

# PREFACE

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*Organization and Procedure* and *Christian Faith and Practice* together comprise the *Book of Christian Discipline of Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends*. This book of discipline is one of many similar books published by the various Yearly Meetings since the earliest days when it was found that some regular arrangement was required for the preservation of good order. The present text derives from many sources but particularly from the respective disciplines of Canada Yearly Meeting (Five Years Meeting—now Friends United Meeting), Canada Yearly Meeting (Conservative) and Genesee Yearly Meeting (Friends General Conference) which united in 1955 to form Canadian Yearly Meeting.

The first chapter of this volume outlines the history and development of the Religious Society of Friends and Canadian Yearly Meeting. Chapters 2 to 12 on Organization and Procedure provide a practical foundation by describing procedures for the guidance of Canadian Friends in the conduct of their business. It is hoped that this book of discipline will serve as a practical and useful guide for individuals, committees and clerks of constituent meetings of Canadian Yearly Meeting and will encourage a continuity of practice among Friends across the country. Our discipline includes *Advices and Queries* (Britain Yearly Meeting 1995) which is reprinted in Appendix A. A second appendix gives a selected Quaker bibliography.

The sections on Organization and Procedure reflect the

movement in the life and spirit of Friends in Canadian Yearly Meeting and therefore are subject to change. Monthly Meetings and Yearly Meeting Standing Committees are encouraged to consider possible alterations or additions to these sections when a change in practice is needed. Proposed revisions must be presented in writing to the Yearly Meeting for the process of final revision and approval (see Section 6.13).

The text of *Organization and Procedure* of Canadian Yearly Meeting is available on the Internet at

<http://www.quaker.ca/Publications/discipline>

It is possible to download and print out a copy in a larger print size if desired.

A postscript to a letter from a meeting of elders at Balby, near Doncaster, 1656 gives the earliest advice on Christian practice issued by any general body of Friends. It continues to be relevant to our belief that above all it is God's light that we seek.

“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 may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.”

# CHAPTER 1

## HISTORICAL OUTLINE

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### 1.1 Early history of Friends

The middle of the seventeenth century in England was a period of religious questioning and social upheaval. Like many other restless seekers, George Fox (1624-1691), the founder of the Society of Friends, became dissatisfied with the ceremonials, creeds and practices of the existing churches. After growing up in a devout family, Fox left home at nineteen and wandered for several years, questioning his Bible, ministers, and anyone who would listen, but remained unsatisfied. Finally, as he later recorded in his Journal:

“when all my hopes in ... all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, Oh then, I heard a voice which said, ‘there is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition’, and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy.”

The faith of John’s gospel he “knew experimentally”—that “the true light which enlightens every man was coming into the world”—even in his day.

To him this was a new revelation. Yet his finding re-emphasized Luther’s priesthood of all believers, and drew unconsciously from the accumulated experience of saints and mystics. Although the Puritans also re-emphasized the power

of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people, Fox believed that his contemporaries were unwilling to trust the Seed, which was another name he used for the indwelling light. He knew from experience, confirmed by intensive study of his Bible, that this Light or Spirit is the source of unity, joining the good in each of us to our neighbour's good, and also identifying the evil revealed by hypocrisy.

In supreme confidence, simplicity, and strength of youth, George Fox began in 1647 to "proclaim the day of the Lord" in the Midland counties near his Leicestershire home. He attracted a group of men and women who, once convinced that "Christ has come to teach his people himself" joined the joyous work as Publishers of Truth or as Friends of the Truth, Children of the Light, or simply Friends. Perhaps they remembered John 15:12-17, where Jesus called his followers friends. The unconvinced, however, derisively called them Quakers, perhaps because they professed to tremble before the Lord or because of the actual physical effect of the overpowering intensity of their message. To find the Light they listened in silence for the voice of the Spirit. The silence continued in meetings for worship until, prompted by the Light Within, a worshipper might rise and speak in the meeting.

After five years Fox went to Northwestern England where he found whole congregations already meeting in silence without appointed ministers. He won over the household of Judge Fell. There the sympathetic and influential judge, although remaining apart from the movement, protected the Quakers from the prevailing hostility against Dissenters, and Swarthmore Hall became the centre of the movement. Margaret Fell, who later married George Fox, organized relief funds for persecuted Friends and bound them together through the encouragement of letters. The Society of Friends was born in 1652, although

membership was not fixed for some eighty years, and no Quaker has been found to have used the name “Society of Friends” in print prior to 1793.

Their numbers had increased past 40,000 by 1660, and many needs arose that required action by Friends as a community. While breadwinners were off on missions, families had to be provided for. Likewise, sustenance had to be supplied when property was seized through legal exactions or for non-payment of tithes. Friends’ marriages without the office of a priest, which was against statute but in accordance with common law, had to be arranged.

In 1653 William Dewsbury advised Friends to hold “a general meeting... once in two or three weeks, as the Lord makes way, to see that order be kept.” This was what later became the Monthly Meeting. The 1656 advice of a meeting of elders at Balby, with which our discipline still begins (see *Preface*), asserted the pre-eminence of “a measure of the light”, which should guide all business transactions.

During the last years of Cromwell’s rule, Friends emerged from sparsely populated northern England. They focused on London and other major cities in southern England, but also took their message into Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Quakers travelled abroad on missionary journeys, one such Friend being Mary Fisher, a maidservant, who addressed her ministry to the Sultan of Turkey and his court. Their first gathered following in America was in 1655 among the Puritans of Barbados.

