

## Canadian Yearly Meeting



## Introduction to Quakers and Friends' Ways

*A Learning Resource for Canadian Friends (FACILITATOR COPY (times and notes to facilitator have been removed in the participant copy)*

## Introduction to Quakers and Friends Ways

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Note: To purchase your own copy of CYM's Faith and Practice (2011), visit the web site of CYM's Quaker Book Service, <http://quaker.ca/resources/quaker-book-service/> A link to the current book list can be found at the beginning of the QBS description.

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Version 3.0.3

## Introduction to Quakers and Friends Ways

### Session 1 — Introduction(s)

Friends in Canada meet for worship in many different places and spaces, on different days, and at different times. Still, we have in common a “settling into silence in our community”. The following quote from Faith and Practice (2011) describes one Friend’s first experience:

3.19. At first I am most aware of the beauty of this place. The warmth and sunshine of a glorious fall day; the dappled shade in which we sit. I hear the rustle of leaves, the sound of neighbours discussing their garden, a screen door banging, and the far-off shouts of children at play. But gradually the silence deepens. I am less aware of my surroundings. I hardly notice when someone rises and beckons to the children. A shuffle of feet on the grass. A murmur of voices. Time seems suspended. Then, someone speaks, about looking for God in our lives. Again there is silence. Sometimes I sense a feeling of deep peace and timelessness, and catch a glimpse of a profoundly moving religious experience, of God in our midst. At other times I am too aware of the distractions, and of the length of the silence. Another person speaks, about what being in this group has meant to him. More silence. Then suddenly the hour has passed. We are all shaking hands with those on each side of us, introducing ourselves, talking, stretching, collecting the children, or going to the kitchen to start lunch. The spell has broken. My first Quaker Meeting for Worship is over. —*Margaret Springer, 1978*

### Agenda

1. Worship (~8 minutes)
2. Topic Summary (< 2 minutes)—“This is a Quaker 101 course for anyone who wants to visit or revisit Quaker fundamentals: what our community is based on.”
  - a. We will be using both Canadian Yearly Meeting’s *Faith and Practice* and its *Organization and Procedure* as primary resources for this course.
3. Welcome and Introductions - Participants introduce themselves (starting with the facilitator!), giving their names, and responding to the following questions (15 minutes)
  - a. How are you today?
  - b. What first brought you to Quaker Meeting?
  - c. What keeps you here?
  - d. What do you most want from this course?
4. Go over the topics to be covered (early Friends, Quaker meeting/ministry, testimonies, meeting for worship for business, spiritual community) (10 minutes)
  - a. Does this cover everything you’d want to know?
5. Ground rules—these are all suggestions, can be modified, other aspects can be added (15 minutes)

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- a. Duration—six meetings, two hours maximum per meeting, probably between 1.5-2 hours per meeting.
- b. Floor—Who has the floor? The goal is to experience rich, spontaneous yet orderly conversation despite being on the phone. Decide between two traditional Quaker methods for determining whose turn it is to speak: Worship Sharing (also known as popcorn-style, not to be confused with a popcorn meeting!) or Claremont Dialog (going in a circle—David Summerhays, one of the facilitators, recommends this method. If popcorn-style, which Eric Kristensen used, note that the facilitator must ensure that people speak no more than once per round before everyone has had a chance to speak).
- c. Interrupting
  - i. Let us use great restraint and discernment around interrupting, but interrupting especially makes sense if there are concerns about:
    1. Safety (physical or emotional)
    2. Time constraints
    3. Technical difficulties (e.g. can't hear)
    4. Following a necessary order of discussion (e.g. agreeing on ground rules before launching into potentially sensitive subjects).
    5. Regrounding the conversation in worship and purpose,
    6. Clarification if this is crucially needed
      - a. Let us use particular restraint around interrupting to clarify. Here are some queries to consider:
        - i. Might the person clarify soon?
        - ii. Can we wait until s/he's finished speaking or even later in the day or week?
        - iii. Might we understand later upon reflection?
        - iv. Is what we'd like clarified really the core of what the person is trying to say?
      - b. Let's ask each other lots of questions and, don't get me wrong, there are certainly times when interrupting to clarify is justified. I'm simply inviting us to focus on what is most essential, which may in certain cases require us to let go of our noble desire to understand everything.
- d. Kindness—Because we're learning, it's important to create an environment where we are kind to each other AND to ourselves.
  - i. We can fear seeming like (or being) a "bad Quaker," whatever that means to us.
- e. Confidentiality—Discuss with the group: how far will information travel? (David Summerhays suggests agreeing as a group to generally anonymous stories about others, and taking great care and precaution with what we share about the course with others).

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- f. Language: if English isn't everyone's first language, ask if there's anything we can do?
  - g. Anything else anyone would like to ask the facilitator or the group in order to feel at our best?
  - h. We will return to these ground rules, if only to ask if there needs to be any revisiting of them, at the beginning of at least the first three meetings for learning. (I suggest revisiting the ground rules every meeting, if only to ask if anyone has any comments: it only takes a moment and, in my experience, it's easier to tweak a problem with the ground rules than mop up conflict later in the discussion!)
    - i. The facilitator should ideally offer to be available to e-mail or speak on the phone in between Meetings for Learning about any concerns, questions, pits in the stomach, or anything that felt uneasy.
6. Spiritual background (interesting discussion but also crucially important for creating a safer space!) (25 minutes)
- a. Ask Friends to discuss our spiritual background (starting with the facilitator!).
  - b. This means answering three questions:
    - i. What religion were you raised in (e.g. atheist)
    - ii. Do you have a spiritual practice now and from what tradition (e.g. I do a Zen meditation every morning)
    - iii. Which traditional or not-so-traditional religious language is closest to your heart (e.g. Christian language, paganism).
  - c. Probably if the group were to fully answer this question in writing, you would collectively fill a library! So encourage Friends to keep the answers a little brief. Interruption may be necessary because it's easy to ramble with this kind of question.
  - d. Then, based on what participants have shared, ask if there are particularly painful, sensitive spots for Friends, e.g. if someone talks about "sin" it may bring up very unpleasant memories for some.
  - e. Talk about listening in tongues (hearing the Spirit through people's words (note: even the symbol "the Spirit" may be lost on some. Be careful to unpack jargon! The symbol "Spirit", for instance, returns often in the rest of the course))
  - f. Upon hearing the spiritual backgrounds of everyone, does everyone have "translations" for key words that might be used by participants?
    - i. For instance, if there's a Christian Quaker who may talk about "Christ-consciousness," how can a non-theist friend translate that so that it resonates?
    - ii. Make sure everyone has translations for key words that are important to folks, e.g. Christ, God, Spirit, spirit guide, prayer, energy
    - iii. The goal is to prepare everyone to speak from the heart and have it resonate in everyone's hearts.
      - 1. Ideally, when people use Quaker words, such as holding in the light or leading, it resonates also—but that may need to wait for Quaker 102!

