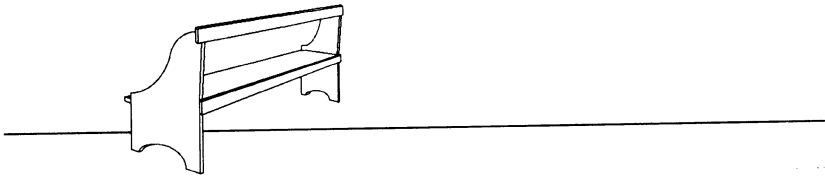


The Quakers

an introduction

Be patterns, be examples in all countries,
places, islands, nations, wherever you come,
that your carriage and life may preach
among all sorts of people, and to them;
then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world,
answering that of God in everyone.

George Fox, 1656



Halifax Friends Meeting

The Meeting for Worship

For when I came into the silent assemblies of God's people, I felt a secret power among them that touched my heart; and as I gave way unto it, I found the evil weakening and the good lifted up.

Robert Barclay, 1648-1690

“Worship” derives from the word “worth” and in Meeting for Worship, Quakers give time to finding worth in their lives in an hour of stillness, inward prayer, contemplation and reflection. Anyone who feels moved to do so may speak out of his/her experience: this is called vocal ministry. The speaker does not speak to the Meeting, rather, the gathered Meeting is speaking through one member.

Spoken ministry does not break the silence, but acts as a vocal counterpoint. Neither the gift of public speaking nor graceful language are the marks of a spiritual message. If it is simple, brief and comes from the heart, even though it is halting or ungrammatical, it will be received gracefully. Ministry can be a quotation from the Bible, offered with or without brief commentary, a prayer, a hymn, a poem, or a personal experience of the Divine. An individual speaks only once in Meeting. If your reason rejects any message, let your heart remember the spirit behind the words.

Meditation, as expressed by many eastern religions is an escape from regular consciousness, an emptying of the self. At its best, a Quaker Meeting for Worship is a fullness. Instead of being led away from the world, one is led back “to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time” (T. S. Elliott). A Quaker aphorism expresses this well: *When the worship ends, the service begins*. Each Meeting for Worship is an experiment in the human-Divine encounter, but unlike meditation in which barriers between an individual and God are dissolved, the Quaker Meeting is a group experience in which human-human barriers also disappear.

Quakers have no set sacraments such as water baptism or communion, nor do they ordain ministers or priests, believing that God can be found in the everyday experience of all people. It is in the here and now that real communion can occur.

In Halifax, the children join us at the beginning of Meeting before they leave for their own programme (First Day School). After about 45 minutes, the a designated person introduces a time of worship-sharing when thoughts experienced in Meeting, which did not mature into ministry, can be shared. Meeting ends when Friends briefly take hands with those around them. The children return and offer a question for our response. Following Meeting, there are introductions, announcements and light refreshments. Sometimes a study group is held.

Quaker beginnings

As we went I spied a great hill called Pendle Hill, and I went on to the top of it with much ado, it was so steep: but I was moved of the Lord to go atop of it; and when I came atop of it I saw Lancashire sea; and there atop of the hill I was moved to sound the day of the Lord; and the Lord let me see atop of the hill in what places he had a great people to be gathered. George Fox, 1652

Quakerism emerged in England at a time of revolutionary change, when old ideas of a strictly defined social order were breaking down—the radical reformation. The King, Charles I, was deposed and beheaded and Cromwell’s Puritan Commonwealth was imposing new laws and values.

George Fox, born in 1624, wandered through England seeking a religious base that offered him a more intimate relationship with God. At the age of 23, he had an opening in which he realized “there is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition.” He found other Seekers, already meeting in silence without priest or pastor, and helped unite these groups into what was to become the Religious Society of Friends. Margaret Fell, opened her home, Swarthmoor Hall, to all Friends in need, and helped organise relief while maintaining correspondence with the growing movement. A group of early converts, the Valiant Sixty, travelled throughout Britain, Europe, the Middle East and the American colonies. Mary Fisher travelled to Massachusetts and in 1657 to Constantinople where she spoke to the Sultan. Others sought audience with the Pope and met with imprisonment or death at the hands of the Inquisition.