George Fox was the informal, acknowledged leader of the movement at this stage, but the behaviour of James Nayler brought him to realise that personal guidance is not enough. The eloquent sad saintly Nayler (1616-1660) was left in charge of the London mission in 1655. He became the

focus for a potential schism and came near to discrediting the movement when he allowed himself “as a sign” to be led into Bristol by a following of enthusiasts in the manner of Christ entering Jerusalem. For this he was tortured and imprisoned as a blasphemer under the authority of a special act of Parliament. Nayler later freely acknowledged his error and became reconciled to Fox and to the movement. His last words beginning “There is a spirit which I feel that delights to do no evil...” (see Extract 25 of *Christian Faith and Practice*) continue to be cherished and are deeply meaningful to Friends.

The fate of Nayler taught Friends the importance of group discipline as a guard against those they called Ranters. The London Morning Meeting and the Meeting for Sufferings dealt with the problems of meetings for worship or caring for Quakers in courts and prisons. From these, and similar gatherings in the north, emerged a constellation of monthly, quarterly and yearly meetings. London became the centre but there was no formal bond between yearly meetings for over two centuries.

Friends spoke both with their words and with their lives. To a degree unusual for their times they practised equality of the sexes, equality of status, equality of ages; simplicity of clothing, speech and way of life; peace, in withdrawing from the army and in settling disputes among themselves. Suspected by the Stuarts as subversives, they published their first peace testimony in 1660, at the Restoration. These testimonies, inherited chiefly from the Anabaptist wing of Protestantism, they defended by quoting from the Bible. For this behaviour large numbers were jailed, whipped, branded, fined and deported. Penalties were uneven according to the temper of the judges and the locality, and more severe after the Church of England was re-established under Charles II.

## 1.2 Friends in North America

The sharpest conflict in these years occurred in Massachusetts Bay. Here laws were enacted by the Puritan legislature stating that “every person of the cursed sect of Quakers” should be banished with the threat of hanging if they returned. Yet in obeying what they thought to be a Divine requirement, William Robinson and Marmaduke Stevenson did return in 1659 and paid that penalty; as did Mary Dyer in 1660 and William Leddra in 1661. “If God calls us”, said Catherine Scott of Providence, “woe to us if we come not.” Finally, a Quaker brought orders from Charles II to stop the hanging of Quakers. Twenty-eight Friends were in prison when the release came. England was inching toward toleration and becoming less and less sure of the effectiveness or value of enforcing conformity; and Quaker steadfastness under persecution helped in persuading officials to permit dissenting practices.

In America, the first general or Yearly Meeting gathered in 1661 in relatively tolerant Rhode Island. It is apparently the oldest continuous Yearly Meeting of Friends. More new meetings started after George Fox and a dozen English Friends visited in 1671-1672. They spent nearly five months strengthening meetings in Barbados and Jamaica, landed in Maryland and passed through the wilderness to Friends in East Jersey, Long Island and Newport. In 1682 William Penn established a colony in Pennsylvania as a “holy experiment”. One of his first acts was to meet with the Leni Lenape First Nation at Shackamaxon where a famous treaty of peace and friendship was signed. Because of their mutual respect, Quakers and Aborigines lived in peace in Pennsylvania for over 70 years. Colonial Rhode Island Friends, with William Penn and the Quaker leaders in the Jerseys and Pennsylvania, represent the best of political

Quakerism. They were willing to hold power in order to move the state nearer to the Truth. Penn advised: “Keep the helm through the storm if you would steer the ship toward the harbour.”

During the eighteenth century, Friends were only one of many religious communities that settled in America. Following Friends’ testimonies such as simplicity, refusal to take oaths, and the peace testimony became difficult while mixing with the “world’s people” and the “world’s governments”. To counteract this, Friends partially withdrew from participation in government, some Quaker magistrates resigned rather than administer oaths, and Pennsylvania Friends resigned from government in 1756 rather than administer tax money for use in the French and Indian War.

Contact with Aboriginal peoples and African peoples held in slavery in America led to the development of the first new testimonies based on the principle of equality. Progress was uneven and slow until the 1750’s, when John Woolman began his mission to Aboriginal peoples and more especially to Quaker slaveholders and slave traders. With Anthony Benezet and others he aroused Friends’ conscience until slavery and the slave trade were abolished in the Society in 1787. These concerns have continued, although broadening awareness of new implications has been painfully slow.

Education has been important to Friends. The William Penn Charter School was established in 1689, followed by other Friends schools in the next hundred years in Rhode Island, New York and Pennsylvania. Surrounded by different Protestant and Catholic sects, Friends tried to maintain their identity by laying down strict rules for their members, discouraging fashionable dress, rejecting activities in arts and music, and forbidding Quakers to “marry out”.

Unlike the seventeenth century when there were energetic activities to convince the wider population of Friends' beliefs, in the eighteenth century Friends were content to leave the rest of the world alone, to be separate.

### **1.3 Separation and expansion**

By the opening of the nineteenth century, two divergent tendencies became apparent among American Friends. Both had roots in early Quaker thought but had subsisted together without seriously disturbing the unity of the Society. One, eventually identified with the followers of Elias Hicks (1747-1830), was associated with ideas of political democracy and stressed the Inward Light as the basis of salvation rather than the atonement made by Christ on the cross. Accordingly, when Hicksites referred to Christ as their saviour, they meant the Christ within rather than the Christ of history. The other was a renewed interest in Evangelical Christianity, which centres upon the meaning and influence of events in Christian history and rests heavily on Biblical authority as understood by leading ministers. Both reformist and evangelical trends reflected influences dominant in contemporary Protestant thought. Fortunately in England these tendencies produced only the small Beaconite separation. The tension between the two American Quaker groups, however, grew steadily more severe until in 1827 a separation took place in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Similar separations followed in some of the American meetings, all the groups continuing to claim the title of Religious Society of Friends.

