

NOTE TO FRIENDS: This draft is a revision of parts of chapters 4, 5, and 6 of the 1993 NPYM *Faith and Practice*, according to the new outline which gathers all material about a topic (description, quotations, advices, queries) into the same place in the book. This chapter “Fruits of the Spirit” deals with Quaker testimonies. Some parts of this chapter are new to *Faith and Practice*, as requested by NPYM Friends: Integrity, Harmony with Creation, “Be Not Afraid,” plus new material in Community and Stewardship.

Comments or questions about specific additions, deletions, or changes appear in *[[italics in double square brackets]]*. These comments will not appear in the final version of *Faith and Practice*.

## 4

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# Fruits of the Spirit: Friends Testimonies

*[[Note to Friends: these introductory paragraphs are new to Faith and Practice.]]*

Testimonies are fruits of the Spirit marking directions for our lives. On one level, testimonies can be seen as values or principles of morality. On a deeper level, what Friends call “testimonies” are the result of being changed by direct interaction with Transcendent Reality. Transformation from worldly to spiritual—our journey into Light—is the result of an encounter with the Spirit and of our response to that encounter.

Learning a moral code will not in itself make us good. Stories, histories, and journals can help us understand how to act rightly in the world. But it is only when we are drawn to the good and have internalized it—as opposed to merely understanding it—are we able to *be* good.

Friends traditionally describe personal transformation as a gradual development over a lifetime. Convincement is the beginning of this process, the point at which we accept the Light and submit to its guidance. As we are changed over time by acting in conformity with that guidance, we are increasingly drawn toward perfection—living a life more and more aligned with divine Truth and Love.

As other Christians did, early Friends believed that they did not have the power, on their own, to make themselves over. Transformation could only happen through empowerment by the Light. Friends did, however, believe that people can choose to respond in ways that strengthen and increase their measure of the Light. The means by which Friends open themselves to the Spirit, once convinced in this way, are varied. Friends for centuries have been in unity about the outcome of that change, if not in the language they use to describe it.

Early Friends saw the purpose of religion as uniting humankind with the Divine. The nature of this unification is remarkably similar across spiritual traditions. Lists exist in many traditions similar to that found in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. These are known as the Fruits of the Spirit. Wherever we look in human spirituality we often find a similar description of salvation, enlightenment, maturation, or perfection. The outcome of this spiritual transformation, then, seems to be predictable. It has been reproduced throughout time all over the world.

Among liberal Quakers, Friends commonly use the terms simplicity, integrity, community, peace, and equality to refer to the Fruits of the Spirit. Other Friends sometimes use other terms, for example, “simplicity” is a modern term replacing “plain.”

It is difficult to draw sharp boundaries among testimonies. Is truth-telling “simple” in the sense that it leads away from deceptions and confusions that can complicate our lives, or is it a matter of

“integrity” in that one’s yes means yes and one’s no means no? Which terms or how many terms are used is less important than whether or not the changes described are actually alive in us.

This chapter will describe the testimonies widely accepted in our yearly meeting, to illustrate and describe the results that Friends have seen when they yield to the Light. This spiritual transformation can be described in other terms. Regardless of the spiritual tradition followed or the words used, those who have embarked upon this way of transformation will recognize its signs, in themselves and others.

## Testimony of Integrity

*[[Note to Friends: this section includes material from pp. 25-27 of the 1993 Faith and Practice; some quotations have been brought in from pp. 19-20, and some queries from Simplicity which pertain to Integrity, and some new material has been added.]]*

Living with integrity presents the daily challenge of keeping our lives congruent with the Light, in essence living in Truth. Our choices in how we use our time, spend our money, and form relationships are consistent with what we believe. Our conversation in public and private is a seamless whole. On those infrequent occasions when we are required to swear an oath, we can advance the cause of truth by simple affirmation. The greater discipline is to continually exercise care in speech, making statements that convey truth without exaggeration or omission of essential fact.

Conduct is integrity made visible. We are called to perform our daily tasks with measured care so that our work is whole and sound. We behave honestly with individuals and toward organizations. Willingness to bear the consequences of our convictions leads to taking our lives seriously. A capacity for self-examination enables us to work toward integrity. The words and witness of Friends provide encouragement towards a life lived whole.

The Light in our hearts leads us into ways we can meet the challenges of living a life of integrity.

### Quotations

*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*

*...That all Friends that have callings and trades, do labour in the thing that is good, in faithfulness and uprightness, and keep to their yea and nay in all their communications; and that all who are indebted to the world, endeavor to discharge the same, that nothing they may owe to any man but love one to another.*

*Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656*

*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*

*Integrity is one of the virtues for which Quakers in the past have been praised. It*

*is a quality worth having, but it is doubtful if it can be reached by self-conscious effort or by adherence to a principle. Integrity is a condition in which a person's response to a total situation can be trusted: the opposite of a condition in which he would be moved by opportunity or self-seeking impulses breaking up his unity as a whole being. This condition of trust is different from the recognition that he will always be kind or always tell the truth.*

*Kenneth C. Barnes, 1972*

*How do we walk with integrity, Friends to each other; Friends to the world? A while back I heard a Friend say there are three pieces to living faithfully or living with integrity. The first is that you have to have the desire to do it. The desire is planted in you. It doesn't even come from us really. It is planted there. So we have to ask, "What is it that is being required of me at this moment, at this time, in this place?" The second piece, she said, was that you have to test what you hear: We hear through ears that also hear a lot of other stuff. So we have to test what we believe. I believe Friends call that discernment. And then, once we have done that, she said the last step was the easy part. You have to act on it. But for me that is one of the hardest parts.*

*Deborah Fisch, 2006*

*It occurs to me that every person I've met who is committed to integrity is simultaneously committed to knowing themselves, facing the truth about themselves, and accepting responsibility for their moods, actions, and reactions. The search for truth begins within the seeker. It begins when we endeavor to understand our motives and priorities, accepting nothing less than the truth about ourselves, especially when the light of introspection is painful and we don't like what we find. It requires little courage to believe the best about ourselves, but to acknowledge our need for growth is difficult. Facing squarely, scrutinizing ourselves instead of others, changing ourselves rather than insisting others change to suit us, is a solid first step in the life of integrity.*

*Philip Gulley, 2014*

### **Advices**

Let us maintain integrity in word and deed. Remember how widespread and diverse are the temptations to grow rich at the expense of others, and how apparently harmless indulgence often leads by degrees to wrongdoing.

Avoid pretense in clothing, manners, and speech, realizing that false impressions may be conveyed by action and appearance, no less than by words.

### **Queries**

- How do we use the resources and strength we are given to meet the challenges of living a whole and honest life?
- Do we keep to a single standard of truth, so that we are free from the use of judicial and other oaths?
- Are we punctual in keeping promises, prompt in the payment of debts, and just and honorable in all our dealings?
- Do we take care that our spiritual growth is not sacrificed to busyness?

## Witness

[[Note to Friends: this section combines advices and queries on Witness from p. 46 with material (especially quotations) from pp. 15-16 and pp. 31-33 "Living in the World" in the 1993 Faith and Practice.]]

Quaker witness results from our practice of integrity. When we speak Truth through both our words and our lives, we provide an example, or witness, to the world about what we believe that Truth to be. For example, witness occurs when an individual acts to resolve an interpersonal conflict according to Quaker principles. It also occurs communally when a monthly meeting discerns and adopts a minute opposing a military action, promoting social and environmental justice, or addressing some other rising concern. On a broader level, Quaker witness is the guiding concern of organizations such as Friends Committee on National Legislation, which lobbies Congress to pass laws in concert with Quaker beliefs.

Throughout our history Friends have testified that our lives are not meant to conform to the ways of the world but that we are meant to contribute to the transformation of the world through the light of Truth.

### Quotations

*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; tread and trample all that is contrary under.... 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

*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

*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

*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

*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

*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

### **Advices**

We are glad to tell in words as well as deeds about the Truth and Faith that are in us. We seek fellowship with others of our own faith and with all people, realizing the oneness of humanity under God. Our witness is characterized by humility and a willingness to learn from others. We are constantly reminded that Truth is greater than the knowledge any one of us has of it. God did not put all the fruit on one branch.

We remain open to new leadings of Spirit, while taking care not to outrun our Guide.

Witness calls us into action.

We follow the witness that we are called to, with a whole heart, understanding that no one person can carry the weight of the whole world.

We seek affinity with others who share the same concerns.

Speak Truth to power with love.

### **Queries**

- How do our lives testify to our convictions as Friends? What are we doing to share our faith?
- How do we speak Truth tenderly, so that others may hear it?
- What ways do we find to cooperate with people and groups with whom we share beliefs and concerns? Do we listen with love and respect to those with whom we disagree?
- How do we respect and encourage the multiplicity of witness that arises in our meetings?
- Are we faithful in witnessing to Truth in our community and to the world?

### **Civic Responsibility**

*[[Note to Friends: This section combines introductory paragraphs and quotations from "The Individual and the State" on pp. 36-37 of the 1993 Faith and Practice and advices and queries on "Civic Responsibility" from p. 47. New advices material from South Mountain Friends Meeting.]]*

Friends' responsibility toward civic authority requires integrity and discernment. When government acts as a coercive agency, especially when resorting to violence, it may violate Quaker principles. On the other hand, the state commands respect and cooperation when it acts to maintain an orderly society with justice under law for all and for meeting human needs.

Friends participate in civic life in a variety of ways. Through the ballot, public witness, legislative advocacy, or holding public office, Friends may contribute to an enlightened and vigorous public life and help shape policies and institutions that are in keeping with Quaker testimonies.

Friends do not avoid serving in public office but rather regard it as a form of Quaker witness, recognizing that some actions taken by public authority may conflict with Quaker beliefs. For example, from its earliest days, the Society has held that war is contrary to the will of God. In situations where a Friend is called to support war while in office, a prayerful search for divine guidance assists in determining how to proceed. There may be many other instances where Friends in public office find that their duties put them into conflict with the testimonies. As Friends have found in the past, it may become necessary to resign their positions rather than violate their principles.

