

EXPLORING QUAKERISM WITH NEWCOMERS

At Friends Meetings

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SUGGESTIONS FOR USE WITH NEWCOMERS

The purpose of this series of discussions is to introduce adult newcomers to Friends Meetings to various aspects of Quakerism. Each of the following topics may be presented informally and independent of the other topics. Each welcoming session should be brief—a half-hour is ideal and can begin with a 5- to 10-minute presentation followed by questions, responses, and discussion. Copies may be made of the topics for the day and handed out to the attenders.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSIONS

- I. Quaker Faith and Practice
- II. Quakerism Is Experiential
- III. Unprogrammed Quaker Worship
- IV. Revelation Is Continuing
- V. The Experience of God Is Universal
- VI. Honoring the Spirit Within
- VII. Truth and Truth-Telling
- VIII. Simplicity and Integrity
- IX. Friends and Diversity
- X. Friends and Community
- XI. Quaker Faith in Action
- XII. Friends Testimonies
- XIII. Quaker Process
- XIV. The Roots and Branches of Modern Quakerism

Suggested Reading List

I. **QUAKER FAITH AND PRACTICE**

By Marsha Holliday, Member Friends Meeting of Washington

In England in 1652, George Fox electrified a large gathering of religious seekers with his description of a profoundly exciting idea. He had found that there is something within each person that enables him or her to experience and respond to the presence of God, something that enables goodness and spiritual growth, something which Friends would later call “that of God in everyone.” This was the beginning of Quaker faith and practice.

This idea greatly affected the development of Quakerism, for if there is that of God in everyone, then human life is holy. If we can respond to that of God within, then revelations, or messages from God, are continuing. If everyone can have this experience, then God is universal and religious authority is not limited to certain individuals, making intermediaries such as priests and ministers unnecessary. The appeal of these new ideas quickly brought many converts to this new religion, despite harsh repression from both the English Church and State.

One of the first names of this new religion was the Religious Society of the Friends of Truth. George Fox began his own faith journey, and subsequently, the Quaker experience, as a search for Truth.

Throughout their history, Friends have acknowledged one Truth—often referred to with a capital “T,” which is of God alone. Believing that there is that of God in everyone, Friends recognize that anyone, therefore, may come to know some part of that Truth. Only in God, however, does Truth reside in its entirety.

Quakers recognize that, when one searches for Truth with a capital T, one finds the same Truth in oneself that one finds in others. This is because Truth is of one nature. Truth is not divided or contradictory. Therefore, Truth in me can resonate with Truth in you.

The quest for Truth is unending. Friends realize that God continues to reveal Truth to us today, just as in the past. Friends, therefore, try to remain open to new revelations. Because creeds, or statements of belief, could never fully represent all Truth and may limit or confine both current perceptions of Truth and the continuing search for further understanding, unprogrammed Friends write no creeds. Friends try to learn from the insights of the past but do not want those past insights to limit present and future insights.

Without creeds, Friends have become diverse in their beliefs about God. As Friends honor the experiences that others have of God, decisions about beliefs become matters for each person to consider for him or herself. Friends feel that what people *do* is more important than what they *believe*; however, beliefs are important as they shape what ones does.

As the search for Truth is more important to Friends than the maintenance of beliefs, scientific discoveries do not tend to challenge Quakerism. Like the scientific

method, Quaker faith and practice relies primarily on experience for guidance, rather than on authorities. Friends have found that they come to know Truth experientially. In the words of Howard Brinton, “Quakerism is primarily a method, just as science is primarily a method.”¹

Quakers’ diversity of beliefs about God has become so extensive that Friends do not even agree upon a definition for the word God. Friends are, however, convinced of the presence and the power of goodness in the universe. Using such terms as “the Inward Light” and “the Seed of Truth,” early Friends developed a rich vocabulary to describe their inward experience of the Divine. In an attempt to acknowledge the equal contributions of both the male and female attributes of God, many Friends today are careful to use either non-sexist names for the Divine or a variety of both feminine and masculine pronouns and metaphors.

¹ *Friends for 350 Years*, Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 2002, page xx.

II. QUAKERISM IS EXPERIENTIAL

By Marsha Holliday, Member Friends Meeting of Washington

Quakerism is experiential. It relies primarily upon each Friend's *experience* of the Divine presence, not primarily upon scriptures or ministers. George Fox's knowledge of the Bible was extensive, but when he said, "and this I knew experimentally,"² he was declaring that his faith was based upon *his experience of God*, not upon *his beliefs about God* or upon his interpretation of the Bible. While preaching in 1652, Fox said, "You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this, but what canst thou say?"³

George Fox's *experience* of God was deeply rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Biblical similarities include Moses' experience of God in the burning bush (Exodus 3: 1-12); Elijah, the wind, earthquake, fire, and silence (1 Kings 19:9-13); and the apostles' experience at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13).

Born in 1624 in a village in Leicestershire, England, George, as a weaver's son, had little schooling. At age nineteen, he was distressed by the corruption and hypocrisy in the church of his day. His distress caused him to begin his spiritual search. In 1647, after four years of searching, he realized that God's guiding and comforting presence could be found within himself and in others. Because the Spirit of God is everywhere, he did not have to be in church or listen to religious leaders to hear God's voice. He could talk directly to God. He *knew* God because he *experienced* God.

According to the twentieth century Quaker, John Yungblut, "Fox knew God 'experimentally,' that is, by way of first-hand mystical experience." Yungblut described this mystical experience as "a sense of being known and loved unconditionally..."⁴

As it was with the early Friends, Quaker faith and practice is still based today on the *experience* of "that of God" within oneself, in others, and throughout the universe. Friends experience this Divine presence both inwardly and outwardly. Inwardly, it is like a spark or seed in everyone that can respond and grow in goodness. Outwardly, it is like unconditional, universal love. The Quaker concept of "that of God in everyone" is similar to the Biblical description of God creating human beings in God's image.

The recognition that God's presence can be experienced inwardly, as well as outwardly in the world, was not original with Quakers. When Quakerism began in England in the seventeenth century, a number of other marginal religions also affirmed the inward presence of God. What early Friends *did* with that revelation, however, *was* original. From their very beginnings, they developed a system of ministerial leadership

² John L. Nickalls, *The Journal of George Fox*, London Yearly Meeting, 1975, p. 11.

³

"The Testimony of Margaret Fox concerning her late husband," from *The Journal of George Fox*, 1694.

⁴ *Variations on the Quaker Message*, Landenberg, PA: Quaker Universalist Fellowship, 1990, p. 37.

and organization, which honors the sanctity and value of each person while placing authority in the Divine.

Having experienced God's inward and outward presence, Friends realize that revelation is continuing, that God's presence is universally available to all people, and that human life is sacred. Quaker faith and practice have evolved from these realizations.

III. UNPROGRAMMED QUAKER WORSHIP

By Marsha Holliday, Member Friends Meeting of Washington

Worship is experiencing the presence of God. Worship can happen anywhere, anytime, and to anyone. In biblical terms, when “two or three are gathered together” (Matthew 18:20), those gathered experience the presence of God. Friends call such gatherings “meeting for worship.”