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7. Discussion question: what do you do in silence? (30 minutes)
  - a. Ask each participant what they do in the silence of Quaker meeting, perhaps inspired by the opening quote. Silence can be added if Friends need some as a base for reflection.
  - b. Ask if anyone has any questions for each other coming out of what's been shared.
  - c. (Optional): If Friends race through this material, participants can discuss the quotes below (or read them out loud).
8. Homework for next time: read the quotes from the next section, part 2. Also, be aware that the homework for the rest of the sessions is to contact at least one member of the course with a thought, a thank you, a resource they might like, or just to say hi and check in. Feel free to start early!
  - a. Building these kinds of ties is very important for the success of this course.
  - b. Reading: does doing the reading every week seem reasonable?
9. Closing (Questions, Homework, Check-out) (5 minutes)
  - a. Check-out: we began the session by asking how everyone is. Checking out means talking about how we're feeling now that we've spent this time together. Anything you'll be thinking about, any intentions you're taking away, any thank you's to be said?
10. Closing worship (5 minutes)

(Total ~ 1 hour 55 minutes)

### **Selections from Faith and Practice, Canadian Yearly Meeting**

1.100. George Fox asked, "What canst thou say?" and for Friends the text is still being written in our lives and spiritual experience; indeed, we are the text. The Hebrew scriptures are a record of how God's activity in creation was perceived by one people over many years. The "heroes" and "heroines" are very human, and through their imperfections we can move across time and culture and relate to the human feelings and experiences recorded in this text. —*Anne Thomas, 1992*

1.110. When we are nourished to our roots in any one tradition, the truths of all the others will be available. Someone who rejects the Christian tradition out of hand has not yet fed deeply enough on whatever their alternative religious source may be. —*Rachel Britton, 2004*

1.111. If I were a Yogi, I would seek samadhi, or transcendence. If I were a Buddhist, I would seek to achieve Nirvana. But I am not. I am a Quaker, a Friend. Thus, I seek to be perfect: to be whole, to love fully as I am loved. Thus, I seek to truly know and respond to "that of God" in myself and each person that I encounter. —*Margery Post Abbott, 2002*

1.66. It is good to be reminded that even trying to discern works for us as it brings our spirit closer to God. I don't think of God as something with

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personal attributes, so I don't feel forgiven by God when I make mistakes, but I can feel the spirit of God working in others when they forgive me for making mistakes. — *Lynne Phillips, 2001*

3.33. Living out the immanent and transcendent aspects of spirituality as a Friend has never been a private matter. Quaker structures depend on the shared inward experiences of members as the basis for worship, the ordering of business, and social and humanitarian action. The Quaker way takes on faith the seemingly irrational proposition that the inspirations of individuals can lead a community to unity and spiritual power, not to chaos and dismemberment. — *Ursula Jane O'Shea, 1993*

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### Session 2 – Experiencing the Spirit – Worship and Ministry in our Community

#### Introduction

Canadian Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice offers the following introduction to the Chapter, "Experiencing the Spirit: Our Faith" (p. 8).

"For Friends the wellspring of faith is the search for what George Fox and early Friends described as the Inner Light, the Seed, the Truth, the Life, the Power, the Christ within — all leading to an inner awareness through which they embraced and experienced the Sacred and were changed by it. Waiting in silence that brought forth vocal ministry, they discovered a power that challenged them to find their own faith. Friends have found inspiration in the Christian message and in the role and significance of Jesus, but at the heart of this faith is an emphasis on the inward experiential testimony to a way of life that resists creeds or doctrines, inspiring Friends to act out their faith in their everyday lives.

"As George Fox said, 'We need no mass to teach us, for the spirit that gave forth the scripture teacheth us how to pray, sing, praise, rejoice, honour and worship God, and in what, and how to walk and to behave ourselves to God and man, and leadeth us into all truth, in which is our unity; and it is our comforter and guide and leader, and not men without who say they have not the spirit and power that the apostles had'. (Epistle 171, 1659).

"For Quakers, the encounter with the Sacred is within, and the inspiration for that encounter may be found in the Bible, in the Christian faith, in testimonies of other Friends, through individual and corporate discernment and through our relationship to other faith traditions and to the natural world. However, the foundation experience is that the Truth is reached beyond words, in stillness, in the hearts of all people who seek God."

#### Agenda

1. Opening
  - a. Worship (truncated <5 mins)
  - b. Check in: ask everyone how they're feeling today, perhaps what we did that they enjoyed the most this week? (Facilitator goes first) (10 minutes)
  - c. Revisit the ground rules (Who has the floor, queries around interrupting, kindness, confidentiality, any additions?)
2. Consider the following queries before settling into worship (15 minutes):
  - a. How do I experience the Spirit?
  - b. How do I prepare myself to listen for it?
  - c. How have I experienced the Spirit in my day-to-day life?
  - d. How have I experienced vocal ministry (of others or being led to speak myself) in my Meeting or Worship Group?
3. Worship

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- a. Does Spirit need to be defined a bit for some?
  - b. Invite Friends to notice the silence, the quality, the feel of it.
  - c. Encourage Friends to be aware of any time they might feel, even a little, led to speak what comes to them. Welcome them to speak if they are so led, and note that there will also be time to share after worship.
  - d. Worship (15 minutes—a little longer than usual). This is a chance to listen for the Truth that is beyond words, and even to try to use words to express it.
  - e. (Optional): If the group hasn't had a chance to get to the query in the previous session about what Friends do in silence, this is a good opportunity to discuss it.
4. What is alive for you right now, coming out of this brief time of worship?
    - a. Worship Sharing rising from worship and the queries above (20 minutes)
  5. Conversation with the group: Consider the selections from Faith and Practice on the following page. Friends express our experience of the Spirit in a variety of ways. Which speak to you? How do you describe your experience of the Divine? How does this experience influence your practices of discernment? (30 minute conversation)
  6. (Optional): If Friends race through this material, participants can discuss the quotes from session 1 (or read them out loud) if this material hasn't been covered yet.
  7. Homework: 1) Read next week's quotes from Faith & Practice. 2) Contact at least one member of the course with a thought, a thank you, a resource they might like, or just to say hi and check in.
  8. Check-out (a little longer than usual) (15 minutes)
    - a. What remains most strongly with you from our reflection and conversation?
    - b. What questions do you still have?
    - c. How would you like to explore further?
    - d. What are you taking away from this meeting?
  9. Closing Worship (5 minutes)

(Total ~ 1 hour 55 minutes)

### **Selections from Faith and Practice, Canadian Yearly Meeting**

1.8. Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand. — *Isaac Pennington, 1667*

1.10. The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious, and devout souls are everywhere of one religion; and when death has taken off the mask they will know

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one another, though the divers liveries they wear here makes them strangers. This world is a form; our bodies are forms, and no visible acts of devotion can be without forms. But yet the less form in religion the better, since God is a Spirit; for the more mental our worship, the more adequate to the nature of God; the more silent, the more suitable to the language of a Spirit. — *William Penn, 1693*

1.12. There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages 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, 1762*

1.20. It seems to me that faith is optimism and cheerfulness, the opposite of despair and giving up. Even in the first half of my life, which was devoid of any religious practice, I had faith — but didn't know it. It was a matter of interpretation of terminology, as well as curiosity, and I am still seeking.

