A QUAKER GLOSSARY -- With some notes on how things got that way.

When a word within a definition is itself defined elsewhere in this Glossary, it appears in **bold** the first time it is used in that definition.

**Advices and Queries** ---- Advices are recommendations, usually quotes from weighty Friends of past generations, about how to live according to the Friends' testimonies. Queries are questions designed to help one think about one's values and how to live according to the advices and testimonies.

**Clearness Committee** ---- A committee appointed to assist a person or the Meeting to seek clearness about a decision or concern.

**Clerk** ---- The person appointed to preside in Meeting for Business or a committee (a "chairman"). The Presiding Clerk is charged with setting up the agenda, keeping the discussion orderly and peaceful, determining the sense of the meeting (the decision that everyone agrees is the leading of the Spirit), and working with the Recording Clerk to develop minutes that accurately express the decisions of the Meeting.

**Concern** ---- When a person feels Spirit-led toward some issue or action, this may be expressed to the Meeting as a concern.

**Continuing revelation** ---- The belief that God (or the spiritual dimension) can speak directly to people today just as tradition says happened in earlier times. Also called "ongoing revelation"

**Convincement** ---- When people decide to become part of the Quaker community, they are said to have joined by convincement. (In prior centuries, children born to Quaker families were said to be "birthright" Friends, but membership in the Religious Society of Friends by birthright alone is not recognized today in most yearly meetings.)

**Discipline** --- See "Faith and Practice, Book of Discipline".

**Eldering** ---- Encouraging diffident or timid Friends to share their gifts with a meeting, or discouraging and/or questioning an individual's inappropriate behavior or expression of concerns. In most unprogrammed yearly meetings, there are no longer formally-appointed Elders carrying these responsibilities, as had been the case previously.

**Faith and Practice, Book of Discipline** ---- Each Yearly Meeting publishes a book which contains statements about what Quakers in that time and place believe and practice. Advices and Queries are usually included, along with description of the ways Quakers do business, how weddings and memorials are conducted, the requirements and arrangements for membership, and how finances are handled. Yearly Meetings usually revise these books every generation in order to keep them in accord with current practices and wisdom gained from guidance of the Spirit. These books used to be called "Discipline", but now most are titled "Faith and Practice".

**First Day, First Month, etc.** ---- Sunday, January, etc. The days of the week and months of the year were mostly named to honor pagan Nordic and Roman gods, and a couple of emperors. Our Quaker ancestors wanted to get away from all the old traditions that they thought empty and misleading (or even idolatrous) in both church and society. So they abandoned the usual names and just numbered the days and months. Most Friends today have dropped this custom, just as they have the 17th and 18th century Quaker clothing and "plain speech" (using "thee" instead of "you"), though some continue to keep the "First Day" tradition, at least part of the time, perhaps to identify their Quaker allegiance.

**Friend** --- Synonym for "Quaker". This word came into common usage because early Quakers called their collective body "The Religious Society of Friends of Truth".

**Friends General Conference** ---- An association of mostly unprogrammed Yearly Meetings in North America

**Friends United Meeting** ---- An association of mostly programmed Yearly Meetings in North America, Africa, and the Caribbean.

**Good order** ---- The procedures for Friends' business that have been found by experience to facilitate our corporate activities as we seek to discern and carry out God's will. Also called "good order of Friends".

**Inner light** ---- That part of each person which Friends believe is our connection to the Spirit or (for most Friends) to God. Sometimes also called "inward Christ", "the Seed", or "inward Teacher", it is believed accessible to all.

**Lay down** ---- To terminate a committee or activity when its work is completed, no longer felt necessary, or is not sustainable with the resources available.

**Leading** ---- An inner conviction that impels one to follow a certain course under a sense of divine guidance, seen by most Friends as a manifestation of one's inner light. A Friend may submit a leading to the Meeting for testing by corporate wisdom.
Meeting ---- What do you call a group of people who gather for a specific purpose? A meeting, of course. Quakers have used this common term in a variety of ways:

Meeting for Worship ---- A gathering in expectant silence to "listen" for divine guidance and to seek harmony with the spiritual dimension.

Friends Meeting ---- Common reference to the local organized unit (or congregation) of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

Monthly Meeting ---- Since the local Friends Meeting generally meets to transact business once a month it is also designated as a Monthly Meeting, and the business session itself is also called a Monthly Meeting.

Meeting for Worship for Business ---- From the Quaker point of view business is not dealt with in a majority rule manner, but as a unified seeking for divine guidance. In the late 20th century it was felt by many that this focus on unified seeking was being lost, and this term combining worship and business has become popular to remind Friends to keep them together.

Quarterly Meeting ---- Local Monthly Meetings have traditionally joined in regional groups, which met four times a year and were of course called Quarterly Meetings. Today many such groups gather less often than quarterly, but the traditional name persists.

Yearly Meeting ---- Most local Meetings are joined in a larger regional group which meets once a year. Yearly Meetings usually include Monthly Meetings with similar thought and practice. Yearly Meetings are the most important, and most independent, bodies within the institution of the Religious Society of Friends beyond the Monthly Meeting.

Programmed ---- In the mid-19th century many Friends were led by the influential English evangelist, Joseph John Gurney, to adopt preplanned worship, using music, Bible readings, and a sermon, along with some silent worship.

Quaker ---- Originally a derogatory term for members of The Religious Society of Friends, referring to the fact that some Friends quaked or trembled during Meeting for Worship, especially when about to deliver vocal ministry. It is not owned or copyrighted by The Religious Society of Friends, and Friends today have no control over it, However, they are happy now to be called Quaker, and are more widely known by this designation than by their official name.

Queries --- See “Advices and Queries”.

Seasoning ---- The practice of letting business decisions rest a month in thought and prayer before final approval.

Sense of the Meeting ---- The decision arrived at by a meeting for business through seeking the will of God, or the guidance of the Spirit, regarding the issue at hand.

Testimony ---- Quakers do not have a creed and are focused on character and behavior rather than on belief. Over the years suggestions about the nature and achievement of the good life outlined by Jesus and the writers of the New Testament, many other religious leaders throughout history, and the guidance of Friends as they have sought contact and harmony with the spiritual dimension, have coalesced into advices in such areas as integrity, equality, peace, simplicity, stewardship, and others. These have been called “testimonies”. They are ideals and goals, not rules, and they may change or be added to as Friends receive new spiritual guidance. Only within the past few decades have Friends come to recognize that we need a testimony on care of the environment. Earlier, it took Friends a century to recognize that slavery was wrong. What will the Spirit guide us to recognize in the coming century?

Unprogrammed ---- Meeting for worship is based on silent waiting, with spoken ministry only when individuals are guided by the Spirit to share a message.

Vocal ministry ---- When Friends gather in the expectant silence of Meeting for Worship, occasionally one of them will be Spirit-led to speak aloud of an experience, insight, or feeling arising from his or her inner light. Many Friends have tried to describe the process of discerning whether a thought should be shared as vocal ministry, but perhaps the most succinct test is to ask oneself whether that ministry will be an improvement on the silence.

Weighty Friends ---- Those who, because of the general assumption of their wisdom, have much influence in Meeting decisions.

--This document was originally drafted by Howard Harris (1917-2014). Subsequent edits and additions have been made by Don Goldstein, who welcomes your feedback and suggestions (dnx6309@gmail.com).