Quakers also suffered persecution in England: between 1650 and 1687, it has been estimated that 13,000 Friends were imprisoned, 198 were

transported and 338 died in penal institutions or of wounds inflicted upon them while they were attending meeting. What did they do to warrant this? They spoke out for peace, justice, equality, integrity and education for all. They refused to pay tithes (church taxes), swear oaths, serve in the army or remove their hats to their “superiors.”

William Penn and William Meade were charged with “preaching in Gracechurch Street.” When the judge demanded a guilty verdict, Penn encouraged the jury to vote their conscience. The jury was jailed for contempt, but brought in a verdict of not guilty. This incident established the integrity of juries. Later, Penn was awarded land in the New World to pay a debt owed by the Crown to his father. He established his Holy Experiment in Pennsylvania, passing a treaty in 1683 which established a pattern of peace and fair dealings with Native Americans.

As its founding members died, the Quaker movement lost some of its zeal. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Friends became a “peculiar” people, suspicious of the outside world, wearing plain clothes and speaking a distinctive jargon; few newcomers were attracted into membership.

Despite this introspection, Friends were still concerned about the world around them. John Woolman (1720-72) of New Jersey, condemned slavery, urged economic boycotts and prompted Friends to see the connection between the way they lived, the possessions they owned and the violence and oppressions which were part of the economic and political institutions of their day. Elizabeth Fry (1798-1845) of Norwich, England, worked with women prisoners, teaching and clothing them, and their imprisoned children. Levi Coffin (1798-1877) of Indiana, was known as the “President” of the Underground Railroad. Lucretia Mott (1793-1880) and several other American Quaker women were 19th century leaders in the struggle to free slaves and in the women’s suffrage movement.

Friends from Nantucket settled in Barrington, Nova Scotia in 1762 to continue their whaling and fishing businesses, but most left as a result of constant attacks from American privateers. Nantucket Quakers were invited to Dartmouth in 1784 to establish a whaling industry, but after a few years most left for Wales.

Theological conflicts in the early nineteenth century led to schisms in North America and by the late 1800s some Friends were hiring pastors and introducing programmed meetings for worship, a practice which continues to this day.

Quaker beliefs

The witness of the Society of Friends has always been in the fact that the apostolic period of the Christian witness has never stopped; that the epoch of the Holy Spirit is upon us; and that the revelation of the power of the Spirit, which the book of Acts records, is in full surge. It is class-blind and color-blind and age-blind, and it comes to the plain man as well as to the genius. Given a yielding, it will pour through the lives of ordinary lay men and women and through its power will release them for hallowed service in the fabric of this world.

Douglas V. Steere, 1901-95

Quakerism depends on neither the Bible nor priestly tradition for its authority. Rather it recognizes “that of God” in everyone which can be enlightened by the Holy Spirit. George Fox asked, “You will say, Christ saith this and the apostles say this, but what canst thou say?” Friends soon recognized that enthusiasm might be mistaken for genuine spiritual leadings, and so tested their insights against the group, unlike the Ranters of the time whose individual inspirations led to unbalanced statements and actions.

Fox experienced that “all things were new, and all the creation gave another smell.” For him this symbolized a return to the Garden of Eden before the fall of Adam and Eve. Hence, original sin and the traditional fall-redemption theology of the Church no longer applied. He also experienced that “Christ has come to teach His people Himself.” Friends were living in the end times, no longer waiting for the Second Coming, for Jesus Christ was present as the Inward Teacher and the Kingdom of God was being realized in the community of Friends.

These insights led to the following tenets and practices:

- the opportunity and obligation for each person to seek God’s leading, both individually and corporately in worship
- the belief that God is still revealing truth to us

- the accordance of equality and respect to all
- the leading to respond to the needs of all people
- no need for professional clergy or other intermediaries between God and the individual
- the refusal to take oaths, for there is a single standard of truth
- the commitment to live simply
- living the sacraments rather than observing them outwardly
- the conviction that peace can best be attained by striving to trust love rather than by reacting to fear

The Meeting for Worship for Business

The continuing search for unity is what makes the conduct of the Friends’ business meeting so uniquely coherent and effective. Friends are not trying to find the broadest area of common acceptance in order to form a consensus, but are searching for the Truth and for an understanding of our own relationships to it.