I think of faith in God as a kind of human version of instinct: the Light Within, or as Aboriginal people say, "instructions from the Creator." Quaker silent worship can reveal this right and natural part of us, and I am grateful to have experienced its mystery. I have found, too, that this centering connects me with feelings of justice and equality I have harboured since childhood but didn't know what to do with, and stimulates me to act upon them. — *Edith Miller, 1998*

1.23. The aim of seeking God's will... is not confined to Quakers. A concern for the human condition is strongly developed amongst humanists. The recognition that the hungry need to be fed, the sick healed, the deprived comforted is not only a Judeo-Christian teaching although a prominent part of it. Quakers have a good record in that they have recognized that a little practice is worth a great deal of preaching. In other words, the philosophy of love your neighbour is a practical one. It is also an extroverted one. One does not attain Nirvana by thinking about how to obtain it, but by forgetting self sufficiently to act for others. One does not opt out of society but sees oneself as a part of it and capable of doing something to improve it. To quote William Penn, true godliness does not turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavours to mend it. — *Betty Hurst, 1971*

1.34. As a Friend, I know the Spirit can and will be reached in the simplest way: sitting together in silence. So why do I continue to sing and dance and dress up and story-tell? Mostly, because I delight in these activities. Also, they are religious tools. The music, movement and symbols of stories speak to my mind, body and soul. Energy flows through me; I open myself and hear that Inner Voice. I enjoy the sense of connection and play with others and the sense of being a part of all life. — *Susan Dew-Jones, 2000*

1.58. Spiritual discernment lies at the heart of Quaker spirituality and practice. It's grounded in the central Quaker conviction of the availability to every person of the experience and guidance of God, immediate as well as mediated. Discernment is the faculty we use to distinguish the true movement of the Spirit to speak in meeting for worship from the wholly human urge to share, to instruct, or to straighten people out. It is the capacity we exercise in a centred meeting for worship for the conduct of business to sense the right course for the meeting to take in complex or difficult circumstances. It is the

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ability to see into people, situations, and possibilities to identify what is of God in them and what is of numerous other sources in ourselves — and what may be both. It is that fallible, intuitive gift we use in attempting to discriminate the course to which we are personally led by God in a given situation, from our other impulses and from the generalized judgments of conscience. — *Patricia Loring, 1992*

1.59. The theme that has woven through my spiritual journey over the past ten years has been the sense of accepting leadings and following them even if the way of doing so is not always clear. My experience has been that I am given what I need to know to get to the next stage. As I am faithful, things become clear... I am able to go about searching with a sense of somewhat awed confidence, after seeking clearness that the way is right. — *Elaine Bishop, 2001*

1.61. A Quaker method of discernment, which I consciously use often, is a combination of listening for guidance and actively watching to see how the Way opens. If I am receptive, I will see where the Spirit is leading me. — *Betty McInnes, 2001*

1.68. The only way that I can understand who I am and what my life is about is to consider myself a “led-one.” I have not often experienced dramatic Leadings, never has a beam of light spoken to me, yet I have a quiet sense of being led. The clarity I feel relates to a profound sense of looking for and finding evidences of “divine truth” in my life.... I am very sure I have missed Leadings. I hope I will be ready with the next tide, or for the next “freshening breeze.” — *Jerilynn C. Prior, 1992*

3.12. Through all my changing certainties and uncertainties, there runs a constant thread. My connection with God is fostered in worship. And worship is essential to our lives together.

Each of us has our own experience of the depth. For me, the focus can vary. There may be inner expressions of thanksgiving or adoration. Perhaps a wrestling with anger or despair; recognition of times I have not spoken or acted in the Light; a seeking of clarity in matters of faith or action. Often my “monkey mind” goes on nattering. But if I am faithful, there’s time to calm it down. To set aside my own agenda; to wait quietly in the presence of God, with a brief prayer that my heart may be open. To accept and breathe in the fragrance of the Spirit — or to be startled into fresh awareness of what is required of me on my spiritual journey. At best, if only for a moment, I feel whole, united with God. — *Muriel Bishop Summers, 1995*

3.15. As the Author of all Good continues from time to time to open amongst us the spring of living ministry, it is fervently desired that Ministers and Elders may so dwell under the Divine influence as to be enabled to discern when offerings proceed from the right source, and when they do not, and thus experience a qualification to be nursing fathers and mothers to those who are young in the ministry; with gentleness and wisdom advising and encouraging them to abide in simple and patient submission to the will of God, and to keep to the openings of Divine love in themselves in order that they may witness a gradual growth in their gifts. — *Discipline, Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends, 1885*

3.23. When I listen to vocal ministry I try to listen to that of God in the words, but not necessarily the language being used. I love vocal ministry. I think

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vocal ministry can illuminate a meeting and take away one's self in a way where you are not listening to the "individual" but the Spirit within them. Whether the language is "Christ centric" or it's more feeling-oriented, I can still "listen" not with my ears but with the Spirit within me. That's what I attempt to do in meeting, sometimes better than others, but I try.

One of the most profound things that Friends "do" in Meeting for Worship is listen. We listen to the Spirit, to God, to the Light, to Jesus, to whatever you want to call it, within ourselves and in others. You hold others in the "light" not to intellectualize their words, but to listen to them with your being. So take away the words, the language, the intellect, the ego, and one is God. There are no quick and easy solutions to the listening and receiving. It's just something as messy and imperfect as people can be. — *Rachael Maxcy, 2003*

### References for those who wish further resources:

*Canadian Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice* (Ottawa, 2011) – Chapter 1 – Experiencing the Spirit: Our Faith

*Canadian Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice* (Ottawa, 2011) – Chapter 3 – The Meeting Community, pp. 70 – 81.

The Committee on Eldership and Oversight of Britain Yearly Meeting - *Quality And Depth Of Worship And Ministry* – London: Britain Yearly Meeting, 2001

Geoffrey Durham, *The Spirit of the Quakers*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp 90 - 108

Patricia Loring, *Personal Spiritual Practices Among Friends*, Volume 1 of *Listening Spirituality*. (Washington, DC: Openings Press, 1997).

William Taber - *Four Doors To Meeting For Worship* - Pendle Hill Pamphlet 306, 1992.

Many resources may be purchased from CYM's Quaker Book Service.

<http://quaker.ca/resources/quaker-book-service/>

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### Session 3 - The Experience of Early Friends

In the introduction to Canadian Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice, the following quote refers to the "Letter from the Elders Gathered at Balby, 1656". (See Appendix A, Faith and Practice of Canadian Yearly Meeting for the full text.)

"This epistle comprises a set of expectations that were considered to be necessary for the growing new movement. The fundamental elements of their advice are still vital to our practice although three and a half centuries have passed:

- a practical organization of meetings for worship held in the right spirit;
- pastoral care;
- responsible family life;
- responsible corporate life, including careful registering of marriages, births and deaths;
- social responsibilities in one's employment and public life

"A living tradition grows, however, retaining the best of its past while adapting to the needs of the present. The Yearly Meetings that were formed as time passed, in faraway lands settled by Friends as well as in Britain, felt it wise to provide written guidance for faithful living in new and unforeseen situations. They included not only advice about dealing with outward behaviour but also counsel aimed at nurturing the inner life and fostering spiritual growth.

"For a Book of Discipline to be useful in promoting learning, it must reflect the attitudes, experiences and challenges of a given body of Friends at a particular time and place. That is the aim of this Canadian Faith and Practice book." (Note: "the Book of Discipline" is the previous name for Faith & Practice. This may sound vaguely authoritarian to our modern ears but it is a traditional Quaker word that refers to faithful *discipleship* to our own Inner Light.)

In this third session, we will explore some of the history, the experiences of early Friends, and reflect on what we might learn from them.

#### Agenda

1. Worship (10 Minutes)
2. Check-in: How are you today? How was your week? (10 minutes)
3. (Optional) Revisit the ground rules
4. Lessons from early Friends (20 minutes)
  - a. Which of the readings speaks to you right now?