For Friends, inspiration and direction for worship begin inwardly. In meeting for worship, the Spirit ministers within the members of the group. Friends, therefore, wait in silent expectation for Divine inspiration and direction. As a consequence, outward forms of ceremonies and rituals to assist the ministry—such as *prearranged* sermons, readings, prayers, hymns, musical orchestrations, or sacraments—are not a part of unprogrammed worship. Instead, unprogrammed Friends *spontaneously* preach, read scripture, recite inspirational works, pray, and sing. Some Friends dance their messages. As Friends have found that the power and awe of worship based in silence transcend words, expectant waiting has become the most commonly shared mode for unprogrammed worship.

This extraordinary emphasis on inward leadings makes the unprogrammed Quaker tradition different from most religious traditions, and different, in some ways, from worship in *programmed* Quaker meetings and Quaker churches. While all Quakers meet in worship to hear more clearly God’s “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12), Friends in the *unprogrammed* Quaker tradition conduct their worship entirely in expectant waiting and listening. They take the psalmist’s advice literally: “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

Unprogrammed meetings for worship can be a surprising experience for *any* attender, but they can be especially surprising for *first-time* attenders. In the typical arrangement of unprogrammed Friends meeting rooms, chairs or benches face each other, signifying that all people are equal before God and that anyone present may be led to speak. Whereas chairs or benches in traditional worship services usually face toward a pulpit, there are no pulpits in unprogrammed Friends meeting rooms.

Sometimes during meeting for worship, the Spirit moves someone to speak. When that happens, the Friend becomes a conduit for Divine revelation and the message is referred to as vocal ministry. Occasionally, there is a sense in a meeting for worship that the Spirit has enlightened everyone present. Friends value this experience and refer to it as a “gathered” meeting. Meeting for worship ends when one Friend, designated in advance, shakes hands with his or her neighbors. Then everyone shakes hands, newcomers are welcomed, and announcements are made. Not surprisingly, no two meetings are ever the same.

Many who are new to Quakerism wonder if they should speak in meeting for worship. Experienced Friends have found that some messages coming to them during meeting are for sharing immediately while others are for personal reflection or for sharing on another occasion. Ideally, spoken messages in meeting for worship come from the heart and from one’s experience and are prompted by the Spirit.

Often, those led to speak in meeting for worship find themselves powerfully moved. A judge gave the name “Quaker” to early Friends when George Fox told him to “tremble at the word of the Lord.” Friends assumed that nickname as it accurately described the Quaker experience of the power of Spirit-led ministry, which often leaves one trembling or shaken and overcome with a feeling of awe. Today members of the Religious Society of Friends refer to themselves interchangeably as “Friends” or “Quakers.”

So that they can reflect upon each spoken message, Friends try to allow a time of silence after each message. Sometimes a later message builds on an earlier one, but messages are not challenged, discussed, or debated during meeting for worship, as this would interrupt expectant waiting upon the Divine.

As precious as the vocal ministry is, Friends also value the silence of expectant waiting because it allows them to listen for God’s leadings in their lives. As breaking the silence to give a message in meeting is a weighty matter, Friends who are moved to speak tend to do so with humility, with few words, and rarely speak more than once in the same meeting for worship. Corporate worship is so important to Friends that even children and babies attend part or all of meeting for worship.

IV. REVELATION IS CONTINUING

By Marsha Holliday, Member Friends Meeting of Washington

Friends' experience of that of God within has led them to realize that anyone at any time may receive and express God's leadings. Consequently, revelations, or messages from God, are continuing. Although we are not always receptive or perceptive, the Divine is always present—imparting guidance, direction, and Truth. Friends, therefore, wait expectantly for revelations. These new awareness's come to Friends through other people, through their religious communities, through reading religious scriptures, and through sources such as art, music, nature, science, philosophy. They may come as dreams, insights, or nudgings.

The Bible confirms waiting upon the Spirit. For example, Psalm 27:14 says, "Wait upon the Lord, and he shall strengthen your heart" and, from Isaiah 40:31, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles."

The recognition of continuing revelation has influenced Friends understanding of the Bible. Friends affirm that the same Spirit that inspired much of the writing of the Bible is still inspiring us today. Friends regard the Bible as only one source of inspiration among many. In addition, many Friends find some parts of the Bible more inspired than other parts. Although Friends consider the Bible to be a rich source of spiritual insights and guidance, they have found that no sacred literature is complete. Revelation did not end with the completion of the Bible or any other sacred texts. George Fox realized that reading about God is not the same as knowing God. In his journal he wrote, "for though I read the Scriptures that spoke of Christ and of God, yet I knew him not but by revelation."⁵

Robert Barclay, an early interpreter of Quakerism, declared that the experience of the Spirit is the primary source. For Barclay, the scriptures only talk *about* the source. He wrote "because the scriptures are only a declaration of the source, and not the source itself, they are not to be considered the principal foundation of all truth and knowledge. They are not even to be considered as the adequate primary rule of all faith and practice. Yet, because they give a true and faithful testimony of the source itself, they are and may be regarded as a secondary rule that is subordinate to the Spirit, from which they obtain all their excellence and certainty."⁶ The intention of Quaker faith and practice is to *experience* that primary source first-hand.

Although revelations from God continue, one may not always perceive them. Moreover, Friends interpretations of what they receive are not always accurate. To prevent false claims of revelation, Friends have developed four tests. They check the truthfulness of their personal revelations against their own past personal experiences; against religious literature; against the collective, historic experience of Friends; and within their faith communities—their monthly, quarterly, or yearly meetings.

⁵ *Journal of George Fox*, p. 11.

⁶ *Barclay's Apology*, edited by Dean Freiday, Newberg, Oregon: The Barclay Press, 1991, p.5.

If, for example, a Friend feels that he or she has had a leading to take a particular action against the death penalty, that Friend might consider his or her personal experience and previous insights, check his or her concern against the scriptures, review the historic experience of Friends, and discuss his or her concern and a possible course of action with members of his or her meeting, paying thoughtful and prayerful attention to Friends responses and being open to their guidance.

When Friends have experienced both a leading and confirmation through discernment, they must take action—they must do something concerning their leading. Friends consider these actions as “holy obedience” and “following one’s leadings.” Friends have found that they become powerfully moved to take these actions. As following one’s leadings often brings joy, taking these actions becomes more than a duty or an obligation. It becomes a yearning.

Friends have aids that help them become more receptive to revelation. In order to promote their search for Truth, Friends practice honesty and integrity. In order to allow more time and space in their lives for the search for Truth, Friends adhere to simplicity. Because they recognize that revelation often comes from unexpected sources, they honor diversity. And since God’s presence is among us collectively, they practice community. These aids can help Friends be more receptive to revelation.

V. THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD IS UNIVERSAL

By Marsha Holliday, Member Friends Meeting of Washington

Friends have found that the potential to experience God's inward presence is universal. It is available to all people. Anyone, anywhere, at any time can experience God's presence directly.

Assured of God's universal presence, William Penn said, "The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious and devout souls are everywhere of one religion; and when death has taken off the mask, they will know one another."⁷ In the language of the Bible, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:27-28).

That God's presence is experienced universally has led Friends to acknowledge that Quakerism is only one way to know God. Followers of other religions also know and experience God, although perhaps with different names and interpretations. Friends, therefore, honor and learn from other worship traditions, and children in First Day Schools (the equivalent of Sunday Schools) may attend other worship services with their First Day School classes.

Since their beginning, Friends have supported freedom of religion for all people. The Quaker struggle for religious freedom, despite tremendous religious persecution, contributed substantially to an increase in religious toleration in England and in the American colonies. When, for example, William Penn, a Quaker, established a government in Pennsylvania, it officially tolerated *all* religious traditions.

Because early Friends' convictions about equality challenged authority, many of their actions had serious personal consequences. "Hat honor" is an example. Early Friends refused to remove their hats to honor any person, even judges in court or the king of England. This profound sense of the equal worth of all people was shocking in the seventeenth century and led to the imprisonment and subsequent death of many Friends. Because Friends honored God, they did, however, remove their hats while speaking in meeting for worship.

Sadly, equality among Quakers has not always extended to people of color. For example, some meetings in the past have had separate benches for blacks and whites. Today Quakers are working toward eliminating racism—in their hearts, in their meetings, and in society.

One area where Friends have been considerably ahead of their time is in the recognition of the equal rights of women. Ever since Quakerism began in the mid-seventeenth century, Quaker women have held every position of leadership that Quaker men have held. Quakers were the first of the religious groups that still exist in which men and women treat each other as equals. Such equality, although imperfect, was

⁷ *Fruits of Solitude*, #519, p. 95.

radical in those early times and had many ramifications.⁸ Among them, Quaker women have always been involved in the business of their monthly meetings, and Quaker schools have always taught both girls and boys.

Emphasizing the equality of Quaker men and women, Margaret Fell, George Fox, and other early Friends developed a simple Quaker marriage ceremony that is still used today. During a meeting for worship, the couples—as equals—exchange the vows that they wrote together. No one “gives the bride away.” In a Quaker marriage ceremony, the bride and groom may walk into the meeting room together or each may walk in separately. Lucretia Mott wrote, “... in the marriage union, the independence of the husband and wife will be equal, their dependence mutual, and their obligations reciprocal.”⁹

Women from Quaker backgrounds, such as Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, Alice Paul, and Emily Green Balch, having experienced leadership roles within their monthly meetings, moved easily to the forefront of the Women's Suffrage Movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Four of the five women (Lucretia Mott, Martha Coffin Wright, Mary Ann McClintock, and Jane Hunt) who organized one of the initial events of the Women's Suffrage Movement (the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848) were Quakers. In 1878, Susan B. Anthony drafted the language for what became the nineteenth amendment to the United States Constitution, giving women the right to vote. With the help of another Quaker woman, Alice Paul, that Amendment was passed by Congress and became law 42 years later, exactly as Susan B. Anthony had written it.¹⁰

The Quaker manner of attending to the business of the meeting also reflects this profound sense of equality. Collectively, committees have the responsibility of carrying out the ministry and the administration of their meeting. In Quaker meetings, positions of leadership rotate and all members are expected and encouraged to participate in the ministry through committee work. To ensure the sharing of the ministry, all leadership positions and all committee assignments have term limits. In the unprogrammed worship tradition, every Friend is a minister. There is no laity.

⁸See Tom Hamm's *Quakers in America*, Chapter 7: “A quarterly meeting in herself”: Quaker Women, Marriage, and the Family, NY: Columbia University Press, 2003.

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Faith and Practice: A Book of Christian Discipline, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1997, p. 68; Lucretia Mott, *Discourse on Women* (Philadelphia, PA: T.B. Peterson, 1850, p. 20).

¹⁰ See *Mothers of Feminism: The Story of Quaker Women in America*, by Margaret Hope Bacon, Philadelphia: FGC, 1995 and *The Ladies of Seneca Falls: The Birth of the Woman's Rights Movement* by Miriam Gurko, Schocken, 1976.

VI. HONORING THE SPIRIT WITHIN

By Marsha Holliday, Member Friends Meeting of Washington

The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 3, wrote, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" Because Friends recognize that there is that of God in everyone, they consider human beings to be holy. Some Friends affirm that all of life—animal, plant, and human—is holy. Others envision the entire universe—even the elements—as holy.

Friends have found that the most basic way of honoring the Spirit within is to avoid all violence, whether it is physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. Friends have found that when they hurt others, they also harm themselves and deny that of God both in themselves and in those they have hurt. Therefore, Friends attempt to live in ways that allow them to find nonviolent resolutions to conflicts and in ways that help others through service, the promotion of social and economic justice, kindness in daily living, and the support of each other's search for that of God within.

Jesus taught us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44). Loving one's enemies requires one to be friendly toward those who are not friendly in return. This does not mean, however, that one intentionally lets oneself be hurt, which, in addition to being harmful to oneself, allows and encourages wrongdoing in others. There are enormous differences between being violent (injuring or abusing others), being aggressive (using force to get what one wants), being assertive (declaring what you want and need and working to get it), and being passive (allowing others to encroach on your rights). Friends affirm assertiveness.

Friends also affirm forbearance, or controlling oneself when provoked to anger. They make every effort to show restraint in the face of provocation. Friends try to remain "tender" toward those with whom they disagree. Tenderness, the practice of being open to that of God in others, is different from tolerance, which is the practice of recognizing and respecting the opinions, beliefs, and practices of others. Tolerance requires acceptance; tenderness requires caring.

Like the early Christians, Friends are opposed to fighting in wars. George Fox once told a group of soldiers that he could not join them because he "lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars."¹¹ As Friends aim to live harmoniously with justice for all parties, they try to resolve disputes through the use of conflict management, mediation, and problem solving. They realize that once violence begins, there is no ideal solution. The ideal solution is to avoid violence.

The Quaker emphasis on the indwelling Spirit of God has had a profound impact on Quakers and has led many Friends to become conscientious objectors to military service. Over the years, conscientious objection has taken many forms. Friends have worked within the military as medics or ambulance drivers or have done alternative service outside the military, such as voluntary participation in medical tests. Some have

¹¹ *Journal of George Fox*, p. 65.

gone to prison, rather than cooperate with the military. Nevertheless, Quakers who have joined the military have often been treated tenderly by members of their monthly meetings—sometimes including those who disapproved of their choice of service.

Similarly, Friends oppose discriminatory and oppressive situations that devalue people. Throughout their history, Friends have tried to persuade public officials and legislators to adopt policies that reflect Quaker principles. The Quaker colonial settlers, for example, attempted to find nonviolent resolutions to conflicts with the Native Americans.

