

# *Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5*

## **Belief**

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1).*

## **Introduction**

Quakers have traditionally been wary of creedal statements as limiting our understanding of God. Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting have further avoided prescribed declarations of faith and statements of essential truths as hindrances to communication with the Divine.

The rejection of creeds does not imply the absence of doctrine or statements of belief. From the earliest times of our society, individual Friends, as well as small groups of Friends and Friends’ Meetings, have issued written statements of their beliefs to the world. Among the doctrines finding wide acceptance by Friends are a universal saving light and continuing revelation. The selections that follow explore these and other beliefs widely shared among Friends.

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The Cross as dogma is painless speculation; the Cross as lived suffering is anguish and glory. Yet God, out of the pattern of His own heart, has planted the Cross along the road of holy obedience. And He enacts in the hearts of those He loves the miracle of willingness to welcome suffering and to know it for what is—the final seal of His gracious love.

—Thomas R. Kelly, 1939

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We are an instrument in this world. No matter which way we look, no matter where we go, we know we have a world filled with injustice, inequality, racism, thousands of problems, whether out in the open or hidden.... We are told that the light that comes from God to us, comes to everyone to light the world—this is what we call the

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Inner Light.... That Light has to illuminate our problems, but we must not live only for resolving our internal problems and nothing else.

—Heredio Santos, 1991

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Quakers from the whole world await a message of hope. But how shall they hear? The presence and work of the Spirit is much more important than our words and forms of worship. That within us should also be transformed outward.

Some of us place special emphasis on the historical Jesus Christ as our personal Savior; others on the Light within everyone, which is interpreted by some of us as the Holy Spirit, and by some as the Christ principle; while others emphasize the universal spirit of God. We see these as three aspects of the one God and rejoice in our unity.

As we love one another, we find unity and become peacemakers. The barriers that separate us are broken, as Jesus broke the barrier between the Samaritans and the Jews through the conversation between him and the Samaritan woman. We should support each other in the diversity of our witness. We are one world trying to live our lives as Christ did.

—Mable Lugaly, 1991

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<http://www.pym.org/faith-and-practice/extracts-from-the-writings-of-friends/concerns-leadings-testimonies/>

## **Concerns, Leadings, Testimonies**

### *Introduction*

Out of worship come Friends’ service and witness—actions that stem from personal leadings and concerns which both arise from and cause evolution of our corporate testimonies. The selections here include corporate statements and individual observations, and begin with statements about service, testimonies, concerns, and leadings in general, followed by selections specific to peace, simplicity, equality and community, and integrity.

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A Quaker testimony is a belief that stems from our fundamental understanding of religious truth. It is a corporately held belief about how we should individually act. In practicing them, we witness to our understanding of the very nature of God’s spirit of love and truth.

—Jonathan Dale, 1996

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Our testimonies arise from our way of worship. Our way of worship evokes from deep within us at once an affirmation and a celebration, an affirmation of the reality of that Light which illumines the spiritual longing of humanity, and a celebration of the continual resurrection within us of the springs of hope and love; a sense that each of us is, if we will, a channel for a power that is both within and beyond us.

—Lorna M. Marsden, 1986

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Ever since I first came among Friends, I was attracted to the testimonies as an ideal. I wanted to belong to a church which made the rejection of warfare a collective commitment and not just a personal option. I admired a simplicity, a devotion to equality, and a respect for others which reflected what I already knew of Christ. In a deceitful world I warmed to those who did not swear oaths and strove to tell the truth in all circumstances. But this was a beginning in the spiritual life. The seed that was sown in my mind and my politics struck root in my soul and my faith.

The choice of the word "testimony" is instructive. The testimonies are ways of behaving but are not ethical rules. They are matters of practice but imply doctrines. They refer to human society but are about God. Though often talked about, they lack an authoritative formulation....

A "testimony" is a declaration of truth or fact.... It is not an ejaculation, a way of letting off steam, or baring one's soul. It has a purpose, and that is to get other people to change, to turn to God. Such an enterprise, be it in words or by conduct and example, is in essence prophetic and evangelical.

—John Punshon, 1987

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Leading and being led: the words are simple enough. But for Quakers they have their most profound resonance as defining religious experience. Friends speak variously of being drawn to an action, feeling under the weight of a concern, being called or led to act in specific ways. We speak of being open to the leadings of the Light, of being taught by the Spirit or the Inward Christ. Extraordinary claims lie embedded in those phrases. They say that it is not only possible but essential to our nature for human beings to

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hear and obey the voice of God; that we can be directed, daily, in what we do, the jobs we hold, the very words we say; and that our obedience may draw us to become leaders in all spheres of human life—in the professions, arts, and sciences, but also in discovering the ethical, political, social, and economic consequences of following the will of God.

—Paul Lacey, 1985

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“Concern” is a word which has tended to become debased by excessively common usage among Friends, so that too often it is used to cover merely a strong desire. The true “concern” [emerges as] a gift from God, a leading of his spirit which may not be denied. Its sanction is not that on investigation it proves to be the intelligent thing to do—though it usually is; it is that the individual...knows, as a matter of inward experience, that there is something that the Lord would have done, however obscure the way, however uncertain the means to human observation. Often proposals for action are made which have every appearance of good sense, but as the meeting waits before God it becomes clear that the proposition falls short of “concern.”

—Roger Wilson, 1949

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Our disciplines are not unalterable documents like the laws of the Medes and Persians, but represent a manifest development in full harmony with the growth of things in the world of life. In studying the discipline ... we must consider the conditions of thought and life at the time when the disciplinary provisions were first formulated ... we must look at all our testimonies and requirements from the standpoint of the present, in connection with right social standards and general need. While a forced disciplinary morality may be better than none at all, the function of the discipline is not to dominate the conscience in an arbitrary way, but to lead to that constant self-examination and genuine concern, which shall make the individual conduct right from choice, and not because of fear or compulsion.

—Henry W. Wilbur, 1908

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A concern is God-initiated, often surprising, always holy, for the life of God is breaking through into the world. Its execution is in peace and power and astounding faith and joy, for in unhurried serenity the Eternal is at work in the midst of time, triumphantly bringing all things unto Himself.

—Thomas Kelly, 1941

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A Quaker social concern seems characteristically to arise in a sensitive individual or very small group.... The concern arises as a revelation to an individual that there is a painful discrepancy between existing social conditions and what God wills for society and that this discrepancy is not being adequately dealt with. The next step is the determination of the individual to do something about it—not because he is particularly well fitted to tackle the problem, but simply because no one else seems to be doing it.

—Dorothy H. Hutchinson, 1961

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I expect to pass through this world but once; any good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now; let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

—Attributed to Stephen Grellet, c. 1800

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In all our fervor—in all my fervor—to be doing, have I paid too little attention to the power that lies in being? Do we remember that it is the spirit of our service, the aura that surrounds it, the gentleness and the patience that marks it, the love made visible that compels it, that is the truly distinctive quality that lifts Quaker service above lobbying, above pressure, above coercion, that inspires the doubtful, and reaches the heart of the adversary?

—Stephen Cary, 1979

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Whether the experience of Divine companionship comes soon or late, whether it is a sudden realisation of the Indwelling Spirit, the Divine Presence, the Eternal Light Within, the Seed of God in the heart, it becomes increasingly the mainspring of our life on earth and

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our hope for the life to come. We recognize this as an element of the Divine in every human heart, however denied and stifled and concealed; it is something to which we can appeal from the innermost depths of our being; an inward experience of God in which we ourselves must live.

From that inward relationship, the testimonies which generations of Friends have been challenged to maintain take on a deeper meaning. One of the most revealing passages in George Fox’s Journal is that in which he records his answer to the officials who offered him his liberty, if he would accept a commission and “take up arms for the Commonwealth against the King.” He did not say that he believed war to be wrong, or that in his opinion brute force never settled anything; he went straight to the heart of the matter and said that he “lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars.” To uphold such a testimony involved a dedicated life. The Quaker peace testimony is more than a repudiation of war, and more than a denial of the use of force; it is a way of life to which we must be faithful in small things as well as in great, in our human relationships, our business and social activities, and in the life and witness of our meetings.

—Elfrida Vipont Foulds, 1981

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If a concerned Quaker (or any man or woman committed to an absolute religious ethic) decides to enter practical politics in order to translate his principles into actuality, he may achieve a relative success: he may be able to raise the level of political life in his time, as John Bright did, or maintain a comparatively happy and just and peaceful society, as the Quaker legislators of Pennsylvania did. But he can apparently do it only at a price—the price of compromise, of partial betrayal of his ideals. If, on the other hand, he decides to preserve his ideals intact, to maintain his religious testimonies unsullied and pure, he may be able to do that, but again at a price—the price of isolation, of withdrawal from the mainstream of life in his time, of renouncing the opportunity directly and immediately to influence history.

Let me call the two positions the relativist and the absolutist. And let me suggest that perhaps each one needs the other. The relativist needs the absolutist to keep alive and clear the vision of the City of God while he struggles in some measure to realize it in the City of Earth. And conversely, the absolutist needs the relativist, lest

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the vision remain the possession of a few only, untranslated into any degree of reality for the world as a whole.

—Frederick B. Tolles, 1956

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We wish we could say that our response to God’s calling was immediate and unequivocal, but in fact there followed several months of indecision, as we struggled with our leading. We initiated, in a tentative way, the application process through Friends United Meeting, and were encouraged by them to schedule a trip to Indiana for an interview. Finally, five months after Yearly Meeting, we reached clarity, together as a couple: if FUM offered us the position (and we were the only serious candidates), we were prepared to accept. The final moment of decision stands out in our minds, because it came on Liz’s birthday, when we were out cross-country skiing together.

That very evening, as we basked in the warm glow of our newly found clearness, we received a phone call...there was no opening, and no need for an interview.

The word “disappointment” does not adequately describe how we felt. Our process of discernment had been slow and gradual but, we felt, genuine. We were left feeling empty, as though we were somehow “in transition”—but transition to what? We had now given up our expectations for the future not once, but twice. Our lives were outwardly the same as before, but we were empty, waiting for a further leading, and not entirely sure when or if it would come.

It took several difficult months, but eventually, reluctantly, we were able to give up the idea that Lugulu was in our future. Then one day, about a year later, a letter came in the mail.... The mission board was asking, almost apologetically, if we would still consider going to Lugulu.

Suddenly, we could see the bumpy and circuitous road that we had been traveling for those eighteen months in a larger perspective. God had been asking, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for me?” Now, and only now, were we prepared to answer unequivocally with the prophet Isaiah, “Here we are, Lord. Send us.”

—Tom and Liz Gates, 1995

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There is that near you which will guide you. O wait for it and be sure you keep to it.

—Isaac Pennington, 1678

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To most of us are given some common little jobs every day of our lives. To a very few comes the call to do something extraordinary, some great task. The world abounds in men and women who find happiness and opportunities for self-expression in being faithful in the humble stations of life which are theirs at a given time. If we are loyal to the truth as we see it, and respond with our might in the “common” situations in day-to-day living as we face them, the glow of the grace of God deepens and nurtures our faculties for insight and for recognition of the true worth of things and of men.

—Ranjit Chetsingh, 1975

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Friends are conservative radicals. They are conservative because they are religious, and religion, as the origin of the word indicates, suggests binding together. Religion binds the present with the past and it binds diverse people into communities. Quakers, because of their deep Christian roots, are bound into the past history of man. The words and actions attributed to Isaiah, to Jesus, to Saint Francis, to George Fox, and to John Woolman, come down through the centuries and are bound into the life and witness of today. In the meeting for worship Friends seek to break through the here-and-now into that which is eternal. Here that which is beyond time and in every time becomes part of the present.

With all this conservatism, however, Friends are also radical. Their authority is the light within, the present and personal experience by which past undoubted authority must be tested. “Thou sayest Christ said this and the apostles saith that, but what canst thou say,” says George Fox.... This “What canst thou say” is the key to a religion in which we have “No time but this present” and in which there is a constant hunger to apply the eternal principles of love, justice, and redemptive suffering to this present world.