During the first half of the nineteenth century there was a westward and northward movement of Quakers from the east coast to the Old North West, Ontario, Iowa, Kansas, Oregon and California. Arthur Garratt Dorland, the historian of the

Religious Society of Friends in Canada, has written: “The migration of Friends to Upper Canada was simply the fringe of this great westward movement of which those who came to this Province constituted the merest fragment.” The establishment of Quaker settlements in Canada was by pioneering emigrants from America but not, as is often assumed, by loyalists in the sense of United Empire Loyalists. The latter were active in their support and allegiance to the King’s party while the former, as was indicated above, must necessarily have been neutral as they remained accredited members of their parent Meetings. While earlier attempts at settlement had been made in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and at Farnham in Quebec, these were not lasting. However permanent communities were realised at Adolphustown on the Bay of Quinte and in the Niagara District and before the close of the eighteenth century the first Monthly Meetings of the Society of Friends in Canada were organized in Adolphustown and Pelham.

These first settlements of Canadian Quakers continued in attachment to the parent New York and Philadelphia Yearly Meetings from whence they had come and, consequently, the separations which affected the Society in America produced similar results among the meetings in Canada, culminating in the great Schism of 1828. One group of Hicksite Friends was first organized as Genesee Yearly Meeting in 1834. It later became affiliated with Friends General Conference, the latter having headquarters in Philadelphia. A second group called Orthodox Friends of Canada Yearly Meeting claimed, as their name implied, to be the continuing body of Friends after the separation of 1828. It was first organized as an independent Yearly Meeting in 1867 by authority of New York Yearly Meeting, of which it was originally a part. It later became affiliated with the Five Years Meeting of Friends (now Friends United Meeting) which has

headquarters in Richmond, Indiana. The third group, called the Conservative Friends of Canada Yearly Meeting was organized in 1885 following the so-called Wilburite Separation.<sup>1</sup> This group was associated with similar Conservative Meetings in the United States, of which the principal centre was in Ohio, but was supported by and recognised by a majority of Philadelphia Friends. Terms referring to the three Yearly Meetings in Canada can be confusing but those used hereafter, and which were used consistently through Yearly Meeting minutes prior to union are: Canada Yearly Meeting (Five Years Meeting), Canada Yearly Meeting (Conservative) and Genesee Yearly Meeting (General Conference).

## 1.4 Peace Testimony

Friends' adherence to the Peace Testimony has always been challenged by the presence of conflict, such as the civil wars in England in the seventeenth century and, in the United States in the nineteenth century, the conflict between colonists and Aboriginal peoples during the Pequod Wars, King Philip's War, the French and Indian War, the American Revolution and the War of 1812.

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<sup>1</sup> *John Wilbur (1774-1856), Rhode Island, and Joseph John Gurney (1788-1847) of Norwich, England, were not responsible for the separations, although they began the dialogue between the two groups. The Wilburites put their main emphasis on the leading of the spirit and were accused by Gurney of Mysticism. The Gurneyites emphasized as all-important the Bible and Bible teaching and written statements of doctrine. From the Gurneyite position developed Protestant forms of worship, including pastors and programmed Meetings. Nevertheless, these were two high-minded and devoted Friends separated more by temperament than theology.*

In Pennsylvania, the enlightened policies of William Penn towards the Aboriginal peoples took away occasion for most conflict, and peace was maintained for over 70 years. When the majority of inhabitants demanded protection against threats from the French and their native allies, Quakers held to their testimony, giving up their political power rather than engage in war. In Rhode Island, the Quaker governors took a different course. They had no scruples about arming their colony against the Dutch or raising militia and appointing officers to defend the colony. During the American Revolution, most Friends did not take up arms, but some did participate in the Continental Army. Among these was Nathaniel Greene of Rhode Island who became one of Washington's most effective generals. Greene and others who fought faced disownment by their meetings. In the American Civil War, many Friends were torn between the desire to end slavery and the wish to hold firm to the Peace Testimony. While most refused service, many Quakers did join the Union Army. Among the Hicksites, many of these soldier-Friends were welcomed back into their meetings after the war, being understood to have followed their consciences.

In the two World Wars larger numbers of Friends have accepted military service, but the Meetings have consistently upheld the traditional testimony of clearness from war preparation and participation. As war has become more comprehensive in its impact on citizens, individual testimonies have included tax refusal, non-registration, alternative civilian service and non-combatant military service.

