

Friends Speak

Introduction

Without a divinely ordained authority beyond the Inward Light, Friends have always valued the meaningful experiences of fellow travelers. This chapter contains a small selection of Friends' words—from vocal ministry, journals, articles, letters, and comments heard and overheard—to show some of the depth and breadth of Friends' experiences and insights.

Friends' Experiences

- 1.01 As I had forsaken all the priests, so I left the separate preachers also, and those called the most-experienced people. For I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, oh then, I heard a voice which said “There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,” and, when I heard it, my heart did leap for joy. Then the Lord did let *me* see why there was none upon the earth that could speak to my condition, namely, that I might give him all the glory. For all are concluded under sin and shut up in unbelief, as I had been, that Jesus Christ might have the preeminence, who enlightens, and gives grace and faith and power. Thus, when God doth work, who shall let it? And this I knew experimentally...
- George Fox, 1647*
- 1.02 At last after all my distresses, wanderings and sore travels, I met with some writings of this people called Quakers, which I cast a slight eye upon and disdained, as falling very short of that wisdom, light, life and power, which I had been longing for and searching after. ... After a long time, I was invited to hear one of them. ... When I came, I felt the presence and power of the Most High among them, and words of truth from the Spirit of truth reaching to my heart and conscience, opening my state as in the presence of the Lord. Yes, I did not only feel words and demonstrations from without, but I felt the dead quickened, the seed raised; insomuch as my heart, in the certainty of light and clearness of true sense, said: “This is he; this is he; there is no other; this is he whom I have waited for and sought after from my childhood, who was always near me, and had often begotten life in my heart, but I knew him not distinctly nor how to receive him, or dwell with him.
- But some may desire to know what I have at last met with. I answer, “I have met with the Seed.” Understand that word, and thou wilt be satisfied and inquire no further. I have met with my God, I have met with my Saviour, and he hath not been present with me without his Salvation, but I have felt the healings drop upon my soul from under his wings.
- Isaac Pennington, 1667*
- 1.03 Not by strength of arguments or by a particular disquisition of each doctrine and convincement of my understanding thereby, came I to receive and bear witness of the Truth, but by being secretly reached by the Life. For when I came into the silent assemblies of God's people, I felt a secret power among them which touched my heart; and as I gave way unto it I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this power and life, whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed.
- Robert Barclay, 1676*
- 1.04 Whenever we are driven into the depths of our own being, or seek them of our own will, we are faced by a tremendous contrast. On the one side we recognize the pathetic littleness of ephemeral existence, with no point or meaning in itself. On the other side, in the depth, there is something eternal and infinite in which our existence, and indeed all existence, is grounded. This experience of the depths of existence fills us with a sense both of reverence and of responsibility, which gives even to our finite lives a meaning and a power which they do not possess in themselves. This, I am assured, is our human experience of God.
- John MacMurray, 1967*
- 1.05 There is indeed One that speaks to my condition, but that One may not announce a name, or even speak a word; it may reveal itself as Light, or inner peace, or compassion for humanity. But

whatever its manifestation, there is only One. If that One is perceived as a King, then that is a true perception; if it is perceived as a Mother, then that is also a true perception. If I call God “Holy Mother” and you call God “Divine King,” does that mean there are two Gods? No, there is only One.

That of God within every person is sometimes recognized as the Spirit of Christ, or the Holy Spirit, or the Inner Light. As Friends we accept and respect that Spirit, however perceived, in all people, and particularly in each other. We can give testimony to our own experience, as honestly and faithfully as possible, but we cannot alter another’s spiritual condition. Let us receive Light as it is given to us, and share it as we are able, and trust in the One that can speak to the condition of all people, to care for and guide us all.

Helen Park, 1979

- 1.06 When we turn inside or beyond ourselves to grasp some understanding of the divine, we discover through encounter that what we need to find we will find: a something creative and renewing, overwhelmingly strong and passive, completely wise and innocent, living and dying, feminine and masculine.

Our father, our mother, our light, which is in heaven and earth, holy is your name. Come.

Patrice Haan, 1983

- 1.07 I am just now beginning to feel comfortable with the realization of a Feminine Spirit as a personal presence. I will continue to work toward centering in Worship, to be open to the Light, its peace and comfort, and maybe then, its message through her voice. I do not search for her. I just know her as the source of my Light.

Molly Barnett, 1983

- 1.08 Around the age of seven I decided that what I wanted to be when I grew up was a saint. That didn’t work out. I gave it my best shot at the time, but I lacked staying power.

Some years later, when I was eleven, there were several months when I thought I’d like to be a nun, in the belief that what the job required was good works, a predisposition to meditateness, and a willingness to be isolated from the real world. I was wrong, of course, and it was just as well that that didn’t work out either. I may have had what my loved father called “the necessary sap,” but I wasn’t a Roman Catholic, to begin with, and more important, I lacked vocation.

I did, however, sense a spirit in things, in literal, tangible things, as well as in places, in houses, in people, trees, flowers, animals. When I felt its presence in the sky, in the stars, I called this spirit God. Even in the worst of times I never lost this feeling of Something Other. Moreover, those early personality traits, obscurely religious, persisted, and to this day I describe myself, roughly speaking, as a religious person.

Consciousness of the spiritual, of God—whatever that means—is at the heart of who I am. Yet I appear to myself and quite probably to those who know me as an ordinary, daily sort of person, as mundane, as worldly, as anyone else, living a life made up of bills, telephone calls, computers, car-washes, work, food, laundry and so on because in every particular my life is aware of a spirit in things. But hardly ever do I so much as mention it.

To me it seems very likely that the same is true for a very great number of people, likely that many *whose* characters are similarly constructed go through their days and nights whispering “Thank You,” or “I need help,” or “Please”—prayers, in short, to whatever is out there listening, holding the world together, binding the stars. As a consequence of this obscure sense of spirit, my life seems rich to me.

I seldom speak of it. I certainly do not mention God’s name, whatever that may be, except in the context of mild swearing. But the sense of a spirit in things is what keeps me alive. I suspect such a recognition is common. I suspect many do not speak of what they deeply recognize as faith.