—Kenneth Boulding, 1988

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After a great war there is and will continue to be intense physical need. If we meet that we shall have some insight into deeper issues. At any rate our choice is today clear as it was on the Jerusalem-Jericho road years ago. Either we shall be among the good Samaritans, or we shall be among those that pass by on the other side. As the gospel suggests elsewhere, when food, clothing, and care are concerned it is either “Inasmuch as ye did” or “Inasmuch as ye did not.” Beginning from there, we may expect further insight.  
—Henry J. Cadbury, 1947

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No one dreamed in the sharp crisis of 1917, when the first steps of faith were taken, that we should feed more than a million German children, drive dray loads of cod-liver oil into Russia, plough the fields of the peasants and fight typhus in Poland, rebuild the houses and replant the wastes in Serbia, administer a longtime service of love in Austria, become foster parents to tens of thousands of children in the coal fields in West Virginia, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, inaugurate plans for the rehabilitation of the stranded soft coal miners, carry relief to the children on both sides of the warring forces in Spain and create new types of peace activity which have brought this supreme issue of these times vitally home to the minds and consciences of people in all parts of America.

We verily went out in those days of low visibility not knowing whither we were going; but, like the early patriarch, we were conscious of a divine leading, and we were aware, even if only dimly, that we were “fellow-laborers with God” in the rugged furrows of the somewhat brambly fields of the world.

—Rufus Jones, 1937

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I think I have wasted a great deal of my life waiting to be called to some great mission which would change the world. I have looked for important social movements. I have wanted to make a big and important contribution to the causes I believe in. I think I have been too ready to reject the genuine leadings I have been given as being matters of little consequence. It has taken me a long time to learn that obedience means doing what we are called to do even if it seems pointless or unimportant or even silly. The great social movements of our time may well be part of our calling. The ideals of peace and

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

—Deborah Haines, 1978

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If we are faithful followers of Jesus, we may expect at times to differ from the practice of others. Having in mind that truth in all ages has been advanced by the courageous example of spiritual leaders, Friends are earnestly advised to be faithful to those leadings of the Divine Spirit which they feel fully assured after mature meditation and consideration they have interpreted truly.

—Book of Discipline, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Race Street), 1927

### ***Peace***

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[After Fox had been in Darby jail for several months]...they filled the House of Corrections with persons that they had taken up to be soldiers and then they would have had me to be captain of them to go forth to Worcester fight and the soldiers cried they would have none but me. So the keeper of the House of Correction was commanded to bring me up before the Commissioners and soldiers in the market place; and there they proffered me that preferment because of my virtue [valor]...and asked me if I would not take up arms for the Commonwealth against the King. But I told them I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars, and I knew from whence all wars did rise, from the lust according to James’s doctrine...I told them I was come into the covenant of peace which was before wars....

—George Fox, 1651

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There is no security except in creating situations in which people do not want to harm you. This is a difficult truth for most people to face, but the difficulty is more emotional than rational or scientific. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him,” is not only Christian

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teaching, but it is profound wisdom, for the best way of getting rid of an enemy is to convert him into a friend. Feeding in this sense does not mean, necessarily, shipping food; it may mean applying science to create local production that he may have both subsistence and self-respect. Whence come the qualities which enable men to tackle so hard and bold a task? We know that they are latent in all men, that they have been manifest in the pursuit of science, and that they respond to cultivation. We know too that religion, in the universal sense of human aspiration that is above sect or creed or any other dividing influence, constitutes a fertile soil in which the best that is in men may grow. It is expressed in many ways, but those who feel a deep loyalty as citizens of the Kingdom of God have an impelling reason to serve their fellow men.

—James G. Vail, 1953

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The foundations of Quaker pacifism are religious. We fully recognize the value of the intuitive recognition of the evil of coercive violence in the individual and national life. The sense of the contrast between the way of war and the way of love shown us in the life of Jesus Christ has compelling force. It is also enlightening to think of pacifism as a corollary of the fundamental Quaker postulate of the Divine Spark in every human being. This fundamental Quaker postulate lays on us the obligation to consider and cherish every human being. It follows, for those who accept the postulate, that they cannot do to human beings the things that war involves. It may follow that they become aware that other sorts of human relations are also evil, such as slavery, economic injustice, inferior status for women, and the results of the traffic in narcotics....

Quaker pacifism is an obligation, not a promise. We are not guaranteed that it will be safe. We are sure that it is right. We desire to make our individual decisions in harmony with it, and to help our fellows to do so.

—Friends Peace Committee, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Race Street), 1940

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We have to take responsibility in our own countries for the trade in weapons, which will continue unless we intensify our actions against it. Let us do this together as an international body. Let us picture where Jesus Christ would be in this matter. What

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would he be saying about the trade in weapons?...

Quakers have often taken on a prophetic role in the past. We should be glad of the example of the slave abolitionists and remember their strength, their courage, their witness, and do likewise now.

—Jo Vallentine, 1991

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Once the horrible inhuman and ungodly war had started, the consequences could not be avoided. That is why I’m writing to you so seriously tonight. I believe that my generation can keep peace for a while, if we work at it hard enough; but your generation must not forget the capacity for destruction that exists in man, and must somehow see that neither you nor your children face this again. I don’t want your sons, if you have any, to look upon the sight that I saw today, or on even worse sights which another war may bring with improved technical means of killing and maiming the bodies and souls of other men.

In order to accomplish that, you, I, and everyone else who believes in the Christian ideals by which we supposedly live must get into the political race and fight for right, even though it inconveniences each of us and interferes with the things we want to do.

—Walter C. Michaels, 1945

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To become a nonviolent society, a basic change we need to make is in the way we think. We need to stop dividing people, ideas, situations, countries, etc. into separate categories while failing to recognize their interconnectedness. We need to seek resolutions of conflict that result in all sides “winning” rather than in one side winning and the other losing. The changes needed are fundamental, and all of us need to reflect on how we might be contributing to a violent culture....

—Deb Sawyer, 1987

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We gladly pay the civilian part of our taxes, but many have reached a point in their conscience which prevents or makes difficult the payment of the military portion.

We warmly approve of people following their conscience, and

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openly approve civil disobedience in this matter under Divine compulsion. We ask all to consider carefully the implications of paying taxes that relate to war-making.

—Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1970

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In a world which desires the fruit but does not understand the root of the peace testimony, we who would live this witness must take care not to succumb to the notion that the fruit can exist independent of the root.

—Sandra Cronk, c.1983

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This meeting fervently recommends to the deep attention of all our members, that they be religiously guarded against approving or showing the least connivance at war, either by attending at or viewing military operations, or in any wise encouraging the unstable deceitful spirit of party, by joining with political devices or associations, however speciously disguised under the ensnaring subtleties commonly attendant thereon; but that they sincerely labour to experience a settlement on the alone sure foundation of the pure unchangeable truth, whereby, through the prevalence of unfeigned Christian love and good will to men, we may convincingly demonstrate that the kingdom we seek is not of this world: A kingdom and government whose subjects are free indeed, redeemed from those captivating lusts from whence come wars and fightings.

As we are called out of wars and fightings, so let them be as seldom as possible the subjects of our conversations; but let an holy care rest upon us, to abide in that power which gives dominion over the hopes and fears that arise from the concerns of an unstable world, which tend, as they are admitted into the mind, to lessen the trust on that rock which is immovable.

—Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1806

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We totally oppose all wars, all preparation for war, all use of weapons and coercion by force, and all military alliances: no end could ever justify such means.

We equally and actively oppose all that leads to violence among people and nations, and violence to other species and to our planet.

This has been our testimony to the whole world for over three

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centuries.

We are not naïve or ignorant about the complexity of our modern world and the impact of sophisticated technologies—but we see no reason whatsoever to change or weaken our vision of the peace that everyone needs in order to survive and flourish on a healthy, abundant earth.

The primary reason for this stand is our conviction that there is that of God in every one which makes each person too precious to damage or destroy.

While someone lives, there is always the hope of reaching that of God within them: such hope motivates our search to find nonviolent resolution of conflict....

There is no guarantee that our resistance will be any more successful or any less risky than military tactics. At least our means will be suited to our end.

If we seemed to fail finally, we would still rather suffer and die than inflict evil in order to save ourselves and what we hold dear.

If we succeed, there is no loser or winner, for the problem that led to conflict will have been resolved in a spirit of justice and tolerance.

Such a resolution is the only guarantee that there will be no further outbreak of war when each side has regained strength....

The places to begin acquiring the skills and maturity and generosity to avoid or to resolve conflicts are in our own homes, our personal relationships, our schools, our workplaces, and wherever decisions are made.

We must relinquish the desire to own other people, to have power over them, and to force our views on to them. We must own up to our own negative side and not look for scapegoats to blame, punish, or exclude. We must resist the urge towards waste and the accumulation of possessions.

Conflicts are inevitable and must not be repressed or ignored but worked through painfully and carefully. We must develop the skills of being sensitive to oppression and grievances, sharing power in decision making, creating consensus, and making reparation.

In speaking out, we acknowledge that we ourselves are as limited and as erring as anyone else. When put to the test, we each may fall short.

We do not have a blueprint for peace.... In any particular situation, a variety of personal decisions could be made with integrity.

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We may disagree with the views and actions of the politician or the soldier who opts for a military solution, but we still respect and cherish that person.

What we call for in this statement is a commitment to make the building of peace a priority and to make opposition to war absolute.

What we advocate is not uniquely Quaker but human and, we believe, the will of God. Our stand does not belong to Friends alone—it is yours by birthright...

[L]et us reject the clamour of fear and listen to the whisperings of hope.

—Aotearoa/New Zealand Yearly Meeting, 1987

### ***Simplicity***

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It may surprise some of us to hear that the first generation of Friends did not have a testimony for simplicity. They came upon a faith which cut to the root of the way they saw life, radically reorienting it. They saw that all they did must flow directly from what they experienced as true, and that if it did not, both the knowing and the doing became false. In order to keep the knowledge clear and the doing true, they stripped away anything which seemed to get in the way. They called those things superfluities, and it is this radical process of stripping for clear-seeing which we now term simplicity.

—Frances Irene Taber, 1985

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The Spirit of Truth which led our early Friends to lay aside things unbecoming the Gospel of Christ still leads in the same path all who submit to its guidance; we therefore earnestly encourage all Friends to watch over themselves in this respect, and seriously to consider the plainness and simplicity which the Gospel enjoins, manifest it in their conversation, apparel, furniture, buildings, salutation, and manner of living, exercising plainness of speech without respect of persons in all their converse among men, not balking their testimony by varying their language according to their company.

—Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Race Street), 1894

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Has Quakerism anything to tell the world about simplicity in religion? It has. This is the main secret of its remarkable success in its early days. It was as simple as the Galilean’s Gospel. It made no compromise with the interminable mass of scholastic theology. It cut loose from it all. One sentence from George Fox announces its whole program—”Let nothing come between your souls and God but Jesus Christ.”

—Rufus Jones, 1906

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We have a testimony about simplicity and we need to think about what that means in the world we’re living in right now. What does it mean to be lean and disciplined and not dependent upon our things?

—Kara Cole Newell, 1982

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The important thing about worldly possessions, in fact, is whether or not we are tied to them. Some, by an undue love of the things of this world, have so dulled their hearing that a divine call to a different way of life would pass unheard. Others are unduly self-conscious about things which are of no eternal significance, and because they worry too much about them, fail to give of their best. The essence of worldliness is to judge of things by an outward and temporary, and not an inward and eternal standard, to care more about appearances than about reality, to let the senses prevail over the reason and the affections.

—London Yearly Meeting, 1958

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Wealth is attended with power, by which bargains and proceedings contrary to universal righteousness are supported; and here oppression, carried on with worldly policy and order, clothes itself with the name of justice and becomes like a seed of discord in the soil. And as this spirit which wanders from the pure habitation prevails, so the seeds of war swell and sprout and grow and become strong until much fruit is ripened. Thus cometh the harvest....

Spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, which is “a heap in the day of grief, and of desperate sorrow.” O that we who declare against wars, and acknowledge our trust to be in God only, may walk in the Light and

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therein examine our... motives in holding great estates! May we look upon our treasures... and try whether the seeds of war have any nourishment in these our possessions.

—John Woolman, c. 1764

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Frugality is good, if liberality be join'd with it. The first is leaving off superfluous expenses; the last bestowing them to the benefit of others that need. The first without the last begins covetousness; the last without the first begins prodigality: Both together make an excellent temper. Happy the place wherever that is found.

—William Penn, 1698

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Perhaps it is this integrity, the concept of the wholeness of creation, that will jolt humanity onto a course of sustainability, which people may see as threatening at first. Of course change is often uncomfortable, but change is a must. We need to nurture ourselves and each other, but ultimately we need to nurture the earth—our mother.

—Jo Vallentine, 1991

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Is our concern for simplicity relevant to our concern for the national economic situation? If we think of simplicity in terms of doing without certain things, of voluntarily reducing our standard of living, I believe this is almost irrelevant at the economic level in view of the scale of the world's need. If we think of simplicity as a spiritual quality which incidentally simplifies life styles then I believe it has relevance. This kind of simplicity goes straight to the heart of things and puts first things first....