When obedience to the state appears to be contrary to divine law, Friends take prayerful counsel to find the right way forward. This involves testing our resistance to the state through discernment in the meeting community. When the decision is to refuse obedience, we act openly and make the reasons of our actions clear. If the decision involves incurring legal penalties, Friends generally have suffered willingly and fearlessly for the sake of their convictions. If we are not personally involved in an action of civil disobedience, we strengthen the meeting community by supporting our fellow members with spiritual encouragement and, when necessary, with material aid.

### **Quotations**

*...That care be taken, that as any are called before outward powers of the nation, that in the light, obedience to the Lord be given.*

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

*Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656*

*We affirm our unchanging conviction that our first allegiance is to God, and if this conflicts with any compulsion of the State, we serve our countries best by remaining true to our higher loyalty.*

*Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1953*

*...There is no one Quaker attitude toward politics. Historically, Quakers can be found practicing and preaching almost every possible position from full participation to complete withdrawal and abstention.... 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 ... 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 the 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 main stream of life in his time, of renouncing the opportunity directly and immediately to influence history.*

*Frederick B. Tolles, 1956*

### **Advices**

We value the part we have in shaping the laws of our country. It is our task to see that these laws speak to and answer that of God, which we believe is in every person. Our aim is the building of a social order that works toward the expression of divine love. We affirm our unchanging conviction that our first allegiance is to God, and if this conflicts with any compulsion of the state, we serve our

country best by remaining true to our higher loyalty.

If, by divine leading, our attention is focused on a law contrary to divine law, we must proceed with care. Before making a decision to oppose a law, we pray for further divine guidance; we consult with others who might be affected by our decision. When we reach clearness, we act with conviction.

When our decision involves disobedience to the law, we make the grounds of our action clear to all concerned. If there are penalties, we suffer them without evasion.

We care for those who suffer for conscience's sake.

### **Queries**

- What are we doing as individuals and as a meeting to carry our share of civic responsibility for our community, state, and nation?
- How are we working for change in government when change is needed?
- Are we conscientious in fulfilling obligations to the state and society while opposing those contrary to our Quaker principles?
- Do we uphold those acting under a concern about actions of the state contrary to Quaker belief?
- Do we share our convictions in a spirit of loving concern?

*[[Question to NPYM Friends: This section focuses on civic responsibility toward government. Are there other types of civic action or responsibility important to your Quaker group? Please describe them.]]*

## **Testimony of Community**

*[[Note NPYM Friends: The 1993 Faith and Practice doesn't have a section specifically on Community. The material here is new: it includes some advices & queries formerly in Participation in the Life of the Meeting and some text based on Intermountain and Southeastern Yearly Meetings.]]*

The meeting as community has been central to Friends since the earliest days, when members of the local Quaker community would take care of the families, farms, and businesses of Friends traveling in ministry or imprisoned for professing Truth. Community remains a spiritual as well as a practical safety net—a place for communal discernment and for testing leadings within the shared wisdom of the group.

There is a nearly mystical relationship between individual Friends and the meeting community. The meeting supports and strengthens its members and attenders; the individuals support and strengthen each other, and thereby the community, and all are transformed. Thus the meeting as a whole reflects what Jesus called “the kingdom of God” and what many Friends today call “the beloved community.” We feel it during worship and in our work and fellowship together.

The spirit of a Friends community might be described as “the testimonies made visible” through the interactions and mutual care of its members. Creating a community of love, trust, compassion, and forbearance, where differences are respected and every voice is valued, is crucial to our witness to the world. It is the center from which our concerns for peace, social justice, and environmental action arise.

### **Quotations**

*Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.*

*Philippians 2:4*

*...That no-one speak evil of another, neither judge one against another, but rather*

*judge this, that none put a stumbling-block or occasion to fall in his brother's way.*  
*Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656*

*... [W]hen 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, 1678*

*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*

*In the kindergarten of the School of Love that we attend with one another in community, we can lead one another by meeting love with love. With grace, we may even be able to meet unlove with love.*

...

*Un-self-centered behavior is hard for humans. It's especially hard today because popular modern psychology ... encourages self-fulfillment and self-assertion as priorities that—without great care—can foster self-centeredness. These cultural priorities are one reason for the need for communities with a commitment or covenant to aspire to self-transcendence rather than self-fulfillment, to mutuality as well as a personal relationship with the Divine. Spiritual communities are where we practice the counter-cultural behaviors of living love with others committed to the same struggle, where we encourage and admonish one another in tenderness.*

*Patricia Loring, 1999*

*Many Friends describe the experience of their first visit to meeting as “coming home.” It is only with God's Spirit that such a diverse group of individuals can realize and embody the kind of unity, belonging, and community that answers to that of God within us.*

*The Quaker meeting is meant to be a blessed community—a living testimony to a social order that embodies God's peace, justice, love, compassion, and joy, and an example and invitation to a better way of life. Like our other testimonies, community can be a prophetic call to the rest of society.*

*Southeastern Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice, 2007*

## **Advices**

“Let your life speak” is traditional advice for Friends. The life of a Quaker meeting also speaks: by giving practical support for members and attenders in need; cherishing the children and young people finding their spiritual paths; encouraging, guiding, and lovingly eldering Friends in discernment or following leadings; welcoming new seekers; and stepping forth in Spirit-led witness in the wider world.

Being part of a community requires us to practice compassion and patience. As members of a community, we pay attention to each other and rely on each other; we consciously nurture our interdependence. It's not always easy. It's nevertheless essential to our shared spiritual journey.

## **Queries**

- How do we foster love, truth, and harmony within our meeting community?
- Is our community a shelter where we can grow in the Spirit? How can our community provide the best combination of safety and challenge to encourage spiritual growth?
- How do we as individuals share our gifts with the meeting? How do we as a community help individual Friends find their own gifts and share them with others?
- How do we as individuals support the spiritual health of the meeting? How do we as a community support the spiritual health of individual members and attenders?
- How do we make our meeting a beloved community and a living testimony—for all members and attenders, wherever they are in their own spiritual journeys?
- How does our meeting community reflect the Spirit and Truth at the center of our lives?

*[[Question to NPYM Friends: Does this new material reflect your group's understanding and experience of the testimony of community? What would you add or change?]]*

## Unity

*[[Note to Friends: This is an expansion of the advices and queries from p. 43 of the 1993 Faith and Practice, with quotations brought in from other sources.]]*

Unity arises within the gathered meeting. Knowledge of our historic witness and spiritual discipline and mutual love prepare us for our life together. Through unity, the sense of being gathered, we are assured of the authenticity of our experience. Different ways of understanding the divine life can arise among us. These differences are not to be ignored for the sake of superficial agreement. They are better recognized and understood, so that a deeper and more vital unity can be reached.

Convictions which might divide or disrupt us can, through God's grace, help to make the meeting creative and strong. Friends are encouraged to keep faith and fellowship with each other, waiting in the Light for that unity which draws us together in Truth and Love.

When a sense of a new witness arises it may occasion a season of disquiet as we discern whether it is a call to renewal. New light can be given to any one among us. We do well to remain open to what the Innermost Word calls forth among us. Revelation is ongoing, providing illumination and guidance to the individual and through individuals to the whole.

Through practical and ongoing devotion, we are drawn into an experience of being gathered as a beloved community. Frequent fellowship is vital to maintaining our life together. As we grow in love and knowledge of one another we are more able to dwell together in singleness, wholeness, and unity.

For unity in the context of Quaker decision making, see Chapter 5, "The Monthly Meeting."

### Quotations

*...That Christian moderation be used towards all men: that they who obey not the word, may be won with those that in the word dwell, to guide in an holy life and godly conversation.*

*Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656*

*Oh, how sweet and lovely it is to see brethren dwell together in unity, to see the true image of God raised in persons, and they knowing and loving one another in that image, and bearing with one another through love, and helping one another under their temptations and distresses of spirit, which every one must expect to meet with ... The way is one; and he that is in the faith, and in the obedience to that light which shines from the Spirit into the heart of every believer, hath a taste of the one heart and*

*the one way, and knoweth that no variety of practices, which is of God, can make a breach in the true unity.*

*Isaac Penington, 1659*

*The Lord is with you my tender Friends. Yea, I say, Israel's God is among you. He will give you wisdom and strength, as you wait upon him. Therefore be encouraged in the blessed work of the Lord, unto which you are called. Be bold and valiant for the truth, to withstand all the false pretenders to love and unity, and are in a dividing Spirit, and secretly endeavoring to disturb the Churches' peace. Stand up on the strength of the Lord, and in the power of his might against all such which would destroy your comely Order (into which the Lord hath gathered you) and bring all into Confusion as they are. As your Hearts are inclined to this good work, the Lord who is rich in mercy and goodness, he will fill your Quivers with polished Arrows, and cause your Bow to abide in strength and so furnish you with his heavenly virtues to enable you for his work and service that he calls you to that hard things will be made easy unto you.*

*Theophila Townsend, 1686*

*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*

*The attainment of unity within the meeting is not the same as the attainment of uniformity. Unity is spiritual, uniformity mechanical. Friends have never required of the members assent to a religious or social creed, though not infrequently a body of Friends has issued a statement expressing their religious or social views at a particular time. There is, however, always the reservation that the Spirit of Truth may lead to further insight. Differences within the group on the particular application of general principles are tolerated, provided they are being actively explored in a spirit of friendship and a continued search for truth. Such differences are often of great value in helping new aspects of truth to emerge.*

*Howard H. Brinton, 1952*

*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 ... 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.*

*New England Yearly Meeting, 1966*

*I believe that we continually deepen our spiritual roots. However, there is a challenge before us to further nurture these roots and enhance our lives with dignity and spirituality. I believe that each individual possesses gifts of the Spirit to help achieve this through opening out hearts to the Light from God so this Light flows through us.*

*This is where unity through diversity comes into focus as we move out across other barriers and communities to "answer that of God in each person" as a "vessel" for the Light to flow to others on our path.*

*Donald Laitin, 1997*

*The various renewals among Friends are a continuing effort to rebalance our*

*Quaker faith and practice, and to sustain its integrity within the changing social ecology of its environment. The evolution of Friends over time, as they have migrated around the world and into various social habitats, has affinities with the changes natural species undergo in their spread to different environments. Ultimately the natural and spiritual are a single process of life on earth. We are made in the image of both God and the universe.*

*Douglas Gwyn, 2014*

### **Advices**

Each of us has a particular experience of God and each must find the way to be true to it. When an expression of that experience is strange or disturbing, try to sense where it comes from and how it might nourish the lives of others.