Howard Brinton has written that, "Relief work undertaken to repair damages caused by war or conflict is a natural corollary of the peace principle." His book *Friends for 300 Years* describes how relief work outside the Society

seems to have first occurred during the Irish War in 1690 when Quakers supplied prisoners of war with food and clothing. In 1755 the Acadians, banished from Canada, were aided by Friends of Philadelphia and, during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the red and black Quaker Star was first used as a distinguishing mark. Today this Quaker Star designates Quaker service of all kinds all over the world. In 1914 the substitution of relief work for military service began in England with the Emergency Committee for the Assistance of Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, and Turks in Distress, the War Victims Relief Committee, and the Friends Ambulance Unit which took care of men wounded in battle. This Unit was too closely tied to the war effort to receive the official endorsement of the Society of Friends but most of its members were Friends. These organizations were joined by the Friends Service Council, now incorporated into the Quaker Peace and Social Witness department of London Yearly Meeting. Soon after the United States entered the war in 1917, the American Friends Service Committee was formed to assist conscientious objectors and send relief workers abroad. In 1931, the three Yearly Meetings in Canada decided to appoint representatives to a united Canadian Friends Service Committee (see Section 1.8). A chain of emergencies has perpetuated some of these institutions until they have become principal agencies uniting all Friends in world-wide work among those suffering in the wake of war. Gradually, however, purely relief functions have been subordinated to the goal of reconciliation.

## **1.5 Steps toward unity and formation of Canadian Yearly Meeting**

Rufus M. Jones (1863-1948) threw the whole weight of his winning personality into the reconciliation movement within twentieth century society. He interpreted modern

trends in Christian thought through his inspirational and philosophical writings, and his research on the history of Quakerism connected the Society with its mystical background. Through diplomacy and dedication he was instrumental in the organization of the Five Years Meeting (now Friends United Meeting), the Young Friends movement, and the series of World Conferences held since 1920. Canadian Yearly Meeting continues to participate in these organizations as well as in Friends General Conference and in Friends World Committee for Consultation. These broad organizations do not draw every variety of Quaker, but they have extended the bonds of unity.

Another result of the conciliatory trend of the twentieth century has been the reunion of branches in the same areas. This movement reached formal completion in New England in 1945, just a century after the separation of the Gurneyites and the Wilburites. New York and Philadelphia re-united soon after and the two Baltimore Yearly Meetings re-united in 1967. In Canada, too, the desire for re-union had been taken to heart by some Canadian Friends prior to 1921 and it grew concurrently with the movement in America. For a number of years prior to 1928, fraternal delegates had been appointed to attend Yearly Meetings of the three branches of the Society of Friends in Canada. In this connection, fully a decade before this date, little delegations of Elders from Genesee Yearly Meeting were making exploratory visits to those groups from which they had been cut off. There were some return visits and a real step forward came when Fred Ryon, pastor of Pelham Brick Church Meeting, and his congregation, invited Genesee Yearly Meeting to hold its sessions in their Meetinghouse in 1921. Business sessions were open to both memberships and Meetings for Worship were shared.

The desire for unity was also stimulated in 1928 when

Genesee Yearly Meeting (General Conference) and Canada Yearly Meeting (Five Years Meeting) held their annual meeting in joint and concurrent sessions to coincide with a similar joint meeting held at the same time by the two parent branches of the New York Meetings on the one hundredth anniversary of the Great Separation of 1828. Meanwhile other straws in the current gave clear indication of the direction in which Canadian Friends were going. In 1933 a number of Conservative Young Friends attended Camp NeeKauNis for the first time. From that time on Young Friends began to take an increasingly important part in the movement towards union. Young Friends, having worshipped, worked and played together at Camp NeeKauNis over the years, were not aware of any significant differences which should keep them apart. While the Second World War was grinding slowly toward its final phase, an important step was taken toward an organic union of Canadian Friends when, in 1944, the Canada Yearly Meeting (Conservative) decided to join the other two Yearly Meetings at Pickering College in joint and concurrent sessions. A Committee on Closer Affiliation appointed to consider the question reported in 1954 that, since “unity has been a growing power over the years of our meeting together, we now accept the desire of Friends for a United Yearly Meeting in Canada....We are now prepared to proceed with ways and means whereby this may be accomplished.” When the minute recording this decision was accepted, the Committee was further charged “to bring recommendations the following year for a basis on which to proceed as one Yearly Meeting.”

Though the decision in favour of organic union had seemed unanimous in 1954, when the Committee brought in its report the following year it met with the first openly expressed objection, principally on the ground that there could be no organic union except on some common doctrinal

basis. However, the overwhelming body of opinion favoured implementing the decision of the previous year for a unified organization. The recommendations of the Joint Committee on Closer Affiliation were accordingly accepted, and *The Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religions Society of Friends* was adopted as the name for the united Yearly Meeting. Pelham Quarterly Meeting comprising two rural Meetings in which the Evangelical-Revivalist tradition of the 1890's was still strong, decided for the time being to stand aside from the united Yearly Meeting.

A fitting climax to the consummation of union in June 1955 was the Meeting for Worship held on First Day morning in the Conservative Friends' Meetinghouse on Yonge Street near the town of Newmarket. (From Arthur G. Dorland, *Recent Developments in Canadian Quakerism*).

Growth of affection and familiarity among members working on common projects makes it hard to recall today the nineteenth century divisions. The accepted variety of outlook in the Canadian Yearly Meeting is the outward embodiment of inner unity. As Friends draw closer to each other they are drawn closer to God.

## **1.6 Development and growth of Canadian Yearly Meeting**

In 1955, Friends in Canada took the momentous step of becoming a unified Canadian Yearly Meeting born out of the desire to start life together as one family of Friends. They had lived in the tradition of the separations which took place in North American Quakerism from 1826 to 1881. By 1955, these divisions had been in place for 129 years, for many generations. Work together on a unified Yearly Meeting Discipline (*Organization and Procedure*) was a starting

point for Canadian Friends as they began life as one spiritual family. (The introduction of revised disciplines from parent Yearly Meetings had been a cause of disunity in the past.) However, at the time of union, Friends recorded that finding a common expression of their Quaker faith was still unresolved, and that seeking this expression of faith would be the underlying longing and searching of Friends as they worshipped, witnessed and worked together in the growing fellowship of the Yearly Meeting.