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- b. What was surprising to you?
- 5. Why should we care about Early Quakers—shouldn't we focus on how we're led now? (30 minutes)
  - a. How do you take meaning from it for your own life?
  - b. What else might we learn from those Friends who went before us?
  - c. Can participants think of a few examples where thinking about founders and about history led to new insight and deeper appreciation, perhaps in our families or our personal lives? What about in institutions we've been a part of—schools, governments, companies, cities?
  - d. (Optional): As Quakers, what kind of relationship do we want with our past? How do we get there? (15 minutes)
- 6. Institutions (20 minutes):
  - a. Do all participants know about the different kinds of Quakers throughout the world? Where are we located? How many are we? How does the form of worship differ?
    - i. Probably want to cover unprogrammed/Liberal, programmed Friends United Meeting (FUM), Evangelical Friends Church International (EFI). ~1,000+ Friends in Canada, almost all Liberal. The majority of Quakers live in Africa.
  - b. Does everyone know what CYM is, and what happens there? Has everyone heard of the Canadian Friend? The Archives (held at Pickering College in Newmarket, Ontario)? Camp NeeKauNis (on the Georgian Bay)?
  - c. Does everyone know what CFSC is and how it witnesses our Quaker faith to the world?
  - d. Does everyone know about international Quaker bodies — FGC (Friends General Conference), QUNO (Quaker United Nations Office), FWCC (Friends World Committee for Consultation)?
  - e. (Optional): Does everyone know what a *leading* is, what *holding in the light* means?
- 7. Homework: 1) Read next week's quotes from Faith & Practice. 2) Contact at least one member of the course with a thought, a thank you, a resource they might like, or just to say hi and check in (facilitator should participate).
- 8. Check-out: How are you feeling now? Any intentions or final thoughts? (5 minutes)
- 9. Closing worship (5 minutes)

(Total: ~ 1 hour 35 minutes, or 1 hour 50 minutes with the optional portion)

### The Beginnings

“The middle of the seventeenth century in England was a period of religious questioning and social upheaval. Like many other restless Christian seekers, George Fox (1624-1691), the founder of the Society of Friends, became dissatisfied with the ceremonials, creeds and practices of the existing churches. After growing up in a devout family, Fox left home at nineteen and wandered for several years, questioning his Bible, ministers, and anyone who would listen, but remained unsatisfied. Finally, as he later recorded in his Journal:

when all my hopes in ... all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, Oh then, I heard a voice which

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said, “there is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition”, and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy.

“The faith of John’s gospel he ‘knew experimentally’—that ‘the true light which enlightens every man was coming into the world’—even in his day.

“To him this was a new revelation. Yet his finding re-emphasized Luther’s priesthood of all believers, and drew unconsciously from the accumulated experience of saints and mystics. Although the Puritans also re-emphasized the power of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people, Fox believed that his contemporaries were unwilling to trust the Seed, which was another name he used for the indwelling light. He knew from experience, confirmed by intensive study of his Bible, that this Light or Spirit is the source of unity, joining the good in each of us to our neighbour’s good, and also identifying the evil revealed by hypocrisy.” *Organization and Procedure, Canadian Yearly Meeting Section 1.1*

“Friends spoke both with their words and with their lives. To a degree unusual for their times they practised equality of the sexes, equality of status, equality of ages; simplicity of clothing, speech and way of life; peace, in withdrawing from the army and in settling disputes among themselves. Suspected by the Stuarts as subversives, they published their first peace testimony in 1660, at the Restoration. These testimonies, inherited chiefly from the Anabaptist wing of Protestantism, they defended by quoting from the Bible. For this behaviour large numbers were jailed, whipped, branded, fined and deported. Penalties were uneven according to the temper of the judges and the locality, and more severe after the Church of England was re-established under Charles II.” *Organization and Procedure, Canadian Yearly Meeting Section 1.1*

### North America

“In 1682 William Penn established a colony in Pennsylvania as a ‘holy experiment.’ One of his first acts was to meet with the Leni Lenape First Nation at Shackamaxon where a famous treaty of peace and friendship was signed. Because of their mutual respect, Quakers and Aborigines lived in peace in Pennsylvania for over 70 years. Colonial Rhode Island Friends, with William Penn and the Quaker leaders in the Jerseys and Pennsylvania, represent the best of political Quakerism. They were willing to hold power in order to move the state nearer to the Truth. Penn advised: ‘Keep the helm through the storm if you would steer the ship toward the harbour.’

“During the eighteenth century, Friends were only one of many religious communities that settled in America. Following Friends’ testimonies such as simplicity, refusal to take oaths, and the peace testimony became difficult while mixing with the ‘world’s people’ and the ‘world’s governments.’ To counteract this, Friends partially withdrew from participation in government; some Quaker magistrates resigned rather than administer oaths, and Pennsylvania Friends resigned from government in 1756 rather than administer tax money for use in the French and Indian War.

“Contact with Aboriginal peoples and African peoples held in slavery in America led to the development of the first new testimonies based on the principle of equality. Progress was uneven and slow until the 1750’s, when John Woolman began his mission to Aboriginal peoples and more especially to Quaker slaveholders and slave traders. With Anthony Benezet and others he aroused Friends’ conscience until slavery and the slave trade were

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abolished in the Society in 1787. These concerns have continued, although broadening awareness of new implications has been painfully slow.

“Education has been important to Friends. The William Penn Charter School was established in 1689, followed by other Friends schools in the next hundred years in Rhode Island, New York and Pennsylvania. Surrounded by different Protestant and Catholic sects, Friends tried to maintain their identity by laying down strict rules for their members, discouraging fashionable dress, rejecting activities in arts and music, and forbidding Quakers to ‘marry out.’ Unlike the seventeenth century when there were energetic activities to convince the wider population of Friends’ beliefs, in the eighteenth century Friends were content to leave the rest of the world alone, to be separate.” *Organization and Procedure Canadian Yearly Meeting Section 1.2*

“By the opening of the nineteenth century, two divergent tendencies became apparent among American Friends. Both had roots in early Quaker thought but had subsisted together without seriously disturbing the unity of the Society. One, eventually identified with the followers of Elias Hicks (1747-1830), was associated with ideas of political democracy and stressed the Inward Light as the basis of salvation rather than the atonement made by Christ on the cross. Accordingly, when Hicksites referred to Christ as their saviour, they meant the Christ within rather than the Christ of history. The other was a renewed interest in Evangelical Christianity, which centres upon the meaning and influence of events in Christian history and rests heavily on Biblical authority as understood by leading ministers. Both reformist and evangelical trends reflected influences dominant in contemporary Protestant thought. Fortunately, in England these tendencies produced only the small Beaconite separation. The tension between the two American Quaker groups, however, grew steadily more severe until in 1827 a separation took place in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Similar separations followed in some of the American meetings, all the groups continuing to claim the title of Religious Society of Friends.” *Organization and Procedure Canadian Yearly Meeting Section 1.3*

### Canada

“During the first half of the nineteenth century there was a westward and northward movement of Quakers from the east coast to the Old North West, Ontario, Iowa, Kansas, Oregon and California. Arthur Garratt Dorland, the historian of the Religious Society of Friends in Canada, has written: ‘The migration of Friends to Upper Canada was simply the fringe of this great westward movement of which those who came to this Province constituted the merest fragment.’ The establishment of Quaker settlements in Canada was by pioneering emigrants from America but not, as is often assumed, by loyalists in the sense of United Empire Loyalists. The latter were active in their support and allegiance to the King’s party while the former, as was indicated above, must necessarily have been neutral as they remained accredited members of their parent Meetings.” *Organization and Procedure, Canadian Yearly Meeting Section 1.3*