Listen patiently and seek the truth which other people's opinions may contain for you. Avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language.

Do not allow the strength of your convictions to betray you into making statements or allegations that are unfair or untrue.

Think it possible that you may be mistaken.

Cultivate affectionate regard and mutual care for each other. Look for times and occasions in addition to meeting on first days to gather together affirming a common life that leads to a deeper unity.

### **Queries**

- When problems and conflicts arise, do we make timely efforts to resolve them in a spirit of love and humility?
- Are we prepared to let go of our individual desires and let the Holy Spirit lead us to unity?
- Are we open to the diversity of culture, language and expressions of faith in our yearly meeting and in the world community of Friends?
- Are we careful not to manipulate and exploit one another? Do we avoid talebearing, and are we careful of the reputation of others?

*[[Question for NPYM Friends: How do you define "unity" in the context of Quaker practice? How do you experience unity in the corporate life of Friends?]]*

### **Mutual Care**

*[[Note to Friends: The advices and queries here are from p. 43 of the 1993 Faith and Practice.]]*

We nurture personal relationships within our meetings by engaging in social and recreational gatherings in addition to our involvement in meetings for worship, business, and committee work. Reading groups, spiritual sharing groups, and affinity groups deepen our lives together. When we learn about each other as individuals, we more readily share joys and sorrows, express our needs, and extend our care for each other in deeper ways. We become mutually supportive, loving Friends in every sense of the word.

### **Quotations**

*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*

*John 13:34-35*

*...That none be busy bodies in others' matters, but each one to bear another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ; that they be sincere and without offence, and that all things that are honest, be done without murmuring, and disputing, that you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation amongst whom they may shine as lights in the world.*

*Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656*

*The spiritual welfare of a meeting is greatly helped if its social life is vigorous and its members take a warm personal interest in one another's welfare...It is our duty and privilege to share in one another's joys and sorrows.*

*London Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice, 1960*

*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 community 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*

*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 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, [sexual orientation,] or gender.*

*Mary Calderone, 1989*

### **Advices**

Our needs for love and care, and our response to these needs in others, make up a rich part of our lives. In an exchange truly grounded in love, each of us is both giver and receiver, ready to help and accept help. Neither pride nor fear keeps us from the unconditional love and care of God manifested through others. Let neither comfort nor self-centeredness blind us to our need for others.

We listen to one another with openness of heart and in good faith, aware that greater wisdom than our own is required to meet our human needs. We lift up our hearts to the Source of all wisdom and power.

### **Queries**

- In what ways do we bring together members and attenders, young and old, in love and community?
- Are we sensitive to each other's personal needs and difficulties, and do we assist in useful ways?
- Do we visit one another in our homes and keep in touch with distant members?
- Do we practice the art of listening to one another, even beyond words?
- Are we charitable with each other?
- How well are we able to love each other unconditionally?

## Home and Family

[[*Note to Friends: from pp. 29 and 44-45 of the 1993 Faith and Practice, with additional material from Britain, Australia, and Intermountain YMs and the Pendle Hill pamphlet Bringing God Home by Mary Kay Rehard.*]]

Each of us creates home and all of us create family. In our homes we nurture fellowship, education, and community for the meeting. In our homes the realm of God can be made real. Ideally, family is an expression of deep emotional unity and shared history. This depth can provide a precious bonding of people and bring forth joy and spiritual growth. It may also bring forth anguish when family ties break down, or a loved one suffers.

Family life is strengthened by recognizing that all family members, and indeed all people, are God's children, and that we are called to nurture and love each other as members of divine creation. In the Light in the eyes of our children, in the loving expression of adults, we feel holy love at work in the life of our families.

We also recognize the sense of family and home that many single people or people without family find in the life of the meeting. We have concern for the well-being of the meeting, of the people it comprises, and of the wider world to which it belongs. Together we can participate in God's work on earth.

Meetings have a responsibility to nurture the immediate family unit. Meetings support marriages and committed relationships between adults. (See Chapter 10.) The meeting can support, yet does not replace, the family in the care of children. For example, we assist in time of crisis or need, offer religious education for children, and make time for parents of young children to "catch their breath." Within the local Friends community, parents may be able to share the joys and challenges of parenting with others as we endeavor to make the homes we envision.

Any combination of adults and children or adults without children can make a family. Family is a place where it is safe to be one's self and receive the encouragement of other family members to grow and expand. The family is a primary place to explore ways of living out Truth. Here the seed of God can be nurtured and cherished. Here is a place for love and commitment to be practiced—giving greater strength for the world beyond the home and meeting.

All are called to make home a place of hospitality—a place to nurture fellowship, education, and community for the meeting. Visiting in one another's homes is valued. In many worship groups, homes provide the space for meetings for worship and business.

A single person, too, can make a home, extend hospitality, nurture intimate friendships, and engage in passionate social action. There is also much to learn of the gift of solitude and stillness from those who either choose to live alone or find themselves alone.

In our homes the Realm of God can be made real.

***Abuse in families.*** In any close family relationship, the exercise of inappropriate power can result in physical, psychological, or sexual abuse. In the face of the social isolation often associated with an abusive home, those victimized may feel alone and desperate. Friends are alert to the possibility of domestic abuse and are sensitive to the signs of such situations. Meetings are encouraged to create communities of trust in which those suffering trauma can find support.

### **Quotations**

*...That husbands and wives dwell together according to knowledge, as being heirs together of the grace of life; that children obey their parents in the Lord; and that parents provoke not their children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and fear of God, walking before them as good examples, in gravity and godliness; providing*

*things honest in the sight of God and man.*

*Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656*

*A husband and a wife that love one another show their children and servants that they should do so too. Others visibly lose their authority in their families by their contempt of one another; and teach their children to be unnatural by their own examples.*

*William Penn, 1693*

*In the busy years of home life the parents are upheld and strengthened by their dependence upon God and upon one another; the efficient running of the home, the simple hospitality, the happy atmosphere, are all outward signs of this three-fold inner relationship. Home-making 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—should not be allowed to hinder its growth.*

*Britain Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice, 1959*

*What makes any relationship, any action, right is caring—caring for the other person, for things, for the earth, and for oneself. George and I put words from Walt Whitman in our marriage ceremony to express what we wanted in our marriage to be: ‘a union of equal comrades’... We have kept the goal of being a union of equal comrades, granting each other space to be ourselves and to grow towards wholeness.*

*Elizabeth Watson, 1977*

*There is little question that if as a parent we have not taken the time really to listen to children when they are young, listened not only to their words but to their feelings behind the words, they are unlikely to want to come with their sharings in later life. Learning to listen to each other in families can help to make us better listeners to others and to the Inner Guide.*

*Dorothy Steere, 1984*

*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.*

*North Pacific Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice, 1991*

## **Advices**

Live in the assurance that all are children of God. In the well-being of all in the meeting family, we feel Spirit moving among us.

We understand that a family may be made single adults, of differing combinations of adults, or of adults and children, sharing a bond of love.

Meeting provides a sense of family for those without families, including those made single after years of marriage or other life commitment.

We give home and family priority in our lives. Support for the family comes before career and other Quaker callings.

The meeting can support, yet cannot replace, the family in the care of children. At the same time, every member of meeting is responsible in some measure for the care of families, including children.

Stay aware of the many ways the meeting can act as a family—and the ways it cannot.

Be both bold and tender in offering assistance to families that may be experiencing discord or domestic abuse.

### **Queries**

- How do we make our homes places of friendliness, peace and renewal, where Spirit is real for those who live there and those who visit?
- Is there a climate of love and trust in our meeting which invites families to be open about their satisfactions and challenges?
- Do we take care that commitments outside the home do not encroach upon the time and loving attention the family needs for its health and well-being?
- Does our home life support our need both for a sense of personal identity and shared living?
- How do we offer strength and support to the aging, the widowed, the separated or divorced, and members of families affected by disruption or trauma?
- How does the meeting assist families to improve communication, family life, and the rearing of children in a context of love?

### **The Meeting and Friends at Every Age**

*[[Note to Friends: some material from p. 30 of 1993 Faith and Practice (“Fulfilling the Later Years”); other material from Britain, Ohio, Philadelphia, and Intermountain YMs to expand the section to cover a meeting’s care for Friends of all ages.]]*

*[[This new section is intended to point out how meetings help members and attenders of all ages. Does the section title work for this? If not, can Friends think of a better title? Is the material appropriate? Too much or not enough?]]*

As we age, each Friend travels a unique path and experiences life differently. Aging can be a test of spirit for Friends. We strive to rise above stereotypes about any age group. In the spirit of equality, we honor that of God in each person, no matter how young or long-lived they are.

**Children.** Children of Friends become part of the spiritual family of their parents’ meeting. This spiritual family is entrusted with a significant role in their upbringing. Like parents and loving caretakers, the meeting shares responsibility for fostering the emerging spiritual life of our children—recognizing and nurturing their individual gifts, nourishing and guiding them as they experience the world and begin to assume the increasing responsibilities that are part of growing up.

As children mature, parents and Friends remain aware of and receptive to their daily experiences, and listen attentively to their feelings, thoughts, and questions. The meeting values and loves the children in its care (however young they are), honors their contributions, and helps them find meaning in their lives.

As a child becomes aware of the spiritual world beyond the home, both meeting and parents find ways to talk about the mystery at the core of Quakerism. Because silence is at the heart of Quaker worship, it can be hard to communicate about the sometimes demanding journey of a seeker. One way to convey this sense of journey is to tell stories about how Quakers have lived in accordance with their beliefs. In addition, hearing vocal ministry in meeting for worship may slowly lead children toward understanding.

Meetings can foster Quaker values in our children by providing a religious education program. Although smaller meetings and worship groups may not be able to offer a full “First-day school,”

every meeting takes care to include all the children and foster their understanding of the Religious Society of Friends.

Friends need to be aware that we are just as susceptible as any other group to those who would take advantage of our children. Situations of trust can provide openings for abuse. We are responsible for ensuring the safety of children in our communities. Meetings educate themselves regarding indicators, prevention, and handling of incidents of abuse. All Friends groups exercise common-sense precautions in monitoring activities that include adult teachers or caregivers and children.