—Anonymous, c. 1995

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But at the first convincement, when Friends could not put off their hats to people nor say 'you' to a [single person], but 'thee' and 'thou'; and could not bow nor use the world's salutations, nor fashions, nor customs; many Friends, being tradesmen of several sorts lost their custom at the first; for the people would not trade with them nor trust them, and for a time Friends that were

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tradesmen could hardly get enough money to buy bread. But afterwards people came to see Friends’ honesty and truthfulness and ‘yea’ and ‘nay’ at a word in their dealing, and their lives and conversations did preach and reach to the witness of God in all people, and they knew and saw that, for conscience sake towards God, they would not cozen and cheat them, and at last that they might send any child and be as well used as [if they had come] themselves, at any of their shops.

—George Fox, 1653

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My mind through the power of Truth was in a good degree weaned from the desire of outward greatness, and I was learning to be content with real conveniences that were not costly; so that a way of life free from much entanglements appeared best for me, though the income was small. I had several offers of business that appeared profitable, but saw not my way clear to accept of them, as believing the business proposed would be attended with more outward care and cumber than was required of me to engage in.

I saw that a humble man with the blessing of the Lord might live on a little, and that where the heart was set on greatness, success in business did not satisfy the craving; but that in common with an increase of wealth, the desire of wealth increased. There was a care on my mind so to pass my time as to things outward that nothing might hinder me from the most steady attention to the voice of the True Shepherd.

—John Woolman, 1743

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Undue luxury often creates a false sense of superiority, causes unnecessary burdens upon both ourselves and others, and leads to the neglect of the spiritual life.

—Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Race Street), 1927

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Poverty does not mean scorn for goods and property. It means the strict limitation of goods that are for personal use.... It means a horror of war, first because it ruins human life and health and the beauty of the earth, but second because it destroys goods that could be used to relieve misery and hardship and to give joy. It means a distaste even for the small carelessnesses that we see prevalent, so

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that beautiful and useful things are allowed to become dirty and battered through lack of respect for them.

—Mildred Binns Young, 1956

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Love silence, even in the mind.... Much speaking, as much thinking, spends; and in many thoughts, as well as words, there is sin. True silence is the rest of the mind; and is to the spirit, what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment.

—William Penn, 1699

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I wish I might emphasize how a life becomes simplified when dominated by faithfulness to a few concerns. Too many of us have too many irons in the fire. We get distracted by the intellectual claim to our interest in a thousand and one good things, and before we know it we are pulled and hauled breathlessly along by an overburdened program of good committees and good undertakings. I am persuaded that this fevered life of church workers is not wholesome.... The concern-oriented life is ordered and organized from within. And we learn to say No as well as Yes by attending to the guidance of inner responsibility. Quaker simplicity needs to be expressed not merely in dress and architecture and the height of tombstones but also in the structure of a relatively simplified and coordinated life-program of social responsibilities. And I am persuaded that concerns introduce that simplification, and along with it that intensification which we need in opposition to the hurried, superficial tendencies of our age.

—Thomas Kelly, 1941

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The testimony of outward simplicity began as a protest against the extravagance and snobbery which marked English society in the 1600s. In whatever forms this protest is maintained today, it must still be seen as a testimony against involvement with things which tend to dilute our energies and scatter our thoughts, reducing us to lives of triviality and mediocrity.

Simplicity does not mean drabness or narrowness but is essentially positive, being the capacity for selectivity in one who holds attention on the goal. Thus simplicity is an appreciation of all that is helpful towards living as children of the Living God.

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—North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative), 1983

### ***Equality-Community***

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Dear Friends, With my love to you all, in God’s holy peaceable Truth, and my desires are that you may all be kept careful of God’s glory. Now in your settling of plantations and provinces, and especially in woody countries, you may have many trials and troubles, but if you keep in the wisdom of God, that will keep you both gentle, and kind, and easy to be entreated one of another, and that will preserve you out of heats, or extremes, or passions.

And I desire that you may be very kind and courteous to all in necessity, in the love of God; for there are many people [going] over to your countries, some poor and some rich; and so, many eyes are upon you. And therefore my desire is that you may all be careful in the love of God, and in his truth and righteousness, as the family of God, and be careful and tender to all your servants in all respects.

And dear Friends, I desire that you would send over an account by the next ship how many Meetings you have, and let us know how Truth spreads and prospers amongst you; which you would do well to write every year, to the Yearly Meeting at London.

—George Fox, 1682

242

We know ourselves as individuals but only because we live in community. Love, trust, fellowship, selflessness are all mediated to us through our interdependence. Just as we could not live physically without each other, we cannot live spiritually in isolation. We are individually free but also communally bound. We cannot act without affecting others and others cannot act without affecting us. We know ourselves as we are reflected in the faces, action and attitudes of each other.

—Janet Scott, 1980

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How many... women or men have come to Quakerism for its historic and contemporary support of the equality of all persons is hard to judge. The Quaker stress on individual responsibility and individual faithfulness makes it a demanding religious path. Friends do not expect to become a mass movement in the foreseeable

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

future.... [There is] a long parade of Quaker women who have acted on the basis of the Light, sure that more light will come. It is a strengthening and liberating belief. From Margaret Fell to Mary Fisher, Mary Dyer, Elizabeth Haddon, Susanna Morris, Charity Cook, Rebecca Jones, Angelina and Sara Grimke, Sarah Douglass, Abby Kelley Foster, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Comstock, Hannah Bean, Rhoda Coffin, Emma Malone, Susan B. Anthony, Ann Branson, Mary Meredith Hobbs, Sybil Jones, Hannah Whitall Smith, Alice Paul, Emily Green Balch, Kay Camp, Elise Boulding, Kara Cole, and Mary Ann Beall, the parade continues, bringing to each generation the same message, that in Christ there is neither male nor female, and in souls there is no sex.

—Margaret Hope Bacon, 1986

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Friends recognize that much of the misunderstanding, fear, and hatred in the world stems from the common tendency to see national, religious, and racial groups as blocks, forgetting the varied and precious individuals who compose them. Differences between individuals, and between groups, are to be prized as part of the variety of divine creation. Every person should be free to cultivate his individual characteristics and his sense of belonging to a racial or cultural group as long as by so doing he does no violence to any one in the human family. Only when differences are the basis for feelings of superiority do they become barriers of hate and fear.

—Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1969

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[A participant in a survey on the stewardship of wealth] saw a broader concern—the contrast between our pretensions to universal brother- and sisterhood and the embarrassing fact that we have signally failed to attract into membership the wealthy, the working class, ethnic minorities, and a lot of others. There is a sad irony in our continually reaching out to fellow human beings in other countries when we have so conspicuously failed to establish communion with so many of our neighbors. The critical question: do we really believe Jesus’ eye-of-the-needle metaphor about the rich? If so, are we willing to accept its implications for Friends’ institutions?

—Kingdon Swayne, 1985

## *Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5*

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Love is a reciprocal relationship between independent personalities, each with rights and spheres of interest. So it is with groups—a proper loving relationship between groups must be based on their rights to co-exist and influence matters in their own spheres of interest. I do not see such group existence and group power as inconsistent with a loving relationship, but rather as the proper basis for such a relationship.

Our task then is not to oppose group differences or legitimate group power, i.e. power which does not place one group in a position of dominance or privilege with respect to another, but to welcome such diversity and reciprocity as the basis of creative dialogue in a spirit of love....

In order to be true to this goal, and to our own values as Quakers and Christians, we need to act in love, truth and responsibility, but also with frankness and radical strength of purpose.

—A. Barrie Pittock, 1969

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Looking at the historical expressions of gospel order raises provocative questions for the community of faith, particularly in regard to the nature of corporate commitment and the role of structure in faithful living. If, indeed, a living relationship with Christ is the basis of gospel order, what does it mean today to be a committed people in covenantal relationship with Christ? What does it mean to practice the mutual accountability that keeps this relationship alive? Do our lives with each other in our meetings and homes reflect fidelity, love, and trust? Can we reclaim the socio-economic and political dimension of gospel order? Can we participate corporately in God’s new order in a way that will allow our love to speak to a world dying from environmental destruction, violence, hatred, and entrenched systems of economic exploitation and injustice?

If the historical experience of Friends is applicable today, then corporate life needs pattern and structure to support faithful living. In turn, structures need care to prevent them from withering or becoming oppressive. Communities of commitment need to see what forms the patterns of faithfulness and the ministry of caring oversight will take today.

—Sandra Cronk, 1991

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The duty of the Society of Friends is to be the voice of the oppressed but [also] to be conscious that we ourselves are part of that oppression. Uncomfortable we stand with one foot in the kingdom of this world and with the other in the Eternal Kingdom. Seldom can we keep the inward and outward working of love in balance, let alone the consciousness of living both in time and in eternity, in timelessness. Let us not be beguiled into thinking that political action is all that is asked of us, nor that our personal relationship with God excuses us from actively confronting the evil in this world. The political and social struggles must be waged, but a person is more and needs more than politics, else we are in danger of gaining the whole world but losing our souls.

—Eva I. Pinthus, 1987

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Racism is one of the great evils of our times—as evil as war itself. It is at the root of strife in our city ghettos and of the guerilla warfare that has plagued Latin America and other parts of the world. John Woolman saw clearly that “The seeds of war have nourishment in the daily lives of men....”

The destructive nature of racism was made visible to the world when Hitler, acting on the theory of the inferiority of Jews and Eastern Europeans, invented Nazism—a system of segregation, exploitation, subjugation, and brutal physical atrocities which shocked the world. War resulted. Quaker pacifists rightly objected to our governments’ participation in the war. But was our objection as firmly spoken to the underlying causes of the war?—to the glaring examples of racism as practiced in Nazi Germany; and to the insidious practices of racism in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the West Indies, and the United States—practices in which we all have shared. It was these pervasive practices of racism everywhere that lent support to the Master Race theory of the Nazis and Fascists, and that led to the most destructive war in the long history of violence.

—Barrington Dunbar, 1969

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Friends have always been especially sensitive to and questioning about the ways in which human beings relate to each other, in a continuing re-examination of their own inner and outer

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

relationships. This consistent component of Quakerism has resulted in the equally consistent and insistent habit Friends have of looking upon and treating all human beings as persons, regardless of age, color, economic status, religion, occupation, or gender.

—Mary Calderone, 1989

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We are much concerned about the whole content of human relationship, about the meaning of “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” in the full range and depth of its implications. Loving does not merely mean doing good works; it goes further than feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. It means warmth and intimacy, open-heartedness and overwhelming generosity of hand and spirit. It means a desire to know and a courageous willingness to be known. Loving implies commitment to the other person, involvement in that person’s life, whatever it may cost in suffering, whether that suffering comes through being repudiated or through identification and sharing.

The life of society desperately needs this warmth of giving and receiving. Everywhere we see sociability without commitment or intimacy, and especially in our towns, intense isolation and loneliness. We see human energy that should be creative and loving deflected into activities that are coldly power-seeking; we see love inhibited, frustrated, or denied, turning into its opposite—into ruthlessness and aggression.

—Quaker Home Service, London Yearly Meeting, 1961

252

Care of the children of the meeting should be the responsibility of every Friend. Let us share with our children a sense of adventure, of wonder, and of trust and let them know that, in facing the mysteries of life, they are surrounded by love. Both parents and meetings need to guard against letting other commitments deprive children of the time and attention they need. Friends are advised to seek for children the full development of God’s gifts, which is true education.

—*Revised Faith and Practice*, New England Yearly Meeting, 1985

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I hope the Society may be a community to which may turn: acknowledged Christians seeking an alternative to their present

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church; the searching humanist who comes to feel that there may be some power outside ourselves but who reacts violently against set forms and rigorous theology; the rationalist who begins to see that it is possible for a power to exist beyond the possibility of reasoning proof, but not in conflict with reason; someone from another culture who can respond to our approach....

—David Hodgkin, 1971

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It is a matter of grave anxiety that torture and secret imprisonment are being used by many governments, anti-government groups, and others to extract information, to suppress criticism, and to intimidate opposition, so that throughout the world countless numbers of men and women and children are suffering inhuman treatment. We believe in the worth of every individual as a child of God, and that no circumstances whatsoever can justify practices intended to break bodies, minds and spirits.

