreciation of the Life of the Spirit. Friends in Listening Groups work together to develop their mutual understanding of the enduring spiritual principles that lie behind our Quaker practices.

Imagine having a small group of deep listeners at your service. Imagine being able to share not only your concerns, your spiritual trials, your questions of faith, but also your discoveries, your leadings, your promptings of the Light. And imagine that you will be asked to serve regularly as a deep listener to others on their spiritual journey, to be present to a Friend in times of trial, in times of critical questioning, and in times of joy and celebration.

### Listening

A common feature that runs consistently through these Quaker practices is our readiness to listen deeply, compassionately, fully to the openings given voice by our Friends.

At the same time that we are encouraged to listen deeply, we bear the weighty responsibility to actively translate their words, their metaphors, their experiences into expressions that speak to our condition. All speech is metaphor, all words are packed with nuance, loaded with meaning, connotations, implications and overtones. To hear a person's message is easy, but to listen deeply, to do the work of interpretation, is the Quaker task.

As Gene Hoffman remarks: "I am not talking about listening with the human ear. I am talking about 'discernment,' which means to perceive something hidden and obscure. We must listen with our spiritual ear, the one inside, and this is very different from deciding in advance what is right and what is wrong and then seeking to promote our own agenda. We must literally suspend our disbelief and then listen to learn whether what we hear expands or diminishes our sense of Truth."

Words must not become barriers between us, for no one of us can ever adequately understand or express the truth about God, the depth of our personal spiritual journey, or the essence of what has been revealed to us. Yet words are our tools

and we must not be afraid to express the truth we know in the best words we can. We must trust that our faith is robust, compassionate and 'not quick to take offence' [1 Cor 13:4-7], and that the Spirit which gives the words is communicated through them.

As we listen to each other's spiritual journey we are encouraged to translate their words much as we would a foreign language. Although we may never adopt their language as our own, we are enriched and brought closer to each other by the experience of listening outside the comfort of our own religious vocabulary. We rejoice in the variety of religious experience, a diversity that leads us to a deepened understanding of our own path.

The skill of the listener who can go beyond words, who can even go beyond the conscious meanings behind words and who can listen with the third ear for what is unconsciously being meant by the speaker, furnishes a climate where the most unexpected disclosures occur, where miracles happen. Marcel Proust declaims, "The voyage of discovery lies not in encountering new landscapes, but in seeing with new eyes." And listening with new ears. Friends are, if nothing else, seekers, searchers of the Truth and open to the wisdom of others regardless of the source. Listening is an essential art in this search; truly paying attention to the witness of Friends is central to our search.

Annie Dillard begins her essay on Luke "It is the fault of infinity to be too small to find. It is the fault of eternity to be crowded out by time." In the same sense it is the practice of Quakers to find space in their lives for the infinite, to take the time required to be open to the revelations of eternity.

All this might appear to new Friends as a process that could take a lot of time. Devoting time to listen to the spiritual efforts of others in your community, spending time in reflecting on your own spiritual path, working together to seek God's will,

not only in matters of the heart, but also in the many decisions which face us; all this takes time. As Thomas Kelly puts it: "It is simple. It is serene. It takes no time, but it occupies all our time." It becomes a way of life: the Life of the Spirit. How else can we expect to know one another in that which is eternal?

### 3. Meeting for Worship

Meeting for worship is the heart and the core of Quakerism. Monthly meetings within Baltimore Yearly Meeting practice unprogrammed worship. Our worship is based on faith that human beings can commune directly with God. In expectant silence each strives to center inwardly, and collectively, each aided by the seeking and centering of others, the worship becomes a corporate experience.

Friends approach the meeting for worship with faith that God speaks to us directly, revealing Divine Will. God's message may come in the silence or in spoken words. The divine manifests itself to individuals in different ways. In order to be in touch with the consciousness of the presence of God in worship, the individual brings the discipline and experience of seeking the Light through such practices as daily meditation and prayer, as well as study of the Bible and other spiritually inspired writings. Each individual's contribution of centering, presence and relationship with the Divine joins with that of others to create corporate worship. In Quaker meeting for worship, there is this integration of the spirituality of the individual with that of the corporate. Thus, the spirit of God embraces and envelops the corporate body in the meeting for worship. On occasions when a complete unity of integration occurs, the phenomenon is called a "gathered meeting". The experience of a gathered meeting is always dynamic.

While prayer is central to the experience of many Friends in Meeting for Worship, each Friend brings to the gathering a unique understanding of what that means. In many a silent meeting you might hear a request to hold an individual, a group, or a situation "in the Light," whether in a time of trouble or a time for celebration. As for prayer, each Friend has a personal understanding of the meaning of that phrase.

Simply drawing the worshipful attention of all who are gathered in that Meeting for Worship to a single individual

or a single situation can be a powerful motion. Attention is the first requirement of Love; attention is the prerequisite for deep listening. Among many others, Douglas Steere eloquently addressed this:

*For when we hold up the life of another before God, when we expose it to God's love, when we pray for the quickening of its inner health, for the power to throw off a destructive habit, for the restoration of its relationship with others, for its strength to resist temptation, for its courage to continue against sharp opposition - only then do we sense what it means to share in God's work, in His concern, only then do the walls which separate us go down and we sense that we are at bottom all knit together in a great and intimate family. [The Inner Springs of Prayer]*

Friends in the several branches have varying forms of worship, and unprogrammed Meetings also have elements of accepted practice. Friends try to avoid the dependence on ritual and outward sacraments in order to prevent stultification. The simplicity of Friends' worship results from an emphasis on the reality of the inward experience. Direct communion with God, the experience of the Spirit, is the core of Quaker spirituality and worship.

## 4. Vocal Ministry

Quaker faith and practice is based upon the experiential understanding that both individuals and the meeting community can experience direct relationship and communication with God. In the unprogrammed Quaker tradition, as practiced by Baltimore Yearly Meeting, there are no professional clergy or other persons designated to speak during the meeting for worship. Rather, all are understood to commune directly with God and share in what the Bible refers to as “the priesthood of all believers.”

Friends gather for meeting for worship to wait together in openness to discern and experience the movement and voice of the Spirit within their midst. The felt leading to give an oral message during the otherwise silent meeting for worship is known as vocal ministry. Vocal ministry demonstrates our Quaker understanding, experience, and conviction that the Spirit not only speaks to all, and that all may choose to hear the Spirit speak to them within their heart, but that the Spirit may or may not also choose to speak through one or more persons attending the meeting for worship.

Vocal ministry is not based on a desire or inclination to speak, but on the persistent sense that one is being compelled to rise and allow the Spirit to use their heart and mind to speak aloud. Vocal ministry, then, is not a person’s own thoughts and words, but those of the Spirit giving itself a voice through the speaker. For this reason no Friend should come to meeting for worship with either the intention to speak or not to speak.

Sometimes a message is not ripe yet, or comes clearly but is meant only for the person receiving it, not for the group. If you have to decide whether it is right to speak, consider that it isn’t. If your words are important the meeting will find them anyway.

Receive vocal ministry of others in a tender spirit. Reach for the deep meaning within the message, recognizing that even if it is not God's word for you, it may be for others.

Some Friends are led to speak frequently, and others only rarely; yet the timid or brief message of one who seldom speaks may be as moving and helpful as that of a more practiced speaker. The most satisfactory vocal ministry arises out of a leading that is felt in the silence so strongly that it cannot be ignored. It should be delivered with as few words as possible, yet as many as necessary. Vocal prayer offered on behalf of the gathered meeting can also bring us into closer harmony with God. Even if not a word is spoken, the meeting for worship can be profoundly nurturing.

## II. Queries, Advices & Voices

The **Queries** are a device which have long been used by the Religious Society of Friends for prompting both corporate and individual self-examination. Queries are an incentive to continue your search, deepen your journey, and engage the mystery.

The **Advices** gather the essential suggestions and critical ideas that might serve to guide your meditations, your reflections, and your choices about how to live. Gleaned from our readings, our worship sharing, our prayerful meditations, these advices articulate our understanding of the concern.

The **Voices** speak eloquently, emphatically, and clearly to our condition. These words illuminate both the wisdom of the past and the issues of the present, connecting our own concerns with those of our history. We have chosen both voices from our Quaker tradition as well as others which echo the Quaker spirit. These voices will not speak equally to each of us. Nor do we believe that the language in which each voice speaks is necessarily the same language we would choose today.

*It is not opinion, or speculation, or notions of what is true, or assent to or the subscription of articles and propositions, though never so soundly worded, that . . . makes a man a true believer or true Christian. But it is a conformity of mind and practice to the will of God, in all holiness of conversation, according to the dictates of this Divine principle of Light and Life in the soul which denotes a person truly a child of God.*

William Penn, 1692

# 1. Caring for One Another

## Queries

*In what ways do I show respect for that of God in every person?*

*Do I reach out to those in distress? If I find this difficult, what holds me back?*

*Am I comfortable making my own needs known to my meeting?*

*How do we share in the diverse joys and transitions in each other's lives?*

## Advices

Friends are concerned about the welfare of every member of the Meeting community. While we need to guard against prying or invasion of privacy, it is nevertheless essential that Meetings be aware of the spiritual and material needs of members of the community and express caring concern in appropriate ways. To this end, we are to live affectionately as friends, entering with sympathy into the joys and sorrows of one another's lives.

As we are willing to offer help, so we need to be willing to make our needs known and to accept help. In bereavement, give yourself time to grieve. When others mourn, let your love embrace them with the simple things of life: praying together, talking, planning meals, caring for children, and otherwise being of comfort. In offering pastoral care, it is not necessary to find the right words; it is important to be present.

Just as we do not leave pastoral care to a pastor, so we may not leave this most essential function to a committee alone. It is also important to recognize when it may be appropriate to reach within or beyond the community to involve persons with special expertise.

## Voices

*When the members of a fellowship know one another, care for one another, visit one another in their homes, consult one another, hold one another up in the silence and feel responsibility before God for one another, then when they meet together for worship they are truly open as a corporate group for the deepest working of the Spirit.*

Douglas Steere, 1940

*Let us seek to live in compassion and patience with one another. Grace and latitude should mark our relationships. All too often we can injure each other unduly in our zeal for justice and truth and righteousness. The spirit of condemnation can creep into our relationships so subtly. We can begin to look at each other's possessions with a mental calculator. But there is a more excellent way: we simply need to be with one another, loving, supporting, caring. Of course, we live and speak the truth as it has been given to us, but the business of straightening each other out belongs to God, not us.*

Richard J. Foster, 1981

*When I touch the heart of prayer, I touch the lives of others, for in some mysterious way which we cannot depict more than to point toward it, we are all interconnected in the life of God, and we are never nearer to another than when we touch his life in the life of God. Intercessory prayer is going on all the time. There is something at the heart of things that cares and that carries on this never-pausing siege at the East window of each soul. When I pray for another, I enter into this siege. I add my caring to help lower the threshold in the heart of the other to this continuous caring.*

Douglas Steere, 1980

*Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness, and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another — and helping one another up with a tender hand, if there has been any slip or fall... O, wait to feel this spirit, and to be guided to walk in this spirit, that ye may enjoy the Lord in sweetness, and walk sweetly, meekly, tenderly, peaceably and lovingly one with another ... the meek, innocent tender righteous life reigning in you, governing over you, and shining through you, in the eyes of all with whom ye converse.*

Isaac Pennington

*In a true community we will not choose our companions, for our choices are so often limited by self-serving motives. Instead, our companions will be given to us by grace. Often they will be persons who will upset our settled view of self and world. In fact, we might define true community as the place where the person you least want to live with always lives!*

Parker J. Palmer, 1977

*Forgiveness does not mean “forgive and forget.” It stares the beast in the eye, names the hurt, and refuses to return it, seeking not to punish but to heal.*

Desmond Tutu, 2007

*Loving care is not something that those sound in mind and body “do” for others but a process that binds us together. God has made us loving and the imparting of love to another satisfies something deep within us. It would be a mistake to assume that those with outwardly well-organized lives do not need assistance. Many apparently secure carers live close to despair within themselves. We all have our needs.*

Britain Yearly Meeting, 12.01

*Careful listening is fundamental to helping each other; it goes beyond finding out about needs and becomes part of meeting them. Some would say that it is the single most useful thing that we can do. Those churches that have formal confession understand its value, but confession does not have to be formal to bring benefits. Speaking the unspeakable, admitting the shameful, to someone who can be trusted and who will accept you in love as you are, is enormously helpful.*

Britain Yearly Meeting, 12.01

*And all such as behold their brother or sister in a transgression, go not in rough, light or upbraiding spirit to reprove or admonish him or her, but in the power of the Lord, and the spirit of the Lamb, and in the wisdom and love of the Truth, which suffers thereby, to admonish such an offender. So may the soul of such a brother or sister be seasonably and effectually reached unto and overcome, and they may have cause to bless the name of the Lord on their behalf, and so a blessing may be rewarded into the bosom of that faithful and tender brother or sister that so admonished them.*

George Fox, 1669

*Our labor is to bring all men to their own teacher in themselves.*

George Fox, *Journal*

*In addition to its many religious forms, Healing also includes many arts and sciences. There is the art of listening, the art of smiling, the art of empathy, of knowing just what people need, and not rushing in to offer help that is not suitable. Then there is the healing that comes through prayer in its various forms, through*

*the laying on of hands, through music and dance, painting and colour, through communion with and understanding of the world of nature, and through friendship.*

Jim Pym, 1990

*O God who has carried us when we knew it not, and who faithfully seeks us when we are yet afar off, lay on us this ministry of intercession for others, that we may share this deepest of all ministries that brings us down into the very matrix of your yearning for souls and makes us members of the great chain of redemptive love that girdles our world for its healing.*

Douglas Steere, 1980

*The resources of the Meeting can be important for families undergoing crises. Friends should be particularly mindful of the needs of children who are experiencing pain or loss. A Meeting can provide care and understanding, acting as an extended family. Not only are we brothers and sisters in the spirit, but we may be beloved aunts and uncles of all the children in the Meeting. The resilience of the Meeting as a nurturing community encompassing many generations supports each of us throughout the many stages of our lives.*

Baltimore Yearly Meeting Advices, 1988

## 2. Children and Young People

### Queries

*How do we provide young people with explicit guidelines in Quaker faith and practice?*

*How do we get to know and care for our children and young people as individuals?*

*What have we learned from the wisdom expressed by our children?*

*How do we share your deepest beliefs with children, while leaving them free to develop as the spirit of God may lead them?*

### Advices

Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in meeting. Recognize and affirm the gifts that they bring to the life of the meeting community.

Children and young people need their peer groups. They also need whole group sharing where they are an integral part of the meeting, sharing experiences that deepen relationships. Part of sharing is learning to know of our past as Quakers. Even more important is the sharing of what we as Quakers understand as the Truth today and how it shapes our lives.

Parents are the children's first teachers; they and the meeting need to help their children understand what it means to attend meeting for worship. Children need specific expectations placed upon them.

All Friends need to be mentors to the children in their meeting.

### Voices

*To watch the spirit of children, to nurture them in Gospel Love, and labour to help them against that which would mar the beauty of their minds, is a debt we owe them; and a faithful performance of our duty not only tends to*

*their lasting benefit and our own peace, but also to render their company agreeable to us. A care hath lived in my mind, that more time might be employed by parents at home, and by tutors at school, in weightily attending to the spirit and inclinations of children, and that we may so lead, instruct and govern them, in this tender part of life, that nothing may be omitted in our power, to help them on their way to become the children of our Father who art in heaven.”*

John Woolman, 1758

*We seek to affirm in each child at school, each member of the meeting, each person we meet in our daily lives, the person that he or she may with God’s help grow to be. We are all the merest infants in God’s world, struggling to stand upright and walk unaided, trying in vain to articulate our halting thoughts and feelings. We stumble and fall. We give way to self-pity and shame. God hauls us to our feet again and makes sense of our childish babble, never ceasing to believe in what we may ultimately become. Do we do the same for our children and one another? We have a responsibility to follow Pierre Ceresole’s dictum: “Speak to every child as if you were addressing the utterly truthful upright individual which under your guidance he may one day become.”*

*...When we find ourselves teaching - as we all do in our relationships within meeting - can we draw upon that respect for one another that will enable the other to feel taller and more capable?*

Barbara Windle, 1988

*All children are listeners, but some stop listening and remembering sooner than others. ...It makes me sad when I hear discussions about not introducing children to God until they are old enough to understand. I grew*

*into the Lord's prayer, and I am still growing into it. All religious language, all devotional books, and particularly the Bible, provide growing room for young minds and spirits.*

Elise Boulding, 1975

*I lament more than I can express that a military education and training is being introduced into our public schools. It has no business there. With such profession as we are making, a Christian profession, we have no right to be instructing children in the art of war, in the art of murdering their fellow beings.*

Lucretia Mott, 1869

*I want that we may all show our faith by our works, by our honesty and justice and mercy and love; I want love to begin with little children; they should be governed by love, and love only. I am glad the rod is so far banished in the family circles and the schools. Children love peace. The little child knows when it says, Mother, I love everybody. There is a Divine instinct in them which prompts to this feeling.*

Lucretia Mott, 1876

### 3. Education

#### Queries

*How can we most effectively foster a spirit of inquiry and a loving and understanding attitude?*

*What effort are we making to be better acquainted with Quaker faith and practices and the beliefs of other faiths?*

*Do we take an active and supportive interest in schools, libraries, and other educational resources in our communities and elsewhere?*

*How do we prepare ourselves and our children to play active roles in a changing world?*

#### Advices

Seek for ourselves and for our children the full development of God's gifts, which is true education. Realize that education should continue throughout life, and that all should share its opportunities and privileges. Be ready at all times to receive fresh light from whatever quarter it may come; approach new theories with discernment.

Friends are concerned to educate for individual growth, community responsibility, a knowledge of God's world, and a sense of wonder at continuing revelation in this changing universe. Religious education begins early in the home as the child participates in family silence, prayer, readings from the Bible and other religious works, and in family discussions. We set an example in our own lives and seek actively to guide our children's development of sensitivity to God and the world. Thus children can learn how God works through and among all of us as exemplified in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Meetings should foster educational activities that bring all age groups together. Conferences, workshops, and retreats, organized by Monthly, Quarterly, or Yearly Meetings or other Friends' bodies, provide contacts with a variety of Friends' viewpoints. We should encourage adult members to follow

their leadings in seeking education of all kinds and should be sensitive in offering the financial assistance sometimes needed to take advantage of such opportunities.

For many years Friends have been concerned about the problem of exclusivity in private schools especially those carrying the name of Friends. Those concerned with any Quaker-related school would agree that each institution has a continuing responsibility to discourage snobbishness and feelings of false superiority, to encourage economy and simplicity, and to cultivate a realization that with special opportunities go special obligations. A Meeting that has direct responsibility for a Friends' school, or that has any Friends' school in its community, should assist the school to maintain its Quaker character.

### Voices

*Our labor is to bring all men to their own teacher in themselves.*

George Fox, *Journal*

*The belief that there is "that of God in each person" is the foundation of the Quaker approach to education. Education cultivates the fullness of the human spirit through both openness and discipline. We are open to the knowledge, understand, and wisdom that come from history, from our own life experience of God, and from the works and lives of others. We recognize all of life as an educational enterprise, that we are all teachers as well as learners.*

Northern Yearly Meeting

*But I showed them by the scriptures that there was an anointing within man to teach him and that the Lord would teach his people himself.*

George Fox, *Journal*

*How is the Inward Teacher known? In joy and health, but also in loneliness and alienation; in the deepest encounters with other people and in dialogue with great ideas and works; in love but also in emptiness; in hunger but also in plenitude; in solitude but also in community. Wherever we are is the starting place for encountering the voice which can speak to our condition. We cannot compel the inner voice to speak, we can only try to practice openness and attention, and when we hear the voice we can only practice minding and answering.*

Paul A. Lacey, 1988

*Friends' openness to continuing revelation leads us to place equal emphasis on the educational process, personal development, and educational content.... Scripture and existing knowledge are important. People are led to think critically and take joy in discovering new implications of knowledge gained.*

Northern Yearly Meeting

*The last reaches of religious education are not attained by carefully planned and externally applied lessons, taught to people through the outward ears. The fundamental religious education of the soul is conducted by the Holy Spirit, the living voice of God within us. He is the last and greatest teacher of the soul. All else is but pointings to the inward Teacher, the Spirit of the indwelling Christ. Until life is lived in the presence of this Teacher, we are apt to confuse knowledge of Church history and Biblical backgrounds with the true education of the soul that takes place in the listening life of prayer.*

Thomas R. Kelly, 1942

*In a sense, simplicity is an important element in all great art, for it means the removal of all details that are*

*irrelevant to a given purpose. It is one of the arts within the great art of life. And perhaps the mind can be guided best if its activities are always kept organically related to the most important purposes in life. Mahatma Gandhi believes that the great need of young people is not so much education of the head as education of the heart.*

Richard B. Gregg, 1936

*True education nurtures the insights that unite knowledge with behavior and ability with desire, changing one's life, not merely one's ideas.*

Carol Murphy, 1952

*What is to be the content of Quaker Religious Education? Lacking a creed, what is it we teach? Theology has been defined as faith reflected upon. For Friends, theology, or what takes the place of theology, is experience reflected upon. We begin by reflecting on our own experience, but as members of the Religious Society of Friends we are engaged in a corporate endeavor. Ours is not a do-it-yourself religion but a do-it-together religion.*

Gene Hillman, 2003

## 4. Equality

### Queries

*In what ways do we respond to prejudice and injustice?  
How do we benefit from inequity and exploitation? How  
are we victims of inequity and exploitation? In what ways  
can we address these problems?*

*How do we teach our children and show through our way  
of living that love of God includes affirming the equality  
of all people, treating them with dignity and respect, and  
seeking to address that of God within every person?*

### Advices

From the beginning of Quakerism in the 1640s, Friends have been aware that every person is equal in God's eyes. Women played a very important role right from the start. Refusing to doff one's hat to a person of superior rank was another way early Friends expressed the testimony of social equality. The servants at Swarthmore Hall in England were invited to attend the meetings for worship along with the family and guests. In England during this period, "you" and "your" were used only when speaking to a person of higher rank, and peers or persons of lower rank were addressed as "thee" and "thou." Quakers adopted "plain speech," using thee and thou to all persons.