**Adolescents.** As children become adolescents, they enter another stage of life. For many this is an especially complex period of transition, during which they become more independent from their immediate family. When they try out unfamiliar trappings of maturity, their behavior and ideas may challenge the adults in their lives. Parents may find themselves taking a step back from being the center of their child's experience. Yet at the same time it is important that they and the other adults in the meeting continue to offer trust, the comfort of familiar values, and an unfailing sense of acceptance and loving security.

Adolescents, meanwhile, are engaged in the difficult job of adjusting to the larger world, where values, relationships, and expectations about what is right behavior may differ from those within the family or meeting community. In addition, they are growing into their changing bodies, discovering their sexual orientations and gender identities, and finding out who they really are. At the same time, young people face pressures to make life-affecting decisions about education, occupation, and fundamental social issues—which can be as specific as Selective Service registration or as general as navigating traditional gender roles. Clearness committees may help adolescents find understanding and security in their own values during this time of vulnerability to society's expectations.

It is no easy task for adolescents to live up to their Light while finding a place among those of their own age, many of whom may not share their values. Family gatherings where young and old discuss issues can be a source of mutual support and learning. Keeping communication open is of the utmost importance, so that the young people do not feel lost and isolated as they go through changes—intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual.

We express trust in the gifts of young people by including them in the work of meeting committees or projects, thereby encouraging them take on some of the responsibilities of being a Friend. We are faithful in clarifying specific ways that younger Friends can contribute to the meeting. Intergenerational activities, including worship-sharing, may help ease the tentativeness that accompanies differences of age. Adults can then serve as role models or mentors that young people can call on to help counteract peer pressure.

Young people become aware of themselves as Friends through meeting for worship and religious education, and also through friendships within their own age group. It is helpful, especially in smaller meetings with few adolescent attenders, to provide regional opportunities to gather youth in larger groups. A larger cohort attracts greater participation of youth in Quaker life and encourages a longer-lasting connection to the Religious Society of Friends.

Children of the meeting can be included in formal meeting records, which can be to their benefit in later years, for instance if they become conscientious objectors. It is important to note that being a junior member or “under the care of the meeting,” which is a choice that parents make on their children's behalf, is distinct from becoming a member of the Religious Society of Friends, which is a personal decision adolescents can make themselves. The middle-school years are an appropriate time for exploring membership and adult roles in the meeting. When young people near adulthood, we offer the clearness process to help them discern whether they are led to request membership. Membership is an individual conscious choice, not an automatic, age-dependent transition for adolescents. (See Chapter 9, “Membership.”)

**Young adults.** As young adults grow into maturity they often leave their parents' physical and spiritual home for opportunities in education and employment. Facing forward into the future, young adults are drawn away from the certainties of their first decades. They may place less value on a living connection with a meeting community. Balancing work, school, and social relationships may be all-consuming. Still, there is a deep value in being part of a community that can outlast the more temporary associations found in school and the workplace. A meeting gives a place to stand that can be a foundation for a lifetime.

Young adults can find many ways to remain engaged with Friends. As is true of adolescents, young adults might find a greater sense of community among others of a similar age, who are also finding their way in life. They may not be living near a meeting or might find it difficult to fit immediately into a meeting they can attend. In those cases, they may focus on regional and national gatherings with young adult Friends. For instance, an annual New Year's Gathering of young adults for worship and community alternates between northern California and southern Oregon. Some local communities also support informal gatherings of young adult Friends.

Young Friends may request a Letter of Introduction from their home meeting before relocating for school or work. Such a letter informs the meetings visited that the bearer is known to Friends and it can help open a relationship with new Friends communities in many parts of the world.

*[[Question for NPYM Friends: What is your experience, if any, with young people asking for or bringing in letters of introduction?]]*

The challenge for meetings is to engage with all young adults—whether they grew up in the meeting or have come to Friends as new attenders. Possibilities include fostering spiritual fellowship, asking for service, and providing resources that encourage growth into the fullness of their gifts and lives. It is especially important to recognize that those once known as children and youth are now adults, and to affirm them as valuable peers.

See the section on “Home and Family” above for other aspects of young adulthood.

**Adults in the middle years.** Friends in mid-life have diverse lifestyles; many find themselves knitted into a web of obligations to work, family, and community. This is often a productive and independent phase of life. Friends of this age may need to be alert to an excess of busyness, which can add up to an over-scheduled life at the expense of spiritual growth, peaceable wisdom, and healthy leisure activities. In some families, the middle generation may be providing care and assistance to their children as well as their aging parents.

These years can be a fruitful season to deepen the life in the Spirit. Due to the increased life expectancy in our culture, Friends often find it possible for to engage in new enterprises, such as second careers or voluntary service, or to begin to simplify their material lives in preparation for their remaining years. Friends in this phase of life may find themselves taking leadership in their meetings, while at the same time learning to lean gracefully upon the meeting's spiritual and practical support as they themselves age.

**Later years.** Aging brings its own conditions, potentialities, and rewards. These years are a time to reevaluate priorities and relinquish some activities while perhaps assuming others. It is a time to do those things that were postponed or forgone earlier, a time to become freshly aware of the quiet fulfillment to be found in simple, everyday things.

The readjustments of this period of life may be difficult. It can be hard to give up longtime occupations, to fit activities into a diminished allotment of strength, or to bear with grace a wearing affliction. Adults in old age may need counsel regarding plans to live in their own home, enter a retirement home, or make other living arrangements appropriate to their health and financial conditions. Deep faith and trust are needed to cope with the loss of a beloved partner. Older adults may also be mourning the loss of close friends.

Meetings can provide love, support, and companionship for aging adults through care and support committees. Meetings recognize that older people may be uncomfortable with contemporary modes of communication, often preferring print media and face-to-face contact. Older Friends may need help with transportation to worship and meeting events. Those with hearing impairments may benefit from sound systems, scribes, and printed handouts that enable fuller participation in the life of the meeting. Large-print publications may also be helpful.

The relationship of older Friends to the meeting does not end when they are no longer able to attend worship or other meeting events. Through telephone, correspondence, and prayer, these Friends may continue to contribute vitally to the meeting and to society. The meeting can keep older adults in touch with the life of the meeting through personal visits, as well as through communication. The meeting may arrange for worship or committee meetings to be held in a housebound Friend's residence. These measures can foster a mutual relationship in which younger Friends appreciate the presence and worth of older Friends in our midst, and older Friends know that they are remembered, needed, cared for, and loved.

***End of life.*** The contemplation of our own death asks Friends to face and accept mortality, actively grieve our losses, and conduct a life review to uncover and complete the unfinished business of forgiveness and reparation. Friends try to prepare ourselves in ways both practical and spiritual for death; we cannot know or control when or how it will come. Not every danger can be foreseen. Death may cut life short at any age. We do not expect accidents, nor the untimely loss of the young, nor even the death of those who knowingly place themselves at risk. What we can do is foster an ever-present readiness in spirit for whatever life may bring.

Our Quaker faith and experience prepares us for the varieties of suffering that occur throughout life. Such preparation allows us to release all that we love. Loss of independence—when we must relinquish our homes, or accept basic care—strikes hard. Chronic pain or life-threatening illness challenges us deeply. The meeting community can help us deal with many losses: our dreams and hopes, our mobility, our sight or hearing, our memory and mental acuity.

Spiritual preparation for death and loss is ongoing, modeled by wise elders and at times by children. We may find comfort in Scripture, literature, music, and art. The spiritual and practical support of caring Friends during times of illness and loss are of great value; they matter more than eloquent words. We strive to avoid letting our feelings of inadequacy keep us away from those who are seriously ill or dying.

Because medical technology may extend life beyond our wishes, we consider in advance the ways to prepare ourselves for the end of life. There may come a point when further medical intervention is of little benefit and palliative care is a compassionate choice. Some Friends have chosen “death with dignity” measures.

Worldly preparation for death includes financial decisions such as wills, ethical wills, bequests, and powers of attorney for financial and health-care decisions. Because death or significant disability may come at any time all adults, particularly those with children or those who place themselves at risk for conscience's sake, take care to make and communicate end-of-life decisions. We take care that health care decisions are not made under the influence of depression or undue pain. Related housing issues include how and when to move from independent living to assisted living, to skilled nursing or home care, and perhaps to hospice. We may want to consider the choice between burial or cremation and consider joining a memorial society to preserve the most simplicity possible at the time of death. We may also wish to be organ donors or donate our bodies to research. These are all difficult decisions, to be made under the guidance of the Spirit. Friends may need, and meetings may offer, care committees or clearness committees to aid in specific decision-making.

For practical responsibilities concerning the end of life, including memorial meetings, see Chapter

## 11, "Death and Memorials."

**Bereavement.** For ourselves, our own death is a transition; for those who love us, it is a deep loss.

Grieving requires time. We recognize that in some sense, grief for the loss of a loved one never ends. It is important to realize that grief does not follow any particular pattern and that each person handles grief in his or her own way. The ways and the times grief manifests itself are often surprising. Support to the bereaved from individual Friends and the meeting may need to continue well beyond the initial period of loss. Bereaved children may need special attention and opportunities to express their grief. When others mourn, we seek to let our love embrace them.

### **Quotations**

*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...*

*Death is but crossing the World, as Friends do the Seas; They live in one another still.*

*William Penn, 1702*

*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*

*Perhaps the most neglected of all the advices is that we should live adventurously. If there is one wish I would pray the Spirit to put into our Christmas stockings, it is warmth, openness, passion, a bit of emotion that doesn't mind making a fool of itself occasionally.*

*Gerald Priestland, 1977*

*For me only two things now seem sure. One is that time must have a stop, and the other is that whatever lies over and around mortal time is not to be feared.*

*With that, I shall have to be content.*

*Norma Jacob, 1981*

*If we can daily face loss as the growing edge in living, we begin to understand that all these small surrenders are a rehearsal for the physical death that each of us must ultimately face. And that physical death will become easier if we consciously accept all of life's small deaths, repeatedly practicing letting go of our self-will. Therefore, to practice the labor of dying as growth towards new horizons, we must live in harmony with the eternal creative process.*

*Lucy McIver, 1998*

*I feel no need to live to a ripe old age. I already have. ... I believe that we all need to reflect together how we might be able to make a difference, as we come to the final stages of our lives. We can use our imaginations, and create legacies while we are still alive and by how we die.*

*Peg Morton, 2013*

### **Advices**

The meeting community is the soilbed of our spiritual lives.