I believe that many lives as ordinary as my own are founded in a sense of the spirit. I believe that faith, consciousness of the unseen Other, works constantly in ordinary lives like mine in a wonderful and mysterious way. Even though no one but the one who knows such faith may feel its power, I believe that in those who are silent faith may be profound and strong, may be the very force which brings about miracles of light.

Phyllis Hoge, 2005

- 1.10 There is a spirit which I feel that delights to do no evil nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention,

and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself. It sees to the end of all temptations. As it bears no evil in itself, so it conceives none in thoughts to any other. If it is betrayed, it bears it, for its ground and spring is the mercies and forgiveness of God. Its crown is meekness, its life is everlasting love unfeigned; and takes its kingdom with entreaty and not with contention, and keeps it by lowliness of mind. In God alone it can rejoice, though none else regard it, or can own its life. It's conceived in sorrow, and brought forth without any to pity it, nor doth it murmur at grief and oppression. It never rejoiceth but through sufferings; for with the world's joy it is murdered. I found it alone, being forsaken. I have fellowship therein with them who lived in dens and desolate places in the earth, who through death obtained this resurrection and eternal life.

James Nayler, 1660

- 1.11 Conscience follows the judgment, doth not inform it; but this light as it is received, removes the blindness of the judgment, opens the understanding, and rectifies both the judgment and the conscience. The conscience is an excellent thing where it is rightly informed and enlightened; wherefore some of us have fitly compared it to the lantern, and the light of Christ to the candle; a lantern is useful, when a clear candle burns and shines in it, but otherwise of no use. To the light of Christ then in the conscience, and not to man's natural conscience, it is that we continually commend men.

Robert Barclay, 1676

- 1.12 That which the people called Quakers lay down as a main fundamental in religion is this, that God through Christ hath placed a principle in every man to inform him of his duty, and to enable him to do it; and that those that live up to this principle are the people of God, and those that live in disobedience to it are not God's people, whatever name they may bear or profession they may make of religion. This is their ancient, first, and standing testimony. With this they began, and this they bore and do bear to the world.

William Penn, 1693

- 1.13 The unity of Christians never did nor ever will or can stand in uniformity of thought and opinion, but in Christian love only.

Thomas Story, 1737

- 1.14 In the love of money and in the wisdom of this world, business is proposed, then the urgency of affairs push forward, nor can the mind in this state discern the good and perfect will of God concerning us. The love of God as manifested is graciously calling us to come out of that which stands in confusion; but if we bow not in the name of Jesus, if we give not up those prospects of gain which in the wisdom of this world are open before us, but say in our hearts, "I must needs go on, and in going on I hope to keep as near to the purity of Truth as the business before me will admit of," here the mind remains entangled and the shining of the light of life into the soul is obstructed.

John Woolman, 1772

- 1.15 There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names. It is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion, nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren in the best sense of the expression.

John Woolman, 1774

- 1.16 They fail to read clearly the signs of the times who do not see that the hour is coming when, under the searching eye of philosophy and the terrible analysis of science, the letter and the outward evidence will not altogether avail us; when the surest dependence must be on the light of Christ within, disclosing the law and the prophets in our own souls, and confirming the truth of outward Scripture by inward experience.

John Greenleaf Whittier, 1870

- 1.17 While seeking to interpret our Christian faith in the language of today, we must remember that there is one worse thing than failure to practice what we profess, and that is to water down our profession to match our practice.

Friends World Conference, 1952

1.18 The best type of religion is one in which the mystical, the evangelical, the rational, and the social are so related that each exercises a restraint on the others. Too exclusive an emphasis on mysticism results in a religion which is individualistic, subjective, and vague; too dominant an evangelicalism results in a religion which is authoritarian, creedal, and external; too great an emphasis on rationalism results in a cold intellectual religion which appeals only to the few; too engrossing a devotion to the social gospel results in a religion which, in improving the outer environment, ignores defects in the inner life which cause the outer disorder. In Quakerism the optimum is not equality in rank of the four elements. The mystical is basic. The Light Within occasions the acceptance or rejection of a particular authority, reason, or service.

Howard Brinton, 1952

1.19 Experience is the Quaker's starting-point. This light must be my light, this truth must be my truth, this faith must be my very own faith. The key that unlocks the door to the spiritual life belongs not to Peter, or some other person, as an official. It belongs to the individual soul that finds the light, discovers the truth that sees the revelation of God and goes on living in the demonstration and power of it.

Rufus M. Jones, 1927

1.20 For God can be found. ... There is a Divine Center into which your life can slip, a new and absolute orientation in God, a Center where you live with him and out of which you see all life, through new and radiant vision, tinged with new sorrows and pangs, new joys unspeakable and full of glory.

Thomas R. Kelly, 1938

1.21 The Inward Light is a universal light given to all men, religious consciousness itself being basically the same wherever it is found. Our difficulties come when we try to express it. We cannot express; we can only experience God. Therefore we must always remember tolerance, humility, and tenderness with others whose ways and views may differ from ours.

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1953

1.22 We must be alert that the warm coziness which we find enveloping us at Yearly Meeting and in our Monthly Meetings does not snare us into imagining that this is all of Quakerism. A vital religion is one which goes from an encounter with the love of God to an encounter in service to that love, no matter how hopeless the situation may be.

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1967

1.23 This central affirmation, that the Light of the Christlike God shines in every person, implies that our knowledge of God is both subjective and objective. It is easy to misconstrue "Inner Light" as an invitation to individualism and anarchy if one concentrates on the subjective experience known to each one. But it is an equally important part of our faith and practice to recognize that we are not affirming the existence and priority of your light and my light, but of the Light of God, and of the God who is made known to us supremely in Jesus. The inward experience must be checked by accordance with the mind of Christ, the fruits of the Spirit, the character of that willed caring which in the New Testament is called Love.

It is further checked by the fact that if God is known in measure by every person, our knowledge of him will be largely gained through the experience of others who reverently and humbly seek him. In the last resort we must be guided by our own conscientiously held conviction—but it is in the last resort. First, we must seek carefully and prayerfully through the insights of others, both in the past and among our contemporaries, and only in the light of this search do we come to our affirmation.

Hugh Doncaster, 1972

1.24 For the mystery of faith is held in a pure conscience, that you may be led, guided, taught, and governed by this which cannot err, but is pure and eternal, and endureth for evermore.