The administration set up for the unified Yearly Meeting shortly after 1955 gave the new forward-looking spirit a practical foundation for the work of the expanding Yearly Meeting. The devotion and service contributed by members who came from the three Yearly Meetings which united was strengthened and encouraged by the fresh experience and conviction brought by post-war immigrant Friends and new members. In spite of great geographical distances, Friends from the three traditions came to appreciate one another as members of the Religious Society of Friends as they worked together in meetings and committees. This helped Friends to become a nation-wide Quaker community.

Individual membership in Canadian Yearly Meeting has increased slowly from about 600 at the time of union, to roughly twice this number in 2002, including Friends who are inactive or non-resident. Originally, in 1955, three quarters of the members were from Monthly Meetings in Ontario: Lobo, Pelham, Pelham Executive, Toronto, Wooler, West Lake, West Lake Executive, Kingston, Newmarket, Rockwood, Yonge Street, Yonge Street Executive and Norwich. The remainder were from Meetings in Argenta, Vancouver, Victoria, Halcyonia in Saskatchewan, and Montreal, and from smaller Worship Groups in Calgary, Edmonton, Kootenay, Winnipeg, Ottawa, and Halifax.

In 1955 rural Meetings, principally in Ontario and made up of longstanding Quaker families, had been declining and some closed as Canadian Yearly Meeting was being formed. At the same time new Meetings and Worship Groups developed, mostly near large urban centres. These attracted seekers who would increasingly make up the majority of members of Canadian Yearly Meeting as Friends by conviction. Over the years, Meetings in Ottawa, Hamilton, Calgary, Halifax, Prairie, Kitchener Area, Thousand Islands, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vernon, Simcoe-Muskoka, New Brunswick and Wolfville, together with numerous Worship Groups under their care, added to the membership of Canadian Yearly Meeting. The most recently established Meeting (2001) is Peninsula Monthly Meeting on Vancouver Island.

In 2002, a little over half the members of Canadian Yearly Meeting are from Ontario, a quarter are from British Columbia, and about a tenth are from the Maritime provinces, with smaller numbers from Alberta, the Prairies and Montreal. There are also about 20 “isolated” Friends under the care of Home Mission and Advancement Committee. About one third of active members serve on Yearly Meeting committees, and approximately 30 requests for new memberships are made each year. Worship in all Meetings which form Canadian Yearly Meeting is unprogrammed and based on silent expectant waiting on God.

Until 1970 the annual sessions of Canadian Yearly Meeting were held in Ontario, usually at Pickering College, Newmarket, a school founded by Quakers in the middle of the nineteenth century. Since 1970 Yearly Meeting has rotated between facilities in the Maritimes, Central Canada and the West. This has made it easier for Friends from all parts of Canada to be engaged in the life of Yearly Meeting.

The Sunderland P. Gardner Lecture continues as a focal point at the annual sessions of Canadian Yearly Meeting. It was originally founded by Genesee Yearly Meeting in memory of Sunderland P. Gardner (1802 - 1893) who was a recorded minister and a preacher in the prophetic tradition of the Society of Friends. In these lectures, speakers have helped Friends to gain deeper insight into the faith which inspires the life, witness and service of individual Friends and of the Society of Friends.

Distance has always been a challenge for Friends in Canada. When Victoria Monthly Meeting was first formally established in 1908 it was under the care of Yonge Street Quarterly Meeting 4000 kms away. The first British Columbia Quarterly Meeting (in 1912) was formed by the Meetings in Victoria, Vancouver and Calgary. Today Victoria Monthly Meeting has under its care Worship Groups spread widely across Vancouver Island. Western Half Yearly Meeting includes Friends in half of Canada: from Manitoba to British Columbia.

On the east coast, there were some early Quaker communities in the eighteenth century, but these did not last. The first Monthly Meeting was established in Halifax in 1964. As this Meeting grew and included members from other Maritime provinces, it split off two other Monthly Meetings: New Brunswick in 1980 and Wolfville in 1986. New Brunswick Monthly Meeting consists of five widely-scattered Worship Groups, meeting separately but with a common Monthly Meeting for Worship for Business. Friends from Halifax, Wolfville and New Brunswick Meetings meet annually at Atlantic Friends Gathering, and join with New England Friends in Gatherings held alternately in Maine and the Maritimes.

Concerns were raised in the late 1980s about aspects of

the structure and operation of Canadian Yearly Meeting. One perceived problem was a sense of a lack of community: some Friends in the east and west felt alienated from the concentration of Friends in Ontario, and other individual Friends felt isolated from their Yearly Meeting. A second problem was a concern that human and financial resources were strained. After several years of looking at ways to revitalize and restructure itself, Yearly Meeting established a working group to examine the organization of Yearly Meeting, the regionalization of meetings, and the role of Representative Meeting. The working group made its report in 1998. Although Yearly Meeting found that it could not accept all of the proposed changes, it did adopt some of the recommendations. The position of General Secretary which had been established early in the history of the united Canadian Yearly Meeting has not been filled since 1998, and the central office support is supervised by a Yearly Meeting Office Review Committee. At the same time more responsibilities have devolved onto committee clerks and Clerks of Yearly Meeting. Home Mission and Advancement Committee appointed a Field Secretary in 1999 for a 3-year pilot project to visit Meetings and to support their spiritual nature in a practical way, but this project has not been extended.