Perhaps the most cruel and irrevocable infraction of the holiness of life is the death penalty. Friends were among the earliest opponents of the death penalty, and most Friends today believe that such a penalty is never justified.

Another aspect of guarding the sacredness of life involves our care for and stewardship of the earth. Out of a concern for God's creation and their eagerness to assure that there is proper sharing of the earth's resources among its people, Friends try to live in an ecologically responsible manner, to conserve world resources, and to care for the quality of life of all creatures. In the eighteenth century, for example, John Woolman witnessed the abuse of horses by owners who overworked and mistreated them. While visiting in England in 1772, he saw that the stagecoach horses were driven too hard and in freezing weather. Therefore, he *walked* to his destinations throughout England. Today, many Quakers are engaged in social and political activities to bring greater equity of resources in health, education, and welfare to the people of the world. Out of concern for animals and the right sharing of world resources some Friends are vegetarians.

Friends realize that every person is at a different place on his or her spiritual journey. Many, who may not think of themselves as pacifists, find their convictions about the sacredness of life deepening with time. Friends encourage each individual to examine and take responsibility for his or her personal convictions and actions. There is a legend that, as a new convert, William Penn asked George Fox if he should continue to wear his sword. George Fox is reported to have responded, "Wear thy sword as long as thou canst."

QUOTATIONS ON NONVIOLENCE

Anne Frank: "I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can't build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness. I hear the ever approaching thunder, which will destroy us too. I can feel the sufferings of millions and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think it will all come right, that this cruelty too will end, and that tranquility will return again."

Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17: "Thou shalt not kill."

Leviticus 19:18 and Mathew 7:12: "In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you."

Isaiah 2:4: "... they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Micah 6:8: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Jesus told us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12: 29-31; Luke 10:27). He further said to love even our enemies and pray for those who spitefully use us (Matthew 5: 21-24, 38-39, 43-48). He told us that the peacemakers are blessed for they shall be called the "children of the Most High" (Matthew 5:9).

Philippians 4:5: "Let your gentleness be known to everyone."

James 4:1: "Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you?"

A group of early Friends in a letter to the King of England (November 21, 1660): "We . . . utterly . . . deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretense whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world."

William Penn: "A good End cannot santifie evil Means; nor must we ever do Evil, that Good may come of it...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 that they would not harm us. Force may subdue, but Love gains: And he that forgives first, wins the Laurel."

Joseph Hoag, a Quaker who lived during the Indian Wars, argued with an army general about nonviolence. The general said, "If all the world was of your mind, I would turn

and follow after.” Joseph Hoag said, "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.”

Lucretia Mott: “Let us strive to keep out all desire for revenge so that, being angry, we sin not.”

Albert Einstein: “Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding.”

Marion Pritchard (Dutch rescuer during World War II): "We all have memories of times we should have done something and didn't. And it gets in the way of the rest of your life."

Mahatma Gandhi: “I object to violence because, when it appears to do good, the good is temporary, but the evil is permanent.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.: "The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate.... Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Jimmy Carter: “War is always an evil, never a good. We will not learn how to live together in peace by killing each other’s children.”

Unknown Author: “Not fighting can be powerful.”

VII. TRUTH AND TRUTH-TELLING

By Marsha Holliday, Member Friends Meeting of Washington

In philosophical terms, truth is what is and refers to the facts about what we think is real. Many Friends distinguish between God's Truth, with a capital "T," and human truth, with a small "t."

Despite how fragmentary our grasp might be, Friends try to discern God's Truth. While we think that some part of God's Truth is eternal and unchanging, we know that human truth is not—for what we think is fact today can be disproved tomorrow. Human truth is based on the best facts we have as we perceive them now.

Values differ from truth. Whereas truth is what is, values are what one thinks ought to be—what one strives to make real.

Beliefs differ from both truth and values. Beliefs are the convictions one has about what is and what ought to be—about truth and values. Everyone has beliefs about truth and values—about what is and what ought to be. Beliefs about what is may be confirmed or shown to be false as our knowledge grows over time. Beliefs about values are personal and subjective and not open to the same kind of examination as are beliefs about what is true. One may change one's beliefs about one's values, but facts alone cannot prove them false.

Faith is belief for which there is no proof. As described in Hebrews 11:1, "To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see."

The concept of "peace on earth" provides an example of the differences between truth, values, beliefs, and faith. For example, from our knowledge of facts, we *know* that it is *true* that we do not have peace on earth. We think we *should* have peace on earth; therefore, we *value* peace on earth. Because we trust the goodness of God and power to transform hearts and minds, we *believe* that we can achieve peace on earth. Despite our lack of proof, we have *faith* that someday there will be peace on earth.

Finding the Truth for a particular situation requires open and honest consideration of differing perspectives—for each of us perceives only a part of the Truth. As Truth may come from unexpected sources, Friends have found that the more they value diversity of opinion, the more likely they are to find the Truth. They recognize that they stretch and grow if they remain open to possible changes in their faith as they thoughtfully consider ideas, beliefs, and perspectives that differ from their own.

The search for Truth has had profound implications for Friends. First, that search has meant that Friends must be extremely honest. Friends are convinced that lies and dishonesty complicate their relationships with others and distract them from finding the Truth. As a consequence, Friends feel they must tell the entire truth on all occasions. George Fox, for example, would not swear in court to tell the truth, in part because of the biblical advice against swearing (Matthew 5: 34-37), but also because swearing to tell the

truth on one occasion implies that there are other occasions when one would *not* tell the truth.

Early Friends developed a reputation for both honesty and accuracy. Quaker shopkeepers were the first to introduce the “fixed price” system in selling goods. Unlike the rest of society in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, Quakers would not bargain about prices. Quaker merchants set what they honestly felt were fair prices and would not change them. In addition to being consistent with their faith, this practice was good for business: Quakers became trusted merchants among their neighbors, and parents felt comfortable sending their children to purchase goods from Quaker storekeepers.

There is an old Quaker joke that illustrates Friends commitment to accuracy. Herbert Hoover, a Quaker and the 31st President of the United States of America, was riding on a train that passed by a field filled with sheep. His companion remarked that the sheep had been sheared. Herbert Hoover replied, “Well, on this side, certainly.” Although Friends value accuracy, they have found that it is important to distinguish between truth and mere *factual* accuracy, which can be the result of partial knowledge or, potentially, a deliberate deception.

Jesus said, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:31-32). A few verses later, Jesus described himself as “a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God” (John 8:40b). According to *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, in this passage, “The truth is the presence of God in Jesus.”¹²

¹² *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. IX, Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995, p. 637.

VIII. SIMPLICITY AND INTEGRITY

By Marsha Holliday, Member Friends Meeting of Washington

Simplicity is putting God first in one's life. It requires listening for that "still small voice of God" (Psalm 46:10) and then making God's leadings primary in one's life. Friends find that when they put God first, other matters then find their proper order of priority. Rufus Jones wrote, "Simplicity is first of all a *quality of the soul*..."¹³

Simplicity is plainness, lack of clutter, and balance. It encourages one to affirm, not flatter or overplay words or emotions, and to avoid extravagance and unnecessary paraphernalia. Simplicity demands integrity, which is being honest in all dealings and on all occasions and adhering consistently to one's values.