Both tortured and torturer are victims of the evil from which no human being is immune. Friends, however, believe that the life and power of God are greater than evil, and in that life and power declare their opposition to all torture. The Society calls on all its members, as well as those of all religious and other organisations, to create a force of public opinion which will oblige those responsible to dismantle everywhere the administrative apparatus which permits or encourages torture, and to observe effectively those international agreements under which its use is strictly forbidden.

—Friends World Committee for Consultation, 1976

255

Our monthly and quarterly meetings were set up for reproving and looking into superfluous or disorderly walking, and such to be admonished and instructed in the truth, and not private persons to take upon them to make orders, and say this must be done and the other must not be done.... we must look at no colours, nor make anything that is changeable colours as the hills are, nor sell them, nor wear them: but we must all be in one dress and one colour.

This is a silly poor gospel! It is more fit for us to be covered with God’s eternal Spirit, and clothed with his eternal Light, which leads us and guides us into righteousness, and to live righteously and justly and holily in this present evil world. This is the clothing that God puts upon us, and likes, and will bless.

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—Margaret Fell, 1700

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The spirituality that is real to us finds its inner strength in the mystical experience of connectedness with each other and with the whole of creation. This is the deep, still, and vibrant centre that transcends time. From that dynamic place it is possible to turn outwards and work in one’s own available and chosen action spaces to help make manifest the harmony that is already known.

—Jillian Wychel and David James, 1991

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Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.

—Isaac Pennington, 1667

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Surely, one of the most moving days in my worship group was the day after we’d had a particularly Western-style argument that hadn’t gotten us any place. After the argument the leader asked, “How would Friends like to structure this tomorrow?” In a touchingly quiet voice, a Kenyan woman said, “I would like an evangelical ....” The next day, we sang several hymns together, picking out unfamiliar tunes tentatively, hearing each other’s voices, as we tried to blend ourselves into something that sounded like music. Then we took turns reading the Book of James in our different voices, different accents, and different languages.

As we read those remarkable and moving words, a magical thing happened that I hadn’t experienced for many years. It had something to do with people reading the Bible together, the way those timeless words can take us outside ourselves and center us on what really counts. Somewhere along in there, we also began to hear each other in different ways, as we laid aside our opinions and really listened.

—Melissa Kay Elliott, 1991

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Are we too fearful of those with ideas different from our own? In one Meeting, the issue of whether or not to offer sanctuary to a refugee is a sword that divides people. Or our relationships may be severed due to differences in the way we interpret the Spirit guiding us or how we refer to God, whether in masculine or inclusive imagery. Quaker men and women who see military service as an integral and necessary part of American life are often branded as “strangers” in their Quaker community. Whether we define the Society of Friends in an inclusive or exclusive way will, in large measure, determine whether we grow, spiritually as well as numerically.

—Nancy Alexander, 1987

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Our language is often more revealing of our inner understandings than we realize. In recent years many Friends and Friends meetings have shifted terminology from “Social Order” to “Social Concerns”; Social Order committees have become Social Concerns committees, and Friends speak more of particular concerns than of a vision of divine social order. The former terminology speaks to Friends understanding that there is a Gospel Order, a Divine harmony intended for creation, in which human affairs can and should share.... Friends have lost the power of the vision of a social order which encompasses all of human society and which from its divine inspiration draws the power to transform all of society. This vision, and the inner transformation which enables one to see it and live in it, has the power needed to address the root causes of all our society’s problems. In contrast the social concern approach does not carry with it a comprehensive concern; one is soon confronted with the need for a society-wide change in values that the visionless social concern approach cannot address.

—Lloyd Lee Wilson, 1993

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If we take seriously the nurture of our children in the worshiping group, we must start by re-appraising the whole life of the group. What kind of communication exists between us all? Do we know one another as people sharing joys and sorrows?

Do we have enough confidence in each other to know that our problems as well as our convictions and uncertainties can be shared

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with understanding? How is the child and the stranger received amongst us? Do we see our young people as individuals we want to know and care for and do we provide opportunities when they can get to know and care for us? Are they encouraged to feel that they have much to give us, that we value them and are the poorer without the insights and questioning they provide? Are we across all the ages a community learning together? Do we consciously look for experiences which can be shared by the whole community? Children and young people need their own peer groups but are encouragingly appreciative of the whole group sharing when they feel an integral part of it and can share in situations which deepen relationships and form lasting friendships. Part of that sharing is learning to know of our past as Quakers, our Christian roots, but even more necessary is the sharing of what we as Quakers believe today and how this should be shaping our lives both individually and corporately.

—Peggy McGeoghegan, 1976

262

The roots of war can be taken away from all our lives, as they were long ago in Francis of Assisi and John Woolman. Day by day let us seek out and remove every seed of hatred and greed, of resentment and of grudging, in our own selves and in the social structure about us. Christ’s way of freedom replaces slavish obedience by fellowship. Instead of an external compulsion He gives an inward authority. Instead of self-seeking, we must put sacrifice; instead of domination, co-operation. Fear and suspicion must give place to trust and the spirit of understanding. Thus shall we more and more become friends to all... and our lives will be filled with the joy which true friendship never fails to bring. Surely this is the way in which Christ calls us to overcome the barriers of race and class and thus to make of all humanity a society of friends.

—All Friends Conference, London, Devonshire House, 1920

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Our gracious Creator cares and provides for all his creatures. His tender mercies are over all his works; and, so far as his love influences our minds, so far we become interested in his workmanship and feel a desire to take hold of every opportunity to lessen the distresses of the afflicted and increase the happiness of the creation. Here we have a prospect of one common interest from which our own is inseparable, that to turn all the treasures we

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possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives.

—John Woolman, 1763

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

—Caroline E. Stephen, 1890

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I ... was early convinced in my mind that true religion consisted in an inward life, wherein the heart doth love and reverence God the Creator and learn to exercise true justice and goodness, not only toward all men but also toward the brute creatures; that as the mind was moved on an inward principle to love God as an invisible, incomprehensible being, on the same principle it was moved to love him in all his manifestations in the visible world; that as by his breath the flame of life was kindled in all animal and sensitive creatures, to say we love God as unseen and at the same time exercise cruelty toward the least creature moving by his life, or by life derived from him, was a contradiction in itself.

—John Woolman, c. 1765

266

Africa is full of discussions on democracy. We are telling our politicians that we do not want them to rule forever.... All of us say yes, we don’t want this to happen. But look at our churches; look at our churches! The Kenyan situation: nobody wants to stop being chairman of some committee; nobody wants to give up being general secretary of one thing or another. We have become so preoccupied with power politics that we have lost the message of Quakerism as a community of believers who recognize we do not have bishops, we do not have popes, because we believe in the equal priesthood. If we who have been exposed to the Light cannot deal with each other peacefully, democratically, how do we expect those who have never

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been exposed to the Light to do it?

—Miriam Were, 1992

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Living out the immanent and transcendent aspects of spirituality as a Friend has never been a private matter. Quaker structures depend on the shared inward experiences of members as the basis for worship, the ordering of business, and social and humanitarian action. The Quaker way takes on faith the seemingly irrational proposition that the inspirations of individuals can lead a community to unity and spiritual power, not to chaos and dismemberment.

—Ursula Jane O’Shea, 1993

268

As Quaker women become aware of the sexism in the society in which we live, and which they have for so long taken for granted as natural and normal, they are turning to their history to find out where they started and what has gone wrong, and they are joining together and preparing themselves to take their rightful place as sisters in the new movement (feminism), contributing their own unique gifts of spiritual sensitivity to a movement that needs spiritual dimensions. They have caught the vision of the formation of a new society, once men and women alike escape the stereotyped roles of [gender]—a society where man need not prove his manhood by war and by acquisition, where he is free to be tender as women are free to be strong. They will be ready, perhaps soon, to join hands and walk cheerfully over the land, answering that of God in everyone.

—Margaret Hope Bacon, 1974

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We have been reminded vividly that women live under cultural, political, and economic oppression. All humanity is lessened by it; we are unwilling to tolerate its perpetuation, and must continue to work for justice and peace in the world....

We hope that we will act as leaven in our local meetings, churches, and yearly meetings, so that Quaker women everywhere will be encouraged by our new understanding. As we grow in solidarity with one another, enriched by how we express our faith, we will all be enabled to surmount the cultural, economic, and

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political barriers that prevent us from discerning and following the ways in which God leads us. We honour the lives of our Quaker foremothers as patterns which help us recognise our own leadings. Their commitment, dedication, and courage remain as worthy standards. May our lives be used as theirs were to give leadership to women everywhere to be vehicles of the love of God. We share a deep love for all creation, and cry with the pain of its desecration. We must realise we are a part of the natural world and examine our lives in order to change those attitudes which lead to domination and exploitation.

—*Epistle*, First International Theological Conference of Quaker Women, Woodbrooke, England, 1990

### ***Integrity***

270

One thing I understand now is that one’s intellect alone won’t pull one through, and that the greatest service it can perform is to open a window for that thing we call the divine spirit. If one trusts to it alone, it’s like trusting to an artificial system of ventilation—correct in theory but musty in practice. How I wish it were as easy to throw everything open to the spirit of God as it is to fresh air.

—Hilda Clark, 1908

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Whichever sphere of activity we are involved in, we have to be responsive to the Spirit’s leadings and try to put into practice our deepest beliefs, for our faith is a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week faith, which is not excluded from our workplace, wherever that may be. Everything in the end can be distilled to relationships—our relationships with each other and the earth. Our work must benefit our relationships rather than damage them, and we must ensure that neither the earth nor other people are exploited. Caring, not exploitation, is the key.

—Jane Stokes, 1992

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Friends are advised to consider our possessions as God’s gifts, entrusted to us for responsible use. Let us free our time and our abilities to be able to follow the leadings of the Spirit. Let us cherish the beauty and variety of the world. Friends are urged to speak

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boldly against the destruction of the world’s resources and the difficulties that destruction prepares for the future generations. Let us guard against waste and resist our extravagant consumption, which contributes to inequities and impoverishment of life in our own and other societies. Let us show a loving consideration for all God’s creatures. Let kindness know no limits....

We are aware that there is no separation between caring for the land and caring for our fellow human beings, and the exploitation of the earth and the exploitation of human beings are part of the same sickness: a lack of connections among one another. Racism, sexism, pollution, drug abuse, causing the extinction of species, and war are all results of that disconnectedness.

—*Faith and Practice*, New England Yearly Meeting, 1985

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From time to time ... adherence to factual truth can give rise to profound dilemmas for Quaker Peace & Service workers if they are in possession of information which could be used to endanger people’s lives or give rise to the abuse of fundamental human rights.... Some of us are clear that in certain difficult circumstances we may still uphold our testimony to truthfulness while at the same time declining to disclose confidences which we have properly accepted. Such withholding of the whole truth is not an option to be undertaken lightly as a convenient way out of a dilemma. We all accept that ultimately it is up to an individual’s own conscience, held in the Light, to decide how to respond.

—Quaker Peace and Service, London Yearly Meeting, 1992

274

A God we cannot be honest with is no God. If we bow the head and say, Thy will be done, when our heart is aflame with protest, we only increase our own pain. Better to rail, rail on God at the passing into night of this small sweet innocence than to assume unreal acceptance. And then, with small steps, treading the way of sorrows, we may gradually, or perhaps with blinding suddenness, look up from the dark road and see—see that He has been treading the Way with us, holding us when we faltered, giving us the strength to go hesitatingly forward.

—Sheila Bovell, 1988

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Where people love money and their hearts are ensnared with imaginary greatness, the disease frequently spreads from one to another, and children indulged in those wants which proceed from the this spirit, have often wants of the same kind in a much larger degree when they grow up to be men and women, and their parents are often entangled in contriving means to supply them with estates to live answerable to those expensive customs, which very early in life have taken hold of their minds.

In contriving to raise estates on these motives, how often are the minds of parents bewildered, perplexed, and drawn into ways and means to get money, which increase the difficulties of poor people who maintain their families by the labor of their hands?

A man may intend to lay up wealth for his children, but may not intend to oppress; yet in this fixed intention to increase his estate, the working of his designs may cause the bread of the needy to fail; and at the same time their hardships remain unnoticed by him.  
—John Woolman, 1772

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Remember then—O my soul!—the quietude of those in whom Christ governs, and in all thy proceedings feel after it.

Doth he condescend to bless thee with his presence? To move and influence to action? To dwell in thee and walk in thee? Remember then thy station as being sacred to God, accept of the strength freely offered thee, and take heed that no weakness in conforming to expensive, unwise, and hard-hearted customs, gendering to discord and strife, be given way to.