### A United Yearly Meeting in Canada

“The desire for unity was also stimulated in 1928 when Genesee Yearly Meeting (General Conference) and Canada Yearly Meeting (Five Years Meeting) held their annual meeting in joint and concurrent sessions to coincide with a similar joint meeting held at the same time by the two parent branches of

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the New York Meetings on the one hundredth anniversary of the Great Separation of 1828. Meanwhile other straws in the current gave clear indication of the direction in which Canadian Friends were going. In 1933 a number of Conservative Young Friends attended Camp NeeKauNis for the first time. From that time on Young Friends began to take an increasingly important part in the movement towards union. Young Friends, having worshipped, worked and played together at Camp NeeKauNis over the years, were not aware of any significant differences that should keep them apart. While the Second World War was grinding slowly toward its final phase, an important step was taken toward an organic union of Canadian Friends when, in 1944, the Canada Yearly Meeting (Conservative) decided to join the other two Yearly Meetings at Pickering College in joint and concurrent sessions. A Committee on Closer Affiliation appointed to consider the question reported in 1954 that, since 'unity has been a growing power over the years of our meeting together, we now accept the desire of Friends for a United Yearly Meeting in Canada.... We are now prepared to proceed with ways and means whereby this may be accomplished.' When the minute recording this decision was accepted, the Committee was further charged 'to bring recommendations the following year for a basis on which to proceed as one Yearly Meeting.'

"Growth of affection and familiarity among members working on common projects makes it hard to recall today the nineteenth century divisions. The accepted variety of outlook in the Canadian Yearly Meeting is the outward embodiment of inner unity. As Friends draw closer to each other they are drawn closer to God." *Organization and Procedure, Canadian Yearly Meeting Section 1.5*

"What is it that makes our Yearly Meeting's Quaker experience distinctive? Consider, first, who the Canadian Quakers are and where they came from — that is, their roots, in both a geographical and a theological sense. The Quaker settlers who began arriving in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as pioneers, moving northwards from the newly born United States, were members of established American Meetings, Meetings that would soon be suffering the disruptions and hurts of the unhappy Separations. They brought with them the doctrinal orientations of the Meetings with which they were affiliated as well as the usages detailed in their own Books of Disciplines.

"In the twentieth century many small rural communities in Canada, such as those which Quakers had settled, began losing their populations in a general movement of urbanization. Also, especially after World War II, an influx of Friends from England and other European countries contributed yet another background tradition. These arrivals tended to settle in cities, giving further impetus to the start of a new Meeting, often centred around a university. Such embryo Meetings might grow by attracting newcomers with no Quaker background at all. Today a large proportion of Friends in Canada have joined the Society by conviction, as adults; relatively few have grown up in Quaker families and Quaker communities.

"It should, therefore, come as no surprise that the writings collected in a Canadian Faith and Practice express different ways of understanding the Quaker faith and, in particular, different points along the Christian-Universalist continuum. The extracts should be read in the same way that we listen to vocal ministry, even when it does not match our own beliefs. Rather than rejecting a message outright, we can welcome it as a means of testing the strength and validity of our own convictions and as a way of enlarging our vision. Nor should it be surprising that, in this collection, there seems to be a wide gap in time between the foundational writings of the first Quakers in the seventeenth century, mainly in England, and the written offerings of Friends in Canada, where the first Meetings were not established until the 1800s." *Faith and Practice of Canadian Yearly Meeting (2011) – Introduction,*

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Page 3.

### References for those who wish further resources:

*Canadian Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice* (Ottawa, 2011) – Extracts available online [here](#).

*Organization and Procedure, Canadian Yearly Meeting* – Available online [here](#). Section 1 contains a historical outline of Friends in Canada.

Howard Brinton, updated by Margaret Hope Bacon, *Friends For 350 Years*, Wallingford PA: Pendle Hill, 2002.

Arthur G Dorland, *The Quakers in Canada: A History*, Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1968.

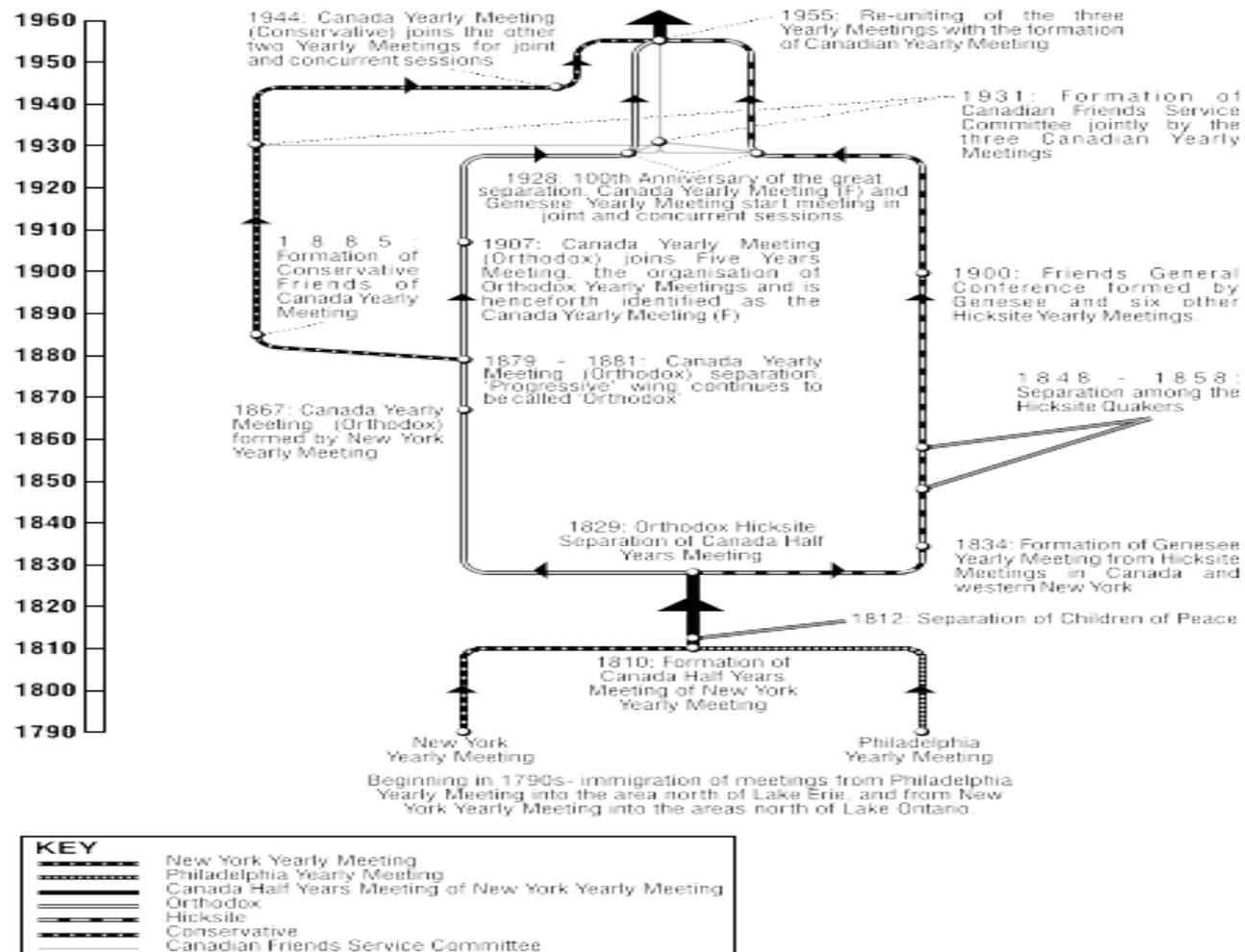
Phillips P Moulton, ed. *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Elaine Bishop, *Quakers in Canada – A Flow Chart of Division and Re-uniting*. (2004) See attached.