John Woolman (1720-1752) spent years convincing Friends and others that slavery was wrong and that people should be paid for their work. Schools were set up by Friends to educate the slave children so that they also might have the opportunity to develop their gifts.

In our meetings for worship, God's message may be delivered through any person attending that meeting. In our meetings for worship with a concern for business, each person present may shed Light on a matter under consideration. We also need to recognize that the young among us need to be

listened to as any adult. Out of the mouths of babes may come something that would bring unity among us.

It is important to realize that equality does not mean sameness. Each person is a separate individual and should have the opportunity to pursue her or his own gifts. To deny anyone the right to develop his or her full potential for any reason is not equality. Cultural and other differences among us weave a tapestry that is immeasurably enriched by our diversity. It is the right of every person to be treated with dignity and respect.

We need to be careful that we speak in positive terms when talking about others, especially those who might be different from ourselves or our close community. Adults have a specific responsibility to model Friendly values to children, who do not see other children as different until they are taught that others may be different and in some way may not be as “good” as they are. Speaking in a negative way about a person or group of people may be a form of violence, especially if the statement is not carefully qualified to show the rationale and purpose of the remark.

## Voices

*...I have never lost the joy of sitting in silence at the beginning of Meeting, knowing that everything can happen, knowing the joy of the utmost surprise; feeling that nothing is preordained, nothing is set, all is open. The Light can come from all sides. The joy of experiencing the Light in a completely different way than one has thought it would come is one of the greatest gifts that Friends' Meeting for Worship has brought me.*

*I believe that Meeting for Worship has brought the same awareness to all who have seen and understood the message that everyone is equal in the sight of God, that everybody has the capacity to be the vessel of God's word. There is nothing that age, experience, and status*

*can do to prejudice where and how the Light will appear. This awareness – the religious equality of each and every one – is central to Friends.*

Ursula M. Franklin, 1979

*There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female, for you are all one person in Christ Jesus.*

Galatians 3:28, The Oxford Study Bible.

*To consider mankind otherwise than brethren, to think favors are peculiar to one nation and exclude others, plainly supposes a darkness in the understanding. For as God's love is universal, so where the mind is sufficiently influenced by it, it begets a likeness of itself and the heart is enlarged towards all men.*

John Woolman, *Journal*

*A very far-reaching part of the Quaker message, affecting character and behavior unconsciously, is the affirmation that if God is revealing himself to every human person, then there can be no parts of life which are "secular" in contrast to other parts which are "sacred." God is equally relevant to every part of life, whether it is Saturday (recreation), Sunday (worship), or Monday (work). The attempt is made to level up, even though in practice we sometimes level down; the underlying faith is that at all times our behavior should reflect the conviction that God is at work in those with whom we mix, and in ourselves; that every human encounter can fan or quench the divine spark in another; and that our lives are at all times lived in the presence of God.*

Hugh L. Doncaster, 1972

*Guided by the Light of God within us and recognizing that of God in others, we can all learn to value our differences in age, sex, physique, race and culture. This enables mutual respect and self-respect to develop, and it becomes possible for every one to love one another as God loves us... Jesus stressed the unique nature and worth of each individual. It is unreasonable to expect assimilation or to ignore difference, claiming to treat everyone the same. This denies the value of variety. Personality, sex, race, culture and experience are God's gifts. We need one another, and differences shared become enrichments, not reasons to be afraid, to dominate or condemn. We need to consider our behavior carefully, heeding the command of Jesus that we should love our neighbors as we love ourselves.*

Meg Maslin, 1990

*And oh, how sweet and pleasant it is to the truly spiritual eye to see several sorts of believers, everyone learning their own lesson, performing their own peculiar service, and knowing, owning and loving one another in several places...For this is the true ground of love and unity, not that such a man walks and does just as I do, but because I feel the same Spirit and life in him...and this is far more pleasing than if he walked in just that track wherein I walk.*

Isaac Pennington, 1660

*Our experience [is] that God speaks to and works through children as well as adults. Religious education needs to respect, affirm, and value children's insights.*

*The Quaker understanding of Christianity includes:*

*The experience that it is possible to have both a strong faith commitment and an open mind, to take other*

*positions seriously without trivializing them, and to value the people who differ from ourselves.*

*The belief that the same God known through Christianity is also present in other faiths. The study of other faith positions is therefore important, not only for its own sake, but as a contribution towards humility before the mystery of truth....*

*The belief in the equality of all human beings of whatever sex, race, class, or age. This is firmly grounded in God's love for each individual, rather than in social fashion. This requires policies, not of equal opportunities (which redistribute inequality) but of equality, and implies that schools be reorganized for cooperation rather than competition, and for affirming people in their successes rather than their failures.*

Janet Scott, 1988

*In the days ahead we must not consider it unpatriotic to raise certain basic questions about our national character. We must begin to ask, "Why are there forty million poor people in a nation overflowing with such unbelievable affluence? Why has our nation placed itself in the position of being God's military agent on earth...? Why have we substituted the arrogant undertaking of policing the whole world for the high task of putting our own house in order?"*

Dr. Martin Luther King

*At the centre of Friends' religious experience is the repeatedly and consistently expressed belief in the fundamental equality of all members of the human race. Our common humanity transcends our differences. Friends have worked individually and corporately to give expression to this belief. We aspire not to say or do*

*anything or condone any statements or actions which imply lack of respect for the humanity of any person. We try to free ourselves from assumptions of superiority and from racial prejudice....To liberate ourselves from pervasive attitudes and practices of our time and social environment requires new perceptions and hard work.*

Meeting for Sufferings, 1988

*That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody helps ME any best place. And aint I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm. I have plowed, I have planted and I have gathered into barns. And no man could head me. And aint I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man – when I could get it – and bear the lash as well. And aint I a woman? I have borne children and seen most of them sold into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me. And aint I a woman?*

Sojourner Truth, 1851

*It is time for the preachers, the rabbis, the priests and pundits, and the professors to believe in the awesome wonder of diversity...It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength. We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter their color; equal in importance no matter their texture. Our young must be taught that racial peculiarities do exist, but that beneath the skin, beyond the differing feature and into the true heart of being, fundamentally, we are more alike, my friend, than we are unlike.*

Maya Angelou, 1993

*In those first days in the South...a white kid of nine or ten was hanging over the roof of the Royals' dugout. Above the chorus of boos, [Jackie] Robinson could hear him shouting, "Atta boy, Jackie, nice try! Atta boy, Jackie!" ...He knew that never in his life would he forget the face of this boy who was honest at heart, not yet filled with the poison of prejudice, who shouted a word of encouragement above the cries of the mob.*

Carl T. Rowan, 1960

## 5. Fostering Community

### Queries

*Are love and harmony within the Meeting community fostered by a spirit of open sharing?*

*What helps our Meeting build trust of one another?*

*How do we get to know one another in our spiritual community?*

*How do we make time in our lives for our Meeting?*

*How do our conflicts have the potential to enrich the life of our community?*

### Advices

Meetings can consciously cultivate fellowship and community. The Meeting is enriched when all members and attenders participate actively. The working of the Spirit in our lives is expressed through ministry, pastoral caring for each other, and the example provided by lives lived in the Light. As we worship, work, and laugh together, we forge bonds of trust, understanding, and communication.

When need arises to address contentious issues, they then may be addressed openly and honestly. Conflict thus experienced can also build trust and intimacy. When resolution is not immediate, the Meeting can make room for different expressions of continuing revelation, while persisting in earnest search for unity. The larger Quaker community has many resources that can help meetings address internal conflict. Convictions that might divide or disrupt a Meeting can, through God's grace, help to make it creative and strong.

### Voices

*The life of a religious society consists in something more than the body of principles it professes and the outer garments of organization which it wears. These things have their own importance: they embody the society to the world, and protect it from the chance and change*

*of circumstances; but the springs of life lie deeper, and often escape recognition. They are to be found in the vital union of the members of the society with God and with one another, a union which allows the free flowing through the society of a spiritual life which is its strength.*

William Charles Braithwaite, 1905

*The Society of Friends can make its greatest contribution to community by continuing to be a religious society - I mean, by centering on the practice of a corporate worship which opens itself to continuing revelation. Again, community is simply too difficult to be sustained by our social impulses. It can be sustained only as we return time and again to the religious experience of the unity of all life.*

Parker J. Palmer, 1977

*The core of the Quaker tradition is a way of inward seeking which leads to outward acts of integrity and service. Friends are most in the Spirit when they stand at the crossing point of the inward and the outward life. And that is the intersection at which we find community. Community is a place where the connections felt in the heart make themselves known in bonds between people, and where the tuggings and pullings of those bonds keep opening up our hearts.*

Parker Palmer, 1977

*Where, then, can seeking men and women find a community in which meditation, worship, religious education of children, common undertaking and adventurous experiments, common festivals, and spiritual therapy are all going on, not as part of an*

*expensive organized professional program, but as part of the informal natural life of a close religious fellowship?*

Douglas V. Steere, 1940

*It is not easy to find community and fellowship in the modern world. Many Friends view relationships within the local Meeting as similar to partial relationships established with people met regularly at work, at play, and in the neighborhood. It is perhaps too much to expect that we all will make the Meeting central to our lives. But unless the Meeting fellowship can be made to speak to something deep in our lives, our Society falls short of fulfilling the true spiritual needs of its members.*

BYM Faith & Practice, 1988

*The community thrives and is nourishing to its members not because its members are special people – on the contrary, they are very ordinary human beings – but because God is active in their lives, helping them rise above their personal standards and ideals to live together in a special way that blesses each other and the larger community in which they live. The ability of Friends to be in community with one another is a testimony to the continuing and redeeming presence of the Holy Spirit in their individual lives and in the community's midst, giving the grace and love to enable them to live with and love one another in the midst of all the problems, trials, and misunderstandings that humans create for one another when they try to be a community.*

Lloyd Lee Wilson, 1993

*We may let God work when we yield to the reknitting of the worshiping community itself as the members are drawn nearer to the center and to each other. The community that has no such common experience to*

*gather it into an inward fellowship as children of a single loving Father, has not yet experienced the deepest fellowship of all.*

Douglas Steere, 1940

*Our belief in the universality of the Inner Light requires us to “walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone” as George Fox urged. No human being is excluded from our sense of community, for we are led by our faith to view human beings as children of God rather than as stereotypes of cultures, nations, or ideologies. It is individual people with whom fellowship must be established, and each Friend must seek in the quiet of worship the personal strength to work at the establishment of community.*

BYM Faith & Practice, 1988

*How can I participate in a fairer distribution of resources unless I live in a community which makes it possible to consume less? How can I learn accountability unless I live in a community where my acts and their consequences are visible to all? How can I learn to share power unless I live in a community where hierarchy is unnatural? How can I take the risks which right action demands unless I belong to a community which gives support? How can I learn the sanctity of each life unless I live in a community where we can be persons, not roles, to one another?*

Parker Palmer, 1977

*I believe that much could be accomplished by carefully planned intervisitation. There are highly gifted persons in a few meetings, who ought to circulate much more than is now the case. Their absence occasionally from their own meeting would throw the sense of responsibility*

*on other members of it, which would have a wholesome effect, and they would bring fresh life and inspiration where they visited.*

Rufus M. Jones, 1941

*Friends who restrict their experience of the Society to their local Meeting are missing rich experiences of fellowship in the wider community. Quarterly, Half-yearly and Yearly Meetings as well as larger gatherings provide opportunities for Friends of all ages to broaden their experience of the Society and the circle of their spiritually-based friendships.*

BYM Faith & Practice, 1988

## 6. Integrity

### Queries

*How do we seek truth by which to live? How do we recognize it?*

*In what ways does my life speak of my beliefs and values?*

*In what way is my life out of harmony with truth as I know it?*

### Advices

Integrity implies a harmony within, a music created through attentive listening to expressions of God in ourselves and each other. When we live with integrity, alone or as a faith community, our words and deeds ring true. We are able to hear when there is discord between our values and our words or actions, and we often sense when others in our community are “out of tune” with their own truth, or when, as a community, we do not seem to be following the same conductor.

When we live with integrity, our sense of self is lit from within by the same steady Light whether we are with our family, in meeting, or at work. When we live with integrity, we do not allow fear or desire for approval to shape the face we present to the world. We may express the truth we know differently so that different people can better hear it, or we may be silent because we feel it is not the time for certain words; but we are willing to allow the Inner Light to guide us in ways consistent with the truth as we understand it. Rooted in an awareness of God’s guiding presence in all times and places, each of us finds the strength and nourishment we need to be faithful – in the Psalmist’s words, “like a tree planted by the water.”

Community plays a critical role in discernment. Integrity calls us to recognize our gifts and our flaws alike with humility, helping each other to “let our lives speak,” lovingly, the truth as we know it. When we live with integrity, we hold the imperfections and dark places in our selves and our communities to the Light, remembering that our mistakes and flaws may help

us understand the pain and burdens of others or even become a spring for ministry. Living with integrity requires that we not “outrun our guide.” Rather, as Carolyn Stephens wrote, we do our best to “live up to the Light we have,” knowing that “more will be given” when we are ready.

## Voices

*The essence of early Quakerism is precisely in a demand for complete integrity of the individual in relation to God, to other people, to self.*

Cecil Hinshaw

*At the first convincement, when Friends could not put off their hats to people, or say You to a single person, but Thou and Thee; when they could not bow, or use flattering words in salutations, or adopt the fashions and customs of the world, many Friends, that were tradesmen of several sorts, lost their customers at the first; for the people were shy of them, and would not trade with them; so that for a time some Friends could hardly get money enough to buy bread. But afterwards, when people came to have experience of Friends' honesty and truthfulness, and found that their Yea was yea, and their Nay was nay; that they kept to a word in their dealings, and that they would not cozen and cheat them; but that if they sent a child to their shops for anything, they were as well used as if they had come themselves; the lives and conversations of Friends did preach, and reached to the witness of God in the people.*

George Fox, 1653

*The truthfulness which we owe to God must assume a concrete form in the world. Our speech must be truthful, not in principle but concretely. A truthfulness which is not concrete is not truthful before God.*

Bonhoeffer, *On Telling the Truth*

*Live your life on the basis of truth and let truth have its say in everything, and let what is right be heard too. Let what is just and holy be acted on, without any guile, fraud, or deceit...In whatever work you do for a living speak the truth, act on the truth, do what is just and right in all your actions, in all your practices, in all your words, in all your buying, selling, exchanging and commercial dealings with people. Let truth be your first concern and put it into practice...Living in this power and life of God in which you have justice, you also have truth and equity and rightness, and these things become quite natural for you.*

George Fox

*For a Quaker, religion is not an external activity, concerning a special “holy” part of the self. It is an openness to the world in the here and now with the whole of the self. If this is not simply a pious commonplace, it must take into account the whole of our humanity: our attitudes to other human beings in our most intimate as well as social and political relationships. It must also take account of our life in the world around us, the way we live, the way we treat animals and the environment. In short, to put it in traditional language, there is no part of ourselves and of our relationships where God is not present.*

Harvey Gillman, 1988

*A neighbor...desired me to write his will: I took notes, and, amongst other things, he told me to which of his children he gave his young negro: I considered the pain and distress he was in, and knew not how it would end, so I wrote his will, save only that part concerning his slave, and carrying it to his bedside, read it to him, and then told him in a friendly way, that I could not write any instruments by which my fellow-creatures were made*

*slaves, without bringing trouble on my own mind. I let him know that I charged nothing for what I had done, and desired to be excused from doing the other part in the way he proposed. Then we had a serious conference on the subject, and at length, he agreeing to set her free, I finished his will.*

John Woolman, 1756

*Dear Friends, be faithful in what you know, take heed of making a profession of what you are not...*

James Nayler, 1653

*Show that you are children of the Light by loving it; and make it clear that you love the Light, that your Light may shine forth before all men in your works, and that true judgement may be set up in you, and all unrighteousness condemned and cast out, and truth received in, that the truth may make you free...*

James Nayler, 1653

*Any great issue has transformative power, once we engage it. Slavery led John Woolman through a lifetime of spiritual transformation, of renewal in his own heart. Whether our own faith is centered on Christ or other core beliefs, our journey can be animated as Woolman's was by compassion and a love of truth.*

David Morse, 2001

*Christ's way of propagating the truth – the way that inherently fits the inner life and spirit of the gospel of the Kingdom – was the way of personal contagion. Instead of founding an institution, or organizing an official society, or forming a system, or creating external machinery, He counted almost wholly upon the spontaneous and dynamic influence of life upon life, of personality upon personality...It was His faith that, if you get into the*

*world anywhere a seed of the Kingdom, a nucleus of persons who exhibit the blessed life, who are dedicated to expanding goodness, who rely implicitly on love and sympathy, who try in meek patience the slow method that is right, who still feel the clasping hands of love even when they go through pain and trial and loss, this seed-spirit will spread, this nucleus will enlarge and create a society...*

Rufus Jones, 1916

*We all need other people to invite, amplify, and help us to discern the inner teacher's voice for at least three reasons:*

*\* The journey toward inner truth is too taxing to be made solo; lacking support, the solitary traveler soon becomes weary or fearful and is likely to quit the road.*

*\* The path is too deeply hidden to be traveled without company; finding our way involves clues that are subtle and sometimes misleading, requiring the kind of discernment that can happen only in dialogue.*

*\* The destination is too daunting to be achieved alone: we need community to find the courage to venture into the alien lands to which the inner teacher may call us.*

Parker Palmer, 2004

*Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one; whereby in them ye may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you. Then to the Lord God you will be a sweet savour and blessing.*

George Fox

*[Note on the meaning of the word “cheerfully” in the above passage: Regarding the quote from George Fox, “Walk cheerfully over the word, answering to that of God in everyone”: The word “cheerfully,” in addition to the way we use it, had another meaning in 17th century England. It meant “encouragingly” (this is the way Shakespeare used it) as in our modern sense of “to cheer someone on.” If I were to paraphrase a small part of Fox’s message it might go something like this: “Always be examples of your best conduct and behavior where ever you are. Then you will come to walk through the world, encouraging others to do likewise.” This is a very different message from how cheerfully is usually understood in our time, but it is much more consistent with the rest of Fox’s writings.*

Bruce Folsom, 1994]

*George Fox... felt the need for integrity in daily life. ... there must be a correspondence between one’s faith, between what one professed on the Sabbath, and what one does during the daily work week.*

Wilmer Cooper, 1991

*Integrity is one of the virtues for which Quakers in the past have been praised. It is a quality worth having, but it is doubtful if it can be reached by self-conscious effort or by adherence to a principle....Integrity is a condition in which a person’s response to a total situation can be trusted: the opposite of a condition in which he would be moved by opportunist or self-seeking impulses breaking up his unity as a whole being. This condition of trust is different from the recognition that he will always be kind or always tell the truth. The integrity of some Dutch Friends I have met showed itself during the war in their willingness to tell lies to save their Jewish friends from the Gestapo or from starvation.*

Kenneth C. Barnes, 1972

*Friends consider integrity a way of life. In the stillness of worship we come into the Divine Presence and open ourselves to the Light; we hide nothing of who we are. In keeping with that openness of spirit, Friends express themselves with honesty in their dealings with others. Plain truth needs no decorative flourishes. We speak with simple clarity to reflect in our words the reality of our perceptions and thoughts.*

Intermountain Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice

*Sing and rejoice, ye children of the day and of the light; for the Lord is at work in this thick night of darkness that may be felt. And truth doth flourish as the rose, and the lilies do grow among the thorns, and the plants atop of the hills, and upon them the lambs do skip and play. And never heed the tempests nor the storms, floods nor rains, for the seed Christ is over all, and doth reign. And so be of good faith and valiant for the truth: for the truth can live in the jails.*

George Fox, Epistle 227

## 7. Listening

### Queries

*When is it hardest for me to be ready to listen?*

*To what extent do I open myself to the risks of listening?*

*How have I been changed by deeply listening to another?*

*What gets in the way when I seek to translate the ideas, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of another into familiar terms? When is this most likely to happen?*

### Advices

Listening to the Spirit enables us to hear “where the words come from” when others speak. Hearing truth as others understand it is a way of deepening your own faith.

Just as compassionate listening can be a healing experience, inattentive conversation can be unkind and hurtful. Undivided attention is a precious gift.

Speak with your own, authentic voice, using the terms true to your experience. Encourage and welcome others to do the same. Read between the lines. Listen between the words.