Does he claim my body as his temple and graciously grant that I may be sacred to him? Oh! that I may prize this favour and that my whole life may be conformable to this character!

Remember, O my soul, that the Prince of Peace is thy Lord; that he communicated his wisdom to his family, that they, living in perfect simplicity, may give no just cause of offence to any creature, but that they may walk as he walked.  
—John Woolman, 1764

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I have never outgrown a sort of naive surprise and delight which I felt when I found out that there is one single thing that one can have without limit and not deprive anyone else—the love of God,

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His Presence.

—Mildred Binns Young, 1961

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All sorts of things “work” for us...as St. Paul declared. Not only does love “work”, and faith and grace, but tribulation “works”, and affliction, and the seemingly hostile forces which block and buffet and hamper us. Everything that drives us deeper, that draws us closer to the great resources of life, that puts vigor into our frame and character into our souls, is in the last resort a blessing to us, even though it seems on superficial examination to be the work of an “enemy”; and we shall be wise if we learn to love the “enemies” that give us the chance to overcome and to attain our true destiny. Perhaps the dualism of the universe is not quite as sharp as the old Persians thought. Perhaps too the love of God reaches further under than we sometimes suppose. Perhaps in fact all things “work together for good,” and even the enemy forces are helping to achieve the ultimate good that shall be revealed “when God hath made the pile complete.”

—Rufus Jones, 1961

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The catch is, we can’t love God without loving our neighbor: whoever is next to us at this moment in time. We have to love, really love, with that same love we feel pouring into and loving us.

Some are easy to love. With some we feel at home. We run to them in joy. But we learn as we go that love is for each other one we encounter: those who are easy to love and those who are difficult. The love we feel loving us is as much for those who wound and betray us, and for those we perceive as “enemies”, as it is for ourselves. This love is for the lost and the broken; the cantankerous, ugly, and lonely; yes, and even the brutal, the murderous, and cruel. If we are to love God we must love them as well, not for their cruelties, but for the hidden Seed that would live and grow in them. We, who are loved with a love that will not let us go, are to let that same love flow through us into the world.

—Carol Reilley Urner, 1994

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We have to be reminded that spirituality is not a separate compartment of life but life itself and...what is ordinary is the major

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part of our lives.... Ordinariness can be radical: it gets to the root of knowing God in everyday life.

—Kathryn Damiano, 1996

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I said to one of the Cuban Friends, “It must be hard to be a Christian in Cuba.” He smiled, “Not as hard as it is in the United States,” he said. Of course, I asked why he said that, and he went on, “You are tempted by three idols that do not tempt us. One is affluence, which we do not have. Another is power, which we also do not have. The third is technology, which again we do not have. Furthermore, when you join a church or a meeting, you gain in social acceptance and respectability. When we join, we lose those things, so we must be very clear about what we believe and what the commitment is that we are prepared to make.”

—Gordon M. Browne, Jr., 1989

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There are few human activities in which perfection is possible; for in most things the human limitations of knowledge, time, energy, skill, and motive impede us; only in the arts do they work for us, so that we can truly say of certain works of music, poetry, painting, sculpture, and architecture that we can neither wish nor imagine them otherwise. When we find this degree of perfection and are able to respond to it, they become in sober truth a revelation of the divine in the sense that Jesus was: human yet complete.

—John Ormerod Greenwood, 1978

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God’s revelations are more likely to be perceived and used to better advantage if the body has been trained for health, the hand for work, the mind for thought, and if the attention has been directed toward spiritual truth.

... When called to serve in public office, Friends should consider the public good rather than personal preference and convenience.

—Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Race Street), 1927

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The love of money is apt to increase almost imperceptibly. That which was at first laboured after under pressure of necessary duty, may, without great watchfulness, steal upon the affections and

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gradually withdraw the heart from God. The danger depends not upon how much a man has, but upon how much his heart is set upon what he has, and upon accumulating more.

—London Yearly Meeting, 1858

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Friends, whatever ye are addicted to, the tempter will come in that thing; and when he can trouble you, then he gets advantage over you, and then you are gone. Stand still in that which is pure, after ye see yourselves; and then mercy comes in. After thou seest thy thoughts, and the temptations, do not think, but submit, and then power comes. Stand still in that which shows and discovers; and there doth strength immediately come. And stand still in the Light, and submit to it, and the other hushed and gone; and then content comes.

—George Fox, 1652

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We seem to be at a turning point in human history. We can choose life or watch the planet become uninhabitable for our species. Somehow, I believe that we will pass through this dark night of our planetary soul to a new period of harmony with the God that is to be found within each of us, and that S/He will inspire renewed confidence in people everywhere, empowering us all to cooperate to use our skills, our wisdom, our creativity, our love, our faith—even our doubts and fears—to make peace with the planet. Strengthened by this fragile faith, empowered by the Spirit within, I dare to hope.

—Pat Saunders, 1987

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As to our own planet which God has given us for a dwelling place, we must be mindful that it is given in stewardship. The power over nature that scientific knowledge has put into our hands, if used in lust or greed, fear or hatred, can bring us to utter destruction. Now as never before we have the choice of life and death. If we choose life we may now feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and heal the sick on a world scale, thus creating new conditions for spiritual advancement so often till now prevented by want. Many of our resources—of oil, of coal, and of uranium—are limited. If by condoning waste and luxury we overspend the allowance God has

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given us, our children’s children will be cheated of their inheritance....

—Norfolk, Cambs., & Hunts Quarterly Meeting, London Yearly Meeting, 1957

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...that if any be called to serve the commonwealth in any public service, which is for the public wealth and good, that with cheerfulness it be undertaken, and in faithfulness discharged unto God.

—Meeting of Elders, Balby, Yorkshire, England, 1656

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To the present distracted and broken nation: We are not for names, nor men, nor titles of Government, nor are we for this party nor against the other . . . but we are for justice and mercy and truth and peace and true freedom, that these may be exalted in our nation, and that goodness, righteousness, meekness, temperance, peace, and unity with God and with one another, that these things may abound.

—Edward Burrough, 1659

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

—William Penn, 1693

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Many yearly meetings hold very strong testimonies against any use of tobacco or alcohol. Within Britain Yearly Meeting some Friends advocate total abstinence from alcohol, others counsel moderation. Those who smoke tobacco, drink alcohol, or abuse other substances risk damage to their own health, and may hurt or endanger other people. Such use can deaden a person’s sensitivity and response to others and to God. Consider whether you should

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

avoid these products altogether, discourage their use in others, especially young people, and refrain from any share in their manufacture or sale. Maintain your own integrity and do not let social pressures influence your decisions.

—Britain Yearly Meeting, 1994

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We no longer need to dominate or take pride of place in respect to any other creature. We can abandon the urge to rule at the office, at church, or at home. We can treat everything God has made with gentleness and generosity, rather than with grasping greed. In joyful dependence, we can grow to be as fully human as possible, as thoroughly in the image of God as we are intended to be. In reflecting the creativity and love of God, we can delight to sing and invent, to work and to love. We can write poetry and tell stories, show mercy to one another and make one another laugh. Having given up the burden of usurping the Creator’s throne, we are now free to become who we are and to let our creaturely lives themselves, yielded gladly to God’s will, shout praise to their Maker.

—Howard R. Macy, 1988

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Commonalities exist between addictive behaviours with these substances and other compulsive actions such as in the areas of eating disorders, gambling, overwork, and physical abuse. The causes go deep and may not be fully understood; but the resulting pain, fear, desperation, and denial, damaging the abuser and all around that person, need to be supportively recognized. A meeting community should be ready to listen non-judgmentally, offer information about sources of help, refuse to enable people to continue in harmful patterns, and continue to offer an environment free from addictive practices.

—*Faith and Practice*, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, 1988

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We feel that we should at this time declare once again our unwavering opposition to capital punishment. The sanctity of human life is one of the fundamentals of a Christian society and can in no circumstances be set aside. Our concern, therefore, is for all victims of violence, not only the murderer but also those who suffer by his act.

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

The sanctioning by the State of the taking of human life has a debasing effect on the community, and tends to produce the very brutality which it seeks to prevent. We realise that many are sincerely afraid of the consequences if the death penalty is abolished, but we are convinced that their fears are unjustified.

—London Yearly Meeting, 1956

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In the light of the resumption of executions in Pennsylvania after a hiatus of thirty-three years, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends reaffirms its opposition to capital punishment, which has been a deeply felt testimony of Friends since the establishment of our Religious Society in the seventeenth century.

We believe that the deliberate taking of human life by the state, under any circumstances, is an absolute and irrevocable denial that there is that of God in everyone.

We urge all persons to press actively for the abolition of the death penalty and to do so as a part of a broader effort to ensure equal justice for all.

—Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Representative Meeting, 1995

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We are faced at every hand with enticements to risk money in anticipation of disproportionate gain through gambling. Some governments employ gambling as a means of raising revenue, even presenting it as a civic virtue. The Religious Society of Friends continues to bear testimony against betting, gambling, lotteries, speculation, or any other endeavor to receive material gain without equivalent exchange, believing that we owe an honest return for what we receive.

—*Faith and Practice*, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, 1988

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Life is one. There is an invisible spiritual aspect and a visible material aspect of the same life. This life includes the whole world and all there is in it. Each aspect has its peculiar function: but the spiritual and the material are inextricably one. Each is to be known in and through the other. The material is infused with the spiritual. The spiritual is intrinsic to the material. In this scientific age we have tended to think that we could understand the world through

## *Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5*

the material aspect alone, but this one-sided approach to the real world may well prove disastrous. Many are alienated from the attempt to know the spiritual because to them it seems to be relegated to a world other than, separate from, the one in which we appear to live. Mysticism, the word used to describe the apprehension of the spiritual, is regarded by ordinary men and women as occult, abnormal, and unavailable even if they wanted it. But mysticism is the key to the whole. It is the recognition that there is a point of convergence of the material and spiritual qualities of man and the world.

—Dan Wilson, 1951

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## **The Queries**

Queries are an approach that Friends use to guide self-examination, using them not as an outward set of rules but as a framework within which we assess our convictions and examine, clarify, and consider prayerfully the direction of our lives and the life of our spiritual community.

Rooted in the history of Friends, the Queries reflect the Quaker way of life, reminding Friends of the ideals we seek to attain. While the text of the Queries has changed somewhat over the years, it has been marked by consistency of convictions and concerns within Friends testimonies – simplicity, peace, integrity, stewardship, equality and community – as well as by strength derived from worship, ministry and social conscience.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice includes twelve Queries. Most meetings consider one Query each month during worship and meetings for business. Each Query consists of two sections: one pertaining to the corporate life of the meeting; the other pertaining to individual reflection. Many meetings read the Query aloud during a meeting for business each month and set aside time for corporate discernment and reflection. Other meetings publish the Query in their newsletters for members and attenders to consider on their own.

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## **Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5**

<http://www.pym.org/faith-and-practice/queries/6-equality/>

### **6. Equality**

How does our Meeting help to create and maintain a society whose institutions recognize and do away with the inequities rooted in patterns of prejudice and economic convenience?

Is our Meeting open to all regardless of race, ability, sexual orientation, or class?

What steps are we taking as a Meeting to assure that our Meeting and the committees and institutions under our care reflect our respect for all and are free from practices rooted in prejudice?

*Do I examine myself for aspects of prejudice that may be buried, including beliefs that seem to justify biases based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, class, and feelings of inferiority or superiority?*

*What am I doing to help overcome the contemporary effects of past and present oppression?*

*Am I teaching my children, and do I show through my way of living, that love of God includes affirming the equality of people, treating others with dignity and respect, and seeking to recognize and address that of God within every person?*

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<http://www.pym.org/faith-and-practice/queries/7-social-responsibility-and-witness/>

### **7. Social Responsibility and Witness**

How does our Meeting work:

- to overcome social, legal, economic, and political injustices, locally and in the wider world?
- for the funding of community services that does not rely on gaming income?

Does our Meeting serve the community through action on concerns for civic improvement? What actions are we taking to assure everyone equal access to education, health care, legal services, housing, and employment as well as equal opportunities in business and in the professions?

When a member has lifted up a concern, how does our Meeting respond?

Does our Meeting encourage those seeking clearness for their convictions of conscience to hold up such convictions with prayerful

## **Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5**

openness to the Light?