Meetings heed the needs of their members and attenders as they move along their life journeys.

As Friends we place a high value on intergenerational activities to nurture life in the Spirit.

### **Queries**

- How do we recognize and cherish the contributions that Friends of all ages make to our Quaker community?
- How do we value each other as children of God without prejudgment based on age?
- How does our meeting walk alongside members and attenders at all stages of their lives?
- How does living in Quaker community nurture a meaningful life?

### **Sexuality**

*[[Note to Friends: Other than the advices and queries, which are new (borrowed from Philadelphia and New England YMs and elsewhere), the following material is adapted from pp. 27-29 of the 1993 Faith and Practice.]]*

As Friends we acknowledge that our sexual and spiritual selves are an integrated whole. Our sexuality shapes how we understand ourselves and how we understand and relate to others.

Our sexual nature can be both a blessing and a source of vulnerability. Understanding our own sexuality can be a struggle. Despite a growing appreciation of human sexuality and its role in our lives, there is lingering ignorance, misunderstanding, and fear that can be harmful. Grace, knowledge, understanding, and tenderness toward each other are sorely needed. Sex education is therefore important for everyone. Open discussion and accurate, unbiased, readily available information about human sexuality are to be encouraged for children and adults alike.

We recognize that sexual orientation is a full spectrum and that gender identity may be fluid and not an either/or question. We affirm that all are children of God and valuable members of the beloved community, however they identify themselves.

Parents and the meeting can encourage children in exploring and understanding their sexuality by constructively supporting each child's natural interest and answering questions honestly and lovingly. Parents teach their children primarily by the example of their lives. Ideally they demonstrate mutual love, affection, consideration, and trust in a lasting relationship that includes sexual joy.

Knowing that our physical and spiritual selves are woven together, we are challenged to discipline our sexual behavior under guidance of the Spirit and in keeping with Friends testimonies. Sexual activity in the context of a loving and committed relationship can be joyous and sacramental. Even among Friends, however, sexual harassment, exploitation, abuse, and violence do occur and do deep and lasting damage. Casual or promiscuous sexual activity can also lead to emotional and physical suffering and harm. In dealing with sexual matters, care and concern for others is no less important than care and concern for ourselves.

### **Quotations**

*I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine...*

*Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm;*

*For love is as strong as death, passion fierce as the grave.*

*Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame.*

*Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.*

*Song of Solomon 6:3a; 8:6-7a*

*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*

*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*

*All our senses are given to us to enjoy and to praise God. The smell of the sea, of the blossom borne on the wind, of the soft flesh of a little baby; the taste of a ripe plum or bread fresh from the oven, the feel of warm cat’s fur, or the body of a lover—these are all forms of thanksgiving prayer. I am sure that it is as wrong to fail to delight in our bodies as it is to misuse them through excess. Not to be a glutton does not mean that we may not delight in good food; not to be ruled by lust does not mean that we must not enjoy the exquisite pleasures of sex; not to be slothful does not mean that we must not lie in the sun, not doing, just being. When Jesus said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,” I do not think He was speaking only of spiritual life—I think He meant us to have positive delight in all the good things in this wonderful world which His Father created.*

*Bella Bown, ca. 1980*

*Our sexuality is ultimately tied to who we are as spiritual persons. The spiritual life enhances our sexuality and gives it direction. Our sexuality gives an earthy wholeness to our spirituality. Our spirituality and our sexuality come into a working harmony in the life of the kingdom of God.*

*Richard J. Foster, 1985*

*Sexuality is something we are given; it is part of us as human beings, the physical aspect of the life force. We can choose to ignore it (as sometimes people choose to ignore their spirituality) but we all have it. Sexual behavior is how we consciously choose, or choose not, to express our sexuality. Alone or in relationship to others, we can choose from a wide range of possible expressions. Within that range, monogamous marriage has traditionally been the norm among Friends. Both the sexuality and the spirituality we are given can be ignored, or explored, discovered, and expressed in different ways; one developed at the expense of the other may leave either less deep, less understood, than it might be.*

*New England Yearly Meeting, Living With Oneself and Others, 2001 edition*

*We are learning that radical inclusion and radical love bring further light to Quaker testimony and life.*

*Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, and Queer Concerns website*

*We have felt painfully the intense divisions among Friends over sexuality and sexual morality. Many of those present this week felt led to explore deeply together what God requires of us in this area. Tender intergenerational sharing took place*

*about these issues. This was enriched by open discussion of the brokenness we have experienced when sexual behaviors are not consistent with God's will. We have found a new degree of unity in the call to witness to the importance of mutual faithfulness and commitment in all sexual relationships.*

*Epistle from Quakercamp at Stillwater, 2007*

### **Advices**

We do well to look past the outward appearances of orientation and identity to see the quality of all individuals and relationships in our meetings. Just as there is that of God in every person, there is that of God in every relationship that calls upon God. We remain tender toward all relationships founded on integrity, mutual respect, commitment, and love.

When dealing with issues of sexuality and sexual behavior, we strive for an appropriate balance between open, honest discussion and protection of privacy and confidentiality for individual members and attenders.

We take care to avoid sexual behavior based on license, exploitation, oppression, and violence in our personal lives and to witness against such behavior in our meetings and communities.

Friends are encouraged to maintain accurate resources on issues of sexuality, sexual behavior, and gender identity and to answer questions, especially from children, honestly and appropriately.

While the meeting can and should be a source of abiding love and support to members and attenders, we acknowledge that some situations may require professional intervention and others may require notification of law-enforcement authorities.

### **Queries**

- Do we accept and appreciate our sexuality as part of our humanity and as a gift from God? How do we integrate our sexuality and our spirituality?
- How can we help each another be faithful in expressing our sexuality? Do we support members and attenders with love and care relating to their sexuality and gender identity?
- Are we able to discuss deeply personal issues honestly and lovingly? Do we create a safe place for such discussions, taking care to maintain privacy and confidentiality?
- Are we willing to talk openly and listen carefully to those whose ideas and behavior are different from our own, responding to that of God in them while acknowledging our discomfort and disagreement?
- As individuals and as a meeting community, do we avoid stereotyping and judging people based on their relationships, sexual orientation, or gender identity?
- How well do we love and respond to those who have been harmed by sexual discrimination, abuse, or violence? How well do we love and respond to those who have committed the discrimination, abuse, or violence?
- Do we know how and when to refer members and attenders for professional help? Do we know how and when to contact legal authorities?

*[[Question for NPYM Friends: The advices and queries on sexuality are new. Do they reflect the experience of your meeting or worship group? Is the material appropriate? Too much? Too little?]]*

## **Testimony of Peace**

*[[Note to Friends: This material is based on pp. 31, 35-36, and 45 of the 1993 Faith and Practice.]]*

As Quakers we are given the demanding challenge to live, as Fox said, “in the virtue of life and power that takes away the occasion of all war.” Since we know that there is that of God in every person, we know each person is worthy of infinite respect. Friends stand as a positive witness in a world still torn by strife and violence. When we stand in the Light of Christ, opening ourselves to the spirit of Love, we can do no less than use this gift in and among ourselves, and we work to manifest it in the world.

Since our first allegiance is to the Spirit of Truth and Love, we must obey divine calling rather than human law when this allegiance is challenged by the demands of the state. We support conscientious objectors and those who resist any cooperation with the military. We recognize that many aspects of the military system are inconsistent with Jesus’ example of love. We hold in love, but disagree with, those of our members who feel that they must enter the armed forces.

Our peace testimony begins with opposition to war and is a positive affirmation of the power of good to overcome evil. We seriously consider the implications of our employment, our investments, our payment of taxes, and our manner of living as they relate to violence at all levels. We remain sensitive to the covert as well as the overt violence inherent in some of our long-established social practices and institutions, and we work to change those elements which violate our conviction that there is that of God in everyone.

Our historic peace testimony must be also a living testimony as we work to give concrete expression to our ideals. We seek to alleviate the suffering caused by war and injustice—and the suffering and injustice that cause war. We refrain from participating in all forms of violence and repression to the best of our understanding. We support efforts to secure international agreements for the control of armaments and to remove the domination of militarism in our society. We are involved in building national and transnational institutions to deal with conflict nonviolently. The threat of total nuclear war and annihilation remains with us in the twenty-first century and elimination of that threat is ever more urgent.

### **Quotations**

*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 ... 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’ doctrine [James 4:1] ... But I told them I was come into the covenant of peace which was before wars and strifes were.*

*George Fox, 1651*

*We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatsoever; 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 certainly know, and testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ, which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the Kingdom of Christ nor for the kingdoms of this world.... Therefore, we cannot learn war any more.*

*A Declaration of the Harmless and Innocent People of God, Called Quakers, ...  
Concerning Wars and Fightings, 1660*

*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*

*We must abide the slowness of the organic. An inanimate bomb reaches its goal swiftly, annihilating whatever is in its way. A living object is soft and pliant, slowly adjusting its environment to itself. It must always depend on small beginnings, germ cells which are perhaps invisible. The pacifist is not afraid of minute beginnings, aimed at the distant future. Violence works quickly, but in the realm of life results are never swift.*

*Howard Brinton, 1943*

*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*

*Peace begins within ourselves. It is to be implemented within the family, in our meetings, in our work and leisure, in our own localities, and internationally. The task will never be done. Peace is a process to engage in, not a goal to be reached.*

*Sidney Bailey, 1993*

## **Advices**

As we work in the larger world we practice love and peace making within our families, in our meetings, and in the greater Quaker community. For it is in these places that our practice will support our testimony of peace as we are involved in the larger world.

Peace is the state in which we are in accord with the Divine, the earth, others, and ourselves. We know that true, lasting peace among us can finally be attained only through unity in the life of the Spirit.

We work to create the conditions of peace, such as freedom, justice, cooperation, and the right sharing of the world's resources.

As we work for peace in the world, we search out the seeds of war in ourselves and in our way of life. We refuse to join in actions which lead to destruction and death. We seek ways to cooperate to save life and strengthen the bonds of unity among all people.