Margaret Fell, 1668

1.25 And the first words that he spoke were as followeth: "He is not a Jew that is one outwards, neither is that circumcision which is outward, but he is a Jew that is one inward, and that is circumcision which is of the heart." And so he went on and said, How that Christ was the Light of the world and lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and that by this Light they might be gathered to God, etc. And I stood up in my pew, and I wondered at his doctrine, for I had never heard such before. And then he went on, and opened the Scriptures, and said, "The Scriptures were the prophets; words and

Christ's and the apostles' words and what as they spoke they enjoyed and possessed and had it come from the Lord." And said, "Then what had any to do with the Scriptures, but as they came to the Spirit that gave them forth. You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of the Light and has walked in the Light, and what thou speakest is it inwardly from God?"

This opened me so that it cut me to the heart; and then I saw clearly we were all wrong. So I sat me down in my pew again, and cried bitterly. And I cried in my spirit to the Lord. "We are all thieves, we are all thieves, we have taken the Scriptures in words and know nothing of them in ourselves." ... I saw it was the truth and I could not deny it; and I did as the apostle saith, I "received the truth in the love of it." And it was opened to me so clear that I had never a tittle in my heart against it; but I desired the Lord that I might be kept in it, and then I desired no greater portion.

Margaret Fell, about 1652

- 1.26 This much is clear: Christians and the Universalists need each other. Our culture is grounded in ancient Christian symbols, which, if we listen, still quiver with dense ineffable meanings. In an effort to persuade us to listen to those meanings, Christians try to find words for them. The danger is that the words may become idols: creeds graven in stone. Universalists, alive to this danger, remind us that other cultures have other symbols which—could we but attune ourselves to their resonance—are just as fraught as ours. There are other ways of seeing. Here the danger is that we may abandon particularity altogether and find ourselves adrift on an ocean of light without stars, landmarks, or anchorage. Christians would call us back to terra firma lest we dissolve. Universalists would have us venture forth lest we petrify. The interplay of universal and particular must be as old as religion itself. Each has dangers which the other counteracts.

The Church Universal needs both its seafarers and its stay-at-homes. Why is that so difficult? Why have I myself never understood it until now?

Esther Murer, Faith & Practice of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1986

- 1.27 We do not speak with one voice. We have so many elements, not only those which are differently organized, but with each group we go off on different lines and too often even criticize one another. We want no artificial unison, but the deeper we get to really central things, the deeper will be the harmonies that emerge.

Henry Hodgkin, Can Quakers Speak to this Generation?, 1933, pp. 40–41

- 1.28 Our differences are our riches but also our problem. One of our key differences is the different names we give our Inward Teacher. Some of us name that Teacher, Lord; others of us use the names Spirit, Inner Light, Inward Christ, or Jesus Christ. It is important to acknowledge that these names involve more than language; they involve basic differences in our understanding of who God is, and how God enters our lives. We urge Friends to wrestle, as many of us have here, with the conviction and experience of many Friends through our history that this Inward Teacher is in fact Christ himself. We have been struck this week, however, with the experience of being forced to recognize this same God at work in others who call that Voice by different names, or who understand differently who that Voice is.

We have wondered whether there is anything Quakers today can say as one. After much struggle, we have discovered that we can proclaim this: There is a living God at the centre of all, who is available to each of us as a Present Teacher at the very heart of our lives.

An Epistle to All Friends Everywhere, from 300 Young Friends from 34 countries, 57 yearly meetings, and 8 monthly meetings, under the care of Friends Word Committee for Consultation, 1985

- 1.29 For those who believe in a personal God, that will mean developing a personal relationship with God—a feeling of being nurtured, cherished and personally guided. For others, it is a sense of beauty and appreciation for interconnectedness with all of life, caring for all creatures, a sense of mystery, of transcendence or of special meaning in ordinary living.

Cynthia Taylor, ed., "Religious Education Newsletter," Intermountain Yearly Meeting, Spring 1995.

- 1.30 The field of my religious training presupposed a clear definite call to a particular kind of service. I must confess that this has never happened to me.... I have never aspired to a particular job or asked for one; nor have I been "stricken on the road to Damascus" as was Paul and had my way clearly dictated to me from the heavens. The entire course has been a maturing of family and personal decisions. In perspective, I should say in all humility that my life has been characterized by an

inadequate, persistent effort to try to find a workable harmony between religious profession and daily practice.

Clarence E. Pickett, Faith & Practice of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1966

- 1.31 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., Faith & Practice of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1989

- 1.32 Spiritual Discernment is at the heart of Quaker Spirituality and Practice. It’s grounded in the central Quaker conviction of the availability to every person of the experience and guidance of God.... Discernment is the faculty we use to distinguish the true movement of the Spirit to speak in meeting from worship from the wholly human urge to share, to instruct, or to straighten people out.... It is the ability to see into people, situations and possibilities to identify what is of God in them and what is of the numerous other sources in ourselves—and what may be both....

Discernment is a gift from God, not a personal achievement.... It is given for the building of the community and of relationship with God rather for self-fulfillment or self-aggrandizement.... We all have been given some measure of the gift of discernment. In a life lived with other priorities, the gift may be left undeveloped. But as we grow and are faithful in the spiritual life, we may well be given more.

Patricia Loring, “Spiritual Discernment” (Pendle Hill Pamphlet #305)

- 1.33 Waiting for the spirit to speak is like waiting for a dear friend to arrive. No noise escapes our attention. Even as we work on other things we are attuned to anything that is out of the ordinary. Every part of us is alert to the sound of its coming ... and when it comes, we are there, listening.

Martha Roberts, 2004

- 1.34 In my experience, a leading is a persistent desire to do something that may not make much sense. It is beyond reason. It keeps asking for your attention; it doesn’t go away. It may be inconvenient. It may be misunderstood by people you love. When you finally act on it, it is like stepping into a river and letting it carry you. Your fear doesn’t go away, your confusion doesn’t go away, you’re not suddenly happy all the time. But you feel relief. There is a kind of knowing that comforts you.