### Voices

*Listening is a rare happening among human beings. You cannot listen to the word another is speaking if you are preoccupied with your appearance, or with impressing the other, or are trying to decide what you are going to say when the other stops talking, or are debating about whether what is being said is true or relevant or agreeable. Such matters have their place, but only after listening to the word as the word is being uttered. Listening is a primitive act of love in which a person gives himself to another's word, making himself accessible and vulnerable to that word.*

William Stringfellow, *Friend's Journal*

*Simple, respectful, prayerful listening is at least as good for the soul of the listener as for the person listened to.*

Patricia Loring, 1997

*With the gift of listening comes the gift of healing, because listening to your brothers and sisters until they have said the last words in their hearts is healing and consoling.*

Catherine de Hueck Doherty

*When listening, Friends need to be aware that certain words carry powerful emotional weight for them personally, and that they may hear meanings which reflect their own emotions and sensitivities rather than the intentions of the speaker. Each person is encouraged to be faithful in using the language which feels authentic and appropriate to their message, and those listening are encouraged to hold the actual words as lightly as possible, while seeking to be open to the Spirit which enlivens them.*

New England Yearly Meeting, 2006

*As we learn from each other, we may initially need to translate the words other Friends use to describe their faith, much as we would a foreign language. With practice this becomes easier, and although we may never adopt their language as our own, we are enriched and brought closer to each other by the ongoing practice of being able to listen outside the comfort of our own religious vocabulary. We rejoice in the Grace of a God who speaks to each of us in a voice we can understand, but who also provides others to help us understand those things which are outside our own experience. Faith and Practice Revision, Second Draft: "Introduction."*

New England Yearly Meeting, 2006

*How falsely a listener may construe what we say if he takes only our words. Our words are often halting and many times plainly not what we mean. Back of what we mean on the conscious level, there is almost always a deeper unconscious meaning that is at work.*

Douglas Steere, 1955

*I am not talking about listening with the human ear. I am talking about “discernment,” which means to perceive something hidden and obscure. We must listen with our spiritual ear, the one inside, and this is very different from deciding in advance what is right and what is wrong and then seeking to promote our own agenda. We must literally suspend our disbelief and then listen to learn whether what we hear expands or diminishes our sense of Truth.*

Gene Knudsen Hoffman, 2003

*Authentic listening is an act of love. To listen is to become vulnerable, to risk being drawn into someone’s suffering, to expose our assumptions to challenge. Listening can require great courage, which is why we will often tolerate injustice or even strike out in violence rather than risk listening.*

Beyond Borders Newsletter

*You cannot truly listen to anyone and do anything else at the same time.*

M. Scott Peck

*The fathomless depth of the listener who can go beyond words, who can even go beyond the conscious meanings behind words and who can listen with the third ear for what is unconsciously being meant by the speaker, this fashion of attentive listening furnishes a climate where*

*the most unexpected disclosures occur that are in the way of being miracles in one sense, and the most natural and obvious things in the world, on the other.*

Douglas Steere, 1955

*It is a powerful discipline for the “listener” to try to listen without agenda, without the compulsion to help, abandoning the need or desire to appear knowledgeable, wise or comforting. There may be no more tellingly difficult spiritual practice than the effort to receive what is being said by someone else hospitably, without editing, without correction, without unsolicited advice. Yet it is this open listening that makes room for the Spirit of God to be present in the midst of the interaction, illuminating and guiding what is taking place... As we listen in this way, particularly in the beginning, we often learn more about ourselves than we do about the person we are trying to hear. We learn the limitations of our hospitality, where our resistances to the reality of the other person lie, how we require others to conform to our ideological structures and ways of expression before we will receive truth as they see it, how unprepared we are to trust in the capacity of others to work out their own solutions with divine assistance.*

Patricia Loring, 1997

## 8. Meeting for Business

### Queries

*Are our meetings for worship with a concern for business held in the spirit of worship, seeking the guidance of God? In what ways do we each take our right share of responsibility in the service of the meeting?*

### Advices

Participation in the meeting for worship with a concern for business is the responsibility of all. Come with open minds, seeking the spirit, listening carefully, discerning the truth in what others have to offer. Proceed with forbearance and warm affection for each other. If you cannot attend, prayerfully uphold the meeting.

We do not seek a majority decision nor even consensus. As we wait patiently for God's guidance, our experience is that way will open and we shall be led into unity. Speak only when God gives you new insight into the matter at hand. Think it possible that you may be mistaken.

### Voices

*So Friends are not to meet like a company of people about town or parish business, neither in their men's nor women's meetings, but to wait upon the Lord; and feeling his power and spirit to lead them, and order them to his glory; that so whatsoever they may do, they may do it to the praise and glory of God, and in unity in the faith, and in the spirit, and in fellowship in the order of the gospel;*

George Fox, 1674

*And that all may be careful to speak short and pertinent to matters in a Christian spirit, and dispatch business quickly, and keep out of long debates and heats; and with*

*the spirit of God keep that down, which is doting about questions and strife of words, that tend to parties and contention: which in the church of God there is no such custom to be allowed. And likewise not to speak more than one at a time; nor any in a fierce way; for that is not to be allowed in any society, neither natural nor spiritual; but as the apostle saith, 'Be swift to hear, and slow to speak;' and let it be in the grace, which seasons all words....*

George Fox, 1690

*The meeting for the transaction of church business is as distinctly a religious exercise as is the meeting for worship, but it has a different objective. The meeting for worship is focused upon the divine-human relationship and the meeting for business is mainly concerned with inter-human cooperation, the two being interdependent. From another point of view, the meeting for worship concerns being while the meeting for business concerns doing. What is implicit in worship becomes explicit in action.*

*The meeting for business should, therefore, be preceded by a period of worship in which the hard shell of ego-centricity is dissolved and the group united into a living whole. It is also well to conclude the business meeting with a period of silent devotion. George Fox wrote to Friends,*

*"Friends, keep your meetings in the power of God, and in his wisdom (by which all things were made) and in the love of God, that by that ye may order all to his glory. And when Friends have finished their business, sit down and continue awhile quietly and wait upon the Lord to feel him. And go not beyond the Power, but keep in the Power by which God Almighty may be felt among you... For the Power of the Lord will work through all, if you follow it."*  
(Ep. 162, 1658)

Howard H. Brinton, 1952

*For the preservation of love, concord and a good decorum in this meeting, 'tis earnestly desired that all business that comes before it be managed with gravity and moderation, in much love and Amity, without reflections or retorting, which is but reasonable as well as comely, since we have no other obligation upon each other but love, which is the very bond of our society: and therein to serve the Truth and one another; having an eye single to it, ready to sacrifice every private interest to that of Truth, and the good of the whole community.*

Wiltshire Quarterly Meeting, 1678

*Partly because of its rarity, sense of the meeting is a gift of enormous worth, more valuable, perhaps, than any other Quaker gift or practice. Quakers are not the only people who worship in silence. They are not alone in waiting for continuing revelation by attending to the Light within.... But where, except among Friends, has the practice of discovering the sense of the meeting become so entrenched?*

Barry Morley, 1993

*Friends have traditionally so valued the fruit of group discernment that they have been willing to labor hard and to wait long to come into unity with one another before proceeding in a matter of substance.*

Patricia Loring, 1992

*Our meetings for church affairs, in which we conduct our business, are also meetings for worship based on silence, and they carry the same expectation that God's guidance can be discerned if we are truly listening together and to each other, and are not blinkered by preconceived opinions. It is this belief that God's will can be recognized through the discipline of silent waiting which distinguishes*

*our decision-making process from the secular idea of consensus. We have a common purpose in seeking God's will through waiting and listening, believing that every activity of life should be subject to divine guidance.*

*This does not mean that laughter and a sense of humor should be absent from our meetings for church affairs. It does mean that at all times there should be an inward recollection: out of this will spring a right dignity, flexible and free from pomp and formality.*

Britain Yearly Meeting, 3.02

*We sometimes overlook that meetings for business are also meetings for worship, even as Friends' weddings and memorial meetings are meetings for worship. Thus meetings for business are subject to the same kinds of abuse and require the same kind of nurture and discipline as meetings for worship. ... The Quaker business meeting is as dependent on the sensitivity, good will, and spiritual readings of its participants as is meeting for worship.*

Barry Morley, 1993

*Spiritual discernment lies at the heart of Quaker spirituality and practice. It's grounded in the central Quaker conviction of the availability to every person of the experience and guidance of God, immediate as well as mediated. Discernment is the faculty we use to distinguish the true movement of the Spirit to speak in meeting for worship from the wholly human urge to share, to instruct, or to straighten people out. It is the capacity we exercise in a centered meeting for worship for the conduct of business to sense the right course for the meeting to take in complex or difficult circumstances.*

*It is the ability to see into people, situations, and possibilities to identify what is of God in them and what*

*is of the numerous other sources in ourselves – and what may be both. It is that fallible, intuitive gift we use in attempting to discriminate the course to which we are personally led by God in a given situation, from our other impulses and from the generalized judgments of conscience.*

Patricia Loring, 1992

*In some people this gift [of discernment] may be given or developed to an unusual degree. Part of the Quaker experience, however, has been that we all have been given some measure of the gift of discernment. In a life lived with other priorities, the gift may be left undeveloped. But as we grow and are faithful to the spiritual life we may well be given more.*

Patricia Loring, 1992

**Consensus** – *a secular method, involving a rational process and producing general agreement. The authority is the group.*

**Sense of the Meeting** – *a religious method involving a spiritual process and producing a spirit-led decision. The authority is God as discerned by the group in worship.*

Arthur Larabee, Clerking Workshop

*Consensus is the product of willfulness. We will ourselves to a decision. Sense of the Meeting is a product of willingness in which we allow ourselves to be led. It is the difference between reason and faith.*

Barry Morley, 1993

*Central to the Quaker understanding of unity-based decision making is Fox's idea that there is "that of God in every one." When a group of believers comes together to deliberate about the best way to serve God here and now,*

*each looks to find in others some manifestation of "that of God," and looks for the mark of the Spirit of Christ - Truth with a capital 'T' - in everyone else's remarks. In short, since the same Spirit speaks in each heart, the members expect to end their meetings united.*

Michael J. Sheeran, 1996

## 9. Meeting for Worship

### Queries

*In what ways do I prepare my heart and mind to receive the power of God's presence and love?*

*How does worship deepen my relationship with God? How is this inspiration carried over into my daily life?*

*Are our meetings for worship held in expectant waiting for Divine guidance?*

*How do activities of our Meeting find their inspiration in worship? In what ways does worship uphold meeting activities?*

### Advices

The heart of the Religious Society of Friends is the Meeting for Worship. In worship we are called to seek God's will with our entire being: body, mind, and soul

Worship is the adoring response of the heart and mind to the influences of the Spirit of God. It stands neither in forms nor in the formal disuse of forms. God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. (John 4:24, RSV) We treasure silence as a path towards inspiration and guidance that leads to communion with God.

In our Meetings for Worship, we are called to listen with 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. Worshipping God together, we can strengthen one another, and our bodies and minds can be refreshed in the life of the Spirit. Our daily lives are linked with the Meeting, the Meeting for Worship with our daily lives. "Let meeting for worship nourish your whole life." (Britain Yearly Meeting, Quaker Faith and Practice, 1.02.10)

Give adequate time for study, meditation and prayer, and other ways of preparing for worship. Be mindful that worship is the fusion of individual and collective waiting to experience

the love of God. Come regularly to meeting for worship even when you are angry, depressed, tired or spiritually cold. In the silence ask for and accept the prayerful support of others joined with you in worship.

During the Meeting for Worship, Friends may be led by the Spirit to testify, to share an insight, to pray, to praise. When speaking, we should do so clearly and simply, using as many words as necessary and as few as possible. When another speaks, listen with an open spirit, holding the speaker in love. Rest with the message, recognizing that even if it is not God's word for you, it may be so for others.

### Voices

*Friends, meet together and know one another in that which is eternal, which was before the world was.*

George Fox, 1657

*What is the ground and foundation of the gathered meeting? In the last analysis, it is, I am convinced, the Real Presence of God.*

Thomas R. Kelly, 1940

*For, when I came into the silent assemblies of God's people I felt a secret power among them which touched my heart; and as I gave way unto it I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up; and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this power and life, whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed....*

Robert Barclay, 1678

*Our worship is a deep exercise of our spirits before the Lord, which doth not consist in an exercising the natural part or natural mind, either to hear or speak words, or in praying according to what we, of ourselves, can*

*apprehend or comprehend concerning our needs; but we wait, in silence of the fleshly part, to hear with the new ear what God shall please to speak inwardly in our own hearts, or outwardly through others.*

Isaac Penington, 1681

*As Catholic worship is centered in the altar and Protestant worship in the sermon, worship for the Society of Friends attempts to realize as its center the divine Presence revealed within. In a Catholic church the altar is placed so as to become the focus of adoration; in a typical Protestant church the pulpit localizes attention; while in a Friends Meeting House there is no visible point of concentration, worship being here directed neither toward the actions nor the words of others, but toward the inward experience of the gathered group.*

Howard Brinton, 1952

*In worship we have our neighbors to right and left, before and behind, yet the Eternal Presence is over all and beneath all. Worship does not consist in achieving a mental state of concentrated isolation from one's fellows. But in the depth of common worship it is as if we found our separate lives were all one life, within whom we live and move and have our being.*

Thomas R. Kelly, 1938

*A Friends' meeting, however silent, is at the very lowest a witness that worship is something other and deeper than words, and that it is to the unseen and eternal things that we desire to give the first place in our lives. And when the meeting, whether silent or not, is awake, and looking upwards, there is much more in it than this. In the united stillness of a truly 'gathered' meeting there is a power known only by experience, and mysterious even when*

*most familiar. There are perhaps few things which more readily flow 'from vessel to vessel' than quietness.*

Caroline E. Stephen, 1908

*Group, like individual worship, is an offering; and let none think that because he comes to meeting dry and empty or in great perplexity or need of help, he has "nothing to offer." He has not only his "outward testimony" to bear, but he has his weakness itself to lay before God in trust and love; and if the meeting is truly "gathered," that offering may bring it to a deeper place than any surface happiness and praise could do.*

Beatrice Saxon Snell, 1965

*The presence of fellow-worshippers in some gently penetrating manner reveals to the spirit something of the nearness of the Divine Presence. "Where two or three are gathered together in His name" have we not again and again felt that the promise was fulfilled and that the Master Himself was indeed "in the midst of us"? And it is out of the depths of this stillness that there do arise at times spoken words which, springing from the very source of prayer, have something of the power of prayer - something of its quickening and melting and purifying effect. Such words as these have at least as much power as silence to gather into stillness.*

Caroline E. Stephen, 1908

*Our way of worship is not just an historical accident; it is a corollary from our conviction concerning the universal Light of Christ. Believing that in every worshiper, regardless of age, learning, sex, or any other human label, the promptness of God's spirit are at work, Friends meet together in entirely unprogrammed meetings, worship in silent prayer, opening themselves [to the Spirit]. ...*

*In such corporate worship...we are led into a depth of communion with God and with one another that is deeply meaningful and spiritually refreshing.*

L. Hugh Doncaster

*Yea, though there be not a word spoken, yet is the true spiritual worship performed, and the body of Christ edified; yea, it may, and hath often fallen out among us, that divers meetings have passed without one word; and yet our souls have been greatly edified and refreshed, and our hearts wonderfully overcome with the secret sense of God's power and Spirit, which without words hath been ministered from one vessel to another.*

Robert Barclay, 1677

*And as 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 is more of the glory of God, and his power appears, to the refreshment of each individual, for that he partakes not only of the light and life raised in himself, but in all the rest.*

Robert Barclay, 1678

*On one never-to-be-forgotten Sunday morning, I found myself one of a small company of silent worshippers, who were content to sit down together without words, that each one might feel after and draw near to the Divine Presence, unhindered at least, if not helped, by any human utterance. Utterance I knew was free, should the words be given; and, before the meeting was over a sentence or two were uttered in great simplicity by an old and apparently untaught man, rising in his place amongst the rest of us. I did not pay much attention to the words he spoke, and I have no recollection of their purport. My whole soul was filled with the unutterable peace of*

*the undisturbed opportunity for communion with God, with the sense that at last I had found a place where I might, without the faintest suspicion of insincerity, join with others in simply seeking His presence. To sit down in silence could at least pledge me to nothing; it might open to me (as it did that morning) the very gate of heaven.*

Caroline Stephen, 1872

*Silence is often a stern discipline, a laying bare of the soul before God, a listening to the “reproof of life.” But the discipline has to be gone through, the reproof has to be submitted to, before we can find our right place in the temple. Words may help and silence may help, but the one thing needful is that the heart should turn to its Maker as the needle turns to the pole. For this we must be still.*

Caroline Stephen, 1908

*So near evening I was at [a meeting with Indians], where the pure gospel love was felt, to the tendering some of our hearts. And the interpreters, endeavoring to acquaint the people with what I said, in short sentences, found some difficulty, as none of them were quite perfect in the English and Delaware tongue. So they helped one another and we laboured along, divine love attending. And afterwards feeling my mind covered with the spirit of prayer, I told the interpreters that I found it in my heart to pray to God and believed if I prayed right he would hear me, and expressed my willingness for them to omit interpreting; so our meeting ended with a degree of divine love. And before the people went out I observed Papunechang...spoke to one of the interpreters, and I was afterward told that he said in substance as follows: “I love to feel where words come from.”*

John Woolman, *Journal*

*I returned to Quaker meeting of my childhood. It was the silence that drew me, that deep, healing silence of the meeting at its best, when the search of each is intensified by the search of all, when the “gentle motions,” the “breathings and stirrings” of the Spirit which is within each and beyond all, are expectantly awaited and often experienced.*

Elizabeth Gray Vining

*The practice of Quaker worship has a strength which goes far beyond the simple act of sitting in an unprogrammed meeting. It defines a community of believers and the way they understand the bond that exists between them. It gives expression to their sense of the indescribable holiness of God. This has probably never been better put than by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians: “we teach what scripture calls: ‘the things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, things beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those that love him.’ These are the very things that God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit reaches the depths of everything, even the depths of God.”*

John Punshon, 1987

*Only in its method is the Society of Friends unique. The Quaker meeting for worship and the Quaker meeting for business are unique institutions. It is their purpose to expose the soul to the Light from God so that peace is removed if it ought to be removed, or attained if it can be attained. If the soul becomes sensitive, if its vision is widened and deepened so that new areas of life come within its ken, then a new requirement may be laid upon it and peace removed until that requirement is met. If the soul is able to find in the silence union with the peace of God at the heart of existence, then inward peace is*

*secured and new knowledge and power received. The soul, no longer exhausting its energy in conflict with itself, becomes integrated and unified. Hence arises new power and vision for tasks ahead.*

Howard H. Brinton, 1948

*There are times of dryness in our individual lives, when meeting may seem difficult or even worthless. At such times one may be tempted not to go to meeting, but it may be better to go, prepared to offer as our contribution to the worship simply a sense of need. In such a meeting one may not at the time realise what one has gained, but one will nevertheless come away helped.*

Berks & Oxon QM, 1948

*The meeting for worship on a basis of silent waiting in which each member present is open to receive and to express the word which comes to him is a direct consequence of the drive towards perfectionism which insisted on the priesthood of all believers and the absence of a professional clergy. It is a direct consequence also of the experimentalism which denies the efficacy of rites and ceremonies.*

Kenneth E. Boulding, 1964

*When a local meeting is engaged in building this kind of religious community, the meeting for worship becomes its culminating experience. Here in the corporate silence people who live in the world and face all of its problems gather each week both to work and to let God work. Let there be no mistake about either of these aspects of worship, for both are present. The meeting for worship when it gathers in the silence is no longer merely a respectable outward association. It is soil that has been*

*ploughed and harrowed and disked by these common experiences. It has been made open for the planting of the seed.*

Douglas V. Steere, 1940

*The Meeting for Worship is at the very heart of our Quaker faith and the life-blood of the Society. Again and again it has proved to be the right discipline by which the individual may free himself from the usual cares that beset the mind, and allow the light to break in upon his consciousness. Whether it be the first time or the thousandth, it is equally wonderful, equally rewarding and refreshing.*

John H. Hobart, 1954

*Do you come to meeting for worship with heart and mind prepared? What is the preparation that readies us ... for the life and power of the seed? It is not simply a matter of arriving for meeting on time, though with our hectic lives even that is not always easy. Preparation for worship is a life that integrates prayer, meditation, edifying reading, and deep conversation into the busy routines that most of us pursue. We cannot expect to dive casually out of the heat of the world into the coolness of divine communication for an hour per week. That only brings the heat of the world in and disturbs the waters, leaving no place for peace.*

Douglas Gwyn, 1997

*If meeting for worship becomes persistently and repeatedly jarring and meaningless, that may be God's challenge to you to rethink your Christianity and come, with his help, to a conclusion as to what you really believe. Feelings always mean something, and by taking counsel with God in prayer we may come to find whether they are the result of spiritual neglect or spiritual growth.*

Beatrice Saxon Snell, 1965

*Finally, remember that our manner of worship is ultimately a mystery under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Each Meeting for Worship is a spiritual adventure, unique and unpredictable. Let us remember in humility that “the end of words is to bring us to the knowledge of things beyond what words can utter.”*

Isaac Pennington, 1670

## 10. Membership

### Queries

*How do I actively support the meeting community?*

*How do I support the Clerk of Meeting and clerks of committees?*

*How am I maturing into the fullness of membership in this spiritual community?*

*How does meeting nurture my spiritual growth and transformation?*

### Advices

Just as Friends have “affirmed the priesthood of all believers” so we also affirm that each Friend, not just the clerk, has a direct responsibility for the meeting. As we are all ministers of the Word, so we all are ministers to each other and to the community as a whole. As members of a community we look not to our rights, liberties and privileges, but to our obligations, responsibilities, and our duties.

Membership in the Religious Society of Friends is a spiritual commitment. To become a member, an applicant should have come experientially into general agreement with the Society’s principles of belief and testimonies.

Membership carries with it spiritual obligations. Each member is called to participate in the Meeting’s spiritual life and to attend worship regularly. Members need to nurture each other’s God-given gifts and talents. They seek guidance from one another and the Meeting in discerning God’s will for themselves. They pray for one another.

The basic spiritual commitment creates practical obligations. The vitality of each Monthly Meeting depends on its members’ investments of time, energy and financial support. Friends put practical meaning into their spiritual commitment through regular participation in meetings for business, service on committees or as officers, regular financial giving, taking

part in service projects under the care of the Meeting, assisting in maintenance of Meeting property, and representing the Meeting in community and wider Friends' organizations.