Many resources may be purchased from CYM's Quaker Book Service. <http://quaker.ca/resources/quaker-book-service/>

# Quakers in Canada

*A flow chart of division and re-uniting*  
1790 - 1960



**FIGURE 5.4**

## Introduction to Quakers and Friends Ways

### Session 4 – Testimony – Faith in Action

Today, many Friends use the acronym SPICES to remember the most common testimonies – Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Stewardship. Stewardship has, in recent years, often been supplanted by the term sustainability. Yet, at their root, testimonies are best understood as the outward expression of an inward Grace (see “On Remembering Why They are Called Testimonies”, in Lloyd Lee Wilson’s *Essays on the Quaker Vision of Gospel Order*). Consider the following:

Many new members are attracted to Friends because they resonate with the testimonies of peace, simplicity, equality, community and integrity. While this kind of attraction is not necessarily bad, the danger is that these testimonies come to be held as ends in themselves — and thus become creeds. Testimonies embraced as ideals are without spiritual grounding. They may be *good* notions but they remain mere notions. They will fade and be lost when brought to the test in an encounter with a world that has contrary notions. This danger is real because often Friends do not do well at making it clear to others that their testimonies are the fruits of their spiritual foundation, not the foundation itself. We are not Quakers because we have embraced the idea of pacifism or simple living or equal regard for both sexes. We are Quakers because we have encountered something within that convinces us we can be and should be at peace, live simply, be loving toward all or live any other witness that may arise from this experience. — *Robert Griswold, 2005, Canadian Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice 4.4, page 107.*

As we begin to speak our truth to others, let us also remember to listen fully to the Spirit speaking through them, so that we may truly share in the learning.

### Agenda

1. Worship (10 minutes)
2. Check-in—how are you today? How was your week?
3. (Optional) Revisit the ground rules
4. The testimonies (20 minutes). Each participant select one of the quotations relating to a testimony (following pages) and reflect on these queries:
  - a. Why does this selection speak strongly to you in your life right now?
  - b. What do you do in your life to live out this testimony?
  - c. How do you think earlier Friends or contemporary Friends or individuals you know experienced this testimony?
5. Flipping the testimonies on their head (30 minutes)
  - a. Quakers often think of the testimonies as our values, perhaps even our ethics—either way, the testimonies are how we take our inner encounter with Spirit and put it in action in the outer world.

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- b. Let's flip that on its head for another take on the testimonies. Consider this: it is common for poetry to evoke a concrete object, such as a rose, to talk about something inside us that's hard to describe, such as love. Listening to poetry moves us: words and images move our heart. With this analogy in mind, let us consider another vision of the testimonies.
    - i. We tend to think of them as "inner-to-outer", that is, our inner experience with Spirit leads to outer actions and values. That's one great way to think about the testimonies. Now, let's look at the testimonies as "outer-to-inner," that is, using the outer images of the testimonies to describe and even heal our inner state of being, our hearts.
  - c. To do this, for the next 5-10 minutes choose one testimony, peace for example, and focus your attention on fantasizing that this testimony has been splendidly and perfectly implemented in your life, in the life of those you love, and then throughout the entire world, and indeed throughout the entire universe. How does this miraculous universal change happen? Perhaps imagining that instead of Spirit being a "still small voice" that our own deepest Truth was loud enough for everyone to hear and act upon. If you chose the peace testimony, by the end, you'd be imagining a perfect universal peace. Don't strain but guide your attention. This may take practice. When we're done discuss:
    - i. Was that easy or difficult, pleasant or unpleasant?
    - ii. On a difficult day, might it be useful to view the testimonies this way (outer to inner), as symbolism or even healing fantasy? Does it enrich your worship? Is it dangerous?
    - iii. If a poet evokes a rose to talk about love, what might evoking the testimonies help you talk about? (Suggestions: God, Spirit. The Quaker testimonies are all Biblical metaphors for God in the "end-times" so this exercise is actually a way of contemplating the divine, as known through divine impact on individuals, communities, and the universe).
6. (Optional) Worship Sharing (30 minutes). Invite participants to respond from the silence
    - a. What connections do you see between your experience of the Spirit and your daily life practices?
  7. Homework: read the quotes from the next section. Contact at least one member of the course with a thought, a thank you, a resource they might like, or just to say hi and check in. Now in addition, 3) make it your homework to reach out to someone from your meeting with a question. Take the questions we have and ask members of your meeting—please report back what you learn!
  8. Learning reflections and check-out (20 minutes)
    - a. What remains most strongly with you from our reflection and conversation today? How do you feel?
    - b. What questions do you still have?
    - c. How would you like to explore further?
  9. Closing Worship (10 minutes)

(Total: ~ 2 hours)

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### Testimonies: - all selections are from Canadian Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice

#### ***Simplicity***

4.44. If we can attain it, how does simplicity shape our lives? Needing little, keeping away from extremes and excess, brings another kind of contentment, a simpler wealth. Simplicity is the essence of stillness, an untroubled way that keeps from grasping, hoarding. Simplicity lies at the heart of the Quaker way of life. Keeping to simplicity is to realize that it is the Light within that leads us, restrains us, inspires us. Knowing this Divine Light is within, we are all children of the Light, all equal. Keeping to the contentment of simplicity leads to peace. Following the plain truth leads to integrity. So all the testimonies are reflected in simplicity. Need little. Want less. It seems a difficult concept in the frantic haste of the world today. We are surrounded on all sides by voices crying their bad advice to buy (save), conform without question, voices that condone greed and excess. It seems hard going against all the pressures that urge us away. Yet keeping to simplicity is a turning back to God, is a relief, is the only thing we can really do... Early Friends testified against the extravagance and snobbery of English society in their times and turned away from the superfluities of society to wait in stillness on God. They were as concerned as we are that lives too full of triviality and mediocrity overburden and distract us from the essential, the positive, the simple truth that we are children of God, and that the first thing we have to do is love God with all our heart and mind and strength. — *Anne-Marie Zilliacus, 2001*

#### ***Peace***

4.22. A good end cannot sanctify evil means nor must we ever do evil that good may come of it. We are too ready to retaliate, rather than forgive, or gain by love and information. And yet we could hurt no man that we believe loves us. Let us then try what love will do: for if men did once see we love them, we should soon find they would not harm us. Force may subdue, but love gains: and he that forgives first, wins the laurel. — *William Penn, 1693*

#### ***Integrity***

4.17. We know truth through what we see, read, do and feel ourselves. We dare etching our testimonies every time we state what we deeply believe and do what our soul calls us to do. We learn from the past but live in the present looking to a future for all creation. We need to affirm our own place in history-in-the-making by living and speaking our truths for ourselves and our children...