Paula Palmer, 2005

The Scriptures

- 2.01 Concerning the Holy Scriptures, we do believe that they were given forth by the Holy Spirit of God, through the holy men of God, who (as the Scripture itself declares, 2 Peter 1:21) “spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” We believe they are to be read, believed, and fulfilled (he that fulfills them is Christ) and they are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16).

George Fox, 1671

- 2.02 How much the Bible has to teach when taken as a whole, that cannot be done by snippets! There is its range over more than a thousand years giving us the perspective of religion in time, growing and changing, and leading from grace to grace. There is its clear evidence of the variety of religious experience, not the kind of strait jacket that nearly every church, even Friends, have sometimes been tempted to substitute for the diversity in the Bible. To select from it but a single strand is to miss something of its richness. Even the uncongenial and the alien to us is happily abundant in the Bible. The needs of men today are partly to be measured by their difficulty in understanding that with which they differ. At this point the Bible has no little service to render. It requires patient insight into the unfamiliar and provides a discipline for the imagination such as today merely on the political level is a crying need of our time.

Further, the Bible is a training school in discrimination among alternatives. One of the most sobering facts is that it is not on the whole a peaceful book—I mean a book of peace of mind. The Bible is the deposit of a long series of controversies between rival views of religion. The sobering thing is that in nearly every case the people shown by the Bible to be wrong had every reason to think they were in the right, and like us they did so. Complacent orthodoxy is the recurrent villain in the story from first to last and the hero is the challenger, like Job, the prophets, Jesus, and Paul.

Henry Joel Cadbury, 1953

Prayer

3.01 Prayer releases energy as certainly as the closing of an electric circuit does. It heightens all human capacities. It refreshes and quickens life. It unlocks reservoirs of power. It opens invisible doors into new storehouses of spiritual force for the person to live by and, as I believe, for others to live by as well. It is effective and operative as surely as are the forces of steam and gravitation.

Rufus M. Jones, 1918

3.02 One of these deep constructive energies of life is prayer. It is a way of life that is as old as the human race is, and it is as difficult to “explain” as is our joy over love and beauty. It came into power in man’s early life and it has persisted through all the stages of it because it has proved to be essential to spiritual health and growth and life-advance. Like all other great springs of life, it has sometimes been turned to cheap ends and brought down to low levels, but on the whole it has been a pretty steady uplifting power in the long story of human progress. The only way we could completely understand it would be to understand the eternal nature of God and man. Then we should no doubt comprehend why he and we seek one another and why we are unsatisfied until we mutually find one another.

Rufus M. Jones, 1931

3.03 As taught and practiced by Jesus, prayer is communion with God, in which mind and heart become open to his sustaining power and gladly and humbly submissive to his directing will.

The Lord’s Prayer is an example of the simple directness of the prayers of Jesus. One can meet God without an elaborate chain of words, even in the rush and tension of everyday life.

Prayer may be response to the beauty or grandeur of nature; to the courage and goodness sometimes revealed by the human spirit; to a desperate sense of need. Prayer may be inspired by joy and sorrow, illness and health, birth and death. Prayer may be without words or in the simplest phrases. Through prayer, daily or special, he who prays can find serenity, humility, strength, courage and direction amid the stresses as well as the joys of life.

Prayer is an exercise of the mind and spirit. Its efficacy is increased by conscious practice. Prayer can work miracles by making individuals sensitive to the will of God and, through obedience, strong to accept or surmount the natural conditions of life.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1972

3.04 Oh God, our Father, spirit of the universe, I am old in years and in the sight of others, but I do not feel old within myself. I have hopes and purposes, things I wish to do before I die. A surging of life within me cries. “Not yet! Not yet!” more strongly than it did ten years ago, perhaps because the nearer approach of death arouses the defensive strength of the instinct to cling to life.

Help me to loosen, fiber by fiber, the instinctive strings that bind me to the life I know. Infuse me with Thy spirit so that it is Thee I turn to, not the old ropes of habit and thought. Make me poised and free, ready when the intimation comes to go forward eagerly and joyfully, into the new phase of life that we call death.

Help me to bring my work each day to an orderly State so that it will not be a burden to those who must fold it up and put it away when I am gone. Keep me ever aware and ever prepared for the summons.

If pain comes before the end help me not to fear it or struggle against it but to welcome it as a hastening of the process by which the strings that bind me to life are untied. Give me joy in awaiting the great change that comes after this life of many changes. Let my self be merged in Thy Self as a candle’s wavering light is caught up into the sun.

Elizabeth Gray Vining, Faith & Practice of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1978

Meeting for Worship

4.01 Be still in thy own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts, and then thou wilt feel the principle of God to turn thy mind to the Lord God, whereby thou wilt receive his strength and power from whence life comes, to allay all tempests, against blusterings and storms. That is it which molds into patience, into innocency, into soberness, into stillness, into stayedness, into quietness, up to God, with his power.

George Fox, 1658

4.02 When you come to your meetings, what do you do? Do you then gather together bodily only, and kindle a fire, compassing yourselves about with the sparks of your own kindling, and so please yourselves, and walk in the “Light of your own fire, and in the sparks which you have kindled?” ... Or rather, do you sit down in the True Silence, resting from your own Will and Workings, and waiting upon the Lord, with your minds fixed in that Light wherewith Christ has enlightened you, until the Lord breathes life into you, refresheth you, and prepares you, and your spirits and souls, to make you fit for his service, that you may offer unto him a pure and spiritual sacrifice?

William Penn, 1678

4.03 As iron sharpeneth iron, the seeing of the faces one of another when both are inwardly gathered into the life, giveth occasion for the life secretly to rise and pass from vessel to vessel. And as many candles lighted and put in one place do greatly augment the light and make it more to shine forth, so when many are gathered together into the same life, there more of the glory of God and his powers appears, to the refreshment of each individual.

Robert Barclay, 1671

4.04 One day, being under a strong exercise of spirit, I stood up and said some words in a meeting; but not keeping close to the Divine opening, I said more than was required of me. Being soon sensible of my error, I was afflicted in mind some weeks without any light or comfort, even to that degree that I could not take satisfaction in anything. I remembered God, and was troubled, and in the depths of my distress he had pity on me, and sent the Comforter. I then felt forgiveness for my offense; my mind became calm and quiet, and I was truly thankful to my gracious Redeemer for his mercies. About six weeks after this, feeling the spring of Divine love opened, and a concern to speak, I said a few words in a meeting, in which I found peace. Being thus humbled and disciplined under the cross, my understanding became more strengthened to distinguish the pure spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart, and which taught me to wait in silence sometimes many weeks together, until I felt that rise which prepares the creature to stand like a trumpet, through which the Lord speaks to his flock.