### Voices

*For as in one body we have many members, and not all members have the same function, so we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.*

Romans 12:4-5 (NRSV)

*So the measuring line of righteousness is in this known; . . . So wait to know every particular of yourselves, to be heirs of this; and know your portion, the power of God, the gospel fellowship, then are ye members one of another, and living stones, that build up the spiritual household.*

Fox, Epistle 239

*When early Friends affirmed the priesthood of all believers it was seen as an abolition of the clergy; in fact it is an abolition of the laity. All members are part of the clergy and have the clergy's responsibility for the maintenance of the meeting as a community. This means helping to contribute, in whatever ways are most suitable, to the maintenance of an atmosphere in which spiritual growth and exploration are possible for all.*

Britain Yearly Meeting 11.01

*Like all discipleships, membership has its elements of commitment and responsibility but it is also about joy and celebration. Membership is a way of saying to the meeting that you feel at home, and in the right place. Membership is also a way of saying to the meeting, and to the world, that you accept at least the fundamental elements of being a Quaker: the understanding of divine guidance,*

*the manner of corporate worship and the ordering of the meeting's business, the practical expression of inward convictions and the equality of all before God. In asking to be admitted into the community of the meeting you are affirming what the meeting stands for and declaring your willingness to contribute to its life.*

Britain Yearly Meeting 11.01

*Membership is costly ... It is not just about belonging, feeling accepted, feeling at home. It has also to do with being stretched, being challenged, being discomforted ... We can never be entirely sure of where the venture will lead us ... [but] the one thing we can be sure of is that the process, taken seriously, will call us to change.*

Helen Rowlands, 1952

*Membership does not require great moral or spiritual achievement, but it does require a sincerity of purpose and a commitment to Quaker values and practices. Membership is a spiritual discipline, a commitment to the well-being of one's spiritual home and not simply appearance on a membership roll.*

Britain Yearly Meeting 11.01

*Entry into membership of the Religious Society of Friends is a public acknowledgement of a growing unity with a community of people whose worship and service reflect, however imperfectly, their perception of discipleship and their recognition of the work of the Holy Spirit in the world. This unity is grounded in the experience of being 'gathered' in the love of God in the silent expectancy of our meetings for worship and in a willingness to surrender ourselves to a corporate seeking for the will of God in such measure as we can comprehend it.*

Britain Yearly Meeting 11.04

*Membership in a Quaker meeting is a spirit-led journey of coming to know ourselves as individual-in-community, a journey on which we experience meeting as a place of acceptance, a place of shared values, a place of transformation, and a place of obedience.*

Thomas Gates, 2004

*Worthiness has nothing to do with membership. God has already accepted us in our imperfection and is loving us forward toward a more perfect image of God's self. The real issue in membership is commitment on the part of both the meeting and the applicant to remain faithful to the development and requirements of the process within Quaker tradition.*

Patricia Loring, 1997

*As Quakers, we have no creed to recite, no confession to confess, no rituals to undergo that will reliably bring us into the fullness of membership. But we do have a rich and inspiring tradition; we have each other; and we have the Spirit of God which, we are promised, will "lead us into all things."*

Thomas Gates, 2004

*The servant-leader can be effective only where the principle of leading by serving is knit into the whole fabric of the institution. Everyone who is part of the community must accept the principle in his or her own life; it must be the basis for the novitiate-period of anyone coming into the institution.*

Paul A. Lacey, 1982

*The Inward Light is a universal light given to all men, religious consciousness itself being basically the same wherever it is found. Our difficulties come when we try*

*to express it. We cannot express; we can only experience God. Therefore we must always remember tolerance, humility, and tenderness with others whose ways and views may differ from ours.*

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1953

*And oh, how sweet and pleasant it is to the truly spiritual eye to see several sorts of believers, several forms of Christians in the school of Christ, every one learning their own lesson, performing their own peculiar service, and knowing, owning, and loving one another in their several places and different performances to their Master, to whom they are to give an account, and not quarrel with one another about their different practices.*

Isaac Pennington, 1659

## 11. Outreach

### Queries

*How does my life witness to my Quaker faith?*

*In what ways do I reach out to new attendees and encourage their exploration of Quakerism as a spiritual path?*

*How does our meeting convey Quaker faith and practice to the wider community?*

### Advices

What do we mean when we repeat Fox's admonition to "Let your life speak"? This simple sentence reminds us that it is our lives, not our words, that speak most reliably about who we are and what we believe. Our lives are our ministry, not the specific acts we think of as "official" ministry, such as speaking in meeting, following leadings, or carrying out our roles on committees. Jesus teaches us not to hide our lights; but to let them shine – as the gospel song would have it, "every day, every way." Outreach in this broad sense is not something we think about and plan; rather, it simply happens as we walk our paths in the world, lighted by "that of God" within us.

Advancement and outreach are natural and integral aspects of the Quaker way of life. Realizing that we are all children of God means that there is an infinite opportunity to search for God in our relations with others. Our fellowship begins, grows, and is nurtured in home and meeting. It reaches greater fulfillment as we carry our love of God and humankind to our relationships with persons in the wider community of which our Meeting is a part, with members of other Meetings, and with all persons whom we meet.

Outreach is not a monologue, but a dialogue - an adventure undertaken in the spirit of a musical improvisation with many instruments. Take time to learn about other people's experiences of the Light and, as you learn, give freely from your own. Respect the experiences and opinions of others, but do not be afraid to

say what you value and to speak with conviction. Welcome the diversity of culture, language, and expressions of faith among Friends and members of other faiths.

Outreach also includes being open to others who may be tentatively “reaching in” to explore the Quaker faith. The sense of welcome is expressed in countless small details: the coffee is warm, the biscuits are good, the potluck is plentiful, and people say “hi.” Most importantly, when someone walks in and asks, “What do Quakers believe?” it is the meeting’s task to be sure that they are likely to get a well-informed answer from anyone they might approach.

### Voices

*Let all nations hear the sound by word or writing. Spare no place, spare no tongue nor pen, but be obedient to the Lord God; go through the world and be valiant for the truth upon earth; tread and trample all that is contrary under.... Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one; whereby in them you may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.*

George Fox, 1656

*Indeed if one has been visited by a direct sense of inward presence, he is driven to tell everyone who will listen to him. Strange and unendurable irony – that Friends who speak so much about the Inward Light should so timidly hide their own light under a bushel! The time has come to preach the faith we have resolved to practice. If we have good news for our brothers, and I believe we do, let us shout it from the housetops! Let us learn to be publishers of truth about our faith as well as our social concerns.*

John Yungblut, 1974

*This story is told of a German woman living in Cologne in 1946. Her husband had been killed during the war and she was left with two small children. Their home was a damp basement beneath the ruins of a house... It is no wonder that she was a cynical and embittered woman when the Service Committee Workers found her. They were of the same nationality that she had been taught to hate, the ones who had killed her husband. But these people brought clothing, medicine, and food and above all sympathy and understanding. "Why do you do it?" she asked, and they tried to tell her something of the spirit that had sent them forth. Finally with tears in her eyes she exclaimed: "This is too good to keep to yourselves — Oh, why don't you preach what you practice!"*

John Hobart, 1954

*The sharing of our spiritual values with others, from our neighbors to the larger world, makes our outreach and advancement activities meaningful. Without spiritual motivation, our witness falls short.*

Baltimore Yearly Meeting, 1988

*Outreach is simply the process of making Quakerism available to those who are seeking, to those who may find value in its process. Whether these people become Quaker is of no consequence to the person who conducts true outreach. True outreach is an act of spiritual hospitality. It is an act of service to others to find and take what they need so they can find that of God in themselves and others.*

Barry Crossno, 2005

*Outreach is the natural result of the second great commandment that we love our neighbors as ourselves.*

*It grows out of the spiritual attitude of caring and can take many forms, limited only by our imagination.*

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1986

*Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every person has received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

I Peter 4: 9-10

*My new acquaintance was told by my friend that I walked a Quaker path. The acquaintance's face lit up. "What is that?" she asked. For the next hour she peppered me with questions about the Quaker path. I could not evade or sidetrack her. She was intense. At the end she exclaimed, "If I had known all of this twenty years ago, I would have lived a different life!" I sat stunned, moved, elated, and saddened all at the same time... She had heard of Quakers all her life, but she never met a Quaker that would explain what it meant. To borrow and butcher a phrase from the Bible: it's time to stop hiding our light under a bushel.*

Barry Crossno, 2005

*We dimly see that this Gospel, before it has finished with us, will turn our lives upside down and inside out. Our favourite Quaker vice of caution holds us back. We have much more to learn before we are ready to teach. It is right that we have much to learn; it is right to recognise the heavy responsibility of teaching; but to suppose that we must know everything before we can teach anything is to condemn ourselves to perpetual futility.*

George B. Jeffery, 1934

*Our point of departure is not a mighty proclamation of Truth, but the humble invitation to sit down together and share what we have found, in the spirit of Woolman setting out on his Indian journey, "that I might feel and understand their life, and the spirit they live in, if haply I might receive some instruction from them." We approach them without pressure to accept a statement, or with proselytising zeal, but with "love as the first motion."*

Harold Loukes, 1955

*Why have we been reluctant to share our faith? Has our message lost its value? Certainly not. How is it then that Friends retreated from a very active, prophetic kind of outreach, making their beliefs public at the risk of life, limb, and liberty, to our current position where outreach is low on our list of priorities, even actively opposed by some? For when we place a low priority on outreach we suggest either that our message isn't that important, or that somehow the rest of the world couldn't appreciate it, or that Quakerism is only for the select few.*

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1986

## 12. Peace

### Queries

*What does it mean to live in the virtue of that life and power which takes away the occasion of all war?*

*Where there are hatred, division, and strife, how are we instruments of reconciliation and love?*

*How do we communicate to others an understanding of the basis of our peace testimony?*

*As we work for peace in the world, are we nourished by peace within and among ourselves?*

*How do we think of those we believe have harmed us or others? How does our way of thinking about them affect our spiritual lives?*

### Advices

Since its founding over 350 years ago, the Society of Friends has testified to the worth of every individual by refusing to participate in war. We repudiate war because it violates the primacy of love, destroys lives that God has given, and tears the fabric of society. Members of our Society have traditionally refused to serve in the armed forces. The Peace Testimony is, however, more than a mere refusal to participate in war.

Fox's assertion that he "lived in that light and power that takes away the occasion for war" and Woolman's advice that we "examine our lives to see that the seeds of war are not contained therein" firmly establish connections between this and other testimonies. As we work for peace in the world, we search out the seeds of war in ourselves and in our way of life. We refuse to join in actions that lead to destruction and death. We seek ways to cooperate to save life and strengthen the bonds of unity among all people. We work to create the conditions of peace, such as freedom, justice, cooperation, and the right sharing of the world's resources.

Our faith calls for us to be fully present to the person before us. History has shown that when a future outcome, however noble, seems of greater worth than the human being before us, any means, any atrocity, is possible. To work for peace without being divisive, we need to work out of a place of faith, truly trusting in the movement of the spirit. We need to bring into God's light those emotions, attitudes and prejudices in ourselves which lie at the root of destructive conflict, acknowledging our need for forgiveness and grace.

Peace is the state in which we are in accord with God, the earth, others, and ourselves. We know that true, lasting peace among us flows from unity in the life of the spirit.

### Voices

*Our work for peace must begin within the private world of each one of us. To build for man a world without fear, we must be without fear. To build a world of justice, we must be just. And how can we fight for liberty if we are not free in our own minds? How can we ask others to sacrifice if we are not ready to do so?... Only in true surrender to the interest of all can we reach that strength and independence, that unity of purpose, that equity of judgment which are necessary if we are to measure up to our duty to the future, as men of a generation to whom the chance was given to build in time a world of peace.*

Dag Hammarskjold, 1953

*I told [the Commonwealth Commissioners] I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars... I told them I was come into the covenant of peace which was before wars and strife were.*

George Fox, 1651

*Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal.*

Martin Luther King, Jr.

George Fox did not say that he believed war to be wrong, or that in his opinion brute force never settled anything; he went straight to the heart of the matter and said that he “lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars.” To uphold such a testimony involved a dedicated life. The Quaker peace testimony is more than a repudiation of war, and more than a denial of the use of force; it is a way of life to which we must be faithful in small things as well as in great, in our human relationships, our business and social activities, and in the life and witness of our meetings.

Elfrida Vipont Foulds, 1981

*We are too ready to retaliate, rather than forgive, or gain by Love and Information. And yet we could hurt no Man that we believe loves us. Let us then try what Love will do: For if Men did once see we Love them, we should soon find they would not harm us. Force may subdue, but Love gains: And he that forgives first, wins the Lawrel. If I am even with my Enemy, the Debt is paid; but if I forgive it, I oblige him for ever.*

William Penn, 1682

*A good end cannot sanctify evil means; nor must we ever do evil, that good may come of it...it is as great presumption to send our passions upon God's errands, as it is to palliate them with God's name...We are too ready to retaliate, rather than forgive, or gain by love and information. And yet we could hurt no man that we believe loves us. Let us then try what Love will do: for if men did once see we may love them, we should soon find they would not harm us. Force may subdue, but Love gains: and he that forgives first, wins the laurel.*

William Penn, 1682

*We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fighting with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretense whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world. The spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the spirit of Christ, which leads us into all Truth will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world.*

George Fox, 1660

*We actively oppose all that leads to violence among people and nations and violence to other species and to our planet. Refusal to fight with weapons is not surrender. We are not passive when threatened by the greedy, the cruel, the tyrant, the unjust. We will struggle to remove the causes of impasse and confrontation by every means of nonviolent resistance available. We must start with our own hearts and minds. Together, let us reject the clamour of fear and listen to the whisperings of hope.*

New Zealand Quakers, 1987

*Universal peace is an active movement toward the oneness of all humanity and the realization of the Kingdom of God on Earth. The Testimony for Peace is not an artificial appendage to our faith, which can be dropped without injury to the whole. Our central faith requires that we should proclaim, in deed as well as word, that war, with the whole military system, is contrary to the spirit of the God whose name is Love. The same spirit must animate our business and social relations and make us eager to remove oppression and injustice in every form.*

London Yearly Meeting, 1912

*Why are we here? If I understand the message of God, his response to that question is that we are to take part in the creation of the Peaceable Realm of God. Again, if I understand the message of God, how we take part in the creation of this realm is to love God with all our heart, our mind and our strength and to love our neighbors and enemies as we love God and ourselves. In its essential form, different aspects of love bring about the creation of the realm.*

Tom Fox

*...There have been a number of times that I have been in some real or potential danger - at peace actions, working in the ghetto, or confronting irrational or violent people. In those times I have not been without fear, but I have never since felt the fear I felt when I first made the commitment to give up reliance on violence to protect me. I believe that when I became convinced of the peace testimony, I was given a leading which, in effect, immersed me in terror and the stuff of violence so that I could know my condition and work with it. I was tested and strengthened in conditions of safety before I was ever tested in real conflict.*

Paul Lacey, 1985

*The activist who seeks explanations based on outer facts declares that our restlessness is due to the terrible state of the world at present. If we could just get the outer world in order we could then feel inward peace. But perhaps he has not the whole truth, perhaps the more fundamental difficulty is with our inward world. As long as there is inward chaos, all outward actions will be contaminated by this chaos. In such a case all that we do will promote rather than allay confusion. We seek to bring peace in the*

*world when there is no peace in our hearts and as a result we infect the outer world with our inner conflict.*

Howard Brinton, 1948

*When speaking of “direct action for peace,” I am often told that one must never do things that make men angry. Now for many years I had the idea that this was true, and a basic part of nonviolent resistance. But I am no longer of this opinion. It is true that, when one is resisting an evil, one should do it without anger on one’s own part. The manner and spirit in which a protest is made is of paramount importance. But one should be straightforward, frank, and clear, and not evade issues because they are controversial and people are touchy on them.*

Wilmer Young, 1961

*May we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses, and our garments and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions.*

John Woolman

*We cannot have peace if we are only concerned with peace. War is not an accident. It is the logical outcome of a certain way of life. If we want to attack war, we have to attack the way of life.*

A.J. Muste

*When Joseph Hoag in 1812 was pleading his peace principles a man in his audience said, “Well stranger, if all the world was of your mind, I would turn and follow after.” Joseph replied, “So then thou hast a mind to be the last man in the world to be good. I have a mind to be one of the first and set the rest an example” (Hoag’s Journal, 1861, p. 201).*

Howard Brinton, 1967

*When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins;  
To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nation,  
To bring peace among brothers and sisters,  
To make music in the heart.*

Howard Thurman

*Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the clouds of war, it is humanity hanging on a cross of iron.*

Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953

*If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.*

Nelson Mandela

*I hope...that mankind will at length, as they call themselves reasonable creatures, have reason and sense enough to settle their differences without cutting throats; for in my opinion there never was a good war, or a bad peace.*

Benjamin Franklin

*I do not want the peace which passeth understanding, I want the understanding which bringeth peace.*

Helen Keller

*We must be prepared to make the same heroic sacrifices for the cause of peace that we make ungrudgingly for the cause of war. There is no task that is more important or closer to my heart.*

Albert Einstein

*The vision for wholeness and peace, which shines like a beacon of light through the Old Covenant, gives us important insights into Christian simplicity. This theme is wonderfully gathered up in the Hebrew word shalom, a full-bodied concept that resonates with wholeness, unity, balance. Gathering in (but much broader than) peace, it means a harmonious, caring community with God at its center as the prime sustainer and most glorious inhabitant. . . . We are in harmony with God – faithfulness and loyalty prevail. We are in harmony with our neighbor – justice and mercy abound. We are in harmony with nature – peace and unity reign.*

Richard J. Foster, 1981

*How shall we as Quakers sustain ourselves as a people of peace in the midst of worldwide war? By living in that covenant of peace which was before wars and strife were . . . by living in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all war. It is not our Quakerism, or our pacifism, or our knowledge, or skill, or emotion that overcomes hate and violence. We shall surely fail if we become proud of our virtue and traditions and become vain in our witness. We shall fail if we think the power that may move through us is our own. The power is not ours, it is God's. This is the foundation of*

*what we must do in our testimony of peace in this time of war. The foundation is faith in the power of God's love to transform us and our society and to bring justice to the poor and the oppressed. Our task is to act, as best we understand what we are led to do, in obedience to that power.*

Mary Lord, 2002

*But we must do more than stand the waterspouts which break over us and rage around us. Our task is to bind up the brokenhearted, to be a cup of strength in times of agony, to set men on their feet when the foundations seem to be caving in, and to feed and comfort the little children amidst the wreckage of war and devastation.*

Rufus Jones, 1940

*Therefore we proclaim this peace testimony to us and our people in love and responsibility before God. It calls on us to object to everything which leads in the direction of war, preparation for it, or supporting it. Our faith challenges us whether to allow ourselves to become a divided people swept along by the stream of mistrust and fear, arrogance and hatred which produces tensions in the world; or whether by our own decision, confidence and courage, we can become a bridge linking those elements which promote truth, justice, and peace.*

German Yearly Meeting, 1948

*War leads to a vicious cycle of hatred, oppression, subverse movements, false propaganda, rearmament, and new wars. . . . We call on people everywhere to break this vicious circle. . . to substitute the institutions of peace for the institutions of war. Let us join together throughout the world to grow more food, to heal and prevent disease, to conserve and develop the resources of the good earth,*

*to the glory of God and the comfort of man's distress.  
These are among the tasks to which, in humility...and  
in faith in the power of love, we call our own Society  
and all men and nations everywhere.*

World Conference of Friends, 1952

## 13. Simplicity

### Queries

*What in my present life most distracts me from God?*

*What am I ready to release so that I can give my attention to what matters most?*

*How do the ways in which I choose to use my time, my possessions, my money, and my energy reflect my most deeply held values?*

*How do the ways in which we choose to use our community's resources reflect our most deeply held values?*

*How do we support one another in our search for a simpler life?*

### Advices

How are we to honor the testimony of simplicity in our modern world? To many of us, our culture seems so “busy” and so complex, so full of disturbing news and distractions, that we are sometimes overwhelmed. Our time is often overcommitted, and our wants are manipulated to make us desire what we do not need. Our consumption of goods as a nation is out of control. In our world, the word “simplicity” may be quickly followed by guilt and then by a sense of frustration, or even despair. We need to think of simplicity not as an impossible demand, but an invitation to a more peaceful and fulfilling Spirit-led life.

Simplicity flows from a well-ordered life. It is less a matter of doing without, than a spiritual quality that simplifies our lives by putting first things first. A simple way of life, freely chosen, is a source of strength, joy, and comfort.

The testimony of simplicity is like a bell that calls us to awareness of the Center. It challenges us to ask “what matters?” It reminds us that much of what worries us and stresses us is not all that important. It asks us to recognize the burdens we carry needlessly and lay them down: our anxiety about

our appearance, our struggle to afford what we do not need, comparisons between our lifestyle and the lifestyles of others, squabbles born of tension and stress, worries that leave us exhausted and unable to find time for what matters in our lives. Simplicity is not about an antique form of dress or speech. It is a reminder that today, as surely as hundreds of years ago, we can choose to allow God to order our lives. It asks us to set aside time for prayer and spiritual discipline that open us to wisdom and guidance beyond our own. Today, as then, it refers to a life lit from within by the Inward Light, ordered by the Love that nourishes the core, and freed by the Spirit from bondage to the superficial.