## **Queries**

- Do we live in the virtue of that life and power which takes away the occasion of all war?
- Do we refrain from taking part in war as inconsistent with the Spirit of Christ?
- What are we doing to remove the causes of war and to bring about the conditions of peace? Where there are hatred, division, and strife, how are we instruments of reconciliation and love?
- How do we communicate to others an understanding of the basis of our peace testimony?

- As we work for peace in the world, are we nourished by peace within ourselves, our families, and our meetings?

## **“Be Not Afraid”**

*[[Note to Friends: This section is entirely new to NPYM’s Faith and Practice.]]*

“Be not afraid” is a phrase that appears frequently in the Bible and still speaks to us today. When those in power use fear to manipulate and control, causing abuse, violence, and oppression, it can be challenging for us to live and act in accord with Quaker values. Living in a time of fear can corrode our ability to listen and respond to the Spirit.

Early Friends met with love and courage public ridicule, confiscation of property, persecution, prison, and sometimes death, for practicing their faith. Although Friends today are blessed with the freedom to worship openly, examples of the courageous witness of early Friends are an inspiration for us facing oppressive social and political conditions.

Fear can be a healthy and useful response in some circumstances, for instance when it prompts Friends to pay attention and take precautions for the safety of themselves, their loved ones, and others.

Fear—and the sense of vulnerability it often brings—can separate us from each other and from God. It can lead to violence, discord, manipulation, intimidation, and control. It can cloud our judgment and diminish our abilities to discern, learn, and grow. It can be a subtle and destructive force hindering our journey towards spiritual maturity. As each of us grows in the Spirit, however, we are called to let go of ego-based fears: of making mistakes; of not being approved of; of having our needs go unmet; of conflict, discomfort, illness, loneliness, and diminishment; and of not being perfect (or even good enough). We cannot avoid fear by attempting to control and use people, things, and events in an attempt, usually futile, to make things turn out the way we want.

Living in the Spirit within a supportive, faithful fellowship gives us courage and guidance to let our lives speak, even when we are afraid, and helps us turn toward each other and toward the Light. When fear threatens our resolve, God’s love comforts and strengthens us. When we trust our Inner Guide, we can walk through our fears and come out in love.

### **Quotations**

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death  
I shall fear no evil, for Thou art with me....*

*Psalm 23:4 (King James Version)*

*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?  
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*

*Psalm 27:1*

*Friends are reminded that our Religious Society took form in times of disturbance, and that its continuing testimony has been the power of God to lead men and women out of the confusions of outward violence, inward sickness, and all other forms of self-will, however upheld by social convention. As death comes to our willfulness, a new life is formed in us, so that we are liberated from distractions and frustrations, from fears, angers, and guilts. Thus we are enabled to sense the Inward Light and to follow its leadings. Friends are advised to place God, not themselves, in the center of the universe and, in all aspects of inward life and outward activity, to keep themselves open to the healing power of the Spirit of Christ.*

*Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1694 - 1695.*

*The first ingredient of life is courage.*

Ham Sok Hon, 1965

*What Jesus was saying is that there is a difference between ordinary prudence and the fear that paralyzes and alienates one from his fellow men. Rufus Jones said about those very words of Jesus, "Christ's major point in the Sermon on the Mount is to get rid of fears and anxieties." It might also be said that the substance of His mission as a teacher was to set men free from the slavery of fears.*

Dorothy Hutchinson, 1965

*This is what the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus symbolizes for me: if you are willing to go into and through your fear, even though it feels like death, you will experience, miracle of miracles, life more fully and abundantly than ever.*

Arthur M. Larrabee, 1998

*It may not be quite accurate to say that "perfect love had cast out my fear." [1 John 4:18] I still experienced fear, and have again on subsequent occasions. But I learned that I swim in a river of love, that I can orient myself to it, and feel its power. When I do so, I know that I can survive the fear, and go beyond it, to a powerful place of peace. I learned that I cannot simply make this transition just once, and stay in that place of love, for the fear comes back. So I need to make that journey again and again. I needed disciplines, familiar paths to tread, to re-connect with love again and again, and feel the fears subside. I understand this love as a manifestation of the Spirit, mediated through the ministry of my sisters and brothers, my wife and sons, my friends, and sometimes even strangers.*

Bruce Birchard, 2003

### **Advices**

Courage is a fundamental act of faith.

As Friends we examine our fears and have the courage to release those that prevent us from growing in the Spirit and following our Guide. As we continue letting go of our fears and following the motions of love, we are led into a new, more abundant and joy-filled life. Although this life is not always free of pain, it is graced with a courage that will endure any adversity.

We ask those in authority to employ their power to reconcile and unify us, rather than to exploit fear to divide us.

It takes courage to reach out to those who are creating fear *and* to those who are controlled by fear. We work to restore harmony through peacemaking and reconciliation based in mutual love. Disharmony is a manifestation of fear; it results in separation from God, from ourselves, from our fellow human beings, and from all of creation.

### **Queries**

- How does fear influence our lives? Are our decisions based on fear, or do we trust the Spirit's urging toward love and reconciliation? How do we let go of our fears, trusting the Spirit, so that we can restore peace in our meetings and communities?
- Do we encourage each other through love to act in faithful witness? How do we identify and confront fears that deceive, enslave, and stop us from living faithfully?
- In times of trial and terror how can we open our hearts, return to God's love, and move forward with courage?
- What would we do, as individuals and as a community, if we were not afraid?

## Testimony of Simplicity

[[Note to Friends: This material comes from pp. 25-26 (quotations), 27 (which combines simplicity, sincerity, and integrity) and 48-49 (advices, queries) of the 1993 *Faith and Practice*.]]

Simplicity is cutting away everything that is extraneous.

A life centered in God will be characterized by integrity, sincerity, and simplicity. Sincerity is being without sham. Integrity is being all of a piece. A simple life need not be cloistered and may even be a busy life. Its activities and expressions are correlated and directed toward the purpose of keeping our communication with God open and unencumbered. Simplicity is a Spirit-led ordering of our lives to this end.

In the past, Quakers could be readily identified by plain dress and plain speech. Today, we have no recipe book for simplicity; all Friends find their own way. Simplicity does mean avoiding self-indulgence, maintaining a spirit of humility, and speaking clearly and directly without exaggeration. It also means keeping the material surroundings of our lives serviceable to necessary ends. A simple life need not be barren and without joy and beauty. Often the most simple lines, words, or moments, when marked by grace, are the most beautiful.

### Quotations

*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 such 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, ca. 1744*

*'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free;  
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be;  
And when we find ourselves in the place just right  
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.  
When true simplicity is gained  
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed.  
To turn, turn will be our delight,  
Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.*

*Joseph Brackett (Shaker elder), ca. 1875*

*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.*

...  
*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 it occupies all our time.*

*Thomas R. Kelly, 1941*

### **Advices**

Simplicity is one of the fruits of a faithful life centered on a commitment to the Spirit of God.

Friends strive for simplicity in the use of our earnings and property, in our speech, and in our manner of living, choosing that which is clear and useful.

All that leads to fullness of life and aids in the service of Truth is to be accepted with thanksgiving. We each determine by the Light we are given what helps and what hinders our search for inner peace.

### **Queries**

- Do we center our lives in the awareness of God so that all things take their rightful place?
- Do we keep our lives uncluttered with things and activities, and avoid commitments beyond our strength and light?
- Does our meeting help us simplify our lives? How do we order our individual lives to nourish our spiritual growth?
- Do we keep to simplicity, moderation and honesty in our speech, our manner of living, and our daily work?

## **Testimony of Equality**

*[[Note to Friends: this material is expanded from pp. 33-35 and 46 of the 1993 Faith and Practice, with additional quotations.]]*

Friends recognize the fundamental equality of all members of the human race. Every person has the capacity to experience the Inner Light. This common humanity transcends our differences. Equality does not mean equality of ability, economic resources, or social status. For us, it means treating every person with respect.

Equality was one of the earliest of the Quaker testimonies. Even before Quakers espoused pacifism, Quaker soldiers were dismissed from service because they refused to treat their officers as superiors. From the earliest days, men and women equally took on responsibilities for ministry and care of others in their Meetings. Early Quakers practiced “plain speech.” They addressed superiors using the familiar “thou” instead of the formal “you,” which was considered polite in the seventeenth century. Quakers refused to use honorifics and titles or to doff their hats to those of a higher class—they offered the same respect and courtesy to everyone. Later, many Quakers worked vigorously to eliminate slavery. More recently, Quakers and Quaker meetings have recognized the rights of lesbians and gays and have taken under their care the marriages and commitment ceremonies of same-sex couples.

Yet the history of Friends practice of the testimony of equality is not without flaw: early Friends established separate men’s and women’s meetings and many Friends owned slaves and opposed those within the Society who would have abolished slavery. Some Quaker meetings relegated African Americans to special benches and placed obstacles in the way of gaining membership.

In light of this history, we ask ourselves whether we are actively living out the testimony of equality in our personal lives, in our meetings, and in the world. We recognize that members of oppressed groups, especially those easily identifiable by their appearance, are subject to prejudice and discrimination. We know that the same is true of poor people and the working class. They face obstacles, both personal and institutional, that others do not, in gaining education or living wage

employment. More subtly, they constantly face the unthinking assumptions of others and a lack of sensitivity to their social conditions. We acknowledge that members of the Religious Society of Friends who are white, or from other entitled groups, may exhibit prejudice and discrimination, even unintentionally.

As Friends, we share a vision of a social order based on the testimony of equality—it embraces and seeks to transform all of human society. This vision and the inner transformation that enables us to see it and live it, enhances our spiritual connectedness and can transcend our differences.