John Woolman, 1740

4.05 It is indeed true, as Friends have been accustomed to say, that we cannot expect “to eat the bread of idleness” in our silent meetings. Every individual spirit must work out its salvation in a living exercise of heart and mind, an exercise in which “fear and trembling” must often be our portion, and which cannot possibly be fully carried out under disturbing influences from without. Silence is often a stern discipline, a laying bare of the soul before God, a listening to the “reproof of life.” But the discipline has to be gone through, the reproof has to be listened to, before we can find our right place in the temple. Words may help and silence may help, but the one thing needful is that the heart should turn to its Maker as the needle turns to the pole. For this we must be still.

Caroline E. Stephen, 1908

4.06 The first thing that I do is to close my eyes and then to still my body in order to get it as far out of the way as I can. Then I still my mind and let it open to God in silent prayer, for the meeting, as we understand it, is the meeting place of the worshiper with God. I thank God inwardly for this occasion, for the week’s happenings, for what I have learned at his hand, for my family, for the work there is to do, for himself. And I often pause to enjoy him. Under his gaze I search the week, and feel the piercing twinge of remorse that comes at this, and this, and this, and at the absence of this, and this, and this. Under his eyes I see again—for I have often been aware of it at the time—the right way. I ask his forgiveness of my faithlessness and ask for strength to meet this matter when it arises again. There have been times when I had to reweave a part of my life under this auspice.

I hold up persons before God in intercession, loving them under his eyes—seeing them with him, longing for his healing and redeeming power to course through their lives. I hold up certain social situations, certain projects. At such a time I often see things that I may do in company with or that are related to this person or this situation. I hold up the persons in the meeting and their needs, as I know them, to God.

Douglas V. Steere, 1937

- 4.07 We are met in a great task when we meet in worship, no less than to realize the Divine Presence and to create an atmosphere in which that Presence and Power can touch us into fuller life. Once we remember this, we cannot but approach the occasion with reverent humility and the desire that nothing on our part may hinder or disturb.

It is something holy and wonderful we are trying to build up together—the consciousness of the Presence with us here and the reality of communion with God.

Quaker poster designed by FGC Press

Worship, according to the ancient practice of the Religious Society of Friends, is entirely without any human direction or supervision. A group of persons come together and sit down quietly with no prearrangement, each seeking to have an immediate sense of divine leading and to know at first hand the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is not wholly accurate to say that such a Meeting is held on the basis of Silence; it is more accurate to say that it is held on the basis of Holy Obedience. Those who enter such a Meeting can harm it in two specific ways: first, by an advanced determination to speak; and second, by advanced determination to keep

silent. The only way in which a worshipper can help such a Meeting is by an advanced determination to try to be responsive in listening to the still small voice and doing whatever may be commanded.

Adapted from the statement prepared for a Friends meeting attended by delegates to the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam, 1948

- 4.09 The true practice of the essence of Quaker worship is to be free, fully open and responsive to a full range of leadings of the Spirit from deep silence to joyful singing and even to dance. Fearlessly and consistently following this path over the long term would eventually obviate all issues of multiculturalism, multiracialism and inclusiveness.

Friends Journal cover, October 2003

Monthly Meeting

- 5.01 Being orderly come together, not to spend time with needless, unnecessary and fruitless discourses; but to proceed in the wisdom of God not in the way of the world, as a worldly assembly of men, by hot contests, by seeking to outspoke and overreach one another in discourse as if it were controversy between party and party of men, or two sides violently striving for dominion, not fellowship of God, in gravity, patience, meekness, in unity and concord, submitting one to another in lowliness of heart, and in the holy Spirit of truth and righteousness.

Edward Burrough, 1662

- 5.02 If you want to listen, then you hear; if you don't want to listen, God is working anyway.

Gusten Lutter, 2002

- 5.03 It is a weighty thing to speak in large meetings for business. First, except our minds are rightly prepared, and we clearly understand the case we speak to, instead of forwarding, we hinder the business and make more labour for those on whom the burden of work is laid.

If selfish views or a partial spirit have any room in our minds, we are unfit for the Lord's work. If we have a clear prospect of the business and proper weight on our minds to speak, it behooves us to avoid useless apologies and repetitions. Where people are gathered from far, and adjourning a meeting of business attended with great difficulty, it behooves all to be cautious how they detain a meeting, especially when they have sat six or seven hours and a good way to ride home.

In three hundred minutes are five hours, and he that improperly detains three hundred people one minute, besides other evils that attend it, does an injury like that of imprisoning one man five hours without cause.

John Woolman, 1758

5.04 Being succinct is unnatural for Quakers.

Annette Greenberg, 2004

5.05 The spirit of worship is essential to that type of business meeting in which the group endeavors to act as a unit. ... To discover what we really want as compared with what at first we think we want, we must go below the surface of self-centered desires. ... To will what God wills is ... to will what we ourselves really want.

Howard Brinton, 1952

5.06 To be present is ... to penetrate the deeper dimensions, ... to be open to influence and change; to be vulnerable, to be able to be hurt; to be willing to be spent and also to be awake, alive, and engaged actively in the immediate assignment that has been laid upon us.

Douglas Steere, 1967, "On Being Present Where You Are" (Pendle Hill Pamphlet #151)

5.07 Friends, both in individual worship and in meetings for worship and for business, continue to experience the presence of the living God not only as awe and healing but also as guidance for conduct. Like the prophets of Israel, they proclaim the unity of religious faith and social justice.

From the foreword in Faith & Practice of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 2002

5.08 It seems to me to be a major issue for the Society of Friends ... whether on the whole the emphasis is to be for a type of open, expectant religion, or whether it is to seek for comfortable formulations that seem to ensure safety, and that will be hostages against new and dangerous enterprises in the realm of truth. Are we charged with hope and faith and vision, or are we busy endeavoring to coin repetitive phrases and to become secure resting places for the mind?