*Am I mindful of how my lifestyle and my investments can contribute to the improvement of the human condition, or to the exploitation of others?*

*Am I open to seeking clearness on matters of conscience and to assisting others in doing so? How do I respond and support one who acts out of a clear leading when I am under the weight of another?*

*What am I doing to work for the betterment of my community to assure the maintenance of effective public services which do not rely on funding from gaming?*

*Do I fulfill my civic responsibilities when they do not conflict with divine leadings?*

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<http://www.pym.org/faith-and-practice/queries/8-peace/>

### **8. Peace**

How does our Meeting act to advance peace, to oppose violence, and to support the constructive use of authority in our community, our nation, and the world?

What are we doing as a Meeting:

- to free our nation from militarization, so evident in our society and in its economy?
- to understand the causes of war and violence and to work for the development of the attitudes and institutions of peace?
- to recognize and correct the causes of violence within our communities, and to work toward overcoming separations and restoring wholeness?
- to increase the understanding and use of nonviolent approaches for the resolution of conflicts?

*Do I live in the power of that Life and Spirit that takes away the occasion of all wars?*

*How do I maintain Friends' testimony that military training and all participation in war and its preparation are inconsistent with the teaching and the spirit of Christ?*

*Do I work for the establishment of alternative ways of settling disputes? Am I aware that to build a world community requires that we all face our differences honestly, openly, and in trust?*

*Do I treat conflict as an opportunity for growth, and address it with careful attention? Do I seek to recognize and respect the Divine in those with whom I have a basic disagreement? Do I look for ways to*

## **Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5**

*reaffirm in action and attitude my love for the one with whom I am in conflict?*

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<http://www.pym.org/faith-and-practice/queries/10-stewardship-of-the-environment/>

### **10. Stewardship of the Environment**

Is the Meeting concerned that human interaction with nature be responsible, guided by a reverence for life and a sense of the splendor of God’s continuing creation?

Are the decisions of the Meeting and its committees relating to the uses of property, goods, services, and energy made with sensitivity toward the environmental impact of those choices?

How does our Meeting learn about environmental concerns and then act in the community on its concerns?

*How am I helping to develop a social, economic, and political system which will nurture an environment which sustains and enriches life for all?*

*Am I aware of the place of water, air, and soil in my life? Do I consider with care the necessity of purchasing substances hazardous to the environment? Do I act as a faithful steward of the environment in the use and disposal of such hazardous substances?*

*Do I choose with care the use of technology and devices that truly simplify and add quality to my life without adding an undue burden to essential resources?*

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<http://www.pym.org/faith-and-practice/queries/11-stewardship-of-resources/>

### **11. Stewardship of Resources**

Does our Meeting serve social and economic justice in its uses of property and money?

How does our Meeting engage its members in the support of the Meeting’s work, its ministry, and the upkeep of its property?

How does our Meeting engage its members in the support of the quarterly and yearly meetings and other Quaker organizations?

To what extent does our Meeting rely on current members for financial support, and what role does endowment income serve? Does the Meeting consider carefully the appropriate role of invested funds?

## **Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5**

*Am I clear that I am the steward, not the owner, of property in my care?*

*Do I simplify my needs, making choices that balance self-sufficiency (to avoid unnecessary dependence on others) and fair sharing of resources? Do I make choices as a consumer that support the equitable distribution of income?*

*Do my employment and other activities allow for use of time and energy in spiritual growth and in service to the Religious Society of Friends?*

*Do I contribute generously within my means to the funding of the work of Friends in my Meeting, in the yearly meeting, and in the wider world of Friends?*

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<http://www.pym.org/faith-and-practice/queries/12-integrity-and-simplicity/>

### **12. Integrity and Simplicity**

What does our Meeting understand to be the meaning and implication of our testimonies on simplicity and integrity?

How do our Meeting’s actions demonstrate this understanding?

As a Meeting, what are we doing to encourage members to embody integrity and simplicity in their everyday lives?

*How do I strive to maintain the integrity of my inner and outer lives—in my spiritual journey, my work, and my family responsibilities? How do I manage my commitments so that overcommitment, worry, and stress do not diminish my integrity?*

*Am I temperate in all things? Am I open to counsel and advice on overindulgence and addictive behavior, such as gambling? Do I take seriously the hazards associated with addictive and mood-altering substances?*

*Am I careful to speak truth as I know it and am I open to truth spoken to me? Am I mindful that judicial oaths imply a double standard of truth?*

*Do I refrain from membership in organizations whose purposes and methods compromise our testimonies?*

## *Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5*

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<http://neym.org/faith-practice/part-2/chapter-3/simplicity-integrity>

### **Simplicity and Integrity**

Central to the Friends’ testimony on simplicity is the injunction to seek first the kingdom of God. In a society that is becoming increasingly more complex, Friends are called to abandon those things which divert them from this goal. They may need to restrain themselves from involvement in many good causes and activities in order to remain true to their inner voice. Simple tastes in possessions and entertainment can do away with rivalry and the false sense of superiority created by undue luxury. A simple lifestyle promotes fullness of life.

Friends’ adherence to a life of simplicity is also rooted in economics and the right sharing of the world’s resources. In the words of William Penn, “the very trimming of the vain would clothe all the naked one.”

Friends profess a genuineness of life and speech which leaves no room for deceit or artificiality. Throughout their history, therefore, they have borne witness against judicial oaths as suggesting a double standard of truth. Devotion to what is true and eternal requires openness, honesty, and careful speech in social, business, and family relationships. As early Friends took care to avoid flattering titles and phrases, modern Friends need to discourage the insincerities and extravagances that are prevalent in their society. With cordiality and kindness, Friends are called to speak the truth, in love.

### ***Quality of the Soul***

In all the best generations of Quakerism, the ideal aim and the controlling expectation of the wiser members have been to live the simple life. It is, of course, a vague and indefinable term. It begins inside with the quality of the soul. It is first and foremost the quality of sincerity, which is the opposite of duplicity or sham. Unclouded honesty at the heart and centre of the man is the true basis of simplicity. This kind of simple life will call, among other things, for an attitude of meekness and humility.

All one needs to do, if he means to be “humble,” is to keep a constant contrast in mind between himself as he now is and that

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larger, truer, richer potential self which he all the time feels hidden away within himself. It involves not merely honesty and sincerity in all the relationships with one's fellow men, but it also calls for utter clarity of spirit in all one's relationships with God.

—Rufus M. Jones: *The faith and practice of the Quakers*, 1927, pp. 90-1.

### ***Beyond Complexity***

The last fruit of holy obedience is the simplicity of the trusting child, the simplicity of the children of God. It is the simplicity which lies beyond complexity. It is the naïveté which is the yonder side of sophistication. It is the beginning of spiritual maturity, which comes after the awkward age of religious busyness for the Kingdom of God yet how many are caught, and arrested in development, within this adolescent development of the soul's growth! The mark of this simplified life is radiant joy. It lives in the Fellowship of the Transfigured Face. Knowing sorrow to the depths it does not agonize and fret and strain, but in serene, unhurried calm it walks in time with the joy and assurance of Eternity.

—Thomas R. Kelly: *A testament of devotion*, 1941, p. 73.

### ***Life Simplified by Concerns***

I wish I might emphasize how a life becomes simplified when dominated by faithfulness to a few concerns. Too many of us have too many irons in the fire. We learn to say No as well as Yes by attending to the guidance of inner responsibility. Quaker simplicity needs to be expressed not merely in dress and architecture and the height of tombstones but also in the structure of a relatively simplified and coordinated life-program of social responsibilities.

—*Ibid.*, p. 110.

### ***Sensitive to God's Call to You***

Incomparably the most important thing is that each one of us should be sensitive to the call of God to ourselves and not spend time in passing judgement on the lives of others. To some the call will be to adopt the witness of great simplicity, perhaps to live in an Indian village or in a London slum. To others the most important thing will be to maintain our ancient testimony against “fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatever.” But

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perhaps most will be called to the humdrum tasks of serving an employer supremely well, or running a house, bringing up a family, keeping the peace with difficult neighbors, serving the community in little things the tasks which, because they are simple, are in fact most difficult to do with dedication.

—Industry and the Social Order Conference: *Preparatory document 5, Christian responsibility and material possessions*, 1958, p. 5.

### ***Not Dependent on Things***

Christianity is tested, not only in the shop and in the office, but also in the home. In the standard of living adopted by the home-makers, in the portion of income devoted to comforts, recreations and luxuries, in willingness to be content with simplicity, the members of a household, both older and younger, may bear witness that there is a Way of Life that does not depend on the abundance of the things possessed.

—*Epistle* of London Y. M., 1911.

### ***Simplicity Promotes Fullness of Life***

All that promotes fullness of life and aids in service for Christ is to be accepted with thanksgiving. Simplicity, when it removes encumbering details, makes for beauty in music, in art and in living. It clears the springs of life and permits wholesome mirth and gladness to bubble up; it cleans the windows of life and lets joy radiate. It requires the avoidance of artificial or harmful social customs and conventions but it opens wide the door to cultivate and express to all sincere cordiality, kindness and friendliness. This sort of simplicity removes barriers and eases tensions. In its presence all can be at ease.

Simplicity is closely akin to sincerity a genuineness of life and speech in which there is no place for sham or artificiality. The care given by early Friends to avoid flattering titles and phrases and to aim for rectitude of speech undoubtedly has done much to turn attention to honesty in the spoken and the written word. Care is needed to avoid and discourage the insincerities and extravagance that are prevalent in the social world. We need also to speak the simple truth, in love, when occasion requires it. Such an attitude does not exclude sincere cordiality and kindness. A life of simplicity and sincerity may be full of activity but it must be a life centered in God.

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—Philadelphia Y. M.: *Faith and practice*, 1961, pp. 22-4

### ***Loyalty Oaths***

Though most law now permits the use of affirmations instead of oaths, for many Friends the prevalence in recent years of loyalty oaths and non-disloyalty disclaimers has added a new dimension to this ancient testimony. Conscientious honesty and Friends’ faithfulness to their testimony against oaths can help create a society based on trust in one’s neighbors and in the validity of their words.

—New England Y. M.: *Faith and Practice*, 1966, p. 147

### ***Swear Not at All***

Advised, that our Christian testimony be faithfully maintained against the burden and imposition of oaths, according to the express prohibition of Christ, and also of the apostle James: “Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths; but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem for it is the city of the great King; neither shalt thou swear by thine head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black; but let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.” “But above all things, my brethren, swear not; neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.”

—London Y. M.: *Christian faith and practice*, 1960, no. 570.

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<http://neym.org/faith-practice/part-2/chapter-4/equality>

### ***Equality***

Friends believe the divine Light is accessible to all people, regardless of race, sex, age, or material wealth. Everyone has the potential to respond to God within. All persons ought to have the opportunity to develop their talents and skills under the leadings of the Spirit. Equality is not sameness. It is equality of respect. Every person is a child of God.

Early Friends refused to acknowledge class distinctions, hence the use of plain language and refusal of hat honor. Education of both

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

men and women was considered essential in order to develop the potential to serve God. Eighteenth and nineteenth century Friends were called to witness against slavery and against the unequal opportunities open to women. Twentieth century Friends have tried to address the problems of racism, women's rights, and the unequal distribution of the world's resources.

### ***God Revealed in Every Person***

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

—Hugh L. Doncaster: *The Quaker message* (Pendle Hill pamphlet, no. 181), 1972, p. 17

### ***Everyone is Equal in the Sight of God***

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

I believe that Meeting for Worship has brought the same awareness to all who have seen and understood the message that everyone is equal in the sight of God, that everybody has the capacity to be the vessel of God's word. There is nothing that age, experience and status can do to pre-judge where and how the Light will appear. This awareness the religious equality of each and every one is central to Friends. Early Friends understood this and at the same time they fully accepted the inseparable unity of life, and spoke against the setting apart of the secular and the sacred. It was thus

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

inevitable that religious equality would be translated into the equality of everyday social behaviour. Friends’ testimony to plain speech and plain dress was both a testimony of religious equality and a testimony of the unacceptability of all other forms of inequality.

—Ursula M. Franklin: *Perspectives on Friends’ testimonies in today’s world* (Gardner Lecture, Canadian Y. M.), 1979, p. 8.

### ***All Are in the Family of God***

I was moved of the Lord to recommend to Friends, for the benefit and advantage of the Church of Christ, that the faithful women who were called to the belief of the Truth, being made partakers of the same precious faith, and heirs of the same everlasting Gospel order, and therein be meet helps unto men in the restoration, in the service of Truth, in the affairs of the Church, as they are outwardly in civil, or temporal things. That so all the family of God, women as well as men, might know, possess, perform, and discharge their offices and services in the house of God.

—George Fox: *Journal*, ed. John L. Nickalls, 1952, p 668 (entry for 1673).