### Voices

*My mind through the power of Truth was in a good degree weaned from the desire of outward greatness, and I was learning to be content with real conveniences that were not costly; so that a way of life free from much Entanglements appeared best for me, tho' the income was small. I had several offers of business that appeared profitable, but saw not my way clear to accept of them, as believing the business proposed would be attended with more outward care & cumber than was required of me to engage in. I saw that a humble man, with the Blessing of the Lord, might live on a little, and that where the heart was set on greatness, success in business did not satisfy the craving; but that commonly with an increase of wealth, the desire for wealth increased. There was a care on my mind so to pass my time, as to things outward, that nothing might hinder me from the most steady attention to the voice of the True Shepherd.*

John Woolman, c. 1744

*I wish I might emphasize how a life becomes simplified when dominated by faithfulness to a few concerns.*

*Too many of us have too many irons in the fire. We get distracted by the intellectual claim to our interest in a thousand and one good things, and before we know it we are pulled and hauled breathlessly along by an over-burdened program of good committees and good undertakings. I am persuaded that this fevered life of church workers is not wholesome. Undertakings get plastered on from the outside because we can't turn down a friend. Acceptance of service on a weighty committee should really depend upon an answering imperative within us, not merely upon a rational calculation of the factors involved. The concern-oriented life is ordered and organized from within. And we learn to say No as well as Yes by attending to the guidance of inner responsibility. Quaker simplicity needs to be expressed not merely in dress and architecture and the height of tombstones but also in the structure of a relatively simplified and coordinated life-program of social responsibilities. And I am persuaded that concerns introduce that simplification, and along with it that intensification which we need in opposition to the hurried, superficial tendencies of our age.*

Thomas R. Kelly, 1941

*Learn the wonderful truth that to increase the quality of life means to decrease material desire; not vice versa.*

Richard J. Foster, 1981

*It's a dangerous thing to lead young Friends much into the observation of outward things, which may be easily done, for they can soon get into an outward garb, to be all alike outwardly, but this will not make them true Christians: it's the Spirit that gives life. I would be loath to have a hand in these things.*

Margaret Fell Fox, 1698

*[Simplicity] brings sanity to our compulsive extravagance, and peace to our frantic spirit. It liberates us from what William Penn called “cumber.” It allows us to see material things for what they are – goods to enhance life, not to oppress life. People once again become more important than possessions. Simplicity enables us to live lives of integrity in the face of the terrible realities of our global village.*

Richard J. Foster, 1981

*How much interior emigration there is all about us! Students emigrate to the future and are not present where they are. Displaced persons live in the past and refuse to let go to the new homeland and to live where they are. Parents are not present here and now but are living for the day when the children are raised, or when they will retire, or when they will be free of this or that, but remain numb and glazed and absent from the living moment. To be present is to be vulnerable, to be able to be hurt, to be willing to be spent -- but it is also to be awake, alive, and engaged actively in the immediate assignment that has been laid upon us.*

Douglas Steere, 1967

*But the wonderful thing about simplicity is its ability to give us contentment. Do you understand what a freedom this is? To live in contentment means we can opt out of the status race and the maddening pace that is its necessary partner. We can shout “NO!” to the insanity which chants, “More, more, more!” We can rest contented in the gracious provision of God.*

Richard J. Foster, 1981

*Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free  
'Tis a gift to come down where we ought to be  
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,  
We will be in the valley of love and delight.*

*When true simplicity is gained  
To bow and to bend we will not be ashamed;  
To turn and turn will be our delight  
Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.*

Shaker spiritual

*Jesus spoke to the heart of the matter when he taught us that if the eye were single, the whole body would be full of light (Matthew 6:22). Dietrich Bonhoeffer, before he died at the hands of the Nazis, said, "To be simple is to fix one's eye solely on the simple truth of God at a time when all concepts are being confused, distorted, and turned upside down."*

Richard J. Foster, 1981

## 14. Social Concerns

### Queries

*How have I expressed my faith in action? How are my actions grounded in my faith?*

*Is my sense of justice based in love?*

*Do I endeavor to face the pain of the world and match it with forgiveness?*

*Do I make an idol of that which I am forced to defend?*

*How do I avoid demonizing those who march against my concern?*

### Advices

Our testimonies are not the heart of our faith but are the fruits of our religious convictions. Our actions in the world arise from our love of that light in every person. We regard no person as our enemy. While we often oppose specific actions and abuses of power, we seek to address the goodness and truth in each individual.

Friends are aware that our tasks are founded on witness, not results; that our testimony to the world is the substance of our truth. We assert the transforming power of love and nonviolence as a challenge to injustice and violence and as an instrument for reconciliation.

While faith without works is dead, Friends are convinced that works without faith are futile. We understand that sheer activism is often spawned from an egocentric center. Friends are mindful of the spiritual ground of their outward works and are attentive to the spiritual dangers of benevolent works.

### Voices

*What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?*

*If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace,*

*be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.*

James 2:14-17

*It seems to me that the moving force behind the Quaker social witness has got to be some vision, however faint and tantalizing, of what the world would be like if we were really obedient to God.*

Deborah Haines

*True godliness don't turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavor to mend it: not hide their candle under a bushel, but set it upon a table in a candlestick.*

William Penn, 1682

*It must occur to everyone to ask why Jesus did not simply accept the power to overcome the sources of these human miseries so that there would be no more want, no more sickness or death, no more murderous or oppressive institutions. Surely the best way to address human ills is to eliminate their source rather than to attend to their symptoms.*

Newton Garver, 1983

*As a Friend I know that my words are worthless if they are not manifested in my behavior, even though no words or behavior can manifest the Truth perfectly. I also need constantly to test my special sense of the Light, since confidence that my work has been illuminated from above can easily become dark pride, a common work of the devil.*

Newton Garver, 2006

*Meister Eckhart says that we can only spend in good works what we earn in contemplation, and that is undoubtedly a valuable admonition to those of us serving Quaker institutions, but it is probably equally the case that what is earned in contemplation cannot be saved up indefinitely but must be spent regularly in service to others.*

Paul A. Lacey, 1988

*As Friends we are committed to an “ethical mysticism,” as Howard Brinton described it. The love of God that we have experienced demands that we express our answering love for God in the form of loving others. We begin to understand Jesus’ admonition: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” This is the basis for ethical behavior and the only motivation for reform that does not grow weary in well-doing, the only passion for social action that does not pall and wane.*

John R. Yungblut, 1983

*The activist who seeks explanations based on outer facts declares that our restlessness is due to the terrible state of the world at present. If we could just get the outer world in order we could then feel inward peace. But perhaps he has not the whole truth, perhaps the more fundamental difficulty is with our inward world. As long as there is inward chaos, all outward actions will be contaminated by this chaos. In such a case all that we do will promote rather than allay confusion. We seek to bring peace in the world when there is no peace in our hearts and as a result we infect the outer world with our inner conflict.*

Howard Brinton, 1948

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

1 Cor 13 (KJV)

*Yet, in the last analysis, obedience to the Light is the only satisfying course [to pursue a social concern]. Approval is not the criterion. Results are not the criteria. We may never be able to say to our critics and detractors, “The results show that our work was important and rightly ordered.”*

Dorothy H. Hutchinson, 1996

*Jesus’s ministry made clear that acts of reconciliation, of healing, and of service nurture the Seed and extend the Gospel. He demonstrated that the religious life is incomplete without the religious act, the practice of worship sterile without the practice of loving concern for distressed people. The truth He demonstrated has caused Friends to make labor in the areas of their social concerns an essential part of their religious life.*

New England Yearly Meeting, 1985

*There is nothing like an unsuitable good work for keeping us back from God. It enlists against Him all that is best and least selfish in our nature. Set an active soul to contemplate, and one of two results will follow, hypochondria or worldliness. Immerse a contemplative soul in business, and you will have either melancholy or delusion. Bend a person to much mental prayer, when they ought to be sewing at home, or helping the poor,*

*and you will produce a self-righteous, inflated, stupefied simulation of interior holiness, which would ruffle the good humor of an angel.*

Frederick Faber, 1949

*How [do] you keep from going over the cliff into the heresy of sheer activism. Have Quakers in their long experience with inwardly directed concerns for service found any way to hold the inner and the outer together? Have they found, under the grilling pressures of situations requiring drastic social change, that they have been able to keep their own share in these things disinfected from the inevitable egotism of good works?*

Douglas V. Steere, 1969

*It is said that one should never attempt the works of charity unless the motion springs from love in the heart. But God can lead us by more ways than one. Some he makes ready before he sends them out; others he sends out that they may be made ready.*

Mildred Binns Young, 1961

*The fact that God is always present means that the whole of a person's life is sacramental; Friends affirm the need to practice the presence of God in all activity. It follows, therefore, that Friends emphasize the importance of combining the inward and outward journeys. To take the inward without the outward will lead to selfishness. You go inward to wait upon and receive the word and support of God and then take this out to action in the world. To take the outward journey without the inward leads to "burn out" because the essential support is not there to be called upon.*

Ted Hoare

*Seeking to live at all times in a divine order of life, Quakers have always counted social service part of Christianity. In fidelity to the genius of their inward experience, they have set themselves the task of developing their own spiritual sensitiveness to the light of truth; and have then resolutely confronted the unawakened conscience of the world with the demands of the new light, and have borne witness to it with undaunted patience. This has resulted in progressive enlightenment for themselves, and in the slow but sure triumph of many of the causes of which they have become champions.*

William Charles Braithwaite, 1919

*The great social movements of our time may well be part of our calling. The ideals of peace and justice and equality which are part of our religious tradition are often the focus of debate. But we cannot simply immerse ourselves in these activities. We need to develop our own unique social witness, in obedience to God. We need to listen to the gentle whispers which will tell us how we can bring our lives into greater harmony with heaven.*

Deborah Haines, 1978

*When we begin by demonizing the opposition, we have taken the first step to ensuring no possibility of resolution. However, there is another path: one which is far more likely to result in a positive resolution. Instead of beginning with what divides us, we should begin with our common ground.*

Lawrence M. Hinman, 2005

## 15. Stewardship

### Stewardship of Personal Resources

#### Queries

*Do we regard our time, talents, energy, money, material possessions and other resources as gifts from God, to be held in trust and shared according to the Light we are given?*

*What are we doing as individuals and as a meeting to nurture our gifts?*

*How do we encourage the members of the larger community to be careful stewards of their gifts?*

#### Advices

“To turn all we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives” - this, in the words of John Woolman, is the meaning of Quaker stewardship.

This applies to all that we have and are, as individuals, as members of groups, and as inhabitants of the earth. As individuals, we are obliged to use our time, our various abilities, our strength, our money, our material possessions, and other resources in a spirit of love, aware that we hold these gifts in trust, and are responsible to use them in the Light.

Investment of assets and consumption of resources require our careful stewardship. As friends, we can direct our investments toward socially desirable ends, avoiding speculation and activities wasteful or harmful to others. We should seek to participate constructively and without greed in the economic life of the community and to refrain from undue accumulation of wealth as well as irresponsible borrowing.

#### Voices

*To turn all we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives.*

John Woolman

*Of the interest of the public in our estates: Hardly any thing is given us for our selves, but the public may claim a share with us. But of all we call ours, we are most accountable to God and the public for our estates: In this we are but stewards, and to hoard up all to ourselves is great injustice as well as ingratitude.*

John Woolman, 1720

*As Christians, all we possess is the gift of God, and in the distribution of it we act as his stewards; it becomes us therefore to act agreeably to that divine wisdom which he graciously gives to his servants.*

John Woolman

*In reading those short last essays of John Woolman, which are little treatises on economics, I have been struck by his intuition that wrong roads were being taken by his contemporaries, upon which we their descendants should find our direction almost irreversibly fixed. Unrighteous use of other human beings, unrighteous use of one's own powers, irresponsible use and waste of land and other natural resources - he touches on them all. It is evident that he was convinced that the spiritual life of men and women is deeply conditioned by their economic life.*

Mildred Binns Young, 1966

*For some there is a danger that care for the future may lead to undue anxiety and become a habit of saving for its own sake, resulting in the withholding of what should be expended for the needs of the family or devoted to the service of the Society. The temptation to trust in riches comes in many forms, and can only be withstood through faith in our Father and his providing care.*

London Yearly Meeting, 1945

*To “stretch beyond one’s compass” grasping at shadows, and encumbering oneself with more than is needed for simple, wholesome living, is at variance with all our best traditions.*

Caroline Stephens, 1890

## Stewardship of the Earth

### Queries

*How do we exercise our respect for the balance of nature?*

*How do we avoid misusing the land, air, and sea and use the world’s resources with care and consideration for future generations and with respect for all life?*

*In what other ways do we carry out our commitment to stewardship?*

### Advices

Friends have connected with the earth and all it holds as part of their spiritual development. From George Fox walking throughout England searching for his spiritual identity to current times, we are aware that we are only stewards, not owners of this land. We need to be constantly aware of how our actions affect the rest of the world. By not using more than we need and by sharing with others, we ensure that the earth will continue to support everyone.

### Voices

*Sustainability as a concept has recently acquired new spiritual depth of meaning to include a resolve to live in harmony with biological and physical systems, and to work to create social systems that can enable us to do that. It includes a sense of connectedness and an understanding of the utter dependence of human society within the intricate web of life; a passion for environmental justice and ecological ethics; an understanding of dynamic natural balances and processes; and a recognition of*

*the limits to growth due to finite resources. Our concern for Sustainability recognizes our responsibility to future generations, to care for the Earth as our own home and the home of all that dwell herein. We seek a relationship between human beings and the Earth that is mutually enhancing.*

Quaker Earthcare Witness, 1998

*The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.*

John Woolman, 1772

*As a Religious Society of Friends we see the stewardship of God's creation as a major concern. The environmental crisis is at root a spiritual and religious crisis; we are called to look again at the real purpose of being on this earth, which is to till it and keep it so as to reveal the glory of God for generations to come.*

London Yearly Meeting, 1988

*That the sweat and tedious labor of the farmer, early and late, cold and hot, wet and dry, should be converted into the pleasure of a small number of men – that continued severity should be laid on nineteen parts of the land to feed the inordinate lusts and delicate appetites of the twentieth, is so far from the will of the great Governor of the world, [it] is wretched and blasphemous.*

William Penn, 1669

## 16. Vocal Ministry

### Queries

*How do I discern when to speak and when not to speak?*

*How do we encourage Friends to allow ample time to absorb the previous message before speaking?*

*How do I practice listening to the Truth which may be revealed by others?*

### Advices

Once meeting begins, take time to enter fully into the spirit of worship. Gently let go of distractions, as you center down and open yourself to the workings of the Spirit. Come to meeting with neither a resolve to speak, nor a determination not to speak, but rather with an attitude of expectant waiting and openness.

If you feel moved to speak, take a moment to test your leading. Is your message from the Spirit, or somewhere else? If it is from God, is it meant only for yourself, or for the entire Meeting? Genuine ministry is often preceded by a physical uneasiness, a “heart pounding weakness”, from which our name Quaker is derived. Remember that silence is not just the space between messages, but a deep and living communion with the “Spirit which gives life”. Your silent prayer and openness to God are themselves a form of ministry that enriches the Meeting community. Allow adequate time between spoken messages, so that all may listen to God, and truly hear the previous message.

Brevity is an under-appreciated virtue. If you speak, do not feel compelled to explore all the implications of your insight. Rather, leave room for the Spirit to work through the next person, building on your words and possibly extending them in an unexpected direction.

Inevitably, not all vocal ministry will be equally meaningful to all present. Remember that ministry that does not speak to you may nevertheless be valuable to others. If you find yourself struggling with another’s words, learn to listen for the Spirit behind the words.

In regard to any impulse to speak a second time during worship, Friends have traditionally counseled restraint. Partly this is a matter of equity (since most present will not speak at all, none should speak more than once), and partly a recognition that to offer genuine vocal ministry is a weighty matter, requiring a degree of spiritual discernment and obedience beyond what most of us can muster twice in a single hour.

Remember that our manner of worship is ultimately a mystery under the direction of the Spirit. Each Meeting for Worship is a spiritual adventure, unique and unpredictable. Let us remember in humility that “the end of words is to bring us to the knowledge of things beyond what words can utter.” (Isaac Penington, 1670)

Know that you are a channel for the Light. If you have a deep sense of the urging of the Spirit, consider your obligation to pass the message on.

## Voices

*The intent of all speaking is to bring into the life, and to walk in, and to possess the same, and to live in and enjoy it, and to feel God's presence.*

George Fox, 1652

*Friends have from the outset taken seriously the New Testament injunction that all believers are priests. That is, they are to be vehicles of communication to each other in a redemptive community in which we have, in fact, abolished the laity and are all ministers. If this is true then no one should come to meeting quite certain that he will not speak. “Let none of us assume that vocal ministry is never to be our part” is what the Advices say. It is our feeling that it is equally unfortunate if someone comes in advance quite certain that he or she will minister. Rather we are meant to come to meeting in openness.*

Douglas Steere, 1972

*Let your patience be perfect, and all your words seasoned with grace, that they may edify; by which ye may season the earth, your hearts being established in the same, over all the unsavory words and talkers, and live in the truth above them.*

George Fox, 1661

*I went to meetings in an awful frame of mind, and endeavoured to be inwardly acquainted with the language of the true Shepherd. And one day, being under a strong exercise of spirit, I stood up, and said some words in a meeting, but not keeping close to the divine opening, I said more than was required of me and being soon sensible to my error, I was afflicted in mind some weeks, without any light or comfort, even to that degree that I could take satisfaction in nothing.*

*I remembered God and was troubled, and in the depth of my distress he had pity upon me, and sent the Comforter. I then felt forgiveness for my offence, and my mind became calm and quiet, being truly thankful to my gracious Redeemer for his mercies. And after this, feeling the spring of divine love opened, and a concern to speak, I said a few words in a meeting in which I found peace. This I believe was about six weeks from the first time, and as I was thus humbled and disciplined under the cross, my understanding became more strengthened to distinguish the language of the pure spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart, and taught me to wait in silence sometimes many weeks together, until I felt that rise which prepares the creature to stand like a trumpet, through which the Lord speaks to his flock.*

John Woolman, 1741

*Since we believe that there is in each person something divine, or what Jefferson called a moral sense, we are*

*naturally called upon to listen to what other persons have to say, to what their hopes and aspirations and concerns are at the deepest level to which we can reach. There are many occasions where such listening is needed, and part of what it means to be a Friend in the world today is to slow down and listen carefully on at least some of those occasions.*

Newton Garver, 1983

*Some think, through a mistaken judgment, that they must be doing something every meeting, (like the preachers of the letter, who must either be singing, preaching or praying all the time) and by such a conduct they lose their interest and place in the hearts of friends by too long and too frequent appearing in both preaching and prayer: For the avoiding of which, keep close to thy gift, intently waiting to know thy place, both when to speak and when to be silent; and when thou speakest, begin under a sense of divine influence, whether it be in preaching or praying; and without it, do not either preach or pray.*

Samuel Bownas, 1750

*In Friends' meetings also, from the fact that everyone is free to speak, one hears harmonies and correspondences between very various utterances such as are scarcely to be met elsewhere. It is sometimes as part-singing compared with unison. The free admission of the ministry of women, of course, greatly enriches this harmony. I have often wondered whether some of the motherly counsels I have listened to in our meeting would not reach some hearts that might be closed to the masculine preacher.*

Caroline E. Stephen, 1890

*Never before did there seem so many things to be done, to be said, to be thought; and in every direction I was pushed and pulled, and greeted with noisy acclamations of unspeakable unrest. It seemed necessary for me to listen to some of them, and to answer some of them, but God said, 'Be still, and know that I am God'. Then came the conflict of thoughts for the morrow, and its duties and cares; but God said 'Be still'. And as I listened, and slowly learned to obey, and shut my ears to every sound, I found, after a while, that when the other voices ceased, or I ceased to hear them, there was a still, small voice in the depths of my being that began to speak with an inexpressible tenderness, power and comfort.*

John Edward Southall, c. 1900

*The spiritual exercises of the meeting may include spoken words. No one should go to a Friends' meeting with the definite expectation either of speaking or of not speaking. We should be open to dealing appropriately with whatever may be laid upon us by the Spirit of Truth and Life.*

Howard H. Brinton, 1942

*As the worshiper sits in silence some message may arise out of the depth of the soul that by its nature is intended not simply for the worshiper but for the gathering as a whole. If it is left unexpressed, the worshiper feels burdened with a sense of omission, but if it is faithfully uttered, the worshiper feels a sense of clearness and relief. This peculiar sense of urgency is usually the sign of divine requirement. There is no sure or single test of guidance. As sensitive persons, we learn to recognize the call as clearly as we recognize the voice of a friend. We know our friend's voice even though we may be quite unable*

*to describe its quality. A clear conviction that the need of the meeting or of some persons in it or even that our own need requires that words be uttered is often the only assurance when there is doubt. Though a message may seem intellectually fitting it should not be given unless it glows with life.*

Howard H. Brinton, 1942

*Ministry is what is on one's soul, and it can be in direct contradiction to what is on one's mind. It's what the Inner Light gently pushes you toward or suddenly dumps in your lap. It is rooted in the eternity, divinity, and selflessness of the Inner Light; not in the worldly, egoistic functions of the conscious mind.*

Marrienne McMullen, 1987

*Waiting upon the Holy Spirit in silent expectation and prayer is the basis of our meeting for worship. Vocal ministry should arise out of a sense of being inwardly moved to share a message aloud. Sometimes a message is not ripe yet, or comes clearly but is meant only for the person receiving it, not for the group. Some Friends are led to speak frequently, and others only rarely; yet the timid or brief message of one who seldom speaks may be as moving and helpful as that of a more practiced speaker.*

*The experienced speaker should be watchful not to speak too often or at undue length. No Friend should come to meeting for worship with an intention to speak or not to speak. The most satisfactory vocal ministry arises out of a leading that is felt in the silence so strongly that it cannot be ignored. It should be delivered with as few words as possible, yet as many as necessary. Vocal prayer*

*offered on behalf of the gathered meeting can also bring us into closer harmony with God.*

Baltimore Faith & Practice, 1988

*Our worship is our gift to God,  
Ministry through words is God's gift to us.  
As we seek the Presence,  
Let us honor these gifts by testing our leadings to speak,  
Discerning that they are truly guided by the Holy Spirit  
That they are messages for the assembled body  
And not ourselves alone,  
And by allowing each message to settle  
Into the heart of those who need it  
By keeping silence between each ministry.  
Let us allow ourselves to be gathered  
By the power and grace of the light.*

Friends General Conference, 1995

*Offer whatever you have to God, and be prepared to let it go. ...Nowadays if words come to my mind I try to remember to pray, "O Lord, if this is not for this time and place, please take it from me," and very often he does.*

Beatrice Saxon Snell, 1965

*When we gather together in worship let us remember that there is committed to each of us, as disciples of Christ, a share in the priesthood. We should help one another, whether in silence or through spoken prayer or words of ministry. Let none of us assume that vocal ministry is never to be our part.*

*If the call comes, there should be no quenching of the spirit; the sense of our own unworthiness must not*

*exempt us from this service, nor the fear of being unable to find the right words.*

*Faithfulness in speaking, even very briefly, may open the way for fuller ministry from others. The tender and humble-minded utterance, given faithfully, can carry its message to the hearts of its hearers.*

London Yearly Meeting, 1973

*Gradually I realized that the most powerful ministry is a wordless radiation of the Love of God. As I began to experience this secret, undramatic, invisible ministry flowing out from me, I realized that my sometimes dramatic gifts in the ministry had depended all along on the secret, silent ministry of a woman here or a man there who never spoke in meeting. With humility I came to understand how their ministry of being deeply present to God and then radiating the Love of Jesus Christ is the most important ministry of all, for it helps everyone in the meeting to come into a state of living communion and transformation. Words are important of course - they can be a matter of life and death - but they are only words. What really counts is the powerful transformation of human character which can occur in a meeting deeply gathered into the body of Christ.*

Bill Taber, 1998

*Upon Friends is laid a double responsibility in their communal worship. They are not only hearers and partakers of the Word of Life, but each must be prepared, if the call comes, to share that Word in words to his fellows.*

Beatrice Saxon Snell, 1965

*My piece was pat and all ready to say,  
She rose first. I threw my piece away.  
My well-turned stuff  
Was not so rough  
As hers, but easy elegant and smooth.  
Beginning middle end  
It had and point  
And aptly quoted prophet priest and poet.  
Hers was uncouth  
Wanting in art  
Laboured scarce-audible and out of joint.  
Three times she lost the thread  
And sitting left her message half unsaid.  
'Why then did thee throw it  
Into the discard?'  
Friend,  
It had head (Like this).  
Hers, oh hers had heart.*

Robert Hewison, 1965

## III. Our Quaker Communities

### 1. Monthly Meetings

#### Officers

#### Advices to Clerks

When you accept the appointment by your Meeting as clerk, you accept the obligation to focus time, energy and gifts in the fulfillment of that trust. Remember that you, as clerk, are the servant of the meeting, and by your attitude and arrangement of the agenda, set the pattern of worshipful listening which should characterize our Meetings for Worship with a concern for business. The meeting is likely to repose great trust in you, and you bear an important responsibility in enabling the meeting to listen and wait for God's guidance in its deliberations.