Integrity is going beyond the legal requirements to the moral ones. Integrity requires harmony between the inner and the outer life, between claimed values and one's way of living in the world. Simplicity and integrity have much in common: just as simplicity avoids cluttering one's environment, integrity avoids complicating one's relationships. Simplicity and integrity allow one to be more receptive to revelation, and so they are aids in finding the Truth.

Throughout their history, Friends appreciation for simplicity has influenced the Quaker life style and is perhaps most apparent in the lack of ornaments in Friends meeting rooms. Today, Friends tend to choose clothing, homes, furniture, transportation, and vacations that reflect a sense of moderation.

Proper stewardship is an aspect of simplicity. We are stewards over that which we own. As our possessions are opportunities to care for ourselves and others, Friends feel that their possessions are enormous responsibilities. They also feel a responsibility to reduce jealousy and rivalry by living lives that would not be coveted. In the words of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends, *Book of Discipline*,¹⁴ "By observing and encouraging simple tastes in apparel, furniture, buildings and manner of living, we help to do away with unwholesome rivalry."

Many Friends seek a simpler path, rather than being servants of materialism. They do not want to be owned by their possessions. They want, instead, to leave time and resources in their lives for spiritual enrichment and social commitment.

In his journal, John Woolman lamented his thriving retail business and his struggle with "the stuff and bother" of material success. Concerned with the terrible effect that slavery had upon both slaves and the slave owners, he minimized his thriving business so he could spend more time traveling throughout the American colonies to convince Friends to free their slaves. Woolman wrote, "To turn all we possess into the

¹³ Rufus Jones, *Essential Writings*, Selected with an introduction by Kerry Walters (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001) 136.

¹⁴ 1978, p. 19.

channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives.” Before Woolman died, no American Quaker owned slave.

In recent times, Friends have found that proper stewardship requires attention to ecological concerns. The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) website statement on ecology reads: “Our legislative policy rises out of our belief that there is that of God in every person and that all creation has worth and dignity. Facing profound global challenges and great opportunity, we speak from our faith for a new vision of how the world community can live together more peacefully and justly and with greater care for each other and our shared world.” Friends consider recycling, the use of renewable energy, and the elimination of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and pollution of all kinds to be essential Twenty-first Century tasks. It is our responsibility to pass on a livable planet to our descendants.

Over the centuries, Quakers have struggled with the meaning of simplicity, and its emphasis has changed over time. Until the twentieth century, many Friends thought that the arts were a distraction from religion. For some early Friends, even the use of colors was a distraction. Margaret Fell, however, strongly disapproved of the habit of many to wear “Quaker grey,” “all in one dress and one colour.”¹⁵ In a struggle similar to that of Margaret Fell, Miss Teen USA 2000, a Quaker, said that she wore her simplicity on the inside. Today many Friends appreciate art, music, theater, and literature as creative expressions of that of God within and find that the arts can enrich, deepen, and cast new meanings upon their spiritual lives.

Friends have not found simplicity to be simple or easy. They have found that simplicity requires them to develop a willingness to live with complexity, paradox, and contradictory ideas. Ironically, they have found that simplicity takes profound thought and vigorous effort. The Apostle Paul could have been describing simplicity when he wrote, “Be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).

We certainly live in a complex society and in complicated times. We have heavily scheduled lives with many demands upon our time and energy. However, when we put God first in our lives, we can prioritize accordingly, and then the unimportant and irrelevant things drop away, making decision-making easier. With this right ordering, Friends can live busy lives, deal with complex issues, maintain a sense of balance, and do what they most need and want to do. The goal of simplicity is not specifically to live a less busy life. The goal is to get one’s priorities right, thereby to enjoy more fully God’s inward and outward presence.

¹⁵ *Quaker Faith and Practice: the book of Christian discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends [Quaker]*, 1995, #20.31.

IX. FRIENDS THEOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

By Marsha Holliday, Member Friends Meeting of Washington

Friends House in London, England, has a poster that reads, “In human diversity lies the creativity of God.”¹⁶ Friends value individual differences as expressions of Divine creativity. Friends, therefore, affirm diverse opinions and beliefs. They have found that they can accept, honor, and interact constructively with the differing points of view Without giving up individual opinions. Friends recognize that diversity of opinions helps them consider additional possibilities, stimulates creativity and problem solving, and aids them in their search for Truth.

While the appreciation of diversity is highly valued among Friends, it is not easy. Accepting and honoring the differing perspectives of others can be both invigorating and difficult for many Friends and for many Friends meetings.

Diversity of opinions and beliefs among unprogrammed Friends have led to theological differences among them. Friends see individual differences as less important than the deeper unity that can occur among them. Friends have found that they can have unity amidst diversity and that the Spirit, which is common to everyone, can hold them together in community. An early Quaker, Isaac Penington, wrote: “This is the true ground of love and unity, not that such a man walks and does just as I do, but that I feel the same spirit and life in him.”¹⁷

This diversity of opinions and beliefs among unprogrammed Friends have led to theological differences among them. Not all contemporary, unprogrammed Friends are Christians. Some are theist, some claim no religious allegiances, and some practice more than one religious tradition. Moreover, those Friends who are Christians may have different definitions of Christianity. There are, for example, “unitarian” and “trinitarian” Friends as well as evangelical and non-evangelical Friends. Those Quakers who are unitarian believe that God is one, while trinitarian Quakers believe that God has three aspects—God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Creator, Teacher, and Inspirer).

Being evangelical or non-evangelical has to do with proselytizing or urging others to join their religion. Because Friends look for that of God in other people and other religions, most unprogrammed Friends tend to not proselytize. While tolerance and openness to diversity are admirable, the hesitancy to not proselytize has its drawbacks. Unprogrammed Friends have had difficulty growing their numbers, and, consequently, have found that it is very important to be intentional in welcoming newcomers to their meetings for worship.

Being creedless, unprogrammed Friends have no written beliefs. Because of that and because Friends often live in different circumstances and geographic locations,

¹⁶ The poster was first issued in March 2000.

¹⁷ Leonard Kenworthy, *Quaker Quotations on Faith and Practice*, Joint publication of Friends General Conference, in Philadelphia, PA, and Quaker Publications, in Kennett Square, PA, 1983, p. 88.

considerable theological diversity has developed among them. As difficult as it is, this diversity is perhaps Quakerism's greatest strength as a religious society: it keeps them open to change, scientific innovation, and new aspects of Truth.

Friends respect for theological diversity helps them respect other forms of diversity, such as differences of race, gender and sexual orientation, nationality, and economic class. As respect for diversity increases, appreciation, thoughtfulness, kindness, understanding, caring for others, and honoring diversity in all of its many forms is a value that is of great importance to Friends.