### ***Power of the Lord Speaks in Women***

Those that speak against the power of the Lord, and the Spirit of the Lord speaking in a woman, simply by reason of her sex or because she is a woman, not regarding the Seed and Spirit and Power that speaks in her, such speak against Christ and his Church.

—Margaret Fell, *Women’s speaking*, 1666, p. 4.

### ***Women are Messengers of Redemption***

Thus we see that Jesus owned the Love and Grace that appeared in Women and did not despise it; and by what is recorded in the Scriptures, he received as much love, kindness, compassion and tender dealing toward him from Women, as he did from many others. Mark this, you that despise and oppose the message of the Lord God that he sends by Women: what had become of the redemption of the whole body of man-kind, if they had not believed the message that the Lord Jesus sent by these Women, of and concerning his resurrection?

—*Ibid.*, pp. 6-7

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

### ***God’s Love is Universal***

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

—John Woolman: *The journal and major essays of John Woolman*, ed. Phillips P Moulton, 1971, p. 200.

### ***Roots of Racial Prejudice***

The roots of racial prejudice lie deep within us, and in seeking a solution to the evil results of racial tensions we need to search our own hearts. Our belief in the significance of every individual in the sight of God and his need for an abundant life can guide us even when we shrink before the vastness of the problem.

—*London Y. M. Proceedings*, 1952, min. 41, pp. 233-4.

### ***Children of One God***

Racial discrimination arises because fundamentally it is easier to see a man as a stranger rather than as a brother if his skin is of a different colour. The stranger tends to be feared rather than loved, and it must be remembered that fears engendered by such differences are not always imaginary. They can be resolved only in so far as relationships between man and man, of whatever race, are conceived in terms of a constant realisation that the members of one race are the children not of the members of another race but the children of God. Against this, imperialism, exploitation and even paternalism cannot stand.

—Race Relations Conference, 1954, min. 4.

### ***Redemption From the Spirit of Oppression***

Oppression in the extreme appears terrible, but oppression in more refined appearances remains to be oppression, and where the smallest degree of it is cherished it grows stronger and more extensive: that labour for a perfect redemption from this spirit of oppression is the great business of the whole family of Christ Jesus in this world.

—John Woolman: “A plea for the poor,” (written in 1763-4) in *The journal and major essays*, ed. Phillips P Moulton, 1971, p. 262.

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

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<http://neym.org/faith-practice/part-2/chapter-4/peace-nonviolence>

### **Peace and Non-Violence**

The witness for peace is an affirmation of the divine Light in every human being. Christ teaches us to love our enemies. George Fox calls us to seek that of God in everyone. Warfare denies these teachings, denies the sanctity of human life.

God’s essential nature is love. The church transcends all divisions of nationality, all prejudices and hatreds of nation for nation, and of class for class. We are called to respect all other persons, to love them as we love ourselves, to overcome evil with good, and to meet our enemies with positive good will.

Friends hold that it is inconsistent with these religious principles to participate in military service and have, therefore, sought exemption on grounds of conscience. But more than a mere refusal to participate in the military is required of the servant of peace.

We are called to root out the causes of war from our own lives and from the political and social structures about us. We must seek out and remove the seeds of hatred and greed. Instead of self-seeking, we must put sacrifice; instead of domination, cooperation. Fear and suspicion must give place to trust and the spirit of understanding. The barriers of race and class, of exaggerated notions of national sovereignty, must give way to a fellowship that makes all humanity a society of friends. Our peace testimony must be inclusive of the whole of life.

### ***Spirit of Christ Leads Not to War***

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

—George Fox: *Journal*, ed. John L. Nickalls 1952, pp. 399-400 (a

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

declaration presented to King Charles II, 1661). The extract as printed is abridged and omissions are not indicated in the text.

### ***Origin of the Peace Witness***

Despite the fact that the Society of Friends developed in an age of violent revolution and has had a witness against war for all of its history, the origin of the peace witness did not start with a concern about war. The Quaker peace witness developed from a deep faith in the essential unity of mankind and the sacredness of each individual because of that “of God” or the “Inward Light” in each person comprising that unity.

—Lawrence Scott: “Non-violent action and the Quaker peace witness,” in *No time but this present*, 1965, p. 230.

### ***That Life and Power That Takes Away the Occasion of War***

My time being nearly out of being committed six months to the House of Correction, they filled the House of Correction with persons that they had taken up to be soldiers; and then they would have had me to be captain of them to go forth to Worcester fight and the soldiers cried they would have none but me. So the keeper of the House of Correction was commanded to bring me up before the Commissioners and soldiers in the market place; and there they proffered me that preferment because of my virtue, as they said, with many other compliments, and asked me if I would not take up arms for the Commonwealth against the King. But I told them I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars, and I knew from whence all wars did rise, from the lust according to James’s doctrine.

Still they courted me to accept of their offer and thought that I did but compliment with them. But I told them I was come into the covenant of peace which was before wars and strifes were. And they said they offered it in love and kindness to me because of my virtue, and such like flattering words they used, and I told them if that were their love and kindness I trampled it under my feet.

Then their rage got up and they said, “Take him away gaoler, and cast him into the dungeon amongst the rogues and felons;” which they then did and put me into the dungeon amongst thirty felons in a lousy, stinking low place in the ground without any bed.

## **Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5**

Here they kept me a close prisoner almost a half year.

—George Fox: *Journal*, ed. John L. Nickalls, 1952, pp. 64-5 (entry for 1651).

### **“I Did It From Principle”**

*During the American War of Independence, the Quaker whaling community on the island of Nantucket suffered heavily from both sides for their neutrality. William Rotch (1734-1828), one of their leaders, had in a disused warehouse a consignment of bayonets which had been taken from muskets which he had accepted twelve years earlier in payment of a debt, and sold as hunting pieces. In 1776 the bayonets were demanded from him by the Americans:*

The time was now come to endeavor to support our Testimony against War, or abandon it, as this very instrument was a severe test. I could not hesitate which to choose, and therefore denied the applicant. My reason for not furnishing them was demanded, to which I readily answered, “As this instrument is purposely made and used for the destruction of mankind, I can put no weapon into a man’s hand to destroy another, that I cannot use myself in the same way.” The person left me much dissatisfied. Others came, and received the same denial. It made a great noise in the Country, and my life was threatened. I would gladly have beaten them into “pruning hooks,” but I took an early opportunity of throwing them into the sea.

A short time after I was called before a Committee appointed by the Court then held at Watertown near Boston, and questioned, amongst other things respecting my bayonets.

I gave a full account of my proceedings, and closed it with saying, “I sunk them in the bottom of the sea, I did it from principle, I have ever been glad that I had done it, and if I am wrong I am to be pitied.” The chairman of the Committee Major Hawley (a worthy character) then addressed the Committee, and said “I believe Mr. Rotch has given us a candid account, and every man has a right to act consistently with his religious principles, but I am sorry that we could not have the bayonets, for we want them very much.” The Major was desirous of knowing more of our principles on which I informed him as far as he enquired. One of the Committee in a pert manner observed “then your principles are passive Obedience and non-resistance.” I replied, “No, my friend, our principles are active

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

Obedience or passive suffering.”

—William Rotch: *Memorandum written in the 80th year of his age*, 1814, pp. 3-5.

### ***Preparation for Peace***

If any of us feel daunted, let us take heart. Remember that the Kingdom of God is within us and seek to reveal it. Remember that Jesus also said, according to Thomas, “The Kingdom is spread upon the earth but ye see it not” let us seek to see it. We must realize, that is, make real, these things in our lives and we shall have no fear and no doubts. No need to worry what to do. No need to feel that unless we are demobilising the armies or stopping the arms races or dismantling the multinationals, we are doing nothing. We never know what ripples spread from what seems the smallest action. Only let us be led by the spirit and we will vanquish the philosophy of death. This is the only preparation for peace.

—Adam Curle: *Preparation for peace* (Gardner lecture, Canadian Y M.), 1980, p. 20.

### ***A Higher Loyalty***

We declare our faith in those abiding truths taught and exemplified by Jesus Christ that every individual of every race and nation, is of supreme worth; that love is the highest law of life, and that evil is to be overcome, not by further evil, but by good. The relationship of nation to nation, of race to race, of class to class, must be based on this divine law of love, if peace and progress are to be achieved. We believe in those principles, not as mere ideals for some future time, but as part of the eternal moral order and as a way of life to be lived here and now. War is a colossal violation of this way of life. If we are true to our faith we can have no part in it.

We affirm the supremacy of conscience. We recognize the privileges and obligations of citizenship; but we reject as false that philosophy which sets the state above the moral law and demands from the individual unquestioning obedience to every state command. On the contrary, we assert that every individual, while owing loyalty to the state, owes a more binding loyalty to a higher authority the authority of God and conscience.

—Philadelphia Y. M.: *Faith and practice*, 1961, pp. 38-9. Statement adopted 1934.

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

### ***Conscription of Tax Money***

No person can decide for another what his or her witness shall be. But it has always been the practice of Friends to act upon the leadings of their consciences and to support each other in their right to do so. The conscription of tax money to build weapons of destruction is something that many Friends find immoral. William Penn, in refusing to send money to England for war with Canada, said, “No man can be true to God and false to his own conscience, nor can he extort from it a tribute to carry on any war, nor ought true Christians to pay for it.” Therefore, we stand in loving support of any of our members who are called by conscience to oppose and refuse taxes that are to be used for military purposes.

—*Minutes of Iowa Yearly Meeting of Friends (Conservative)*, 6-VIII-83.

### ***Alternative to Violence***

Nationalism, sovereignty, conventional patriotism, are all breeders of war. It is the Quaker’s concern to counter all these influences where he may to help his countrymen think non-nationally on international matters, to be inventive and patient in the search for alternative procedures, and to suggest by deed and word an alternative way.

A conspicuous example has been the foreign service of Friends in recent years. Two major wars and minor ones have made the need for physical aid tragically abundant. The British Friends Service Council and the American Friends Service Committee separately and together have intervened in these situations not out of humanitarianism alone but to give expression to the positive alternative to war. Their service is not part of the war effort. In this it differs sharply from the political use of food, clothing, and technical assistance to “win friends and influence people.” Its aim is to be friends rather than to win friends. It is specially concerned to cross the frontiers of hatred, suspicion, and rivalry. Its disinterestedness is to be seen when it labors on both sides of a civil war, a world war, or a cold war. Only persevering years of such experience can establish to an incredulous enemy nation, past or potential, the distinctive character of Quaker service. Here is a language other than force that can be understood by Jew and Catholic, by Arab or Hindu, by persecutor and persecuted, by fascist and communist. In such service it is particularly true that “the gift without the giver is bare.”

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

—Henry J. Cadbury, “Peace and war” in *The Quaker approach to contemporary problems*, ed. John Kavanaugh, 1953, p. 17

### ***The World Awaits Its Own Rebirth***

The world is awaiting its own rebirth. With each new dawn, with each new day, the peoples of the earth have risen with the morning star, hoping that today will bring news of peace. Yet each day is a disappointment, as nations continue to arm, preparing for war, and looking upon their neighbors with hatred and suspicion.

Because of the incomparable evil presented by the threat of nuclear war, we are moved to bear a passionate witness for life and peace. As Christians, we believe that the example of Christ's life, death and rebirth requires among us and all peoples a rebirth of love and peace. So, with humility and hope, we seek to confront and overcome the evil of nuclear weaponry. We believe the presence of nuclear weapons in our midst threatens all of humanity and is incompatible with the life and living spirit of Christ.

—Syracuse Monthly Meeting, February 1980.

### ***Violence Can Exist in the Absence of War***

A Call for Peacemaking must also be a call for promoting worldwide economic and social justice, including respect for human rights. Violence, we know, can exist even in the absence of war. Poverty-ridden, oppressed peoples are victims of economic violence. Peace is hollow without more equal sharing of the world's wealth and power.

—Maynard Shelly: *New call for peacemakers*, 1979, p. 99.

### ***Military Service***

Believing in the law of love, and striving to live “in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars,” we in the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends are deeply opposed to war and the preparation for war, including military conscription and registration for conscription.

We know that many young people who are legally required to register for the draft hold strong moral scruples against war. We reaffirm our long-standing support for those, both Friends and non-Friends, whose consciences lead them to reject participation in the armed forces. We encourage them to follow their consciences, and

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

we stand ready to help, to the best of our ability, with information, counselling, and spiritual and practical support.

—New England Y. M., *Minutes*, 1980, p. 33.