As we approach our business we need to put aside how the world reaches decisions in temporal affairs and to recollect that we have come together to seek not equity, nor compromise, nor even the most "democratic" solution to the matter at hand but the Truth as God gives us to see the Truth. We believe that God is revealed and gives guidance to all who seek. Thus, in business meeting, we should listen to the views of all, just as we do in meeting for worship. We further believe that as Truth emerges we will have substantial unity in recognizing it, for Truth is undivided and that of God within each person responds to its presence.

Major items of business to be submitted to the Meeting should be prepared as carefully as possible by a Meeting committee or by preparatory work on the part of the Clerk so that pertinent facts and records of previous Meeting actions will be available to facilitate the discussion. Members not

involved in the preparatory work should trust and value the work of preparation. Care should be taken to avoid re-working in a way that belittles the work already done.

Do not leave all your preparations to the last minute. Check beforehand all facts which may be in question, so as to avoid fruitless and time-wasting speculation. When introducing business try to provide a brief but sufficient outline of needed background to set the meeting purposefully on its course. In the subsequent deliberations you may need to advise on procedure or make an occasional suggestion. However, your main task is to discern the meeting's leading. You may find that this very discipline of detachment leads to a new and deeper relationship with other members of the meeting. If you are deeply involved in a decision to be reached, the meeting should be invited to ask another Friend to act as clerk for the occasion.

The clerk helps the meeting move through the agenda with efficient but unhurried dispatch, keeping the members attention on the matters to be considered. The clerk listens, learns and sifts what is said, to discern the sense of the meeting. The clerk encourages those who are reluctant to speak, and in like manner restrains those who tend to speak at undue length or speak too often. When strong division of opinion seems to threaten the worshipful basis of the business meeting, a period of silent and prayerful waiting on the will of God may well have a calming and unifying effect. The clerk may also call for silence between messages, so that each Friend's insight may be fully heard.

Do not be afraid to ask the meeting to hold the clerks' table in the Light while a minute is being prepared. Minutes need to be specific and clear and include any necessary names and dates. Remember that the minute will be consulted in the future to understand the meeting's leading. Therefore it is important that each minute be specific, clear, and complete. Details regarding committees and individuals named to tasks, and any dates which are germane, should be included. Each

minute that records a significant decision should be written out in full and presented, revised as needed, and approved before the close of the meeting for business during which the matters were considered.

Be careful to maintain the right balance in exercising the authority that the office of clerk lays upon you. Use discretion in deciding which matters should be brought before Friends and which may be dealt with by you. When contentious difficult issues arise, take care not to take sides, but to uphold Quaker process, counseling the meeting to have patience, go back to the center, hear each other, and listen for the spirit. Beware of exceeding your authority and if in doubt confer with Friends of experience. You may find a support committee of such experienced Friends beneficial. Remember that the right exercise of the clerk's authority is of great service to the meeting in promoting the smooth and expeditious handling of its business.

When a Friend from outside comes to your meeting to speak, by invitation or under a concern, try to ensure that the agenda is arranged to allow adequate time for the matter, before the meeting is fatigued or overwhelmed with other business. Putting an agenda together is an art. You may wish to put items that will require lots of energy early in the agenda. Don't try to put conflict at the end. Don't be afraid to lay over business until the next month or until a called meeting for business. When a time management issue arises, it can be referred to the meeting.

Members should exercise love and forbearance in discussion and should seek Divine guidance, realizing that Truth will often transcend the understanding of any single individual. When the discernment of the Meeting appears to be tending away from the opinion of a member, that Friend should consider whether to stand aside or to prevent the Meeting's action. When the Meeting cannot unite upon a minute, no action is taken on the matter, which may be postponed for further consideration.

Any previous action or policy of the Meeting in the same area stands in the absence of a specific Meeting decision to change it. Friends are reminded that failure to act is also a decision and are urged to consider seriously the nature of their guidance to stand opposed to a view which has clearly received the assent of most Friends in the Meeting. At the same time Friends are mindful of the many occasions when the leading of one or a few has proven to be the way of Truth.

When action appears to be blocked by one or a few Friends, the Meeting may find it useful to appoint a special committee to labor with all concerned for a resolution of the impasse.

Keep a sense of proportion and a sense of humor. Think affectionately between meetings of the needs of the community which has appointed you and how they can best be met. Ask guidance of God continually in the performance of your task. Pay attention to a regular spiritual practice that will help you remain anchored in the Spirit.

## Growth and Change

*Ye that are turned to the light, and gathered into it, meet together and keep your meetings, that ye may feel and see the life of God among you, and know that in one another.*

George Fox, Epistle 186 (1659)

In his Pendle Hill Pamphlet, “How They Became Friends”, Howard Brinton addresses some fundamental questions.

*From the outset of the Quaker movement in the middle of the 17th century meetings for worship were based on silence, a silence frequently, but by no means always, broken by spoken words. For this statement we have ample evidence in early Quaker literature. How can such a religion be propagated? Yet propagated it was with power and success, despite extreme persecution by Church and State. How can a religion based primarily on an attempt to heed the voice of God within the soul be communicated to others by any outward means? We are thinking not only of its communication to the public, but also to the oncoming generation of its own members.*

Baltimore Yearly Meeting encourages all who are moved to worship God after the manner of Friends to do so by participation in a Friends Worship Group, a Preparative Meeting, or a Monthly Meeting. Moreover BYM advises Monthly Meetings, especially large Monthly Meetings, to offer encouragement, support, and care to those who might wish to form new gatherings.

### Friends Worship Groups

A Worship Group is a gathering of persons who meet regularly for public worship after the manner of Friends and desire to be identified as a Friends group. In areas where no

Friends Meetings exist, individual Friends and those drawn to Friends' ways are encouraged to meet together for worship and to seek Divine guidance. A Friends Worship Group may also be formed when an established Monthly Meeting has grown so large that it becomes desirable for a group to meet separately, or when some of its members live a great distance from the established Friends Meeting.

Each Friends Worship Group should organize only to the degree that is right for it at a particular time, neither over-organizing nor avoiding whatever organization is needed to nurture the interests and concerns of its participants, including children.

While Friends are not required to associate with an existing Monthly Meeting, the guidance, care and support available in such a relationship can be valuable. A Worship Group may apply to a Monthly Meeting for recognition as an Allowed (or Indulged) Meeting. Such a meeting would be under the care of the Monthly Meeting and is not expected to conduct a regular Meeting for Business.

Whatever organization and activities members of the Worship Group are led to take up, they can elicit support and assistance from nearby Monthly Meetings. For example, help with organizing a 'Newcomers packet', placing announcements in local newspapers, creating a web presence, and other outreach activities can come from the Monthly or Yearly Meeting. Resources on forming First Day School, initiating a library of Quaker literature, as well as help in contacting Friends in the wider Quaker community will also be forthcoming if desired.

If a Monthly Meeting accepts a Worship Group under its care as an Allowed Meeting, it will appoint a Committee of Care to be available for support and guidance. This committee will pay particular attention to the right ordering and growth of the Allowed Meeting. This experience will help the Worship Group learn about and be guided in Friends practice. It is expected that members of the Committee of Care and others

from the Monthly Meeting will join the Allowed Meeting occasionally in Meeting for Worship.

### Advices for a Friends Worship Group

- Worship Groups may find Meeting for Worship their only group activity. It is acceptable to continue in this fashion for an indefinite period of time.

- Some Worship Groups may have shared meals, reading groups, study groups, and discussion groups. With the guidance and support of their Monthly Meeting or Yearly Meeting Committees they may have service projects, religious education, public witness or worship sharing groups.

- Worship Groups need to be mindful of the dangers of attempting too many things during their initial enthusiasm or of having an individual or couple carry all of the responsibility. Be mindful that Quakerism is a group religious responsibility.

- It is essential that those who participate in a Worship Group be dedicated to the leadings of the Light and that the group be devoted to growth in the Spirit.

- Worship Groups may suffer discouragements and setbacks due to the departure of participants or other difficulties that may arise. This is an opportunity for patiently working through setbacks or conflicts in a loving manner. It is important to persevere and continue to meet regularly for worship at the appointed hour even though only two or three are able to meet. In doing so, hold absent attenders in the Light and in the prayer that all may come to know the comfort of an ongoing Worship Group.

- A Friends Worship Group may name one of the group to serve as the convener and correspondent. It is beneficial if the convener/correspondent is a member of the Religious

Society of Friends. The correspondent becomes the first point of contact with the Worship Group.

- Allowed (or Indulged) Meetings are encouraged to maintain regular contact with the Committee of Care of the sponsoring Monthly Meeting and ask for help as needed. The purpose of a Committee of Care is to nurture and guide the Meeting under their care.

### Preparative Meetings

After a period of seasoning, a Friends Worship Group often becomes a Preparative Meeting. A Preparative Meeting is a group of Friends that holds its own Meeting for Business and is under the care of a Monthly Meeting. The Monthly Meeting and the Preparative Meeting are expected to maintain close contact.

Alternatively, a group of experienced Friends from a Monthly Meeting may decide they are prepared to form an independent meeting and apply to the Monthly Meeting for assistance in the form of a Committee of Care. This committee should include Friends from both the proposed Preparative Meeting and the sponsoring Monthly Meeting. It is helpful to have Friends on the committee experienced with Friends' business procedures.

When a Worship Group or group of experienced Friends feels it is ready to organize and conduct business in the manner of an established Monthly Meeting, it asks the Committee of Care of the Monthly Meeting for Preparative Meeting status. After a clearness process, that committee may then prepare a minute recommending the establishment of a Preparative Meeting. Approval of such a minute at the Monthly Meeting for Business is sufficient to establish the new Preparative Meeting.

A Preparative Meeting has officers and committees as needed, and holds monthly Meeting for Business. A Preparative Meeting has a budget that is a sub-budget of the budget of the Monthly Meeting that is caring for the Preparative Meeting.

Each month it sends a copy of the minutes of its Meeting for Business to the Monthly Meeting. When the Preparative Meeting begins the practice of Meeting for Business it should also follow the same practice of caring for minutes as a Monthly Meeting.

The following actions may be carried out only with the help and clearness of the Monthly Meeting that has care of the Preparative Meeting:

- receiving requests for membership,
- receiving or holding charitable contributions for tax deduction purposes,
- holding weddings or memorial meetings,
- or otherwise acting formally as an established Monthly Meeting.

Preparative meetings are encouraged to send a delegate to BYM meetings and to prepare an annual Spiritual State of the Meeting report to be considered during the next Baltimore Yearly Meeting Annual Session. With the guidance of the Monthly Meeting having care for the Preparative Meeting, Friends will determine which Meeting is responsible for paying the annual apportionment to BYM, and will decide how to allocate the responsibility for other functions typical of a monthly meeting.

Preparative Meetings often look forward to such growth and development as may enable them to become Monthly Meetings. This process depends upon many factors, and there may be great differences in the time required.

#### Advices for a Preparative Meeting

- It is essential that the Preparative Meeting be faithful to the leadings of the Light and devoted to growth in the Spirit.

- A Preparative Meeting, when organizing itself, should first appoint a clerk and recording clerk, and then hold Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business regularly. The recording clerk will prepare the minutes from the Meeting for Business and send them to the Committee of Care of the Monthly Meeting.

- A Preparative Meeting appoints committees and committee clerks as needed to accomplish its goals. Establishing an effective method of communication, such as a newsletter or website, is an advisable way to further contact with Friends. The Preparative Meeting can expect their sponsoring Monthly Meeting to assist in these endeavors.

- Preparative Meetings should be large enough to be able to undertake, with the guidance and support of their Monthly Meeting Committee of Care, such activities as service projects, religious education, public witness, or worship sharing groups.

- Preparative Meetings need to be mindful of the danger of having too many activities or having an individual or a very small group carry all of the responsibility, for this can invite exhaustion and disillusionment.

- Preparative Meetings may suffer discouragements and setbacks due to the departure of participants or other difficulties that may arise. It is important to persevere and continue to meet regularly for Meeting for Worship and Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business at the appointed hour.

- Preparative Meetings and their Committee of Care should maintain regular contact with one another. The committee's purpose is to nurture the Preparative Meeting and help all Friends discern God's will.

### Advices for the Committee of Care

- The Committee of Care affirms that this work is undertaken in a spirit of celebration with an eye upon how each committee can best serve and facilitate the joyous event of forming a new Friends Monthly Meeting.

- The Committee of Care has the responsibility to nurture the growth and education of the Preparative Meeting in the ways of Friends.

- The Committee of Care should monitor the progress of the Preparative Meeting and encourage them to apply for Monthly Meeting status when it appears suitable to do so.

- It is important that the Preparative Meeting understand that nurturing the community is a group responsibility. The Committee of Care is charged with helping them accept their role as loving ministers to one another in the blessed community.

- The greatest gift the Committee of Care can give to this work is their loving presence in the life of the Preparative Meeting. The committee should be prepared to have at least one member participate in Meetings for Worship throughout the Preparative Meeting's process of becoming a new Friends Monthly Meeting.

### **New Monthly Meetings**

When a Preparative Meeting under the care of the Monthly Meeting feels ready to become a Monthly Meeting, and its Committee of Care, after a clearness process, agrees, then the Preparative Meeting sends a letter to the Clerk of the Monthly Meeting requesting a change in status and asking that its letter be forwarded to the Yearly Meeting. The letter states why the Preparative Meeting wishes to become a Monthly Meeting and why it feels it is ready for this step. If the Monthly Meeting concurs, it forwards this request and a

minute of agreement to the clerk of Baltimore Yearly Meeting. The Yearly Meeting in session approves the establishment of that new Monthly Meeting.

The following guidelines and queries are suggested for consideration by the Monthly Meeting in determining whether the Preparative Meeting is ready to become a Monthly Meeting:

1. **Recording.** The Preparative Meeting compiles a complete list of names and addresses of its regular attenders, noting those who are members of the Religious Society of Friends and indicating in which Monthly Meeting and Yearly Meeting, if other than BYM, their memberships are held.

2. **Spiritual Condition.**

- Does the Preparative Meeting function under divine guidance?
- Is the Meeting for Worship the center of life of the Preparative Meeting?
- What is the vitality of the Meetings for Worship?
- Are they held in the spirit of expectant waiting and communion with God?

3. **History and Experience.**

- How long has the Preparative Meeting been meeting?
- What relations does it have with other Meetings?
- What geographical area does it serve?
- Where and when is its Meeting for Worship?
- What is the usual attendance?
- How many Friends, regular attenders, and children are there in the Meeting?

- Of the individuals and families taking responsibility for the Meeting, how many appear well settled in the area?
- How do the lives of the people in this meeting speak to the outside world?
- Are responsibilities for the meeting's business and activities shared fairly by all?

#### **4. Evidence of Good Order.**

- Has the Preparative Meeting studied the Faith and Practice of BYM?
- Does it hold a monthly Meeting for Business in the manner of Friends?
- How are the minutes taken and approved?
- Are the functions of Clerk and other officers understood?
- What Committees does the Meeting have?
- Are the functions of the Committee(s) on Ministry and Counsel understood and carried out?
- Are financial matters being handled in a competent manner according to Friends' principles?
- How are the Meeting's officers and committees and Nominating Committee selected?
- How are children included in the life of the Meeting?
- Are there religious education programs for children and adults?

#### **Laying Down a Meeting**

A Monthly Meeting that has so little business or member interest that it is unable to hold meetings for business at least four times per year should apply to its Quarterly Meeting or to Yearly Meeting for assistance. The Quarterly Meeting or

the Yearly Meeting may initiate steps to lay down a Monthly Meeting that is entirely inactive. Any property of a Monthly Meeting that is laid down is normally transferred to the Yearly Meeting. Remaining members of Monthly Meetings laid down are encouraged to join another Meeting.

## Clearness and Support Committees

Friends believe that each individual has an Inner Light that can guide us to act with integrity in the most difficult situations. From the beginning of Quakerism, however, Friends also have had a healthy respect for the extent to which the desires and tendencies of our personal egos can create “noise” that confuses and undermines spiritual promptings. Too easily, we can unconsciously choose to hear only part of a message or warp it to suit our inclinations.

Knowing this, we turn to other trusted Friends to help us listen well to the inner Light and to enrich our understanding of the current situation and the path forward. Serving on clearness and support committees is not only a gift of time and love to the person whose needs have brought the committee together – hereafter called “the person” – but a precious opportunity for each member of the committee to grow in faith, insight, and love.

Clearness and support committees tend to focus either on a personal concern or on a leading. In the following sections, you will find a general discussion of each type of committee – clearness or support – followed by comments on considerations that arise when that type of committee addresses personal concerns or leadings. Whatever the focus of your concern, you are advised to read the entries under both clearness and support. Over time, a clearness committee sometimes becomes more like a support committee; also, a support committee may come to a basic unresolved issue and begin to look more like a clearness committee. When these shifts occur, it is important for committee members to be aware of their changed role. Please see:

- “Clearness to follow leadings” and “Support in following leadings,” as well as
- “Clearness for personal decisions” and “Support in difficult times.”

### Clearness Committees

Friends seek to follow the Light within when they reach major choices in life, but the Light does not usually give us unmistakable road signs or route maps. Instead, we pray, follow spiritual disciplines, sit with an issue in worship, and talk to individuals who have some perspective or insight to offer us.

For some decisions that we face – the choice of a vocation, whether to join a faith group, whom to marry, or whether to adopt a child with special needs – the spiritual dimensions of the choice are especially striking. We know that if our choice is not in harmony with our deepest values and the guidance of the Spirit, the consequences may be serious. Friends may gain a deep sense of ease and grace from knowing their decision has been made with the aid of caring Friends who have listened together for the counsel of the Spirit.

### General guidance

A clearness committee is shaped and focused to meet the needs of the individual, the decision, and factors that come into play in specific situations (for example, a need to make a decision within a time frame). A clearness committee may be formed by the person, or members or regular attenders may ask the appropriate meeting committee to form a clearness committee for them. Sometimes a Friend who sees a community member struggling with a weighty decision may suggest a clearness committee and, if the response is positive, may also help the Friend identify committee members.

It is important that Friends contacted to serve on the committee understand:

- The nature of the decision,
- Why they were asked to serve on the committee, and
- The likely amount of time the commitment will require.

Each committee has a “convener.” Usually, this individual contacts or helps contact potential committee members, explains the nature of the request, and arranges the time and place for the first meeting. The convener also accepts the responsibility for facilitating the meeting and helping to ensure it is well grounded in worship.

Members of the committee should be selected with the following in mind:

- Their relationship with the person,
- Their centeredness,
- Their ability to listen well without jumping in to give advice,
- Their openness as to what the outcome should be, and
- Their ability to empathize with the person in this type of decision.

The person can gain most from the clearness committee if he or she has prepared for it. It is usually helpful, both for the person and for committee members, to begin by expressing the basic question and the issues surrounding it in writing. This statement can be given to committee members prior to the first meeting to help them prepare. Prayerful searching, a meditative walk, or a creative activity such as making a collage also may help the person seek Light.

The committee may have one meeting or several. When necessary, it could consist of a few Friends who convene after meeting without prior notice to help the person address an urgent decision.

Recommendations regarding Clearness for Marriage and Clearness for Membership are described in a separate section. The following guidance addresses the clearness process as it applies to personal decisions and discernment related to leadings.

### Clearness for personal decisions

*A clearness committee for personal discernment meets with the individual or family, not as professional counselors nor as friends discussing a problem and giving advice, but rather as caring Friends, drawing on the resources that bind us together in our meeting for worship. Maintaining a spirit of openness and prayerful waiting, the committee seeks to help the individual become clear about an impending decision by serving as a channel for Divine guidance. The members of the committee are there to listen without prejudice, to help clarify alternatives and their implications, to facilitate communication if necessary, and to provide emotional support as an individual or family seeks to find God's will (New England Yearly Meeting, 2001).*

- A clearness committee usually follows the following process at the first meeting:
- The convener briefly summarizes the nature of the request and establishes time parameters for the meeting. He or she then explains the process to be followed.
- At the request of the convener, the group settles into silence.
- The person speaks out of the silence when ready, stating the basic question that must be answered and briefly describing the issues around the decision. This includes the feelings and influences the person is experiencing, the implications of the decision for the person and for others, and the person's sense of what is at stake.
- Members of the committee ask questions, allowing space for the person to consider and answer. They listen carefully to what they hear. One member's

question may follow from an answer or explore a question from a different angle.