William B. Watson, 1976

Friends have given the world many new ideas and processes that spring from their experiences concerning humankind’s interaction with the Divine and with one another. Meeting for Business is one example of the Quaker way at work. Most people make decisions largely on the basis of their own perceived best interest. Friends attempt to make a decision by seeking God’s guidance. Come into a Meeting and watch what happens:

The people in the meeting room are seated and seemingly engrossed in deep thought. Latecomers move quietly to their chairs and join in the silence. The Clerk of the Monthly Meeting and the Co-Clerk or Recording Clerk greet the gathering and review the agenda that has been set for the meeting. A member attracts the attention of the Clerk and is invited to comment.

As a point is discussed, the ideas are considered and put together as a minute that summarizes and records the remarks. The members wait quietly while the Co-Clerk performs this duty and then reads out the proposed minute.

Most often the minute will be accepted by spoken approval from the members, whilst at times further discussion is necessary before the sense of the meeting has been gained. If the minute does not meet with general approval, the Clerk may ask for some quiet reflection on matters. Usually a greater degree of unity is attained after the silence. Should this fail, the Clerk may suggest that a committee consider the matter or that laying the item over until a later meeting might be appropriate. There is no voting, for neither unanimity nor consensus are the aim, but that Friends open themselves to be led to the Truth.

After the approval of the final minute, the Clerk asks for a period of silent worship. After a few minutes, the clerk and Co-clerk shake hands.

All formal decisions of the Monthly Meeting are minuted. The Meeting for Business is open to members and attenders; both are encouraged to be present, though membership matters are considered only by members.

Friends seeking to be married under the care of the Meeting first come to the Meeting for Business for approval. Once approval is given, a Meeting for Marriage is held, during which the couple exchange vows and sign a marriage certificate which is then witnessed by all present.

Pastoral care and oversight of the Meeting for Worship is offered by members of the Meeting of Ministry and Counsel.

Quaker Testimonies

Newcomers to the Society are often attracted by our values and practices like peace work, simplicity of life and the pursuit of integrity. They are soon told that these are testimonies. They then find that there is no authoritative statement of what the testimonies are, only hallowed examples of their implications in particular circumstances. . . . They are religious, ethical, collective, demanding, developing—and vague.

John Punshon, 1990

As Friends sought to live faithfully in the world they identified various patterns of daily behavior which reflected their beliefs. These they called “testimonies.”

There is no formal list of testimonies, nor are there formal definitions for each one, as testimonies evolve over time to reflect the action of the Spirit in Friends’ lives. However, most Friends would identify the following as core testimonies:

- Truth and integrity
- Peace
- Simplicity
- Equality
- Gospel order

“Gospel order” is not often discussed by today’s Friends, but it is behind all that we do. Based on biblical principles, early Friends structured their whole lives in a way that reflected God’s will for them. Friends are still challenged today by the issue of freedom of the individual in relationship to the common good of the Society.

Some Friends believe that sustainability should be added to the list of testimonies, while others see this as a modern response to testimonies of peace, equality and simplicity.

Quaker organization & membership

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 that 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.

Gathering of Elders at Balby, 1656

Meeting for Worship is the heart of Quakerism, but it was soon discovered that in worship Friends were led to change their own lives and to change the world around them. The Meeting for Business evolved to enable community decisions to be made. Because these meetings are held monthly, the name given to a Quaker group is the “Monthly Meeting.” Smaller groups, such as Worship Groups do not conduct their own business, but are part of a larger Monthly Meeting.

Larger groupings can be effective in reducing duplication of effort and providing a public voice. These are called Yearly Meetings, as they meet annually for worship and business. All members of Monthly Meetings are

part of a Yearly Meeting. There may also be Half Yearly Meetings or Regional Gatherings; today these groups do little formal business.