### ***God is at Work in Every Human Being***

Many experiences in the post-war period gave me ever increasing certainty that hostility can at least be modified, even if not dissolved, in spite of the greatest conflicts in men's ideas, interests, even moral principles. There is an approachability in people, even in individuals in power, which in our weaker moments fear often prevents us from believing in. I repeatedly found confirmation of this during the Occupation, and often also still later, in transactions between East and West. The Soviet officers were of an age to have grown up in the thought-world of communism, so that there were no points of contact in Christian terms. But it was my experience again and again that when one approached them honestly, naturally, without aggression or fear, they reacted no differently than people brought up as Christians. It confirmed my faith that God is at work in every human being, as Quakerism teaches, even in a person who outwardly shows no hesitation in being hard or doing evil.

—Margarethe Lachmund: *With thine adversary in the way* (Pendle Hill pamphlet, no. 228), 1979, p. 23.

### ***Living Lives in the Power of Love***

What matters is living our lives in the power of love and not worrying too much about the results. In doing this, the means become part of the end. Hence we lose the sense of helplessness and futility in the face of the world's crushing problems. We also lose the craving for success, always focusing on the goal to the exclusion of the way of getting there. We must literally not take too much thought for the morrow but throw ourselves wholeheartedly into the present. That is the beauty of the way of love, it cannot be planned and its end cannot be foretold.

—Wolf Mendl: *Prophets and reconcilers: reflections on the Quaker peace testimony*, 1974, p. 102.

### ***Peace is the Experience of Christian Love***

We begin to feel energized and expansive; joy flows in us and through us. It touches others and some may join us in the witness.

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

We no longer feel isolated or overwhelmed, for the witness to peace is the experience of Christian love. It is that love made visible. Christ told us we must love God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind, and that we must live our lives in that love. This is why the Peace Testimony is at the very center of our faith.

—Alan Eccleston: “Witnessing to peace for ourselves and for each other,” *Friends Journal*, October 1, 1980, p. 15.

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<http://neym.org/faith-practice/part-2/chapter-4/stewardship>

### **Stewardship**

To be good stewards in God’s Kingdom means that we are not to be possessed by our possessions, that we learn to live more simply and with a willingness to share with others. In the contemporary world, which makes increasing demands on the earth’s finite resources, Friends are challenged to exercise the care and concern that can assure that future generations may inherit an earth on which they can live in hope and dignity.

### ***The Earth is the Lord’s***

The Creator of the earth is the owner of it. He gave us being thereon, and our nature requires nourishment which is the produce of it. As he is kind and merciful, we as his creatures, while we live answerable to the design of our creation, we are so far entitled to a convenient subsistence that no man may justly deprive us of it. By the agreements and contracts of our fathers and predecessors, and by doings and proceedings of our own, some claim a much greater share of this world than others; and whilst those possessions are faithfully improved to the good of the whole, it consists with equity. But he who with a view to self-exaltation causeth some with their domestic animals to labour immoderately, and with the moneys arising to him therefrom employs others in the luxuries of life, acts contrary to the gracious design of him who is the owner of the earth; nor can any possessions, either acquired or derived from ancestors, justify such conduct.

—John Woolman: “A plea for the poor,” (written in 1763-4) in *The journal and major essays*, ed. Phillips P Moulton, 1971, pp. 239-40.

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

### ***Be Not Cumbered With the Riches of This World***

Neither be cumbered nor surfeited with the riches of this world, nor bound, nor straitened with them, nor married to them; but be free and loose from them, and be married to the Lord.

—George Fox: “Epistle 161” (1658), in *Works*, vol. 7, 1831, p. 152.

### ***Tenderness Toward All Creatures***

[I] believe that where the love of God is verily perfected and the true spirit of government watchfully attended to, a tenderness toward all creatures made subject to us will be experienced, and a care felt in us that we do not lessen that sweetness of life in the animal creation which the great Creator intends for them under our government.

—John Woolman: *The journal and major essays*, ed. Phillips P. Moulton, 1971, pp. 178-9 (entry for 2nd day, 6th month, 1772).

### ***Distributing the Gifts of God***

As Christians, all we possess are the gifts of God. Now in distributing it to others we act as his steward, and it becomes our station to act agreeable to that divine wisdom which he gracious gives to his servants. If the steward of a great family, from a selfish attachment to particulars, takes that with which he is entrusted and bestows it lavishly on some to the injury of others and to the damage of him who employs him, he disunites himself and becomes unworthy of that office.

—John Woolman: “A plea for the poor,” (written in 1763-4) in *Ibid.*, p. 249.

### ***The Seeds of War***

Oh, that we who declare against wars and acknowledge our trust to be in God only, may walk in the Light and therein examine our foundation and motives in holding great estates! May we look upon our treasures and the furniture of our houses and our garments and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions or not.

—*Ibid.*, p. 255

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

### ***A Peacemaking Way***

We are called to a peacemaking lifestyle that follows Jesus’ way in personal relationships and economic decisions.

A peacemaking lifestyle requires a positive, creative love and respect for the integrity of each person, especially in situations of conflict and confrontation. It requires us to take the way of the cross to absorb suffering rather than to inflict it, and to demonstrate the power of forgiving love.

An affluent lifestyle contributes to violence because it is based on waste, on competition, and on demanding more than a fair share of the world’s resources. Let us undertake the examination of our personal and corporate stewardship of money and natural resources, reduce the level of consumption, and become more discerning in our investments.

—Helen Fletcher: “A new call to peacemaking,” *Friends world news*, Autumn 1979, p. 17

### ***The Earth is Held in Trust***

Together, the world’s people have been granted stewardship over the Earth, to enjoy it briefly, then to surrender it to succeeding generations. The Earth is not a possession but a trust. Those dramatic photographs from the moon showed us all what is ours to care for a green and blue jewel shining in the blackness of space. What steward would risk turning such a gem into a radioactive cinder?

—Friends World Committee for Consultation, Statement to United Nations Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament, June 12, 1978.

### ***Simplifying Our Lives***

Learning to live contentedly without high consumption goes against the grain of our culture, but is possible in the context of community. Incomes can be cut if every family does not have to have its own laundry facilities, tools, automobiles, house, etc.

Concern for the ecosystem adds to the need for developing a simple yet adequate life style. Simplifying our lives also means pruning our scatter of activities to focus energy and to provide time to be present to each other.

—American Friends Service Committee: *Taking charge*, 1975, p. 23.

## *Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5*

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<http://neym.org/faith-practice/part-3/advices>

### **The Advices**

The Advices have served Friends for many generations in their search for a life centered in the Spirit. Arising from the experience and aspirations of successive generations of Friends, the Advices are illustrations of how they seek to carry their faith into all aspects of life.

Advices first appeared in the form of epistles sent among Friends to encourage and strengthen each other in their faith. The earliest surviving collection of Advices was issued from Balby in England in 1656. Its concluding statement begins, “Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by.”

Friends find their essential unity in their profound and exhilarating belief in the pervasive presence of God and in the continuing responsibility of each person and worshipping group to seek the leading of the Spirit in all things. Obedience to the leading of that Spirit rather than to any written statement of belief or conduct is the obligation of their faith.

Yet the Advices should have a quickening influence in shaping our daily lives. Their reading is intended to remind us that all aspects of our lives are under divine guidance and to heighten our awareness that in all our relationships we act in the sight of God.

### ***Personal Conduct***

Let us bring the whole of our daily lives under the ordering of the Spirit. Let our faith free us from crippling fears so that we may live adventurously. In relations with others, let us exercise imagination, understanding, and sympathy. Let us live and work in the plainness and simplicity of true followers of Christ.

In view of the evils arising from the use of tobacco and intoxicating drinks and from the abuse of drugs, Friends are advised to consider whether they should refrain from using them, from offering them to others, and from having any share in their manufacture or sale. We should not let the claims of good fellowship or the fear of seeming peculiar influence our decision.

Let us maintain integrity in word and deed. Holding to the simplicity of truth, let us keep free of oaths. Remember how

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

widespread and diverse are the temptations to grow rich at the expense of others, and how apparently harmless indulgence often leads by degrees to wrong-doing. Let us avoid and discourage every kind of betting and gambling and commercial speculations of a gambling character.

Friends have always held that the sacred nature of a sexual relationship is affirmed only in marriage. In recent times, however, some Friends have found such affirmation in other contexts. Let us be certain, in any case, that we hold up to the Light any sexual relationship we may be considering and reject any relationship that may violate the integrity or spiritual welfare of either of the partners or of others. No relationship can be a right one which makes use of another person through selfish desire.

### ***Stewardship***

Friends are advised to consider our possessions as God’s gifts, entrusted to us for responsible use. Let us free our time and our abilities to be able to follow the leadings of the Spirit. Let us cherish the beauty and variety of the world. Friends are urged to speak out boldly against the destruction of the world’s resources and the difficulties that destruction prepares for the future generations. Let us guard against waste and resist our extravagant consumption, which contributes to inequities and impoverishment of life in our own and other societies. Let us show a loving consideration for all God’s creatures. Let kindness know no limits.

### ***Social Responsibility***

Friends are called, as followers of Christ, to help establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Let us strengthen a sense of kinship with everyone. Let that sense of kinship inspire us in our efforts to build a social order free of violence and oppression, in which no person’s development is thwarted by poverty and the lack of health care, education, or freedom. Friends are advised to minister to those in need but also to seek to know the facts and the causes of social and economic ills and to work for the removal of those ills. Let us cherish every human being and encourage efforts to overcome all forms of prejudice.

## *Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5*

### **Peace and Reconciliation**

Every human being is a child of God with a measure of God’s Light. War and other instruments of violence and oppression ignore this reality and violate our relation with God. Let us keep primary, therefore, Friends’ concern for removing the causes of war. Let us seek, through God’s power and grace, to overcome in our own hearts the emotions that lie at the root of violence. At every opportunity, let us be peacemakers in our homes, in our communities, and in our places of work. Let us take care that we who declare against war do not nourish the seeds of war in our possessions. Friends are urged to support those who witness to their governments and take personal risks in the cause of peace, who choose not to participate in war as soldiers nor to contribute to its preparations with their taxes. Let us support in all possible ways the development of international order, justice, and understanding.

Finally, dear Friends, let us follow steadfastly after all that is pure and lovely and of good report. Let us be prayerful, be watchful, be humble. Let not failure discourage us. Let our whole conduct and conversation be worthy of disciples of Christ.

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<http://neym.org/faith-practice/part-3/queries>

### **The Queries**

Friends have developed the Queries to assist us to consider prayerfully the true source of spiritual strength and the extent to which the conduct of our lives gives witness to our Christian faith. To these ends, the Queries should be read frequently in private devotions and regularly in monthly and quarterly meetings.

In using these Queries, meetings should be aware that our standards of conduct do not derive from an outward set of rules but rather from the life and teachings of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament, from the examples offered by the spiritual experiences and lives of those who have preceded us, and from our own encounters with that inward revelation through which “the way, the truth, and the life” seek expression today.

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

### ***Personal Conduct***

- Do you live with simplicity, moderation, and integrity?
- Are you punctual in keeping promises, careful in speech, just and compassionate in all your dealings with others?
- Do you take care that your spiritual growth is not sacrificed to busyness but instead integrates your life’s activities?
- Are your recreations consistent with Quaker values; do they refresh your spirit and renew your body and mind?

### ***Stewardship***

- Do you revere all life and the splendor of God’s continuing creation?
- Do you try to protect the natural environment and its creatures against abuse and harmful exploitation?
- Do you regard your possessions as given to you in trust, and do you part with them freely to meet the needs of others?
- Are you frugal in your personal life and committed to the just distribution of the world’s resources?

### ***Social Responsibility***

- Do you respect the worth of every human being as a child of God?
- Do you uphold the right of all persons to justice and human dignity?
- Do you endeavor to create political, social, and economic institutions which will sustain and enrich the life of all?
- Do you fulfill all civic obligations which are not contrary to divine leadings?
- Do you give spiritual and material support to those who suffer for conscience’s sake?

### ***Peace and Reconciliation***

- Do you “live in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars”?
- Do you faithfully maintain Friends’ testimony against military preparations and all participation in war, as inconsistent with the teachings and spirit of Christ?
- Do you strive to increase understanding and use of nonviolent methods of resolving conflicts?
- Do you take your part in the ministry of reconciliation between individuals, groups, and nations?

## ***Readings for “Quaker Basics”, Week 5***

- When discouraged, do you remember that Jesus said, “Peace is my parting gift to you, my own peace, such the world cannot give. Set your troubled hearts at rest, and banish your fears”?  
John 14:27 NEB