As noted earlier, Young Friends played an important role in the decades before 1955 in helping to bring together Friends from the three Yearly Meetings which united to form Canadian Yearly Meeting. Canadian Young Friends Yearly Meeting continues to enrich Yearly Meeting. Young Friends engage in the life of Yearly Meeting in many ways: through retreats, as representatives to committees (in particular, Home Mission and Advancement Committee and Canadian Friends Service Committee), by work on special projects (most recently on guidelines on Sexual Abuse and Harassment), and by challenging the complacency of older

Friends. Individual young Friends have taken part in the Quaker Youth Pilgrimages organized by Friends World Committee for Consultation, and they have represented Canadian Friends at international Quaker meetings. For six weeks in the summer of 1994 a caravan of Young Friends of North America including three Canadian young Friends travelled to meetings in Canada and the United States to present a programme facilitating discussion of gender issues. Canadian Young Friends issue a news-sheet *Sporadical* on an irregular basis.

## **1.7 Witness and service**

As Canadian Friends have worshipped together in their local Meetings, they have given expression to their many and varied concerns. Argenta Meeting established a small Quaker high school in 1959 which reported to Yearly Meeting until the school closed in 1982. Argenta Friends Press, which prints *The Canadian Friend* and the *Canadian Quaker Pamphlets*, was established in 1960 (it came under the care of Argenta Monthly Meeting in 1975). Ottawa Meeting has taken responsibility for the Quaker Book Service since 1979, reporting to Home Mission and Advancement Committee, providing an annual catalogue and making Quaker literature more easily available to Canadian Friends. Friends in Victoria Monthly Meeting in the 1970's witnessed against the establishment of the Trident nuclear submarine base in Bangor, Washington, and in 1978 established the Peace Tax proposal (individuals paid the part of their Federal taxes which would have been spent on military purposes into a "Peace Tax Fund"). Halifax Monthly Meeting worked with U.S. draft resisters and conscientious objectors during the war in Vietnam and has supported pioneering work on alternatives to nuclear energy. New Brunswick Monthly Meeting has supported work in prisons

and First Nations concerns for Aboriginal rights. Toronto Monthly Meeting's Refugee Committee has continued to support a large number of refugees. In 1946 Toronto Monthly Meeting purchased Friends House which, as well as serving activities of the local meeting, provides an office for Canadian Friends Service Committee, facilities for Canadian Yearly Meeting committee meetings, and overnight accommodation for visiting Friends. The Canadian Yearly Meeting office was based in Friends House until it moved to Ottawa in 1989. Individual Friends, following the leadings of the Spirit, have made witness and have initiated concerns which Yearly Meeting has discussed or taken action upon. Members of Yonge Street Half-Yearly Meeting developed the FoxFell Friends' Residential Community which was opened in Orillia in 2001.

In 1931 Toronto Monthly Meeting established Camp NeeKauNis on a large wooded property on Georgian Bay as a summer camp for inner city children. Shortly thereafter, Canadian Friends Service Committee took over the camp until 1959 when it became the responsibility of the Camp NeeKauNis Committee of Yearly Meeting. Each year Camp NeeKauNis offers lively and interesting camps: work camps, children's camps, community and family camps, a seniors camp, young Friends gatherings and special seminars. It plays an important role in the life of many Canadian Friends.

Home Mission and Advancement Committee has provided opportunities for travelling Friends to visit Meetings and Worship Groups across Canada. It has responsibility for the Quaker Book Service, and for publication of the periodical *The Canadian Friend* and the *Canadian Quaker Pamphlets*. It also provides information to inquirers seeking to learn more about our faith, and oversees isolated Friends who live too far from a Meeting to be able to participate regularly in local Quaker affairs. In 2001

Home Mission and Advancement Committee set up a subcommittee to explore ways in which Yearly Meeting might benefit from further use of electronic communication. With so few Friends in such a large country this mode of communication can be effective and efficient; but we are mindful that some Friends do not use computers and need to be informed in traditional ways.

In 1984 Religious Education Committee was set apart from Home Mission and Advancement Committee as a separate Yearly Meeting committee. Its purpose is to facilitate and encourage religious education for all ages in Meetings across Canadian Yearly Meeting and at Yearly Meeting sessions. Increasing interest in Bible study has led to a regular series of Bible studies at Yearly Meeting. The Committee has a lending library of curricula and books available to all Friends.

Canadian Friends Foreign Missionary Board which was founded by women Friends in 1884 continues as a standing Committee of Canadian Yearly Meeting. It disburses funds, mainly from trust funds established by Friends prior to 1955.

Canadian Friends Historical Association was founded in 1972. It is not a committee of Canadian Yearly Meeting, but is supported by many Friends who have a concern that the Quaker heritage in Canada should not be lost. The Association encourages research, study, recording and writing of Quaker history in Canada since the time when Quakers first settled in Canada in the late eighteenth century. It facilitates the collection and preservation of Quaker records in the Yearly Meeting Archives in Pickering College, Newmarket (see Section 6.22). The Association publishes a regular newsletter, *Canadian Quaker History Journal*, and supports the Arthur Garratt Dorland Friends' Historical Collection, a reference library also located at Pickering

College. Since 1984 Canadian Yearly Meeting has appointed a volunteer Archivist to work with these collections.