Although the overall composition of worldwide Quakerism is geographically, racially, nationally, and economically diverse, many Friends meetings in the United States and England are painfully aware of their lack of racial and class diversity and struggle with the issues of privilege and racism. Many of these meetings are working to become more hospitable and inclusive.

The twenty-second entry in the *Advices and Queries* of Britain Yearly Meeting reads: "Respect the wide diversity among us in our lives and relationships. Refrain from making prejudiced judgments about the life journeys of others. Do you foster the spirit of mutual understanding and forgiveness, which our discipleship asks of us? Remember that each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God."

X. FRIENDS AND COMMUNITY

By Marsha Holliday, Member Friends Meeting of Washington

Ken Smith, a former Sandy Spring Friends School headmaster, compared community to the flight of geese. He wrote, “As each goose flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the birds that follow. By flying in ‘V’ formation, the whole flock adds 71 percent greater flying range than if each bird flew alone. When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone. It quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it. When the lead geese tires, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies into the point position. The geese, flying in formation, honk to encourage those in front to keep up their speed. When a goose gets sick, wounded, or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help protect it. They stay with it until it dies or is able to fly again. Then they launch out with another formation or catch up with the flock.”¹⁸

In describing early Quaker communities, Isaac Penington, a seventeenth-century Quaker, said, “They are like a heap of fresh and living coals, warming one another as a great strength, freshness, and vigor of life flows into all.”¹⁹

Every member of a Quaker community brings different gifts, insights, and contributions, which collectively help achieve and maintain balance and wholeness in the life of the meeting. At the same time, individual Friends gain balance and wholeness from the collective wisdom of their meetings. In Quakerism, the individual needs the community as much as the community needs the individual.

Practicing community, like achieving diversity, is very difficult. Because of individual differences, community can be difficult to achieve and maintain. To make community work, each member of the community must protect the ego needs of every other member, while at the same time must let go of his or her own ego needs. Staying together as a community requires individuals to value and respect one another; consequently, it is essential that members of a community are caring and considerate with each other. This is no easy matter. A contemporary Quaker writer, Parker Palmer, humorously reminds us that community is “that place where the person you least want to live with always lives!”²⁰

Because God is among us collectively as well as within us individually, our communities help us experience God more fully. As we each possess different perspectives, the insights of community members help illuminate additional new approaches to the Truth. This is why Friends have found that decisions made by a

¹⁸ “The Head’s Column,” *Parents Association Newsletter*, Sandy Spring Friends School, June 1997.

¹⁹ *Works of Isaac Penington, Vol. 4, Glenside, PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 1997, p. 48.*

²⁰ “A Place Called Community” *Pendle Hill Pamphlet*, # 212, Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1977, p. 20.

reflective group tend to be better than decisions made on one's own. Friends, therefore, endeavor to remain open to Truth as it is expressed through others.

Although Friends think they must speak truthfully at all times, they know they must do so with loving kindness. Richard Foster, a contemporary Quaker, has reminded us, "How do we serve others in the world? We serve them by valuing their opinion. We serve them by acts of common courtesy. We serve them by guarding their reputation. We serve them by simple acts of kindness. We serve them by integrity of life. We serve them by honesty, truthfulness, and dependability."²¹

Margaret Fell is an example of a Friend whose contributions helped create and support her community. Born in 1614 to a wealthy English family, Margaret was well educated. She, her first husband, Judge Thomas Fell, and their nine children lived in England in a huge mansion called "Swarthmore Hall." After Margaret became a Friend, her home became the center of Quakerism, where she held meetings for worship and provided hospitality to visiting Friends. She began "meetings for sufferings," which were an extended support system for families of Friends who were in prison. Because Quakers were not allowed to marry in English churches, Margaret and other Friends began the practice of Quaker weddings, in which couples made their vows or declarations to each other without the assistance of a priest. Like George Fox, Margaret recognized that men and women are equally important in the leadership of their communities, so she insisted on the right for women to preach—something unheard of before that time.

For Friends, community is more than local clusters of people with whom one lives, works, and worships. Friends understand that community is global. This has caused Friends to be mindful of ecological concerns and of the need to protect our natural resources. It has also caused them to work for a more equitable distribution of the world's resources among its people. Friends, therefore, are especially concerned for the health and welfare of those who are living in poverty and under oppression of any kind.

²¹*The Challenge of the Disciplined Life*, NY: Harper Collins, 1985, pp. 228-48.

XI. FAITH IN ACTION

By Marsha Holliday, Member Friends Meeting of Washington

Quaker faith in action is based on the conviction that goodness is mightier than evil. George Fox wrote that he saw “. . . an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. And in that also I saw the infinite love of God...”²² That inward experience of the ocean of light and love of God entices Friends to put their faith into action. Friends expect that, with Divine guidance and power, human beings are capable of living divinely inspired lives, which furthers social justice and peace on earth.

Rufus Jones is an example of a life whose inward experience of the presence of God was expressed through outward actions. His writings made him a leading interpreter of Christian and Quaker mysticism. Yet while deeply inward and contemplative, Rufus also led an active outward life. This balance of the outward with the inward was poignantly illustrated when, on behalf of the American Friends Service Committee, Rufus Jones traveled to Nazi Germany with two Friends following the “Night of Broken Glass” in 1938, when Nazis broke Jewish shopkeepers’ windows, beginning the intense suffering and persecution of Jews during World War II.

Rufus and his two Friends went to the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin and met with aides of Reinhard Heydrich, a high-ranking Nazi official, to plead for the safety of the Jews. Before they were allowed to see Heydrich, the Nazis left the three Quakers alone in a room that had hidden microphones. The Nazis thought that, left alone, the Quakers would talk among themselves about their *real* mission in Germany. Sitting in a microphoned room, they never spoke and entered into silent worship. As Heydrich, who was in the adjacent room, listened to the silent Quaker meeting, he, in a sense, participated in their worship. The Nazis returned after two hours, admitted they had tape-recorded them, and announced that, because of the Quakers’ innocent intentions, their request would be granted. Heydrich released a number of Jews to the care of the Quakers.²³

Perhaps Friends are best known for their relief work during and following wars. At those times, Friends attempt to provide food, shelter, and medical care to *anyone* who is suffering, regardless of that person’s political affiliation or personal morality.

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), founded in 1917 to promote social justice, peace, and humanitarian solutions to society’s problems, is well known in Germany for its “Quaker hilfe,” or “Quaker help.” In 1920, the AFSC and the British Friends Service Committee began their “Quakerspeisung,” or “child-feeding” program. Following World War II, they helped feed “Quaker soup” to around 250,000 children

²² *Quaker Faith and Practice: the book of Christian discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends [Quakers] of Britain*, 1995, 19.03.

²³ Elizabeth Gray Vining, *Friend of Life: Biography of Rufus Jones*, Philadelphia: JB Lippencott, 1958, pp. 280-293.

every day.²⁴ The AFSC and the British Friends Service Committee were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1948 for these efforts in war relief.