By taking up the call of our spirit and living life with passion and conviction, we feel the heat of truth and rightness in our heart of hearts. Here, in our stirrings of gut knowledge and intuition, we find our passionate calling to certain beliefs, our lovers, our place in this chaotic world, answers (or solace) for the questions that confront us. Each of us feels the passion called truth. It's our choice to listen and act or not. The truth in our bones can be scary; it asks us to put our hearts on the line. In following our hearts, however, we will find ourselves in exquisite alignment with the power-filled spirit that we seek truth from. — *Jane Orion Smith, 1994*

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### **Community**

4.66. When justice is reduced to nothing more than a matter of punishment, it becomes a simple game of vengeance where pain begets pain. If humanity is ever to achieve any peace, we must redefine justice as the process that allows us all to continue living together after one has caused harm to another in our midst. Justice, therefore, has to be measured by how peacefully and productively we coexist, not by how severely we punish those found responsible for a transgression. — *Marc Forget, 2001*

### **Equality**

4.46. The Holy Spirit, which we all share, makes us equal. We differ in our class backgrounds, intelligence, manners, experiences, talents, skin color, language, gender, sexuality, and customs; these differences can serve to remind us of the infinite number of ways the Spirit presents itself. But our differences can also create barriers because of our inability to interpret accurately the actions, motives, and goals of others. This failure to understand lies at the heart of racial and ethnic prejudice, for when we fear the unfamiliar or unknown, we tend to reject and thrust it from us. — *New York Yearly Meeting, 1995*

### **Stewardship**

4.77. We affirm the interrelatedness of nature, spirit and all living beings as expressions of God's creation. This guides us towards a holistic lifestyle which models for ourselves and others ways to heal the earth. We are responsible for what we eat, wear and use. To paraphrase John Woolman: Let us be open to discern how the seeds of destruction of our planet are present in our ways of living. We are thankful that so much joy and beauty have been offered to us. *Canadian Yearly Meeting, 1992*

### **References for those who wish further resources:**

*Canadian Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice* (2011) – Chapter 4 – Testimony: Faith in Action

SPICES – Testimonies for Quaker Kids (Included)

Geoffrey Durham, *The Spirit of the Quakers*, (Yale University Press, New Haven and London - 2010), pp 71 – 89; 126 – 149; 150 – 166

Kathleen Hertzberg, *Doing the Work, Finding the Meaning* (CQP No. 56, 2002), pp 1-3; 34- 35.

Jack Ross, *Nonviolence for Elfin Spirits*. Argenta BC: Argenta Friends Press, 1992. Pp 29- 37.

## Introduction to Quakers and Friends Ways

Lloyd Lee Wilson, *Essays on the Quaker Vision of Gospel Order*, Burnsville NC: Celo Valley Books, 1993.

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Our testimonies are the way we live what we believe. Quakers believe that God wants us to live as good people. Quakers try to do this in many ways, but the six most important ones are described by some people as the SPICES. Queries are questions that we use to help us think about how we can improve.

### **SIMPLICITY**

Quakers believe that if we are always trying to get better things, we can forget to be good people. Sometimes keeping a lot of fancy things, clothes, and toys can get in the way of doing our work. Sometimes we can begin to think our things are more important than people.

#### Queries On The Testimony Of Simplicity

- Is our stuff more important than our friends and family?
- Do we do things just because they look cool?
- What are fun things to do that don't cost anything at all?

### **PEACE**

Quakers believe that war and violence do not solve disagreements between anybody. These things only make people suffer. Quakers try to settle all their arguments without using weapons or words to hurt others. Quakers believe that world peace begins with each of us.

#### Queries On The Testimony Of Peace

- Do we listen to all sides when there is a disagreement?
- What should we do when we are mad at someone?
- What can we do to make our world more peaceful?

### **INTEGRITY**

Integrity means being truthful and trying always to do a good job. It means saying what we mean and meaning what we say. Quakers believe that God wants us to be honorable in all that we do and say.

#### Queries On The Testimony Of Integrity

- Do we always try to be honest in every situation?
- Do we try to give our best effort on everything we do?
- Do we do just enough or as much as we can to do a good job?

### **COMMUNITY**

Quakers believe that it is very important to be a good neighbor. This means being helpful to people around us. This could be the people we live with or near, our schoolmates and teachers, and people at our Meetings or churches. It could be doing chores or it could just mean visiting someone who is lonely. Having fun together is a great way to build community too!

#### Queries On The Testimony Of Community

- What can we do to be good neighbors?
- How can we be helpful and take good care of each other?
- What can we do to have fun and get to know each other better?

### **EQUALITY**

Quakers believe there is that of God in everyone. Everyone is created equal. This means everyone has the same human rights and should be treated fairly. It also means we should treat people the way we want to be treated.

#### Queries On The Testimony Of Equality

- What can we do to be fair to other kids we meet?
- What can we do when we see people being treated unkindly?
- Do we try to share the things we have?

### **STEWARDSHIP**

To live with simplicity and integrity, we need to do a good job taking care of the things we own and use. This means taking good care of the earth. Quakers believe in trying to leave the world a better place after we have been here.

#### Queries On The Testimony Of Stewardship

- Do we help with cleaning chores at home and at school?
- Do we take good care of our own clothes and toys?
- What can we do to avoid being wasteful?

*What questions can you think of?*

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### Session 5 – The Meeting Community – Business Meetings

#### Introduction

The following quotation, 3.39 from Canadian Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice, provides some insight into our Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business:

3.39. The meeting for business — Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly, with many other supplementary varieties — always opened in silence and closed in silence. It was a deeply religious occasion, impressive in its solemnity.... It was a set custom that nothing should be done which could not be done in unity, i.e. with the solid body of the meeting in favour of it. In most cases, as the consideration of the problem proceeded, there would develop a spirit of submission, conciliation and mutual understanding. Some Friend with a reconciling mind would hit upon an inclusive proposal which would bind together the good features of both divergent propositions and draw all present into harmony with his large plan. Then would follow a chorus of responses: “I approve”; “I unite”; “I like that.” The very fact that no action would be taken until unity was reached necessitated the cultivation of enlargement of outlook. Instead of blocking action, it encouraged the widening of the scope of action. It trained Friends to seize upon a higher unifying principle that would meet and satisfy the various partial and one-sided attitudes.

The Quaker custom of “gathering the sense” was grounded in the religious life. If the religious life ran dry, the method became weak. — *Rufus Jones, 1921*

#### Agenda

1. Worship (10 minutes)
2. “With heart and mind prepared” - (20 minutes)
  - a. How would you describe the state of your “heart and mind” as you come to this Meeting for Learning?
  - b. What reflections do you have from our earlier sessions?
3. Share gleanings from conversations with members of their meeting (previous week’s homework) (5 minutes)
4. Meeting for Worship for Business – the Experience (40 minutes)
  - a. Begin by gathering the experience of participants: who has been to a business meeting before? How do these meetings work? What’s the goal? Does anyone know what unity is? What is the sense of the meeting? How is unity different from consensus? What is standing aside and what is standing in the way?
    - i. For the facilitators: always ask if someone in the group can define these before giving any definition. Always ask if someone in the group can explain before explaining!