One of the committees of Canadian Yearly Meeting is the Canadian Friends Service Committee which undertakes peace and justice work on behalf of Canadian Quakers. Among other committees are those that run Camp NeeKauNis on Georgian Bay, do outreach, oversee finances, update the Discipline, and arrange the sessions of Yearly Meeting.

Halifax Monthly Meeting is comprised of Antigonish Worship Group, Dartmouth Worship Group, Halifax Friends Meeting and South Shore Worship Group. There is another Monthly Meeting in Wolfville. Halifax Monthly Meeting is part of the Atlantic Friends Gathering and Canadian Yearly Meeting.

There are also international Quaker groupings. Canadian Yearly Meeting belongs to Friends General Conference, Friends United Meeting and Friends World Committee for Consultation--Section of the Americas.

For Quakers, membership is the outward sign of a personal involvement with a group of people who have no binding creed, but who share convictions about the purpose and meaning of life. Membership involves a sharing of loving care, and a sharing of responsibility.

An applicant for membership writes a simple letter to the Meeting stating why s/he is drawn into the fellowship of the Religious Society of Friends. A visiting committee of two or three Friends is named by the Monthly Meeting for Business, and arranges to call upon the applicant, usually in his/her home, to discuss the contemplated step, to advise and to answer questions. The visiting committee will discuss varying viewpoints of Friends' testimonies, beliefs and interpretations of membership. The committee gives consideration to the applicant's familiarity with Quaker history, and with the Discipline (*Faith and Practice, Organization and Procedure and Advices and Queries*). The committee reports back to Monthly Meeting which decides if the applicant is ready for membership. When an applicant has been approved by the Monthly Meeting, that fact is recorded and the new member is welcomed into full membership.

Quaker miscellany

- *Actors* F. Murray Abraham (Amadeus), Kathy Baker (Picket Fences), Jim Broadbent (Moulin Rouge), Montgomery Clift (From Here to Eternity), James Dean (Rebel without a Cause), Judi Dench (Shakespeare in Love), Paul Eddington (Yes, Prime Minister), Ben Kingsley (Gandhi), Madeleine Thornton-Sherwood (Cat on a Hot Tin Roof)
- *Artists* Fritz Eichenberg, Edward Hicks, Sylvia Shaw Judson, Peter Peri, Benjamin West, Signe Wilkinson
- *Banks* Quaker reputation for honesty led the Lloyds, Frys, Gurneys, Bevens, Backhouses and Barclays into commercial banking in England
- *Bathing machine* invented by Benjamin Beale in 1750 to extol the remedial effects of sea-bathing
- *Bayeux Tapestry* inspired the Quaker Tapestry which started as a First Day School project
- *Botanical gardens* John Bartram of Philadelphia established the first in America
- *Businesses* Allen & Hanburys--pharmacists, Bryant & May--matches, Carrs-biscuits, Clarks--shoes, Crosfield--Persil, Hires--root beer, Huntley & Palmers--biscuits, Price Waterhouse & Co--auditors, Reckitts--starch & blue, Tiptree--jams, George and William Penrose--Waterford crystal
- *Drinking chocolate* the Fry, Cadbury and Rowntree families advocated drinking chocolate as an alternative to alcohol
- *Industrial Revolution* Abraham Darby built the first iron bridge at Coalbrookdale
- *Jordans Meetinghouse* (Buckinghamshire) the location of the paintings *The Presence in the Midst* and *The Promise* (a Quaker wedding). Beams in a nearby barn came from the Mayflower.
- *Model villages* Cadbury's Bourneville & Rowntree's New Earswick were built for company workers
- *Musicians* Joan Baez, Bonnie Raitt, Emmylou Harris, Donald Swann, but not George Fox!
- *They gave their names* Daltonism--John Dalton, red-green colour blindness; Hodgkin's disease--Thomas Hodgkin, a Quaker physician; Listerine--Joseph Lister, likewise; Wisteria--Caspar Wistar, likewise; Starbucks--named for a fictional Nantucket Quaker sailor in Moby Dick
- *Non-Quaker companies* Quaker Oats, Quaker State Motor Oil, Old Quaker Whiskey, William Penn cigars
- *Nobel prizes* 1946 for Peace--Emily Green Balch; 1947 for Peace--AFSC & Friends Service Council; 1959 for Peace--Philip Noel-Baker; 1993 for