During the nearly 50 years since unification, work has continued on revisions to *Organization and Procedure*, reflecting our changing processes. The Discipline (Church government) of Canadian Yearly Meeting consists of *Organization and Procedure, Advices and Queries* (see Appendix A) and the volume *Christian Faith and Practice in the Experience of the Society of Friends* of London Yearly Meeting. In 2000, realizing the wealth of individual and collective experience in the short history of Canadian Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting appointed a Faith and Practice Development Committee to co-ordinate development of its own *Faith and Practice*. This work is underway.

Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel of Canadian Yearly Meeting is charged with spiritual nurture of meetings and pastoral care of members. It has also tackled contemporary ethical problems with which Meetings and individuals are faced. In recent years, Continuing Meeting has helped guide Yearly Meeting in its deliberations on appointment of ministers and chaplains, has revisited the topic of marriage (in particular, the still unresolved question of same sex unions), and recently has put a great deal of energy into development of guidelines addressing the issues of sexual harassment and protection of children. An ad hoc Committee Addressing Issues of Child Abuse presented a draft document "Saving Children from Harm" to Yearly Meeting in 1998. For many years Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel has organized a pre-Yearly Meeting retreat in response to a desire among Friends to continue their search for deeper meaning.

## **1.8 Canadian Friends Service Committee**

Canadian Friends Service Committee is a standing committee of Canadian Yearly Meeting. The Service Committee was established in 1931 before union and represented service work of Friends in Canada across the divisions. In 1955, it became the peace and social justice committee of the new Canadian Yearly Meeting, incorporating projects already in existence. The strength and experience which came from participation in Friends' wartime and post-war relief and witness brought fresh impetus to the work of the Committee. Younger Friends and newcomers who had done Quaker service abroad as conscientious objectors in relief, reconstruction and ambulance work, along with Friends from other Yearly Meetings, participated in the work with concern and enthusiasm.

For more than 70 years, the concerns, witness and projects of the Service Committee, along with their inherent challenges, have enriched the life of Yearly Meeting. Because Quakers recognize that a concern is "that leading of the Holy Spirit which may not be denied", they have supported service projects, peace witness and education. The projects supported are not solely philanthropic or humanitarian, but work which expresses a religiously-based approach to the life of our times.

In the decade beginning in 1963, the Service Committee operated a Friends Peace Education Centre on Grindstone Island, south of Ottawa, providing imaginative peace and reconciliation programmes for Canadian Friends and many others concerned about working for peace. Programmes included training in non-violence, French-English dialogue, conferences for diplomats and Quaker-UNESCO seminars organized by the Canadian Peace Research Institute. During

the Vietnam war many war and draft resisters came to Canada from the United States. Some of these participated in Grindstone Island programmes; some were assisted by Quaker Meetings, individual Friends and families; and some settled in Canada and became Friends.

At this time, the Service Committee sent medical aid to Vietnam to be used by victims on all sides of the conflict in accordance with Friends' tradition of relief work which cuts across the boundaries of war and conflict. Many American Friends knowingly contravened U.S. law by contributing to this work through Canadian Friends. For some the programme was controversial, but for many it was a labour of love in war-time. It provided considerable aid to the sufferers and served as a witness against war.

During the 1950's and 1960's, two families of Canadian Friends served at the Friends Rural Centre, Rasulia, India. This project, supported by Canadian Friends Service Committee and Friends Service Council (now Quaker Peace and Social Witness) in London, was important for the growing sense of family among Friends in Canada. By the 1970's the development work that Canadian Friends had done personally in Rasulia changed to financial support for a larger number of small projects in collaboration with other development agencies, later including the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Through its International Committee, Service Committee now supports small but imaginative projects in keeping with Friends' testimonies and values in Asia, Latin America and Africa. A recent project supports local Quaker agencies in Africa working on post-conflict peacebuilding and alternatives to violence.

Friends have traditionally had a concern for the rights of Aboriginal peoples. In 1974 individual Friends at Yearly

Meeting were led to go to Kenora in Northern Ontario to attempt reconciliation in a confrontation over mercury contamination of the waterways. Shortly afterwards, a Friend who was a physician went there to treat Aboriginal people suffering from mercury poisoning and to document the problem. The Quaker Committee on Native Concerns (now Quaker Aboriginal Affairs Committee) was born out of this work and other concerns, especially amongst Friends in western Canada. Since then the Committee has supported Aboriginal community building initiatives, and urged governments to live up to their legal commitments to Aboriginal communities including Esgeenoopetitj (Burnt Church) in New Brunswick, Pimicikamac Cree Nation in northern Manitoba and the Lubicon in northern Alberta. Much of the work of this Committee has been done in collaboration with the Aboriginal Rights Coalition which is now part of KAIROS (see Section 1.9). More recently, the Quaker Aboriginal Affairs Committee has been working with others at the United Nations to develop international standards for Aboriginal Rights.

In 1972, with strong support of Toronto Friends, the Service Committee established the Quaker Committee on Jails and Justice which over the years has worked to encourage prison visiting, sought alternatives to prisons and fostered awareness of the roots of crime and violence in society. This committee has worked hard in promoting restorative justice and has supported the Alternatives to Violence Project. In 1981 Canadian Yearly Meeting minuted: "... Prison abolition is both a process and a long-term goal. In the interim there is a great need for Friends to reach out and to support all those affected: guards, prisoners, victims, and families. We recognize a need for restraint of those few who are exhibiting dangerous behaviour. The kind of restraint used and the help offered during that time must reflect our concern for that of God in every person."