Even though their numbers are small, Friends have a remarkable record in social reforms. Friends were among the first to recognize that mental and emotional disturbances are illnesses that need humane treatment. They were pioneers in education, child welfare, and prison reform. They were in the forefront of the movements to abolish slavery and promote civil rights. They have been active in the women's rights movement. They have promoted ecological concerns and animal rights. Almost every major social reform in the history of the United States of America has had a Quaker involved in its formation. When experiencing and confronted by social problems, Quakers set about initiating reforms. Quaker conscientious objectors, for example, who had done their alternative service in mental hospitals, started the National Association of Mental Health after World War II.

Despite Quakers' impressive record in social reforms, Friends realize that a more important outward expression of that of God within occurs in the way Friends live their *daily* lives. For Friends, it is of utmost importance to help others through kindness and compassion in daily living and through the support of one another's search for that of God within. The core of Quakerism is in how Friends relate to that of God in themselves and in others.

²⁴ One of those children was my second cousin who told me of his experience of Quaker soup and of his gratitude for it.

XII. FRIENDS TESTIMONIES

By Marsha Holliday, Member Friends Meeting of Washington

Although inspiration and direction from God are experienced inwardly, Quakerism is outward as well. Friends find that their inner experiences lead them to outer actions. In the words of William Penn, “True godliness does not turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavors to mend it.”²⁵ Friends realize that all life is holy, that anyone anywhere can experience God’s presence directly, and that revelation is continuing. These realizations are reflected in the Quaker values of simplicity, integrity, harmony, community, equality, stewardship, and diversity, which are all essential in the search for Truth. As Friends try to live their values, they witness or give testimony to the world.

Friends’ testimonies are outward expressions of God’s leadings. They are the application of Friends values to situations in their personal lives and in the corporate life of the Religious Society of Friends. Friend’s testimonies are action-oriented. They are not just philosophical views but commitments Friends make and attempt to follow in all aspects of their lives.

Friend’s testimonies express their relationships with God and among people and come from Friends struggles to live their values, according to their understanding and ability. They are responses Friends make to their life experiences. George Fox did not, for example, have a revelation about nonviolence. He was asked to join the army, and he refused. That occurred in the decade after Quakerism began and was the beginning of the Friends Peace Testimony.

Similarly, the story of Elizabeth Fry is an example of a testimony that grew out of a response to an experience that Elizabeth had. Elizabeth was a late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century English Quaker. A few months after the birth of her eleventh child, she became aware of the terrible conditions at Newgate Prison, a prison for convicted women and their children. The women and children, some ill and in rags, without bedding or washing facilities, were treated brutally by the jailers and each other. When Elizabeth arrived to visit the prison, the jailers, afraid for their own safety, would not accompany her into the area where the prisoners were held. Elizabeth began her first visit by asking the women if they would like her to start a school for their children. Receiving an overwhelmingly positive response, her safety among the inmates was, henceforth, assured.

In addition to educating the children, Elizabeth brought the inmates clothes and straw for bedding. She insisted that the jailers allow the women to wash their clothes—the jailers had previously believed that the inmates were not interested in cleanliness. She taught the women to sew and arranged for them to sell the clothes and quilts they produced and keep the profits. Such prison reforms were previously unheard of. When the House of Commons asked her to give evidence of conditions at Newgate,

²⁵ *No Cross, No Crown*, York, England: The Ebor Press, 1981, pp. 63-4.

Elizabeth Fry became the first English woman, other than the Queen, to advise the English Parliament.

Friends recognize that their lives speak. That makes their religion a way of life for them. With the assistance and support of their communities, Friends try to discern God's leadings and live accordingly. Friends do not measure success in visible achievements. Their measure for success is whether they have done their best to discern and follow God's direction in their lives. As a consequence, Friends tend to remain hopeful even if the results of their leadings do not appear to be "successful" by popular standards. The goal is to follow God's leadings.

A life of service is the natural result of the living out of Friends testimonies. In 1960, London Yearly Meeting wrote, "Service is not a department of life, something outside the main current of personal living. It is sometimes deliberate, but more often is involved unconsciously in the sheer quality of the soul displayed in ordinary occupations...These we shall not think of as tasks to be performed; they will be the natural outcome of our love of others."²⁶

As they have attempted to answer that of God in everyone, Friends have found that their common values unite them and find expression in their testimonies. Friends regret that they do not always succeed in living their testimonies; nonetheless, they continue to strive to do so. Friends recognize that, no matter what has happened, it is always important to try to do the next right thing. George Fox gave the following instruction, which is the basis of Friends testimonies: "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 earth, answering that of God in everyone."²⁷

²⁶ *Christian Faith and Practice in the Experience of the Society of Friends*, #594.

²⁷ *Journal of George Fox*, p. 263.

XIII. QUAKER PROCESS

By Marsha Holliday, Member Friends Meeting of Washington

Monthly Meetings are local congregations of Friends. Yearly Meetings are clusters of Monthly Meetings in a geographic area, which gather annually to attend to business that is not possible or practical for local meetings to accomplish alone. Monthly and Yearly Meetings are a blend of worship, business deliberations, religious education, spiritual nurture, and social concerns. Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business attend to the administrative and practical work of the congregation of that Meeting.

With no pastors or priests, all members of unprogrammed Friends meetings are collectively responsible for the work of their meetings. Decisions about the work of unprogrammed Friends are made at Monthly Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business. The work of the ministry is done between business meetings by committees and by committee members. Those committees report their work to the monthly meeting for business.

In Quaker meetings, there is no laity. Every member is a minister. In every decision in meeting for business, Friends are confident that there is a direction that approaches the Truth and that, if they are patient, they can find that way. In making decisions, Friends, as a group, search for God's guidance in finding that way. They seek unity in their decision-making because they have found that Truth with a capital "T" is of one nature. Truth is not divided. It has one Source.

In Quaker business meetings, unity does not have to mean unanimity, or agreement without dissent. Unity is often agreement *with* dissent, or staying together *through* differences. It requires moving forward with guidance from God's leadings and from the values that Friends hold in common. Unity occurs when collectively the members of the meeting feel they have been truthful in their discernment of God's will. This sometimes means that, out of respect for the unity of the whole, a Friend will "stand aside" and allow a decision to go forward with which he or she is not entirely comfortable but for which he or she has no moral misgivings. On the other hand, the community knows that it must listen carefully to heartfelt dissent, as God's leadings may come through anyone at any time, and that the more differing perspectives they consider, the more closely they may come to discerning the Truth.

To facilitate their business, the meeting selects a presiding clerk who oversees the business meeting and a recording clerk who records minutes of decisions that have been agreed upon by the meeting. At meetings for business, the responsibility of the clerk and recording clerk is to help identify "a sense of the meeting."

Finding the sense of the meeting is a religious and spiritual process in which Friends seek God's guidance in each particular situation. Sense of the meeting is different from consensus, which is a valuable secular process. Friends feel that, by working together, they are more likely to discover God's leadings for the right course of action, and that, when the right course becomes evident, it will unite them in a common

effort. Because Friends do not vote, they avoid creating fractious and embittered minorities.