Physics--Joseph Taylor; 1996 for Economics--William Vickrey

- *Oops!* John Dillinger and Jim Jones attended First Day School as children, Richard Nixon was a birthright Friend
- *Pendle Hill* in Lancashire, traditionally the haunt of witches, where Fox had a vision; also a retreat centre near Philadelphia
- *Potters* William Cookworthy, Richard Champion, Josiah Wedgwood
- *Quaker parrots* small, talkative, bad tempered, grey parakeets, that build complex, year-long nests
- *Railways* William Pease--funded the first railway line, George Bradshaw--railway timetable, Thomas Edmonson--railway ticket
- *The Retreat* a humane mental hospital founded in 1792 by William Tuke of York
- *Bayard Rustin* Martin Luther King's ghostwriter, strategist and adviser
- *Scientists* Jocelyn Bell Burnell--astronomy, Peter Collinson--botany, John Dalton--chemistry, Arthur Stanley Eddington--astrophysics, John Fothergill--medicine, Ursula Franklin--metallurgy, Luke Howard--clouds, Len Lamerton--radiation biology, Joseph Lister-antiseptics, Kathleen Lonsdale--crystallography, Maria Mitchell--astronomy, Thomas Young--light waves, Joseph Taylor--astronomy
- *Tea* the ships involved in the Boston Tea Party were owned by the Nantucket Quaker Rotches; the tea was consigned to two Philadelphia Quaker firms; much later John Horniman invented tea bags
- *U.S. Presidents* Herbert Hoover, Richard Nixon
- *Woodbrooke* the family home of the Cadburys in Selly Oak, Birmingham, given to Friends to use as an adult college
- *Writers* Raymond Chandler, Philip Gulley, Jan de Hartog, James Michener, Daisy Newman, Jessamyn West

Further reading

The Journal of George Fox

The Journal of John Woolman

Portrait in Grey, John Punshon, 1984

The Quakers in Canada, Arthur Dorland, 1968

The Quaker Reader, Jessamyn West, 1992

Introduction from Quaker Spirituality, Douglas Steere, 1988

A Testament of Devotion, Thomas Kelly, 1941

Quaker Faith and Practice, 1995

These can be borrowed from Halifax Friends Library or purchased from Quaker Book Service.

Resources

Halifax Monthly Meeting

Antigonish Worship Group (902) 863-8998
Dartmouth Worship Group (902) 463-3498 or (902) 461-0702
Halifax Friends Meeting (902) 429-2904
South Shore Worship Group (902) 634-3231
info@halifax.quaker.ca www.quaker.ca/halifax
P.O. Box 8091 Halifax NS B3K 5L8

Camp NeeKauNis

RR#1, Waubashene ON L0K 2C0

Canadian Friends Service Committee

60 Lowther Avenue, Toronto ON M5R 1C7 (416) 920-5214
cfsc@quaker.ca www.quaker.ca/cfsc

Canadian Yearly Meeting Office

91A Fourth Avenue, Ottawa ON K1S 2L1 (613) 235-8553
cym-office@quaker.ca www.quaker.ca

Quaker Book Service

P.O. Box 4652, Station E, Ottawa ON K1S 5H8

Friends General Conference

#2B-1216 Arch Street, Philadelphia PA 19107 U.S.A.
friends@fgcquaker.org www.fgcquaker.org (215) 561-1700

Friends United Meeting

101 Quaker Hill Drive, Richmond IN 47374 U.S.A.
info@fum.org www.fum.org (765) 962-7573

Friends World Committee for Consultation

1506 Race Street, Philadelphia PA 19102 U.S.A.
Americas@fwcc.quaker.org www.fwcc.quaker.org (215) 241-7250

Pendle Hill

338 Plush Mill Road, Wallingford PA 19086-6099 U.S.A.
www.pendlehill.org (610) 566-4507

How to find a Quaker Meeting: www.Quakerfinder.org

Useful Quaker links: www.Quaker.org

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