Rufus Jones, Rethinking Quaker Principles, 1940

Membership

6.01 Now the Lord God hath opened to me by his invisible power how that every man was enlightened by the divine light of Christ; and I saw it shine through all, and that they that believed in it came out of condemnation and came to the light of life, and became children of it, but they that hated it, and did not believe in it, were condemned by it, though they made a profession of Christ. This I saw in the pure openings of the Light without the help of any man, neither did I then know where to find it in the Scriptures; though afterwards, searching the Scriptures, I found it. For I saw in that Light and Spirit which was before Scripture was given forth, and which led the holy men of God to give them forth, that all must come to that Spirit, if they would know God, or Christ, or the Scriptures aright, which they that gave them forth were led and taught by.

George Fox, 1648

6.02 And oh, how sweet and pleasant it is to the truly spiritual eye to see several sorts of believers, several forms of Christians in the school of Christ, every one learning their own lesson, performing their own peculiar service, and knowing, owning, and loving one another in their several places and different performances to their Master, to whom they are to give an account, and not quarrel with one another about their different practices.

Isaac Penington, 1659

6.03 The test for membership should not be doctrinal agreement, nor adherence to certain testimonies, but evidence of sincere seeking and striving for Truth, together with an understanding of the lines along which Friends are seeking that Truth.

Friends World Conference, 1952

6.04 Our membership of this, or any other Christian fellowship, is never based on worthiness. ... We none of us are members because we have attained a certain standard of goodness, but rather because, in this matter, we still are all humble learners in the school of Christ. Our membership is of no importance whatever unless it signifies that we are committed to something of far greater and more lasting significance than can adequately be conveyed by the closest association with any movement or organization. Our membership of the Society of Friends should commit us to the discipleship of the living Christ. When we have made that choice and come under that high compulsion, our membership will have endorsed it.

- 6.05 The nature of their purpose and quest as Friends binds members of a Meeting and of the whole Society into an intimate fellowship whose unity is not threatened by the diversity of leadings and experiences which may come to individual Friends. To share in the experience of the Presence in corporate worship, to strive, conscious that other Friends are also striving, to let the Divine Will guide one's life, to live in a sense of unending Love reaching out to the stumbling followers of Christ is to participate in a spiritual adventure in which Friends come to know one another and to respect one another at a level where superficial differences of age or sex, of wealth or position, of education or vocation, of race or nation are all irrelevant. Within this sort of fellowship, as in a family, griefs and joys, fears and hopes, failures and accomplishments are naturally shared, even as individuality and independence are scrupulously respected.

Faith and Practice of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, 1966

- 6.06 "George Fox and his early followers," wrote Rufus Jones, "went forth with unbounded faith and enthusiasm to discover in all lands those who were true fellow-members with them in this great household of God, and who were the hidden seed of God." Our Society thus arose from a series of mutual discoveries of men and women who found that they were making the same spiritual pilgrimage. This is still our experience today. Even at times of great difference of opinion, we have known a sense of living unity, because we have recognised one another as followers of Jesus. We are at different stages along the way. We use different language to speak of him and to express our discipleship. The insistent questioning of the seeker, the fire of the rebel, the reflective contribution of the more cautious thinker—all have a place amongst us. This does not always make life easy. But we have found that we have learned to listen to one another, to respect the sincerity of one another's opinions, to love and to care for one another. We are enabled to do this because God first loved us. The gospels tell us of the life and teaching of Jesus. The light of Christ, a universal light and known inwardly, is our guide. It is the grace of God which gives us the strength to follow. It is his forgiveness which restores us when we are oppressed by the sense of falling short. These things we know, not as glib phrases, but out of the depths of sometimes agonising experience.

London Yearly Meeting, 1968

Home, Children, Family

- 7.01 Children have much to teach us. If we cultivated the habit of dialogue and mutual learning, our children could keep us growing, and in a measure could bring us into their future, so that in middle age we would not stand on the sidelines bemoaning the terrible behavior and inconsiderateness of the younger generation.

Elizabeth Watson, 1975

- 7.02 I will begin here also with the beginning of time, the morning. So soon as you wake, retire your mind into a pure silence from all thoughts and ideas of worldly things, and in that frame wait upon God, to feel his good presence, to lift up your hearts to him, and commit your whole self into his blessed care and protection. Then rise, if well, immediately; being dressed, read a chapter or more in the Scriptures, and afterwards dispose yourselves for the business of the day, ever remembering that God is present, the overseer of all your thoughts, words, and action; and demean yourselves, my dear children accordingly; and do not you dare to do that in his holy, all-seeing presence, which you would be ashamed a man, yea, a child, should see you do. And as you have intervals from your lawful occasions, delight to step home, within yourselves, I mean, commune with your own hearts and be still, and (as Nebuchadnezzar said on another occasion) "*one like the son of God you shall find and enjoy with you and in you; a treasure the world knows not of, but is the aim, end, and diadem of the children of god.*" This will bear you up against all temptations, and carry you sweetly and evenly through your day's business, supporting you under disappointments, and moderating your satisfaction in success and prosperity. The evening come, read again the Holy Scripture, and have your times of retirement, before you close your eyes, as in the morning; that so the Lord may be the alpha and omega of every day of your lives.

William Penn's Advice to his Children

- 7.03 Hospitality in the home is a vital force in spiritual nurture. The contacts of parents with their children's companions, and the child's association with adult guests, are important influences.

Parental attitudes toward neighbors and acquaintances are often reflected in the children. Family conversation may determine whether or not children will look for the good in the people they meet, and whether they will be sensitive to that of God in everyone.

Faith and Practice of North Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1991

- 7.04 Homemaking is a Quaker service in its own right. It should be recognized as such and a proper balance preserved, so that other activities—even the claims of Quaker service in other fields—are not allowed to hinder its growth.

Faith and Practice of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, 1985

Sexuality

- 8.01 Sexuality looked at dispassionately, is neither good nor evil—it is a fact of nature and a force of immeasurable power. But looking at it as Christians we have felt impelled to state without reservation that it is a glorious gift of God.

Throughout the whole of living nature it makes possible an endless and fascinating variety of creatures, a lavishness, a beauty of form and colour surpassing all that could be imagined as necessary to survival.