- Committee members also reflect back and test what they have heard: “I have the sense that\_\_\_\_\_ -- am I hearing that right?”
- About 20-30 minutes before the end of the meeting, the convener calls for silence and asks each person to share his or her sense of what has emerged.
- The convener suggests next steps: is another meeting needed? If so, when and where? Would anyone like to suggest specific steps that might help reach clarity?

It is important that members of the committee refrain from giving advice. Committee members are there to help the person listen well to the promptings of the Spirit, and strongly held opinions can make this difficult. Clearness is most likely to be found when all members are centered, open, and alert for what John Woolman called “motions of love.”

Questions should arise not from curiosity, but from the desire to be helpful. They may address matters of fact (could you tell us more about...?) or feeling (how do you feel about...?) or explore the possible consequences of a choice (how would it affect your decision if...? Have you considered the implications of...?). If the person finds some questions too personal or painful, or does not know the answer, members should respect his or her preference for silence; however, the individual may want to note these questions to consider them later.

While members’ own experiences in similar situations are sometimes helpful in illustrating options, sharing them extensively can also lead members away from the unique decision facing the person. Clearness committee members should be willing to share what they have found “experimentally,” but not place so much weight on their own experience that it becomes an obstacle for the person. Committee members should also be careful not to take responsibility for the problem away from

the individual or try to “fix” it. Each member is present as a channel for the Light.

The foundation of the clearness process is trust: trust that the Spirit can light the path, trust that God is present in the clearness process and within each member of the committee, and trust in the individual’s own ability to discern the best course. As Jan Hoffman writes, “the answers sought are within the person seeking clearness, though they may not be revealed until some time after the meeting.”

### Clearness to follow leadings

Powerful emotional currents accompany a strong sense of calling: compassion, horror, desire to prove oneself, a yearning to be the source of change. These currents can lead us to act too soon, act wrongly, or act for the wrong reasons. Clearness committees must be wary of assuming that because the person is responding to a genuine need, the leading is genuine. The committee’s task is to separate the ego-driven motives from the promptings of the Spirit, distinguish between a vague desire and a “motion of love,” and test the feasibility of the leading while at the same time trusting that way may open.

An individual usually requests the meeting’s involvement in testing a leading through the designated meeting committee. As for clearness committees for personal discernment, a convener is appointed who brings members together at a particular time and place and who guides them through the same basic process described for the clearness committee for personal discernment. When the person speaks out of the silence, he or she tells the “story” of the concern and the possible leading:

- When did it begin?
- How has it grown or changed over time?
- What actions have been taken already to learn more about the concern or test the leading?

Questions the committee may want to explore include:

- Is the leading consistent with Friends' testimonies?
- Is the leading consistent with the person's life?
- Does the person have the skills to carry out the leading?
- Is the leading "ripe"? Are the details clear enough to proceed?
- Does the person have preconceived ideas about the nature of the problem that may be unsound?
- Is the person hoping to "fix" or change a situation without first having explored its causes?
- Has the person listened to those most affected by a situation to understand their own sense of what is needed?
- How does the person propose to involve those who are most affected by the concern?

Signs that a leading may not be of the Spirit, or that it is not yet ripe for action, include:

- The person wants to make a general contribution (such as promoting conflict resolution in schools) but has not looked into what is already being done.
- The person wants to help bring needed change to a situation, but has not talked to those affected most directly by the situation.
- The person is so personally involved in the situation that his or her judgment is questionable.
- The person's self-image or ego is strongly invested.
- The person envisions a specific outcome, without which he or she perceives the effort has been "wasted."

When the clearness committee affirms that a leading is of God, its members often feel called to help the individual discern and take the next steps in following that leading. The meeting as a whole may have a role in supporting the

individual. Members with the skills and talents required may form a committee to carry out the leading as a team, reporting back to the meeting periodically on their progress.

### Support Committees

Friends look to their religious community to steady and strengthen them in challenging times and to help them follow leadings. Each of these two purposes calls for different kinds of support from the meeting, which may be initiated and structured in different ways to meet the need of the specific individual and situation.

#### General guidance

A key purpose of any support committee is to help the individual find solid footing and Light in a challenging situation. This involves a measure of ongoing discernment. When the support committee is seeking the way forward or resolving a difficulty, it overlaps in nature with the clearness committee and may use the tested approaches to seeking clearness that were described in the preceding section. The difference is that unlike the clearness committee, the support committee is not drawn together by a question or a single important decision, but by a need.

Often, people outside the meeting or the Society of Friends itself are appropriate members of support committees. They may know the individual or situation well and may have special skills or insights that make them valuable members. Whatever their faith, other members bring their own Inner Light and wisdom to the committee's task. However, as for clearness committees, members from other faiths will need grounding in how Friends use this type of committee to discern and follow God's will, and how they can bring their own wisdom, experience, and Light to bear on the situation.

When a support committee is held, the convener should be sure the following are clear at the outset:

- What support is the committee being asked to provide? For example, is there an expectation of financial support or assistance in addressing practical concerns?
- Does the committee feel it can and should provide all the types of support requested? If not, can the committee suggest other resources to address needs that it cannot address by itself?
- What is the expectation regarding confidentiality?
- What are the spiritual dimensions of the person's current situation?
- How long are Friends expected to serve on the committee?
- How often will the support committee meet?

Serving on a support committee can be tough at times. Committee members may be stressed as difficult obstacles present themselves, discouraging news is heard, and hard facts must be accepted. Friendly practices are an integral part of any support committee. Silent worship is essential at the beginning and end of meetings, or whenever a deeper connection with the Spirit is needed.

Support committees of any type should not go on indefinitely. Members should review their status and consider the committee's role from time to time. Periodic review offers a chance to recommit, develop a new sense of mission, or realize it is time to lay down the committee.

### Support in difficult times

*The spiritual strength of a meeting finds important expression through the loving community of its members. Out of awareness and responsiveness of its members to each other grow the bonds of trust and love that allow the meeting to find coherence in its spiritual life and unity in its actions (New England Yearly Meeting, 2001).*

Experiences such as the loss of a partner, the need to act as a caretaker for a family member, a terminal diagnosis, or the responsibility of parenting a child with a disability test us to the core and call us to live our faith. Tensions, strong emotions, and high demands on personal resources may threaten to overwhelm us and displace us from our center. Friends can help each other maintain awareness of the Inner Light, accept their personal limitations, and find strength within the community. Sometimes, drawing on their own experience or knowledge, others can also help address the practical difficulties and demands of a tough situation.

A support committee may be formed at the request of an individual, or community members who perceive a need for support may suggest to the person that a support committee may be helpful. It is important to be aware of people who may need and benefit from support but who may have difficulty asking for it. While it is appropriate to offer the individual a channel for loving support, however, it is the person's decision alone whether or not to accept it.

Members who have experienced similar difficult situations are often good choices to serve, but it is important for them to be able to keep the present experience of a different individual before them rather than continually comparing the Friend's situation to their own. Individuals weather similar crises differently, so we should avoid assuming that what worked for us will always be right for someone else. Deep listening is essential and lends support in itself.

A shared understanding of the role of the support committee, and what is outside its scope, is critical. For example, it is wrenching to the meeting, as well as to the couple, when a marriage ends in divorce. A support committee for each of the individuals involved may help encourage the use of mediators and counselors, reducing recriminations and conflict. It may help individuals stay spiritually grounded in a turbulent time. It may express the ongoing love and concern

of the spiritual community. However, the support committee should never allow itself to be used as a means of swaying the community to one individual's "side" or to substitute for the services of a qualified mediator. In such cases, the meeting will also want to consider how best to support any children affected by the divorce.

Similarly, when an individual experiences serious emotional distress, threatens others, or becomes suicidal, the meeting plays an important role in affirming its love and concern, as well as in helping the person access the Inner Light and find a steady course through the turbulent period – but it cannot play the role of a psychiatrist or licensed counselor.

It is often helpful for an appropriate committee to stay in touch with both the individual and the convener to ensure the support committee is working together in the manner of Friends, staying on course, and meeting the need.

#### Support in following leadings

*It has been the practice for a Friend, who believes that she or he has heard a call, to bring the concern before the gathered community of Friends in the monthly meeting, that it may be tested as a true leading of the Spirit. The practice is an expression of our membership one of another, of a mutually accepted obligation, that of the individual Friend to test his or her concern against the counsel of the group and that of the group to seek the guidance of God in exercising judgment. It may bring enrichment both to the individual and to the group, even though the meeting may advise the Friend that he or she is mistaken. If the individual is encouraged to go forward, the prayers of Friends will strengthen him or her in the service.* London Yearly Meeting, Church Government (1968, rev. 1980), #861, wording changed to be gender inclusive.

Support committees may be formed for the distinctly different task of helping a member of the community follow a leading. The leading may be an individual calling that does not involve the meeting directly or one that the meeting has affirmed and feels led to support in specific ways. In either case, members work together to keep focused on the most significant questions and issues, listening for the guidance of the Spirit together and helping the individual stay faithful to the leading.

Individuals may accept significant tasks that they feel challenge them to live their faith. For example, meeting members may have opportunities to chair a community board in time of crisis, lead a task force, or guide a difficult negotiation. They may ask for a support committee to help them stay spiritually grounded to fulfill this challenge.

Individuals may also have leadings that require the confirmation and support of the meeting as a whole. Often, these leadings are tested by a clearness committee, which reports to business meeting. Sometimes, however, they require a quick response and are brought immediately to business meeting for action. If the meeting affirms the leading, the meeting may establish a committee to carry out the leading on behalf of the meeting community. A committee such as this, which is focused on practical tasks, is distinct from a support committee for the individual. The need for a support committee that is focused on helping the individual stay centered should be considered, especially when the leading is long-term or emotionally demanding.

“Released” Friends are those who have come to their monthly meeting with a leading for ministry that is affirmed by the meeting and that the meeting supports through financial resources or by addressing other practical concerns. The meeting may also release the Friend from other obligations to the meeting while the leading is pursued. For example, a Friend with a specific concern may feel led to travel widely

among Friends. Following a clearness committee that affirms the leading, the meeting may minute its support for the leading and also establish a means of making the ministry possible.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting has developed specific guidance for ministry that is “embraced” and supported at the level of Baltimore Yearly Meeting. In general, Friends seek to have their ministry embraced at this level when the ministry to which they are called exceeds the geographic bounds or financial scope of the monthly meeting.

## 4. Quaker Organizations

### American Friends Service Committee

The American Friends Service Committee carries out service, development, social justice, and peace programs throughout the world. Founded by Quakers in 1917 to provide conscientious objectors with an opportunity to aid civilian war victims, AFSC's work attracts the support and partnership of people of many races, religions, and cultures.

AFSC's work is based on the Quaker belief in the worth of every person and expresses faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice. The organization's achievements won worldwide recognition in 1947 when it accepted the Nobel Peace Prize with the British Friends Service Council on behalf of all Quakers.

The AFSC has offices in several places throughout the United States. The office that covers the area of Baltimore Yearly Meeting is in Baltimore, Maryland. The main office is in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

AFSC  
1501 Cherry Street  
Philadelphia PA 19102  
215.241.7000  
[www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org)

AFSC Middle Atlantic Region  
4806 York Road  
Baltimore MD 21212  
410.323.4200  
[www.afsc.org/midatlantic/baltimore](http://www.afsc.org/midatlantic/baltimore)

### Evangelical Friends Church International

Evangelical Friends Church International helps Friends churches around the world meet the spiritual needs of their communities. Their desire is to stretch across racial, cultural, national, even denominational barriers, to reach people with the life-changing love of Christ. Over 1,100 Evangelical

Friends churches representing more than 140,000 Friends in 24 countries are actively carrying out this mission.

EFC-NA c/o EFC-ER  
5350 Broadmoor Circle NW  
Canton, OH 44709  
330.493.1660  
[www.evangelicalfriends.org](http://www.evangelicalfriends.org)

## Friends Committee on National Legislation

The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) is the largest peace lobby and the oldest registered ecumenical lobby in Washington, DC. Founded in 1943 by members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), FCNL staff and volunteers work with a nationwide network of thousands of people from many different races, religions, and cultures to advocate social and economic justice, peace, and good government.

The organization's legislative priorities and policies are set by a General Committee made up of some 220 Quakers from around the country. FCNL's multi-issue advocacy connects historic Quaker testimonies on peace, equality, simplicity, and truth with peace and social justice issues that the United States Government is or should be addressing.

FCNL is a nonpartisan 501(c)4 public interest lobby. It is neither a political action committee nor a special interest lobby. The FCNL Education Fund is a parallel 501(c)3 organization that supports the research, analysis, and education for which FCNL is known and respected.

Friends Committee on National Legislation  
245 Second Street NE  
Washington DC 20002  
202.547.6000  
[www.fcnl.org](http://www.fcnl.org)

## Friends General Conference

Founded in 1900, FGC has grown from a voluntary organization of seven yearly meetings created to hold a “general conference” every other year into a vibrant association of fourteen, mainly unprogrammed, yearly meetings and regional groups. Besides the now annual Gathering of Friends, which is held throughout the United States, FGC has a large bookstore of Quaker and other publications that hold to the basic Quaker principles.

FGC has many programs and services that serve the wider Quaker communities: Advancement & Outreach, Religious Education, Quaker youth, Ministry on Racism, Quaker & Interfaith Relations, and Quaker Quest among them.

Friends General Conference

1216 Arch Street Suite 2B

Philadelphia PA 19107

215.561.1700

Bookstore 800.966.4556

[www.fgcquaker.org](http://www.fgcquaker.org)

## Friends Journal

An independent, international monthly magazine of current Quaker thought and life, Friends Journal publishes articles, art, poetry, news of Quaker organizations, book reviews, a reader’s forum, advertising, and a listing of Friends Meetings.

Friends Journal provides a forum and connection for Friends across North America and throughout the world. It is found in Quaker homes, libraries, meetings, and retirement communities. It is used widely in Quaker schools and adult study programs.

Friends Journal  
1216 Arch Street Suite 2A  
Philadelphia PA 19107  
215.563.8629  
[www.friendsjournal.org](http://www.friendsjournal.org)

## Friends United Meeting

Friends United Meeting (FUM), founded in 1902, includes thirty Yearly Meetings along with several smaller groups, local meetings (churches), and affiliated organizations. FUM is an international association of Friends Meetings and Churches, organized for evangelism, global partnership, leadership development, and communication. Kenya has more Friends than any other country in the world.

FUM works in cross-cultural missions and cooperative ventures with member yearly meetings through their offices in Richmond, Indiana (USA) and Kisumu, Kenya.

Friends United Meeting  
101 Quaker Hill Drive  
Richmond In 47374  
765.962.7573  
[www.fum.org](http://www.fum.org)

## Friends World Committee for Consultation

The purpose of the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) is to encourage fellowship and communication among all groups within the Religious Society of Friends. This Quaker community circles the globe, spanning a rich diversity of regional cultures, beliefs, and styles of worship. FWCC programs unite Friends around the world through Spirit-led fellowship.

In 1937, after years of concerned work to reconnect a fragmented Quaker world, the Second World Conference of Friends created the FWCC “to act in a consultative capacity to promote better understanding among Friends the world over.” Today, Friends from yearly meetings and groups in 75 nations continue this work. Around the world there are four cooperating, autonomous FWCC sections serving Africa, the Americas, Asia & the West Pacific, and Europe & the Middle East. FWCC’s World Office is in London. The Section of the America’s office is in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

FWCC’s association with the Quaker United Nations Office offers a means to monitor and explain Quaker contributions to world affairs, both in New York City and in Geneva, Switzerland. Their consultation extends to those of other faiths through work with the World Council of Churches.

Friends World Committee for Consultation, Section of the  
Americas

1506 Race Street  
Philadelphia PA 19102  
215.241.7250  
[www.fwccamericas.org](http://www.fwccamericas.org).

## **Pendle Hill (USA)**

Pendle Hill is a Quaker center for spiritual growth, study, and service. At Pendle Hill, students and staff live, work, worship, and study together. Located on 23 wooded acres just outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Pendle Hill is where adults and youth come for inspiration and renewal. Founded by Quakers in 1930, Pendle Hill is a community that welcomes people from many faiths and countries. The name is taken from the hill in England that George Fox climbed and where he “saw a great people to be gathered.”

Pendle Hill provides an environment of love, challenge, and support for people seeking to gain insight and prepare for service in the world. Through the Resident Study Program, adults of all ages spend up to a year in reflection and service. Retreats and workshops provide deep insight in a shorter time frame. For youth and young adults, they offer leadership programs. Their bookstore has a unique selection of spiritual and educational publications. Pendle Hill welcomes people from across the country and the world.

Pendle Hill  
338 Plush Mill Road  
Wallingford PA 19086  
610.566.4507  
[www.pendlehill.org](http://www.pendlehill.org)

## **Friends Wilderness Center**

The Friends Wilderness Center (FWC), is a very small retreat facility sharing 1400 acres of wilderness with two other groups. It is located in the very southeastern corner of the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia, between the Appalachian Trail and the Shenandoah River. Miles of trails wander through the woods, crossing beautiful little brooks. Sitting by one of the two ponds gives individuals a place to renew their spirit and escape the hectic world of work, family, and school. Visitors may camp on the site or stay in one of the two bedrooms in the Niles Cabin.

Friends Wilderness Center  
305 Friends Way  
Harpers Ferry WV 25425  
304.728.4820  
[www.friendswilderness.org](http://www.friendswilderness.org)

## William Penn House

William Penn House is a Quaker lodging and program center located in Washington DC. It is five blocks from the US Capitol Building and near the historic Eastern Market. They offer clean, safe, affordable lodging and conference facilities, daily silent worship, weekly yoga, monthly potlucks, as well as community dialogues, seminars, and workshops.

William Penn House seeks to promote peace and justice in all that it does so that visitors may become greater peacemakers when they leave its doors. You are invited to enjoy their hospitality services.

William Penn House  
515 East Capital Street SE  
Washington DC 20003  
202.543.5560  
[www.wmpennhouse.org](http://www.wmpennhouse.org)

## Retirement Communities

**Broadmead** is an independent life care facility for people over the age of 65.

13801 York Road  
Cockeysville MD 21030  
410.527.1900  
[www.broadmead.org](http://www.broadmead.org)

**Foxdale Village** is an independent life care facility for people over the age of 65,

500 East Marilyn Avenue  
State College PA 16801  
814.238.3322  
[www.foxdalevillage.org](http://www.foxdalevillage.org)

**Friends House** is an independent for people age 62 and over. It has an intermediate care unit, a full nursing unit, and an Alzheimer unit where residents may move when necessary if space is available,

17340 Quaker Lane  
Sandy Spring MD 20860  
301.924.5100  
[www.friendshouse.com](http://www.friendshouse.com)

## Baltimore Yearly Meeting Camps

**Catoctin Quaker Camp**, 12611 Tower Road, Thurmont MD 21788, 301.271.2184

**Opequon Quaker Camp**, 2710 Brucetown Road, Brucetown VA 22722, 540.3678.4900

**Shiloh Quaker Camp**, 4774 Middle River Road, Standardsville VA 22973, 540.948.5226

**Teen Adventure**, 495 Snakefoot Lane, Lexington VA 24450, 540.3463.7234

For more information on the BYM camps, call 301.774.7663 or go to [www.bymcamps.org](http://www.bymcamps.org)

## Friends Schools

**Alexandria Friends School**, 3830 Seminary Road, Alexandria VA 22304, 703.461.7222, Grades 9 -12, [www.afriends.org](http://www.afriends.org)

**Friends Community School**, 45901 Westchester Park Drive, College Park MD 20740, 301.441.5411, Grades K - 6, [www.friendscommunityschool.org](http://www.friendscommunityschool.org)

**Friends Meeting School**, 3232 Green Valley Road, Ijamsville MD 21754, 301.798.0288, Grades PK - 12, [www.friendsmeetingschool.org](http://www.friendsmeetingschool.org)

**Friends School of Baltimore**, 5114 North Charles St., Baltimore MD 21210, 410.649.3200, Grades PK - 12, [www.friendsbalt.org](http://www.friendsbalt.org)

**George Fox Friends School**, 2009 Gap Newport Pike, Cochranville PA 19330, 610.593.7122, Grades PK - K, [www.gffs.org](http://www.gffs.org)

**Harford Friends School**, 708 Highland Rd, Street, MD 21154, 410.452.5570, Grades 1 - 8, [www.harfordfriends.org](http://www.harfordfriends.org)

**Sandy Spring Friends School**, 16923 Norwood Rd., Sandy Spring MD 20860, 301.774.7455, Grades PK - 12, [www.ssfs.org](http://www.ssfs.org)

**Sidwell Friends School**, 3825 Wisconsin Ave, Washington DC 20016, 202.537.8100, Grades PK - 12, [www.sidwell.edu](http://www.sidwell.edu)

**State College Friends School**, 1900 University Dr. State College, PA 16801, 814.237.8386, Grades K -8, [www.statecollegefriendsschool.org](http://www.statecollegefriendsschool.org)

**Tandem Friends School**, 279 Tandem Lane, Charlottesville VA 22902, 434.296.1303, Grades 5 -12, [www.tandemfs.org](http://www.tandemfs.org)

## V. Appendices

### 1. Glossary

**Advices:** Ideals stated as a continuing reminder of the basic faith and principles held to be essential to the life and witness of Friends. Friends have found it useful regularly to remind each other of their nature through periodic reading and discussion along with related queries.

**Affirm:** A legal declaration made by Friends or others who conscientiously decline to take an oath. “I affirm such and such is so.” rather than: “I swear . . .” Swearing an oath implies having a double standard in regard to speaking the truth.

**Allowed or Indulged Meeting:** A worship group of Friends under the care of an organized body of Friends, usually at quarterly or monthly meeting level, but less formally organized than a preparative meeting.

**Anchor committee.** An anchor committee, or anchoring committee, is a support committee that guides and nurtures a Friend who is pursuing a ministry that leads him or her to travel away from the meeting frequently. This term is most frequently heard in reference to travelling ministries supported by Friends General Conference (FGC).

