

We hope that this new chapter inspires Friends across the country to think deeply about the foundations of their faith.

Foundations of Our Faith

By Anne-Marie Zilliacus

For Friends, the wellspring of their faith is the search for what George Fox and early Friends described as the Inner Light, the Seed, the Truth, the Life, the Power, the Christ within – all leading to an inner awareness through which they embraced and experienced the sacred and were changed by it. Waiting in silence that brought forth vocal ministry, they discovered a power that challenged them to find their own truth. Friends have found inspiration in the Christian message, and in the role and significance of Jesus, but at the heart of this faith is an emphasis on the inward experiential testimony to a way of life that resists creeds or doctrines, and inspires Friends to act out their faith in their everyday life. As George Fox said:

We need no mass to teach us, for the spirit that gave forth the scripture teacheth us how to pray, sing, praise, rejoice, honour and worship God, and in what, and how to walk and to behave ourselves to God and man, and leadeth us into all truth, in which is our unity; and it is our comforter and guide and leader, and not men without who say they have not the spirit and power that the apostles had.” (Epistle 171, 1659)

For Quakers, the encounter with the Sacred is within, and the inspiration for that encounter may be found in the Bible, in the Christian faith, in testimonies of other Friends, through individual and corporate discernment, and through our relationship to other faith traditions. It is from sources such as these that we have built the foundations of our faith.



For the last year, the Faith and Practice Development Committee has been gathering extracts from Canadian Friends that illustrate the foundations of our faith, and now the second chapter of Canadian Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice is ready to be distributed to Friends for reflection and discussion.

At Ottawa Meeting, we are using the chapter on Foundations of Faith as the basis for a study session. It is quite simple: we read aloud four to six extracts at each session and take time to reflect on them, followed by worship sharing. In this way, we are giving ourselves an opportunity to become familiar with the chapter and hope that we will be prepared for the decision on preliminary approval at Yearly Meeting in August.

What does preliminary approval mean? It is approval in principle; that is, it means saying that you feel the chapter is “on the right track.” It does not mean that everyone approves of every extract; no one can be expected to like every passage in a book of Faith and Practice.

Many Meetings had study sessions on the first chapter, and submitted more extracts to the committee because of them. Don't forget that if you think an extract is missing from the collection, you are the one who should send that extract to the committee. By the same token, if you think an extract is inappropriate, please let the committee know. The committee was happy to receive all the new extracts, comments and suggestions.

The next meeting of the Faith and Practice Development Committee will be in May, at which time we will finalise the chapter for preliminary approval at Canadian Yearly Meeting in August. And we hope that this new chapter inspires Friends across the country to think deeply about the foundations of their faith. □

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