“Towards a Quaker View of Sex,” Revised Edition, 1964

- 8.02 The mystery of sex continues to be greater than our capacity to comprehend it, no matter how much we learn about it. We engage in it, in often too frantic efforts to enjoy it but, more subtly, also to try to fathom its ever recurring power over us. Surely this power and its mystery relate to the mystery of God’s relationship to us. The mistake we have made throughout the ages has been to load onto sex the incubus of success or failure of marriage, to look upon sex as a resolution, an ending. In reality it offers us, if we could only see it, a fresh *beginning* every time in that relationship of which it is a part.

Mary S. Calderone, 1973

Living in the World

- 9.01 Let all nations hear the sound by word or writing. Spare no place, spare no tongue nor pen, but be obedient to the Lord God; go through the world and be valiant for the truth upon earth.... Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one; whereby in them you may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.

George Fox, 1656

- 9.02 We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love, and unity; it is our desire that others’ feet may walk in the same, and do deny and bear our testimony against all strife and wars and contentions....Our weapons are not carnal, but spiritual. . . And so we desire, and also expect to have liberty of our consciences and just rights and outward liberties, as other people of the nation, which we have promise of, from the word of a king....Treason, treachery and false dealing we do utterly deny; false dealing, surmising or plotting against any creature on the face of the earth; and speak the Truth in plainness and singleness of heart; and all our desire is your good and peace and love and unity.

Margaret Fell, 1660

- 9.03 Prison shall be my grave before I will budge a jot; for I owe my conscience to no mortal man; I have no need to fear, God will make amends for all.

William Penn, 1668

- 9.04 Answer the Witness of God in every man, whether they are the heathen that do not profess Christ, or whether they are such as do profess Christ that have the form of godliness and be out of the Power.

George Fox, 1672

- 9.05 The Cross of Christ ... truly overcomes the world, and leads a life of purity in the face of its allurements; they that bear it are not thus chained up, for fear they should bite; nor locked up, lest

they should be stole away; no, they receive power from Christ their Captain, to resist the evil, and do that which is good in the sight of God; to despise the world, and love its reproach above its praise; and not only not to offend others, but love those that offend them.... True godliness doesn't turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavours to mend it; not hide their candle under a bushel, but set it upon a table in a candlestick.

William Penn, 1682

- 9.06 Every degree of luxury of what kind soever, and every demand for money inconsistent with divine order, hath some connection with unnecessary labor....To labor too hard or cause others to do so, that we may live conformable to customs which Christ our Redeemer contradicted by his example in the days of his flesh, and which are contrary to divine order, is to manure a soil for propagating an evil seed in the earth.

John Woolman, c. 1763

- 9.07 Love was the first motion, and then a concern arose to spend some time with the Indians, that I might feel and understand their life and the spirit they live in, if haply I might receive some instruction from them, or they be in any degree helped forward by my following the leadings of Truth amongst them. ...

Afterward, feeling my mind covered with the spirit of prayer, I told the interpreters that I found it in my heart to pray to God, and I believed, if I prayed right, he would hear me, and expressed my willingness for them to omit interpreting, so our meeting ended with a degree of Divine love. Before our people went out I observed Papunehang (the man who had been zealous in laboring for a reformation in that town, being then very tender) spoke to one of the interpreters, and I was afterward told that he said in substance as follows: "I love to feel where words come from."

John Woolman, 1763

- 9.08 For Friends the most important consideration is not the right action in itself but a right inward state out of which right action will arise. Given the right inward state, right action is inevitable. Inward state and outward action are component parts of a single whole.

Howard Brinton, 1943

- 9.09 As Friends, we need to develop our spiritual lives so that we may become increasingly able to speak to "that of God" in those with whom we come in contact and to point out to them by our lives as well as our words that there is a power and a spirit within them that can make war impossible. We should show by our lives that they as well as we are responsible to this authority within, and none other.

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1950

- 9.10 I know only too well what a poor old broken world confronts us at the present moment. This is not time for soft and easy optimism. Jeremiah the prophet usually took a dark view of things. He did not expect the leopard to change his spots, or the Ethiopian to go white. He looked for no miraculous panacea—no balm in Gilead—to change the hard conditions. But watching a potter remake a spoiled vessel on his potter's wheel, he suddenly has a vision of reality and in a flash he saw that that is what God does with His world. He does not scrap the marred clay. He remakes what has gone wrong. How often He has done it! What a list it is!

*From The Luminous Trail, quoted in
Harry Emerson Fosdick, ed., Rufus Jones Speaks to Our Time, 1961*

- 9.11 Individuals can resist injustice, but only in community can we do justice.

The defense of human rights ... is faith-based and worship-initiated, but we need look neither to Heaven nor to the Bible nor to corporate conscience for the higher law that overrules unjust laws.

In the United States, protecting people from human rights violations is, if nonviolent, never illegal.

A society's constituent individuals and communities retain primary responsibility for protecting human rights, a responsibility that we may entrust but never forfeit to the state.

Much that has been labeled "civil disobedience" is, more accurately, civil initiative; it is the exercise by individuals or communities of their legally established duty to protect the victims of government officials' violations of fundamental rights.

9.12 It is thought that realizes will. Only a thinking man can live. Only a thinking people can create history. Only a thinking kind can live in the midst of the dead.

The future always belongs to us. It is neither the working of nature, nor that of fate. It comes by our resolution.

Only a person who resolves not to be enslaved enjoys freedom. Only a person who resolves not to assert his own enjoys freedom.

Only the person who resolves to love even at the cost of his own life can win love.

The first ingredient of life is courage.

The problem of today is not that of knowledge or technology. It is a spiritual problem. It is a question which requires a revolution in our outlook on life, on history, and on the nation.

The world today does not require an increase in technology, nor an easier access to its store of learning. It requires faith and spirit to overcome the present hurdle. The age calls for a new religion.

Ham Sok Hon, 1965

Testimonies

10.01 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

10.02 Of the interest of the public in our estates: Hardly any thing is given us for our selves, but the public may claim a share with us. But of all we call ours, we are most accountable to God and the public for our estates: In this we are but stewards, and to hoard up all to ourselves is great injustice as well as ingratitude.