**Associate Member:** One of several statuses of membership in the Society of Friends used by many Monthly Meetings. An Associate Member is a minor child recorded as a member at the request of parents, one or both of who are members of a Monthly Meeting. Associate Members may be transferred to full membership status at their own request, preferably in writing, after they have reached an age of decision and when they are familiar with Friends principles.

**Attender:** Someone who comes with some frequency to Meeting for Worship and other Meeting functions, but has not yet sought or been accepted into membership in the Society of Friends.

**Birthright Member:** A Friend born of Quaker parents and recorded at birth on the membership rolls of the meeting. Most meetings no longer have this category of membership, using some form of Associate status for children.

**Book of Discipline:** A book describing a yearly meeting's history, structures, and procedures, including advices, queries, and often quotations, or extracts, from the experience of Friends. Faith and Practice is a Book of Discipline. The word discipline comes from the root word disciple.

**Breaking Meeting:** Term used to designate the ending or closing of the Meeting for Worship when a designated member shakes hands with Friends nearby. Friends then greet their neighbors similarly.

**Called Meeting:** A meeting of the monthly, quarterly, or yearly meeting specially called by its clerk to address some concern or item of business. In a called meeting for business, decisions are recorded as in a regular meeting for business.

**Center Down:** An endeavor to quiet our restless thoughts and open our hearts, in order that we may hear God speak directly to us.

**Christ within:** That of God in everyone especially as illustrated in the teachings of Jesus. Also called the Truth, the Spirit of Guidance, the Inward Light, the Seed or the Holy Spirit.

**Clearness Committee:** A group of Friends appointed or selected to assist a person or the meeting to clarify a decision or concern.

**Clearness:** Confidence that an action is consistent with the divine will.

- Clerk:** The person responsible for the administration of a Friends body and sensitive to the guidance of the Spirit in the conduct of the business of that body. This includes preparation, leadership, and follow up of meetings for business.
- Concern:** A concern, whether of an individual or a Meeting, is a formulated interest so deep and vigorous that it motivates to action. It is often a spiritual leading to action -- task oriented; and when completed; the concern is laid down.
- Conscientious objection:** A principled refusal to participate in certain social or political practices; commonly applied to the refusal to undertake military service or pay war taxes.
- Consensus:** a secular method, involving a rational process and producing general agreement. The authority is the group. Not to be confused with 'sense of the meeting.'
- Conservative Friends:** Three unaffiliated yearly meetings—Iowa, North Carolina and Ohio—call themselves Conservative. Historically, they share John Wilbur's objections to the pastoral system; at the same time they are more explicitly Christ-centered than most meetings in Friends General Conference.
- Continuing revelation:** A central Quaker belief that the revelation of God's will is an ongoing process.
- Convener:** Member of a committee, usually the first person listed, who is asked to convene the first meeting. Also the correspondent or contact person of a Worship Group.
- Convinced Friend:** A person who, after deciding that the Religious Society of Friends provides the most promising home for spiritual enlightenment and growth, becomes a member of a monthly meeting. Traditionally distinguished from a birthright Friend.
- Corporate worship:** The action of a group's seeking together the will of God for their individual and community life.

The Meeting for Worship is corporate worship. The activity of the group decision process - quiet waiting and group discussion - is intended to reflect the group's corporate search for truth.

**Covered Meeting:** A meeting for worship or business in which the participants feel the power and inspiration of God so strongly that they are united in silence that is the reward of waiting upon God.

**Discernment:** The process of arriving at the right course of action through spiritual perception and clear rational thought.

**Discipline:** Term related to discipleship: following a particular path. Also see "Faith & Practice."

**Disownment:** The practice of dismissing an individual from membership in the Society of Friends. Historically, a person could be put out of meeting ("read out") by a monthly meeting for violating prohibitions or practices of the Society.

**Elders:** Historically, those appointed to foster the vocal ministry of the meeting for worship and the spiritual condition of the members.

**Eldering:** The act of encouraging and/or questioning an individual's behavior and/or expression. Eldering is to be done with courtesy and loving concern for the individual, even when it is offered as a correction.

**Embraced Friend.** A Friend whose leading for ministry has been affirmed by the Yearly Meeting and is supported at the Yearly Meeting level.

**Epistle:** A public letter of greeting and ministry. Such letters are sent from a Friends meeting or organization to other Friends groups, to supply information, spiritual insight, and encouragement.

**Facing bench:** The benches or seats in the front of the meeting room, facing the body of the meeting, on which Friends' ministers and elders generally sat. In recent times, many

meetings have adopted a circular or square arrangement to eliminate the facing-bench distinction.

**Faith and Practice:** An official edited book of Friends' testimonies, beliefs, and practices compiled by a Yearly Meeting body of Friends. The book is meant to provide guidance (queries and advices) for individuals and organizational groupings of the religious body. The structure and membership of the group, the procedures of well ordered business, the legalities of marriage, and stewardship of group property are explained. These are sources of tradition and not dogma. They are periodically updated to respond to current needs. Sometimes called "A Book of Discipline."

**First Day:** Sunday. Quakers have traditionally referred to the days of the week by number, avoiding the days named for pagan gods. This is not a firm Quaker custom today but more a familiar usage. We would tend to refer to First Day school, rather than Sunday school for the children.

**Friends:** Members of the Religious Society of Friends; also called Quakers. The term, Friends, or "Friends in the Truth," was used as early as 1

**Gathered Meeting:** A phrase used to describe those special occasions when the Meeting for Worship attains a generally felt sense of divine Presence, touching the hearts of all worshipers and unites them in a common experience of holy fellowship. A Covered Meeting is synonymous.

**Good Order:** Those procedures for the conduct of Friends business and witness that encourage a meeting to carry out its corporate activities under divine leading. The term rightly ordered is also used in this sense.

**Gospel Order:** A term used by George Fox and others to describe the new covenant order of the church under the headship of Christ. It concerns how we live faithfully in relationship with God and with each other.

**Gurneyites:** Orthodox Friends, who, in the 19th Century, agreed with Joseph John Gurney concerning the importance of studying the Holy Scriptures and proclaiming the Quaker faith and practice in strong programs of evangelical outreach.

**Hicksites:** 'Liberal' Friends who assert the sufficiency of the Inner Light in religious life. Called 'Hicksites' by their opponents in reference to Elias Hicks, a prominent Quaker preacher.

**Hold in the Light:** To ask for God's presence to illumine a person, situation, or problem, whether in concern or thanksgiving.

**Inner Light:** the presence of God in our hearts and lives, a reality, which guides and directs us, which gives us strength to act on this guidance, and thus brings us into unity with the Spirit of God. Also called the Truth, the Spirit of Guidance, the Inward Light, the Christ Within or the Holy Spirit.

**Integrity:** One of the basic practical principles or testimonies of Friends. It involves both a wholeness and harmony of the various aspects of one's life, and truthfulness in whatever one says and does.

**Interim Meeting:** a broadly representative body meeting to conduct the business of the yearly meeting between its annual sessions. (Formerly called Representative Meeting.)

**Lay Down:** A decision to discontinue a committee when its work is complete; occasionally, a decision to discontinue a Meeting or other Friends organization when it is no longer viable.

**Lay Over:** In Quaker business process, to postpone a significant decision to allow time for further reflection and discussion.

**Leading:** An inner conviction that impels one to follow a certain course under a sense of divine guidance. A

Friend may submit a leading to the meeting for testing by corporate wisdom.

**Letter of Introduction:** A Friend who is traveling socially or otherwise may request a “Letter of Introduction” from her or his monthly meeting to affirm association with Friends.

**Liberal Friends:** Liberal Friends hold that belief must be verified by religious experience. Religious experience derives from the direct revelation of God through the Light of Christ within. For Liberals, Jesus’s life, teachings and death are a supreme example of love. Historically, Liberal Friends have reconciled science and religion, incorporating freedom of thought, tolerance and humanitarian service in their expression of religious faith and practice maintaining a balance between individual liberty and community.

**Marrying out:** Marrying someone who is not a member of the Society of Friends. Until 1859, many were disowned for marrying those who were not Quakers.

**Meeting for Business:** The gathering of members and attenders where the business of the Society of Friends takes place. For a particular local grouping of Friends, this is on a monthly basis, thus the name Monthly Meeting. Business follows the traditional practices of Friends; there is no voting. Agreement for group action is reached by arriving at “a sense of the meeting,” a process similar to but not the same as consensus.

**Meeting for Worship:** The gathering of Friends for the purpose of worshipping God. Traditionally, Friends met in silent, expectant waiting for leadings of the Spirit, which might inspire anyone of the group to offer a message or prayer.

**Meeting House:** The building in which Friends meet. The name is used in place of ‘church’.

**Message:** a spoken message or ministry by an individual inspired by Divine leading in a Meeting for Worship. A message may come to an individual that is personal or not

for the group, and it is a matter of discernment whether or not to stand and deliver the message to a gathering.

**Mind the Light:** An expression used to remind us that there is an “Inward Light” in each of us that can reveal God’s will and direction.

**Ministry:** Sharing or acting upon one’s gifts, whether in service to individuals, to the meeting, or to the larger community.

**Minute:** A record of an agreement reached in Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business formalizing the “sense of the meeting.”

**Minute of Exercise:** An expression of a clerk’s insights and concerns at the close of a meeting for business. Historically, a closing summary of vocal ministry and spiritual concerns expressed during yearly meeting sessions.

**Minutes:** A record of the proceedings of a meeting.

**Monthly Meeting:** A local community of Friends who meet together at regular intervals to wait upon God in Meeting for Worship.

**Moved:** Led or prompted by the Spirit.

**Notion:** An approach to religiously important matters that is not based on first-hand spiritual experience.

**Opening:** A moment of unexpected enlightenment or inspiration from God.

**Overseers:** A term traditionally used for the members of a committee which gives pastoral care and nurture to all members and attenders.

**Pacifist:** A person who renounces war and any use of violence and seeks to resolve conflicts peacefully.

**Plain Dress:** The simple and unadorned garments worn by early Friends.

**Plain Language:** Friends’ use of “thee,” “thy,” “thine,” and both names with no titles as an expression of equality. Because the months and days were named for heathen gods, goddesses, and emperors, many Friends preferred to

use “First day,” “Second day,” and “First Month,” “Second Month,” etc.

**Popcorn Meeting:** As implied, numerous speakers “pop up” to “minister” to the meeting leaving very little “silence” between speakers.

**Preparative Meeting:** (1) A body of Friends, generally under the care and guidance of an established Monthly Meeting; (2.) Originally, and still in some Yearly Meetings, one of a group of Meetings that meet for worship and to “prepare” business to be brought before their Monthly Meeting.

**Proceed as way opens:** Taking one step at a time (prayerfully), so as to become clear what to do.

**Programmed Meeting:** A Friends meeting under the leadership of a pastor, with an arranged order of worship that usually includes a period of silent worship.

**Quaker:** Unofficial name of a member of the Religious Society of Friends.

**Quarterly Meeting:** A regional gathering of members of constituent monthly meetings, traditionally on four occasions each year.

**Queries:** A set of questions, based on Friends’ practices and testimonies, which are considered by Meetings and individuals as a way of both guiding and examining individual and corporate lives and actions. As such, they are a means of self examination. Queries to be considered regularly are included in Faith and Practice; others may be formulated by a committee or Meeting that seeks to clarify for itself an issue it needs to address.

**Recorder:** The person appointed by a Meeting to maintain statistics of the members and attenders of that Meeting.

**Recording Clerk:** The person who records the actions of a Friends’ meeting for business.

**Released Friend:** A Friend whose leading to carry out a particular course of action has met with approval from a

Meeting which then promises to provide such support as would enable the Friend to follow that leading.

**Religious Society of Friends:** Official name for Quakers.

**Rise of meeting:** A term used to indicate the end of a meeting for worship or business. Meetings for worship are “broken” (are sensed complete) by the clerk or other designated person, often indicated by the shaking of hands to signify the meeting is over. Also called the “close of meeting.”

**Seasoning:** Taking the time to seek the Light rather than moving into a matter hastily.

**Sense of the Meeting:** A collective understanding of God’s will emerging from a Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, gathered and explained by the clerk for the approval of the Meeting.

**Settled:** All together under the leading of the Spirit.

**Silence:** Meditation, and solemn waiting, quiet time in meetings.

**Simplicity:** Simplicity is cutting away all that is extraneous. Sincerity is being without sham. Integrity is being all of a piece. See testimony on simplicity.

**Sojourning Friend:** A Friend temporarily residing in the area of another Monthly Meeting and accepted by that Meeting as a participating member.

**Speak to One’s Condition:** The experience of receiving a message directly from God, or through another person, which touches one at the deepest level or helps one solve a problem or make a right decision.

**Standing Aside:** An action taken by an individual who has genuine reservations about a particular decision, but who also recognizes that the decision is clearly supported by the weight of the Meeting. The action of standing aside frees the Meeting to reach unity. A person may ask to be recorded as standing aside.

- Standing in the Way:** A person who feels a spirit led objection to a decision or proposed action of the meeting may stand in the way, thus preventing further action.
- Stop in the Mind:** An expression used by Friends when they feel uneasy and cannot follow a course of action.
- Stewardship:** Directing the use of resources in accord with God's will. See also Advices and Queries.
- Testimonies:** Public statements or witness based on beliefs of the Religious Society of Friends that give direction to our lives.
- That of God in everyone:** A Quaker belief that all humans have a divine spirit enabling them to hear, be aware of and respond to the movement of the spirit of God in the heart.
- Threshing Session:** A meeting to consider in depth a controversial issue, but in a way that is free from the necessity of reaching a decision.
- Traveling Ministry:** A term for a Friend, traveling with a concern and under the care of their meeting.
- Travel Minute:** The endorsement a Meeting gives to one of its members who is traveling under weight of a concern.
- Unity:** A recognition of the truth emerging from a group's corporate search and yielding to the Holy Spirit in its decision-making.
- Universalism:** The belief that there is a universal spiritual truth to be found a base of all religious traditions.
- Unprogrammed Meeting:** A Meeting for Worship without pastor or prearranged program. Gathered Friends come together in silence, waiting upon God and "leadings of the Spirit" which may give rise to vocal messages to share with the Meeting. Meetings for Worship in which the whole time is spent in silence can also be occasions of great inspiration.
- Visitation:** Formal visiting among Friends for any one of several purposes.

**Vocal Ministry:** The sharing of a message from God during Meeting for Worship. See Advices.

**Waiting upon God:** Actively seeking and attending to God's will in expectant worship.

**Weighty Friend:** A Friend who is respected for spiritual depth, wisdom, and long service to the Religious Society of Friends.

**Witness:** To let one's life speak. To stand up for a truth or deeply held belief.

**Worship Group:** A meeting for worship that has not applied for any formal meeting status.

**Worship sharing:** Sharing personal and spiritual experiences, thoughts, and feelings, in a worshipful setting, often in response to a query or theme and in a manner that acknowledges the presence of God.

**Yearly Meeting:** Those Friends from a geographically extended area who gather in Annual Session to worship and conduct business together. Yearly Meeting has an advisory and supportive role to the Monthly Meetings.

The Faith & Practice Revision Committee used several sources to prompt our work on this glossary. Among the most useful references are:

- \* New York Yearly Meeting *Faith & Practice*
- \* Philadelphia Yearly Meeting *Faith & Practice*
- \* North Pacific Yearly Meeting *Faith & Practice*
- \* Clark: *A General Glossary of Quaker Terms*
- \* Lyn Cope-Robinson: *Little Quaker Sociology Book*

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The Voices for each of the Queries are presented in the order in which they appear in those sections. Many of the quotations come from Pendle Hill Pamphlets and the *Faith and Practice* of several Yearly Meetings. Friends are encouraged to peruse the original sources, many of which can be found online.

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## 7. History of *Faith and Practice*

At Fall Committee Day, 1971, the Ministry and Counsel Committee considered the concern for the development of a new Discipline for Baltimore Yearly Meeting and forwarded a minute to Executive Committee requesting the formation of an ad hoc committee. Executive Committee approved the following minute: “The Executive Committee believes that it is now the time for the Yearly Meeting to begin the work of writing a new Discipline...”

Representatives of 16 Monthly Meeting Ministry and Counsel Committees met 3/11/72 at Stony Run Friends Meetinghouse “to consider the wisdom and timeliness of devising a Book of Discipline for Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.” Harry S. Scott, Jr. Reported to the Yearly Meeting, “Friends present at this gathering concluded it is right to begin some parts in this, our three-hundredth year.” Ministry and Counsel proposed that his work begin with Monthly Meeting review of the queries “with specific reference to the adequacy with which they express current feeling on both faith and practice.”

Yearly Meeting in session, 1973, asked that a Ministry and Counsel subcommittee review Monthly Meeting work on the queries and prepare suggestions for the next Yearly Meeting. By 1974, the subcommittee prepared and circulated a working paper, which was used for worship-sharing at Yearly Meeting sessions. Forty Monthly Meetings, study groups, and individuals had sent comments to the subcommittee by spring 1975.

In 1975, the Yearly Meeting agreed to a two-year trial period for use of the new Queries, laid down the subcommittee, and directed the Executive Committee to name an *ad hoc* committee on the Discipline. Friends who served on the subcommittee that prepared the new Queries included:

Romaine Blackburn  
 Edmund D. Cronon  
 Timothy E. Felton  
 James R. Hibbs  
 Lois S. Vaught

W. Herbert Brown  
 Judith Farquhar  
 Katharine G. Gelder  
 Ross W. Sanderson, Jr.  
 Ellis T. Williams

The Yearly Meeting's Ad Hoc Committee on the discipline began its work in 1976: drafting new sections, circulating them to the Monthly Meetings, and redrafting to incorporate the comments and suggestions of various Friends. In 1982, the Yearly Meeting, approved the recommendations of the ad hoc committee, published a *Provisional Faith and Practice* for use for the next three years and laid down the Ad Hoc Committee on the New Yearly Meeting Discipline. Friends who served on the committee included:

Karl F. Bach  
 Robert G. Gronewald  
 Margaret M. Hunter  
 Katharine J. Newman  
 Lloyd B. Swift  
 Arnold B. Vaught

Katharine G. Gelder  
 James R. Hibbs  
 Herbert L. Kinney  
 Harry S. Scott, Jr.  
 Virginia R. Sutton

Yearly Meeting in session, 1984, discussed needed improvements in the *Provisional Faith and Practice* and agreed to establish a Faith and Practice Review Committee to receive, collate, and interpret comments and report to the next Yearly Meeting. Friends shared their leadings about specific sections during Yearly Meeting sessions in 1985, 1986, and 1987. The Faith and Practice Review Committee incorporated the wide variety of concerns into the final version, which the Yearly Meeting joyfully approved in 1988. Friends who served on this committee 1984-1988 included:

Christina Connell  
Cynthia Kerman  
Joan Oehser  
S. Clement Swisher  
Jay W. Worrall

Elsbeth Inglis  
Caroline Kirk  
William S. Samuel, III  
Claire G. Walker

Thanks to all these Friends!

Katharine J. Newman

[Taken from the Baltimore Yearly Meeting Yearbook, 1988, pp 16-17 of the Minutes]

At Interim Meeting in 2002, a proposal was made to renew the Faith and Practice Revision Committee. The name of the committee had been listed in the Yearbook since 1988, but no names had been shown for many years. It was recommended that the upcoming annual session consider filling that committee. The following names were approved by the annual session in the year indicated:

Sheila Bach, clerk (2002)	Martha Gay (2002)
Margaret Stambaugh (2002)	Ron Mattson (2002)*
Chip Tucker (2002)*	Mochiko DeSilva (2004)
Sam Legg (2004)	Pamela Cook (2004)*
Julie Gouchenour (2004)	Jim Rose (2004)
Susan Hills (2005)	

\*resigned

## 8. Progress of the Revision

As stated in our current *Faith & Practice* (1988), “This manual of Faith and Practice of Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends is composed of statements of faith and of advice on organization and practice considered relevant for this present time. It is issued in the expectation, however, that another generation of seekers on the road toward Truth will make changes.”

In 2002, the Yearly Meeting approved the revival of the Faith & Practice Revision Committee to reconsider the structure and content of our current document. Since that time the committee has published its work in progress periodically in the hope that each Meeting and each Friend will help with that reconsideration. That hope has met with a gratifying response. At the time of this publication, we have received comments from 14 meetings and several individuals, as well as some worship groups. We are encouraged by the response of Friends: some meetings have reviewed our drafts in committee, while others have established “Friendly Eights” to reflect on the “Queries, Advices and Voices” before going to their Monthly Meetings for approval. Whatever the approach, the thoughtful consideration of this material is received with much thanks. We particularly appreciate responses from meetings because they are seasoned through discussion with others and give us a better sense of the range of reactions among Friends.

Although we have attended to many of your responses, we have not yet integrated all comments received by the date of this publication. We consider all suggestions carefully. For those who find their suggestions have not been followed, it may be because others had a different view and our consideration of all the comments received led us elsewhere. For example, many Friends found the open-ended format of the new queries helpful in exploring issues, while others missed the “yes” or “no” queries. Because many meetings are in the midst of reviewing

Voices, Advices, and Queries, we have kept this section the same as last year's version to avoid the complexity and potential confusion of reviewing comments on different drafts.

We anticipate completing our work on the following schedule:

- By the time of annual meeting in 2011, we expect to have a complete draft of *Faith and Practice*. The 2011 edition will incorporate our deliberations on all comments received by **February 1, 2011**.
- We will integrate all comments received on the 2011 draft by **February 1, 2012**. The edition of 2012 will be, in essence, the version we submit for review at our annual meeting in 2013.
- We will seek approval for the new *Faith and Practice* in 2013.

Members of your Faith and Practice Revision Committee are available to meet with individual Meetings to discuss the history of this effort, to present our progress, and to encourage further discussion.

Please consider establishing a process to review this draft within your meeting. Send your suggestions, revisions, comments, and corrections to:

Faith and Practice Revision Committee  
305 Friends Way  
Harper's Ferry  
West Virginia 25425  
fnp@bym-rsf.org