### **Quotations**

*There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.*

*Galatians 3:28*

*If a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, “have a seat here, please”, while to the one who is poor you say, “stand there,” or , “sit at my feet,” have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?*

*James 2:2-4*

*As male and female are made one in Jesus Christ, so women receive an office in the Truth as well as men, and they have a stewardship and must give an account of their stewardship as well as the men.*

*Elizabeth Bathurst, 1685*

*And as you request to know particularly about Arch St. Meeting, I may say that the experience of years has made me wise in this fact, that there is a bench set apart at that meeting for our people, whether officially appointed or not I cannot say; but this I am free to say, that my Mother and myself were told to sit there, & that a friend sat at each end of the bench to prevent white persons from sitting there.*

*Sarah Mapps Douglas, 1837*

*Too long have wrongs and oppression existed without an acknowledged wrongdoer and oppressor. It was not until the slaveholder was told ‘Thou art the man’ that a healthy agitation was brought about. Woman is told the fault is in herself, in too willingly submitting to her inferior condition but like the slave, she is pressed down by laws in the making of which she has no voice, and crushed by customs which have grown out of such laws. She cannot rise therefore, while thus trampled in the dust. The oppressor does not see himself in that light until the oppressed cry for deliverance.*

*Lucretia Mott, 1852*

*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*

*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*

*Until we as the Religious Society begin to question our assumptions, until we look at the prejudices, often very deeply hidden, within our own Society, how are we going to be able to confront the inequalities within the wider society? We are very good at feeling bad about injustice, we put a lot of energy into sticking-plaster activity (which obviously has to be done) but we are not having any effect in challenging the causes of inequality and oppression. I do sometimes wonder if this is because we are not able to do this within and among ourselves.*

*Susan Rooke-Matthews, 1993*

*Jesus said, "As you have done unto the least... you have done unto me." We are called to work for the peaceable Kingdom of God on the whole earth, in right sharing with all peoples. However few our numbers, we are called to be the salt that flavours and preserves, to be a light in the darkness of greed and destruction.*

*We have heard of the disappearing snows of Kilimanjaro and glaciers of Bolivia, from which come life-giving waters. We have heard appeals from peoples of the Arctic, Asia and Pacific. We have heard of forests cut down, seasons disrupted, wildlife dying, of land hunger in Africa, of new diseases, droughts, floods, fires, famine and desperate migrations—this climatic chaos is now worsening. There are wars and rumors of war, job loss, inequality and violence. We fear our neighbors. We waste our children's heritage.*

*All of these are driven by our dominant economic systems—by greed not need, by worship of the market, by Mammon and Caesar.*

*Is this how Jesus showed us to live?*

*Sixth World Conference of Friends, 2012*

### **Advices**

We treat every person with respect, based on our belief in the fundamental equality of all members of the human race.

We examine ourselves as individuals and in our meeting communities to be sure that we are practicing the testimony of equality in reality and not just paying lip service to it.

We cherish those parts of the history of the Religious Society of Friends that show us opposing slavery and refusing to doff our hats to superiors. We also acknowledge that Friends are not perfect in

treating all human beings with equal respect and that there is work yet to do, both among Friends and in the world, to achieve the vision of a social order based on the testimony of equality.

### **Queries**

- Do we regularly examine ourselves for evidence of prejudice?
- What are we, as individuals and as a meeting community, doing to overcome the contemporary effects of past and present oppression?
- Do we avoid being drawn into violent reactions against those who are destructive of human dignity? Do we reach out to the violator as well as the violated with courage and love?
- Is our meeting truly open to all regardless of race, ability, sexual orientation and identity, or class?
- Is our meeting place accessible and welcoming to all?

## **Testimony of Stewardship**

*[[Note to Friends: This section includes material from pp. 23 and 47-48 of the 1993 Faith and Practice on Stewardship; plus new introductory paragraphs and new material on Harmony with Creation and Stewardship of Money & Other Resources, and Taking Care of Our Selves, as requested by Friends.]]*

The word “stewardship” can imply dominion or control, and so many Friends instead speak of a testimony of Earthcare. The testimony of stewardship is evolving, and new ways of understanding humankind’s role in the community of life are urgently necessary in our time. This chapter uses the term stewardship and defines it more broadly than Friends have in earlier generations. It distinguishes between stewardship in the sense of living in harmony with creation and stewardship in the sense of right use of gifts given to us—time, ability, money, and our physical selves. These aspects of stewardship are distinct and yet deeply linked. The natural world is not a “gift given to us for our use.” Our individual or communal talent *is* such a gift. When we fully understand that humans are only part of the natural world—not divinely appointed masters or managers of it—we are better able to make Spirit-led decisions about those things we have been given.

We strive for balance, to use what we have wisely and with due care for other creatures, and to live as lightly on the earth as we can. We are answerable to God and to the rest of creation for how we understand and take our place in the community of life.

### **Harmony with Creation**

*[[Note to Friends: This section is all new to NPYM’s Faith and Practice, some borrowed from Pacific, Philadelphia, Southeast, and Northern YMs. NPYM Friends saw an earlier version in 2007.]]*

The mystery and beauty of the universe reveal their Source. Spiritually and physically nourished by our home, the Earth, we are filled with gratitude and wonder. Centered in divine Love, we are called to recognize and respect the sacredness and interdependence of the whole community of life, and the complex balance required to sustain it. Each of us is part of the whole of life. All of life is in each of us. We grieve over what has been lost through humankind’s continuing misuse of divine gifts, leading to extinction of species; pollution of earth, water, and air; and calamitous climate change.

As Friends we are led to live in right relationship to creation, to preserve and protect the Earth and all its inhabitants, to educate ourselves, and to witness both personally and publicly. This state of right relationship will be manifest in our lives lived in equality, simplicity, community, and peace.

We can educate ourselves by learning about the far-reaching spiritual and environmental consequences of our daily activities: our habits and choices of energy usage, housing, travel,

reproduction, diet, and consumption. We can witness personally by being “patterns and examples” of environmentally sustainable lifestyles. We can witness publicly by advocating for cultural changes that reflect the principle of harmony with creation. We celebrate the Earth’s bounty which provides for us, our fellow human beings, future generations, and all other living beings.

### **Quotations**

*But ask the animals, and they will teach you;  
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;  
Ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you,  
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.*

*Job 12: 7-8*

*The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it,  
the world, and those who live in it;  
for he has founded it on the seas,  
and established it on the rivers.*

*Psalms 24:1-2*

*What wages doth the Lord desire of you for his earth that he giveth to you...but that you give him the praise and honor, and the thanks, and the glory, and not that you should spend the creatures upon your lusts, but to do good with them, you that have much to them that have little, and to honor God with your substance...leave all creatures behind you as you found them, which God hath given to serve all nations and all generations.*

*George Fox, 1678*

*It would go a great way to caution and direct people in their use of the world, that they were better studied and knowing in the Creation of it. For how [could they] find the confidence to abuse it, while they should see the Great Creator stare them in the Face, in all and every part thereof?*

*William Penn, 1693*

*... [M]y love of beauty in nature helped very much to strengthen my faith in God. I felt his presence in my world rather than thought out how he could be there. When “I” was moved with wonder, awe, and mystery, I was always reaching out beyond what I saw and touched....*

*Rufus Jones, Finding the Trail of Life, 1926*

*Healing of the Earth is central to all our Quaker concerns.... No peace without a planet.... No justice without a planet.... Those who care about the Earth must feel its woundedness as our own.... How can we look our children and grandchildren in the eye unless we do all we can to give them a future? They need to know that we care, and that we tried.*

*Elizabeth Watson, 1991*

*God calls Friends today ... to look into our hearts and examine our relationship with the rest of Creation, and to recognize that our neighbor includes the entire Earth community. We, too, are being asked to give up habits and things which have made our lives seem easier, just as slaves appeared to make life easier for their owners.*

*Lisa L. Gould, 1994*

*We need to commit ourselves to radically changed lives, recognizing the costly implications, yet also knowing the joy, reverence, and deep love of God that inspires us. Spirit-filled lives that see every form of life as an expression of universal love*

*enable us to move forward confidently, in faith and in hope. Yes, hope, in spite of all we know.*

*Doris Ferm, 2006*

*In past times God's Creation restored itself. Now humanity dominates, our growing population consuming more resources than nature can replace. We must change, we must become careful stewards of all life. Earthcare unites traditional Quaker testimonies: peace, equality, simplicity, love, integrity, and justice. ...*

*We dedicate ourselves to let the living waters flow through us—where we live, regionally, and in wider world fellowship. We dedicate ourselves to building the peace that passeth all understanding, to the repair of the world, opening our lives to the Light to guide us in each small step.*

***Bwana asifiwe. A pu Dios Awqui. Gracias Jesús. Jubilé. Salaam aleikum. Migwetch. Tikkun olam. Alleluia!***

*Sixth World Conference of Friends, 2012*

### **Advices**

Rejoice in the majesty of nature. Pray that the Presence will lead us to our rightful place in the creation.

We are each part of the intricate web of life; each choice to act or not to act can have profound consequences.

We take care to conserve and protect the whole of life. We educate ourselves for deeper understanding of the interconnected systems in which we live.

We face the difficult challenge to change our manner of living to come into harmony with creation. As we support each other's efforts to use no more than our fair share, we guard against waste and resist the temptations of convenience and the inertia of the status quo. We help each other look for ways to counter attitudes of human arrogance, domination, and greed which threaten Earth's equilibrium.

### **Queries**

- In what ways do we honor all living things? Do we seek the holiness inherent in the order of nature, the wildness of wilderness, and the richness of the world?
- How do our daily habits and choices reflect our respect for the web of life?
- How do we educate ourselves and others about living in harmony with the earth?
- What can we do to make the community of life whole?

### **Stewardship of Money and Other Resources**

*[[Note to Friends: based on pp. 47-48 with some quotations from pp. 19, 26, and 32 of the 1993 Faith and Practice. Additional material from New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Southeast YMs. NPYM Friends saw an earlier version of this section as "Right Relationship to Wealth—it has been extensively edited based on comments received.]]*

John Woolman's simple statement in *A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich* (1793) may summarize all considerations of stewardship:

*As Christians, all we possess is the gift of God, and in the distribution of it we act as his stewards; it becomes us therefore to act agreeably to that divine wisdom which he graciously gives to his servants.*

The ways Friends think about and use money and all other resources are linked to our values of integrity, equality, social justice, and peace. We are responsible for how we acquire and use our financial resources, not as ends in themselves but as gifts temporarily entrusted to us. We seek to use them with humility and care and to share them with others.

We are stewards of many other gifts beyond money and material possessions—for example, we are also accountable to Truth for how we use our time, strength, and inherent talents and abilities. We hold these gifts in trust, and take care to use them in good order and in the Spirit of Love. Decisions we make about the food we eat, the clothing we wear, the ways we communicate, the ways we travel from place to place have consequences for our physical and spiritual lives and for the environment. Using all our gifts with care brings us closer to the Center.