John Woolman, 1720

10.03 Perhaps what we are now considering is the question: What was the central concern of Jesus? I may say quite simply, The answer to that question is: human conduct.... [For Jesus there] are not primarily questions of religious ritual ... [nor] questions of philosophy, or theology or belief. There are rather questions of how you should behave.... Jesus, in his teaching, would not be asked ... abstract questions nearly as much as ... questions about the will of God for our conduct.

Henry J. Cadbury, 1961, from Faith & Practice of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

10.04 At the first convincement, when Friends could not put off their hats to people, or say You to a single person, but Thou and Thee; when they could not bow, or use flattering words in salutations, or adopt the fashions and customs of the world, many Friends, that were tradesmen of several sorts, lost their customers at the first; for the people were shy of them, and would not trade with them; so that for a time some Friends could hardly get money enough to buy bread. But afterwards, when people came to have experience of Friends' honesty and truthfulness, and found that their Yea was yea, and their Nay was nay; that they kept to a word in their dealings, and that they would not cozen and cheat them; but that if they sent a child to their shops for anything, they were as well used as if they had come themselves; the lives and conversations of Friends did preach, and reached to the witness of God in the people.

George Fox, 1653

10.05 It's a dangerous thing to lead young Friends much into the observation of outward things, which may be easily done, for they can soon get into an outward garb, to be all alike outwardly, but this will not make them true Christians: it's the Spirit that gives life. I would be loath to have a hand in these things....

Margaret Fell Fox, 1698

10.06 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, tho' 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 & 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 commonly with an increase of wealth, the desire for 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, c. 1744

10.07 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 over-burdened program of good committees and good undertakings. I am persuaded that this fevered life of church workers is not wholesome. Undertakings get plastered on from the outside because we can't turn down a friend. Acceptance of service on a weighty committee should really depend upon an answering imperative within us, not merely upon a rational calculation of the factors involved. 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 R. Kelly, 1941

10.08 For some there is a danger that care for the future may lead to undue anxiety and become a habit of saving for its own sake, resulting in the withholding of what should be expended for the needs of the family or devoted to the service of the Society. The temptation to trust in riches comes in many forms, and can only be withstood through faith in our Father and his providing care.

London Yearly Meeting, 1945

10.09 Life is meant to be lived from a Center, a divine Center—a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. It takes no time but occupies all our time.

Thomas R. Kelly, 1941

10.10 In spite of our varying degrees of emphasis on how our Peace Testimony should be expressed, there are many ways to peace. There are:

Those who feel that we must seek inward peace first, as self purification.

Those who are moved to radical personal and group action, and need the support of Meetings.

Those who feel that as citizens of governments we still have opportunities to influence events.

We support Friends who are led to walk in any of these ways to peace....We differ, yet we love each other.

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1959

10.11 How healing to come into the Religious Society of Friends, whose founder saw clearly that the Light of God is not limited to the male half of the human race. Membership and participation have helped me grow toward wholeness, as I have followed my calling into a ministry that embraces all of life. Though I believe deeply in women's liberation, I cannot put men down or join in consciousness-raising activities that foster hatred of everything masculine. I have loved the men in my life too deeply for that kind of betrayal.

As women gain rights and become whole human beings, men too can grow into wholeness, no longer having to carry the whole burden of responsibility for running the affairs of humankind, but in humility accepting the vast resources, as yet not very much drawn on, and the wisdom of women in solving the colossal problems of the world.

Elizabeth Watson, 1975

10.12 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 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 with in 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 seem 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.

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 take 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.

Let us reject the clamour of fear and listen to the whisperings of hope.

*Aotearoa/New Zealand Yearly Meeting, 1987,
from Faith & Practice of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1998*

10.13 And thus the Lord Jesus hath manifested himself and his Power, without respect of Persons; and so let all mouths be stopt that would limit him, whose Power and Spirit is infinite, that is pouring it upon all flesh.

Margaret Fell, 1666

Death and Memorials

11.01 They that love beyond the World cannot be separated by it. Death cannot kill what never dies. Nor can Spirits ever be divided that love and live in the same Divine Principle. They live in one another still.

William Penn, 1693

11.02 Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-worn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home to Itself.

Thomas R. Kelly, 1941

11.03 The night before landing in Liverpool I awoke in my berth with a strange sense of trouble and sadness. As I lay wondering what it meant, I felt myself invaded by a Presence and held by the Everlasting Arms. It was the most extraordinary experience I had ever had. But I had no intimation that anything was happening to Lowell [his eleven-year-old son]. When we landed in Liverpool a cable informed me that he was desperately ill, and a second cable, in answer to one from me, brought the dreadful news that he was gone. When the news reached my friend John Wilhelm Rowntree, he experienced a profound sense of Divine Presence enfolding him and me, and his comfort and love were an immense help to me in my trial.... I know now, as I look back across the years, that nothing has carried me up into the life of God, or done more to open out the infinite meaning of love, than the fact that love can span this break of separation, can pass beyond the visible and hold right on across the chasm. The mystic union has not broken and knows no end.

Rufus M. Jones, 1947

11.04 In hours of loss and sorrow, when the spurious props fail us, we are more apt to find our way back to the real refuge. We are suddenly made aware of our shelterless condition, alone, and in our own strength. Our stoic armor and our brave defenses of pride become utterly inadequate. We are thrown back on reality. We have then our moments of sincerity and insight. We feel that we cannot live without resources from beyond our own domain. We must have God. It is then, when one knows that nothing else whatever will do, that the great discovery is made. Again and again the psalms announce this. When the world has caved in; when the last extremity has been reached; when the billows and waterspouts of fortune have done their worst, you hear the calm, heroic voice of the lonely man saying: "God is our refuge and fortress, therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, though the mountains be carried into the middle of the sea." That is great experience, but it is not reserved for psalmists and rare patriarchs like Job. It is a privilege for common mortals like us who struggle and agonize and feel the thorn in the flesh, and the bitter tragedy of life unhealed. Whether we make the discovery or not, God is there with us in the furnace. Only it makes all the difference if we do find him as the one high tower where refuge is not for the passing moment only, but is an eternal attainment.

*Spiritual Energies in Daily Life, quoted in
Henry Emerson Fosdick, ed., Rufus Jones Speaks to our Time, 1961*