Friends expect to work on issues, concerns, problems, and disagreements until unity is found. When Friends are unable to reach unity, there are several ways in which they may proceed. Friends first look to the elders of their meetings for advice. Elders are those Friends whose experience and insights give them perspective and authority in the business of the meeting. Often Friends create a small group or subcommittee to continue the discussion, investigate alternatives, and report back to business meeting. Friends urge dissenting individuals “to labor with us on this.” Having discerned the direction in which to precede, specific steps forward that may not have been previously known to them often become apparent. Friends refer to this phenomenon as “way opening.”

When way does not open, when there is no agreement, no obvious direction in which to proceed, Friends have the opportunity and responsibility to accept and cherish those with whom they disagree. In this situation, Friends wait for the way to open, for situations to change or circumstances to develop, enabling them to find the direction in which to proceed. When still unclear about how to proceed, Friends “lay over,” for consideration at a later time, all decisions that have not yet found unity among their members.

Quaker process may sound hopelessly slow and cumbersome, but it can be miraculous and sometimes even swift. John Woolman’s mission to end slave owning among Friends is an example. In the eighteenth century, when John addressed his meeting concerning the abolishment of Quaker ownership of slaves, his meeting first rejected his proposal to travel and visit with Quaker slave owners. He persisted in his request, and his meeting eventually supported him. Before he died and a hundred years before the “Proclamation of Emancipation” freed slaves, no Quaker in the American colonies owned slaves.

Leonard Kenworthy summed up the importance of Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, “The meeting for business is another of the unique contributions of Quakerism to the world. In fact, it may even be more unprecedented than the meeting for worship ... Nothing like it exists anywhere in Christendom or in any of the other world religions. It is uncommon, unusual, unparalleled, unique.”²⁸

²⁸ *Quakerism: A Study Guide on the Religious Society of Friends*, Quaker Publications, Box 726, Kennett Square, PA 19348, c1981 reprinted by Print Press, Dublin, IN 1982 and 1983, p. 81.

VIX. THE ROOTS AND BRANCHES OF MODERN QUAKERISM

By Marsha Holliday, Member Friends Meeting of Washington

Although Quakerism began in England and quickly spread to North America, Quakerism is geographically diverse today. Twentieth-century missionary work of American programmed and Orthodox Friends and some British Friends account for the relatively large numbers of Quakers in Africa and in Central and South America today. In addition, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting sent missionaries to Japan.

According to the Quaker Information Center, a service of Earlham School of Religion, in 2011 there were 377,055 Quakers in the world, which is about the capacity of seven major league baseball stadiums. 52% of the world population of Quakers is African, making African Quakers the largest group of Quakers in the world. At 20%, North America has the second largest population. Caribbean and Latin American Quakers make up 15%, European and Middle Eastern Quakers have 7%, and Asia-West Pacific is 6%. In 2012, there were 76,360 Quakers in the United States. In 2011, Friends World Committee for Consultation listed 49% of Quakers as programmed, 40% as evangelical, 11% as unprogrammed, and .003% as conservative. Although the Americas have been losing in population, we have been gaining in population world-wide.

This geographic diversity is compounded by theological differences and varied worship styles. In Africa, Central and South America, and in much of the American West and Middle West, most Friends meetings are programmed and their style of worship is more like a Protestant service—often with a hired pastor and prepared sermons, readings, prayers, hymns, and music, but usually without sacramental ceremonies such as baptism and communion. Most programmed and semi-programmed Quaker meetings include at least one period of silent or “open” worship, during which anyone may speak.

Friends in the unprogrammed tradition are in the minority among Quakers in the world. The largest numbers of unprogrammed Friends are in England, other European countries, and the United States.

The present differences in worship style among Friends are largely a result of historical circumstances in the United States of America. During the nineteenth century, many Friends, distraught over slavery, migrated from their unprogrammed meetings in the eastern and southern United States to the American west and midwest. Around that time, new types of Quakerism, such as programmed and semi-programmed worship, pastoral meetings, and Quaker churches emerged in the United States for reasons including the effect of the westward migration, the encounter with the Protestant frontier revival movement, and the Quaker Quietest movement.²⁹

²⁹ For more information on these new types of Quakerism and their history, see Thomas D. Hamm, *The Quakers in America*, NY: Columbia University Press, 2003; Jim Leshana, *Evangelical Friends History Cd-rom*, Friends Center (EDCSW), 2003; and A Film by Cleman Watts and Betsy Blake, *Can We All Be Friends? A Boundary-crossing Conversation*, Coleman Watts, 2004. Geoffrey Kaiser's drawing of the Quaker family tree is available for purchase from Friends General Conference and gives an idea of the complexities of the branches of Quakerism.

Differences in theology between programmed and unprogrammed Friends involve the emphasis placed on the authority of the scriptures and the role of Jesus Christ. Friends in programmed meetings tend to emphasize the authority of the scriptures, while Friends in unprogrammed meetings emphasize the authority of the Inward Light. Unprogrammed Friends tend to be more universalist—recognizing that of God in various revelations and religions. Despite these differences, both unprogrammed and programmed Friends trace their roots directly to the message of the early Friends, which was based in Christian scripture.

After generations of splits and divisions, Friends from all branches of Quakerism are now trying to better understand each other, to share their worship and insights, and to work together. In 1994, for example, Friends from different traditions got together and made up a list of 50 things that all Quakers have in common. Steve Davison³⁰ condensed the list to four items:

- “1) A belief that we are all called as individuals to a direct, personal, unmediated relationship with God: ‘Christ has come to teach his people himself,’ there is that of God in everyone.
- 2) The meeting as a community is also called to a direct, unmediated relationship with God. This is embodied in our meeting for worship with a concern for business conducted under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.
- 3) Continuing revelation.
- 4) We are called to live our faith in lives of witness and service; this includes the faith and practice of Quaker ministry and our historical witness testimonies.”³¹

Despite their diversity, Friends common values ensure that they can work, worship, and share together in community. When they do, their values become their testimonies, or witness, to the world. Friends testimonies on peace, equality, simplicity, integrity, truth, community, stewardship, and diversity have evolved over time and are the outward expressions of Friends attempts to turn their faith into action.

Friends try to pursue actions that reflect their values. Not only do Friends expect that they can live divinely inspired lives, they also expect that, with Divine power and guidance, they can attain and sustain social justice and peace on earth.

Although they do not always attain peace and justice or live in harmony with their values, they continue to strive to do so. As they do, their meetings for worship and business and their daily lives bear witness to our common values:

- life is sacred;
- God’s inward presence is experienced universally;
- revelation is continuous;

³⁰ From New Brunswick.

³¹ *Spark*, March 1995.

- simplicity, integrity, community, stewardship, and diversity are essential in the search for truth;
- seeking truth and unity are goals for worship and business;
- the way opens, making our values attainable.

All of these values grow out of the realization that there is that of God in everyone.

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