The community of early Friends was knit together by their recognition of a common good to which all contributed. In the crucible of religious oppression, early Friends were moved to support one another with all of their God-given gifts. Meetings offered material support to care for community members experiencing hardship. This ministry continues today: most monthly meetings have a committee for pastoral care that coordinates the community's skills, talents and funds to alleviate suffering in the meeting.

Many Friends have labored in the Spirit in regard to accumulated wealth and aspired to apply their financial resources to breathe life into Friends testimonies. In nineteenth-century England, Elizabeth Fry was led to bring her talents and the funds of family and friends to her concern for prison conditions, thus pioneering Quaker involvement in prison reform. In the early twentieth century, Swiss Friend Pierre Ceresole was moved to apply his talent and wealth to create a service organization that served as a model for the Peace Corps in the U.S. These and other examples show Friends commitment to improving the human conditions with all available gifts.

Early Quakers lived in a culture dominated by hereditary rank and privilege. Modern Quakers live in cultures increasingly dominated by economic and social class divisions. We are often unclear about our own deepest attitudes toward money in our lives. Wealth, or lack of it, has an effect on nearly every outward aspect of our lives: housing, clothing, transportation, education, health, recreation, etc. We know that too much time and attention to money can preempt more Spirit-led choices in our lives. We also know that money well-used can make needed changes possible. We are clear on the spiritual dangers of a culture built on unfettered capitalism and obsessed with economic status. We are aware that unequal distribution of wealth is one of the seeds of war.

Friends continue to work against exploitation and for fair and equitable wages, healthy working conditions, and honest employment practices for all.

#### **Quotations**

*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourself treasures in heaven ... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

*No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.*

*Matthew 6: 19-21, 24*

*Every degree of luxury of what kind so ever, 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.*

*May we look upon our treasure, the furniture of our houses, and our garments,  
and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions.*  
John Woolman, 1763

*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  
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

*Poverty does not mean scorn for goods and property. It means the strict limitation  
of goods that are for personal use. It means the opposite of the reckless abuse and  
misuse of property that leaves our country spotted with the graveyards of broken and  
abandoned machinery. 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.*

Mildred Binns Young, 1956

*...[F]inancial stewardship in harmony with the testimonies is as much a part of  
our spiritual life and journey as prayer and meditation.*

*Our efforts to live simply and reject superfluous consumption of material goods  
should not be equated with a superficial belief that money is inherently “bad” or at  
best a necessary evil that should be ignored. By ignoring finances and not exercising  
thoughtful stewardship, we risk allowing money to have more control over our lives  
rather than less.*

...

*What does our spending, especially our contributions to our monthly and yearly  
meetings, Friends organizations, or other charities, say about what is important to  
us?*

Connie Brooks, 2009

*For me, tithing is about a lot more than money. It is about faith, trust, and  
community. By giving ten percent of what I make, I have to have faith that God will  
provide what I need and that I will be able to survive on less than my entire paycheck.  
I have to trust that the people in my meeting will be good stewards of the money I  
give. Giving that much also means that I am invested in what the community does,  
which makes me more likely to attend business meeting and care about how the  
community spends its money.*

Ashley M. Wilcox, 2010

## **Advices**

We seek a sound relationship to money and other resources, making decisions that reflect our testimonies of integrity, simplicity, equality, peace, and care for creation.

Our household and meeting spending plans are evidence of what is important in our lives.

We pay a fair wage to our employees and offer comparable pay for comparable work.

We refrain from hazardous speculation or participation in business matters that may be ethically suspect. We seek to invest our money and time in ventures that are planned to benefit the social or environmental good as well as to provide profits.

Obsession with the money we have is a sickness. So also are envy and self-pity when we feel we

haven't enough. Whatever our state of economic affairs, gratitude for what we have helps to prevent worries over losing it or resentment of others who live differently.

We accept our gifts and recognize with profound gratitude any opportunities to share them generously. We embrace and uphold Friends commitment to improving the human condition with all available gifts.

As Friends, we examine our decisions about money and other assets, and look in them for the seeds of war, injustice, and environmental damage.

### **Queries**

- Do we regard our time, talents, and material possessions as gifts from God, to be used and shared according to the Light we are given?
- As individuals and as a meeting community, how do we show that we are stewards and not just owners of the property and resources in our care?
- How does the Spirit guide us in our relationship to money? How do our choices reflect the working of Truth and Love in our lives and in the world?
- Do we keep to moderation and simplicity in our daily lives?
- Are we careful not to judge others, or ourselves, by worldly criteria of wealth and status? How do we answer to that of God in those who have less than we do? In those who have more than we do?
- Do we use the gifts we are given in ways that separate us from others and from God, or in ways that build community and bring us closer to the Source and Center?
- What is our "fair share"? How do our social and economic choices help or harm our vulnerable neighbors—human and non-human? Can we identify "the seeds of war" in our choices?

### **Taking Care of Our Selves**

*[[Note to Friends: Some of this section is based on p. 29 of the 1993 Faith and Practice. Quotations, advices, and most queries are new.]]*

*[[Question to Friends: does this section title work for you? If not, what else can you suggest?]]*

Taking care of our physical bodies, as we are able, is a form of stewardship. Living the most balanced and healthy life we can brings us wholeness and promotes our spiritual well-being. How we use and treat the bodies we have can help us to find a new self in partnership with the Creator.

For physical activity and healthful recreations as forms of spiritual discipline, see Chapter 3.

Our testimonies of simplicity, integrity, and stewardship encourage us to choose ways of living that rest and strengthen the body, and that refresh and enrich the mind and spirit. We choose recreations in keeping with our values around the right use of money. We consider how we use the time and physical energy that have been given to us. We make considered choices about the food we eat. We also think about the effects that our choices have on the welfare of others and of the Earth as a whole as well as on our own lives.

Some activities can become obsessions, leading to lives inconsistent with integrity and simplicity and creating barriers between individuals and their families and communities. Friends have long opposed gambling (even in the mild forms of lotteries and door prizes). As Friends we recognize that the incautious use of alcohol and drugs can be a spiritual danger as well as a threat to our physical selves. Any activity taken to an extreme can divide us from God.

## Quotations

*True leisureliness is a beautiful thing and may not lightly be given away. Indeed, it is one of the outstanding and most wonderful features of the life of Christ that, with all his work in preaching and healing and planning for the Kingdom, he leaves behind this sense of leisure, of time in which to pray and meditate, to stand and stare at the cornfields and fishing boats, and to listen to the confidences of neighbours and passers-by...*

...

*Most of us need from time to time the experience of something spacious or space-making when Time ceases to be the enemy, goad-in-hand, and becomes our friend. To read good literature, gaze on natural beauty, to follow cultivated pursuits until our spirits are refreshed and expanded, will not unfit us for the up and doing of life, whether of personal or church affairs. Rather it will help us separate the essential from the unessential, to know where we are really needed and get a sense of proportion. We shall find ourselves giving the effect of leisure even in the midst of a full and busy life. People do not pour their joys or sorrows into the ears of those with an eye on the clock.*

Caroline C. Graveson, 1937

*Family recreation should promote restoration, solidarity, and spiritual well-being; it should bring balance into life and contribute to wholeness of personality. Such recreation includes reading aloud, gardening, music and arts and crafts as well as games and sports. All such activities develop fellowship within the family. Both competitive and non-competitive games can teach lessons of fairness, sportsmanship, and self-esteem. Recreational activities should stress cooperation and inclusiveness, and should resist the materialism of our culture.*

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice, 2007

## Advices

Friends can sometimes be too serious! Playing together joyfully strengthens family and community life.

We are mindful of the close connection between physical and spiritual well-being.

Healthful activity includes games, sports, and other physical exercise; gardening and the study and enjoyment of nature; travel; books; fellowship with friends and family; and arts and handicrafts which bring creative self-expression and appreciation of beauty.

Recreations in which we are participants rather than spectators can be particularly beneficial.

## Queries

- Do we choose recreations which strengthen our physical, mental, and spiritual lives and avoid those which may prove harmful to ourselves and others and to the world around us?
- Are we careful about our food choices?
- Do our lives as individuals and as meeting communities include enough time for healthy play?
- Do our relationships with a Higher Power release each of us from our addictions and compulsive behaviors?

*[[Question to Friends, especially those with experience in Twelve-Step groups: the last query is a proposed replacement for one under Simplicity on p. 48 of the 1993 book: "Are our lives so filled by the Spirit that we are free of the need to indulge in the addictive use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, or excesses of any kind?" Does the proposed language work better? What needs to*

be added or changed?]]

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## Some questions for discussion around the Fruits of the Spirit / Friends Testimonies

From NPYM Friends and the Committee on the Discipline

- All our testimonies interconnect, so it is difficult to separate them and put them into a list order. This draft chapter has six main sections in this order: Integrity, Community, Peace, Simplicity, Equality, Stewardship. Would your Friends group prefer a different order? If so, what?
- The section on civic responsibility focuses on government. Are there other types of civic action or responsibility important to your Quaker group? Please describe them.
- How do you define “unity” in the context of Quaker practice? How do you experience unity in the corporate life of Friends?
- The following sections are largely or entirely new to NPYM’s *Faith and Practice*. Do they reflect your experience? Would you add anything? Subtract anything?
  - Integrity (the introductory section)
  - Community (the introductory section)
  - The Meeting and Friends at Every Age
  - “Be Not Afraid”
  - Harmony with Creation
  - Stewardship of Money and other Resources
  - Taking Care of Our Selves
- What is your experience, if any, with young people asking for or bringing in letters of introduction?
- We have suggested the query “Do our relationships with a Higher Power release each of us from our addictions and compulsive behaviors?” in place of one which appears under Simplicity in the 1993 Faith and Practice: “*Are our lives so filled by the Spirit that we are free of the need to indulge in the addictive use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, or excesses of any kind?*” Does the proposed language work better? What needs to be added or changed?
- Has enough been said here about Friends ways of resolving conflicts with other Friends and with our family members? This subject is covered in the chapter on the Monthly Meeting.
- **Are there additional advices and queries** we could add?
- **What’s missing from the current material** that you find that you find valuable for describing and considering Friends testimonies today?
- **What books, pamphlets, articles, or other resources** can you recommend to Friends on these topics?