In 2001 Canadian Friends Service Committee became legally incorporated. This step was driven in part by the realization that individual employees were otherwise unprotected from serious legal liability and by the desire to continue partnerships with other organizations (such as the Canadian International Development Agency) which require incorporation if they are to support Canadian Friends Service Committee projects. A great deal of care was taken to ensure that the legal obligations of incorporation do not conflict with the spiritual understanding and practices of Friends or the position of Canadian Friends Service Committee as a committee of Canadian Yearly Meeting.

Service Committee structure and staffing has evolved to reflect its work. In addition to its committee of 22 volunteers, the Service Committee has six paid employees. Its four standing committees are: International Committee, Quaker Committee on Jails and Justice, Quaker Aboriginal Affairs Committee and Peace and National Concerns Committee. There are branch offices located in the homes of Friends in Calgary (QCJJ), Guelph (QAAC) and Ottawa (IC). In 2001 a Quaker International Affairs Program was established in Ottawa, building on earlier work in facilitating dialogue in international affairs, such as Quaker Peacemakers and the diplomats' conferences held at Grindstone in the 1960's. It works in collaboration with the Quaker United Nations Offices based in Geneva and New York and relates to diplomats, government officials, and international nongovernmental organizations based in Ottawa.

## **1.9 Association with other bodies**

The Yearly Meeting has continued its historic association with the wider Quaker community through affiliation with

Friends General Conference and Friends United Meeting which represent two of the main streams of Quakerism in the United States. The three streams which united in Canada in 1955 remain separate in some areas of the United States; their member meetings include pastoral meetings with varying theological emphases as well as traditional meetings based on silent worship. Evangelical Friends Alliance (now Evangelical Friends International) which was established in the United States in 1965 has several Friends meetings in Canada but these are not part of Canadian Yearly Meeting.

Canadian Yearly Meeting is also a member of Friends World Committee for Consultation (Section of the Americas). FWCC is an international organization whose goal is “to facilitate loving understanding of diversities among Friends while we discover together, with God’s help, our common spiritual ground; and to facilitate full expression of our Friends’ testimonies in the world.” The participation of Canadian Friends brings an enrichment of spirit and of life, and at times challenges Friends’ understanding of the Quaker faith. Canadian Friends have been represented at FWCC since it was established in the 1930’s and helped to organize the Triennial held in Hamilton, Ontario in 1976. Friends in Canada also took part in the Faith and Life Movement of the Section of the Americas during the 1980’s, and young Friends from Canada have participated in Quaker Youth Pilgrimages.

Friends Committee on Unity with Nature was established in the United States in 1987 as a spiritually-centred organization of Quakers and likeminded people seeking to integrate their concern for the environment with Friends’ longstanding testimonies of simplicity, peace and equality. Friends in Canada were associated with its early development and Canadian Yearly Meeting became formally affiliated with FCUN in 1998. This interest in the

environment has also led to establishment of a Canadian Yearly Meeting Ecology Working Group (now called the Quaker Ecology Action Network).

Canada Yearly Meeting (Five Years Meeting) was a founding member of the World Council of Churches and the Canadian Council of Churches through the Canadian Committee for a World Council of Churches in 1944. Canadian Yearly Meeting has retained membership in these bodies and currently is one of only three Yearly Meetings in the world in full membership with the WCC (Friends World Committee for Consultation also takes part in WCC). When the Canadian Council of Churches revised its constitution in 1965, Canadian Yearly Meeting was required to re-affirm its membership by assenting to a short Statement of Faith. While affirming its desire to continue to serve as a Christian body in association with the Canadian Council of Churches, Yearly Meeting stated that “the Religious Society of Friends does not require its members to accept a written formula of belief.” When the General Secretary of Canadian Yearly Meeting reported this decision to the Executive of the Canadian Council of Churches he read the first Advice from the *Advices and Queries* (London Yearly Meeting, 1964) which the Council accepted “as being simply and profoundly a statement of the Christian faith ... so admirably embodied in the life and witness of Friends.” Canadian Yearly Meeting has continued in full membership and its representatives make a Quaker contribution to the ecumenical work of the Council. Canadian Friends, largely through the Canadian Friends Service Committee, participate in the inter-church coalitions concerned with human rights, refugees, justice and peace (now incorporated into a single organization called KAIROS). They find strength from the shared commitment and the expertise which the representatives of other churches bring to these issues, and use these unique opportunities to contribute with distinctive

Quaker insights and experience.

Many Friends contributed to and attended the World Council of Churches 6th Assembly in Vancouver in 1983. More recently Friends have taken part in the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative, part of a world wide movement Jubilee 2000 urging primarily governments to forgive debts of the poorest countries.

The Ecumenical Committee of Yearly Meeting supports the work of representatives to both wider Quaker bodies and inter-faith organizations.

## **1.10 Summing up**

This short history of the life of Friends and the development of Canadian Yearly Meeting since 1955 reminds us that the same God that Jesus exemplified and taught us to know is our centre, as it was with Friends who have gone before. As we have joined to bring our divisions together, we have grown into one faithful body, the Canadian Yearly Meeting, that continues to seek the will of God. We find guidance through the presence of God in our worship and through the inward experiences of others shared in the fellowship of the Meeting for Worship. This guidance is our empowerment to live a life in the Spirit of Christ and to work in the world for justice, peace and love.

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*There are many books on Quaker history. Some of these are listed in the bibliography at the end of this volume.*