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- ii. **The goal of the business meeting** is to figure out how the community is led by Spirit to be in the world. To be clear, it's not as if Spirit has the colour orange in mind and if we choose a tangerine rug that we're being bad Quakers. Arthur Larabee, long-time clerk of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, talks in his clerking workshop given to Canadian Yearly Meeting in 2013, about the goal of business meeting being "to find a loving outcome." There are many possible loving outcomes, and none of them are known in advance before the meeting starts. Also, a loving outcome isn't necessarily an action: it can be worshipping together!
- iii. **The clerk** sets the tone, explains the item or asks knowledgeable people to do so, moves the item from a stage of information, to clarification, to action, to assigning action to people or committees. The clerk tries to find the sense of the meeting and eventually unity. The clerk tests his or her understanding of the sense of the meeting by proposing it and asking if it is right.
- iv. **The sense of the meeting:** is the generally agreed upon articulation of the discussion and decision. The sense of the meeting could be that there is no unity, it could be a decision, it could be an opinion. The sense of the meeting is an articulation of where the group is at generally in their feelings and opinion.
- v. **Consensus:** Perhaps some have been part of a consensus-based group. Basically, it means a kind of voting where everyone has to be ok with a prescribed action.
- vi. **Unity:** is the spiritual unity of the group, the clear sense that the Spirit is leading the group in a particular direction. Note that the Spirit may be moving us *individually* in a very different direction than the group. Unity is corporate, not personal.
  - 1. Unity is usually known through unanimity. Most of the time we know unity through a unanimously agreed upon sense of the meeting that the group is moved by Spirit in a particular direction.
  - 2. However, this point is delicate for a number of reasons.
    - a. Depending on the size of the group, a tiny minority cannot hold up the process without others recognizing that there is spiritual weight to their objections.
      - i. For instance, if one person out of a group of 30 cannot unite, and all other avenues have been tried, as a last resort, the clerk may ask if others see spiritual weight in the objections raised that should hold up the process. If no one else sees reason to hold up the process, then the meeting is in unity and will move forward. Nonetheless, moving forward without one person should be quite rare.
      - ii. If others believe there is spiritual weight to the objection, and believe that it should hold up the process, then there isn't unity. That person is "standing in the way" but it's not the person but the group who allows their witness to stand in the way of unity.
    - b. Similarly, Quaker business meeting has expectations about how members behave. Most of all, we need to be open in mind and spirit. If the meeting senses that a member is not open in mind or spirit (e.g. "No, stupid idea and I don't want to talk about it!" or comes with preconceived or selfish notions) then their objections simply don't count. Once again, if no one sees fit to hold up the process for that objection, and as a last resort, the meeting is in unity and can move forward. So unity is not consensus even if unity should usually be found by a



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In your small Meeting, two new families with young children have begun attending. Everyone attends this Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business so the Meeting can consider how to meet the needs of the children, their parents, and the Meeting as a whole. Participants brainstorm a few ideas then draft a minute.

### *Item 2 – Vocal Ministry and Meeting for Worship (Ministry and Counsel)*

A few Friends have expressed concerns that some of the vocal ministry given in meetings over the past few months has been “too political,” by which they mean focused on specific causes for which Friends are advocating. A couple of members of Ministry and Counsel (M&C) believe we should let people speak as they feel led and have concerns about stifling ministry; two others believe it is important that we hold each other accountable in our meeting, and this job falls particularly on M&C. What are some options and what might an M&C minute look like? (Note: the process at meeting for worship for business and at a committee meeting, such as Ministry & Counsel, is ideally the same)

### *Item 3 – Timing of Meeting for Worship*

Our Meeting/Worship Group has been meeting weekly on Sundays at 11:00 for a number of years. Some Friends have asked that the Meeting consider changing the Meeting Time to 10:00 so they could have a longer afternoon available for family and personal time. Are there any concerns about this proposal? What do Friends want to do?

## **Selections from Faith and Practice, Canadian Yearly Meeting**

3.40. Born in a time of political and philosophical stress and turmoil, a legitimate child of spiritual self-searching and public protest, our Society has always had a genius for turning stress and turmoil into creative tension. Strongly held opposing views tied together by trust and love are truly creative. As the process of loving outreach dissolves the areas of brittle antagonism, legitimate differences are recognized as a stimulus and broadening influence.  
— *Hugh Campbell-Brown, 1970*

3.44. It should be obvious that all need not feel equally happy about the decision the Clerk finally, after getting the “sense of the meeting,” has set down in the meeting as passed.... Something that might be called participative humility in the assembled members is certainly required in the Quaker decision-making process for it to be able to operate effectively. In this process, whose decision I have been willing to accept, I am brought to realize that the matter has been carefully and patiently considered. I have been involved throughout the process and have had a chance at different stages in it of making my point of view known to the group and having it seriously considered and weighed. Even if the decision that the group feels drawn to accept may go against what I initially proposed, I know that my contribution has helped to sift the issue, perhaps to temper it, and in the course of the process, I may have come to see it somewhat differently...

I am a seasoned Friend, I no longer oppose the decision. I give it my *nihil obstat* and I emerge from the meeting not as a member of a minority who feels

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outflanked and rejected but rather as one who has been through the process of the decision and is willing to abide by it even though my accent would not have put it in this form. —*Douglas V. Steere, 1988*

3.45. The purpose of our Meetings for Worship for Business is precisely this: we meet not to make decisions, but to build a community of witness: what have we found corporately? The sense of the meeting is not unanimity. I have had the experience of concurring in a sense of meeting with which I disagreed, knowing it was the sense of the meeting. I have wept, wishing the meeting could go further than it clearly was ready to go, but it clearly was not. But my concurring with the sense of the meeting meant that I accepted my faith community where it was, for it is only in affirming clearly where we are that we can add more on. —*Jan Hoffman, 1988*

3.46. One of the largest obstacles to Canadian Yearly Meeting moving toward our vision arises out of a fear of conflict. This is a common fear among Friends, and I am sure many of you share it with me. The conflict may be one of language or of belief. We do not want to disturb — we do not want to be difficult — we do not want to hurt — and so we do not share our differences of thought, word or experience in the open, loving way which would help all of us to grow. Instead we remain silent. Is there some way we can work together on this? —*Betty Polster, 1988*

### References for those who wish further resources:

[\*Canadian Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice\*](#) See Chapter 3 - The Meeting Community, pp 70 – 81, (2011)

[\*Organization and Procedure of Canadian Yearly Meeting\*](#). See, in particular, Chapter 2 – General Procedure in Meetings for Business.

David Stanfield - *Handbook For The Presiding Clerk* - North Carolina Yearly Meeting (FUM), 1989

Will Watson - *Before Business Begins-Notes For Recording Clerks* - New England Yearly Meeting, 1996

Mathilda Navias - *Quaker Process: for Friends on the Benches* (2012), Friends Publishing Corporation

## Introduction to Quakers and Friends Ways

### Session 6 – The Meeting Community – Living the Spiritual Community

#### Introduction

In 2006, Deborah Fisch, wrote the following to Toronto Monthly Meeting, as quoted in our Faith and Practice. As we spend time together in this last session, you are invited to consider what it means to you to be part of this community of Friends.

“We have been in danger of forgetting that we have also been given faith communities in which to test what it is we believe we are hearing, to share our experiences and learn from each other, to give each other encouragement, courage to act when called, and wisdom to know when we are not called to act. We have been given community to comfort us when we mourn, to give us a place of rest and safety when we are afraid, challenge us when we have grown complacent or [have] misstepped, and celebrate with us when we are faithful. And our meeting communities can do this because we have come to know each other, as Friends of old would say, in that which is eternal. We have been intentional in risking to share of the Spirit with each other, to spend time and really listen to each other, to grow together in love. Oh, dear Friends who so willingly opened your hearts and homes to us when we travelled among you, look at the blessed community that you have inherited and be mindful to continue to nurture it. Remind yourselves often what you already know, that there is no opposition between those calling the Meeting to grow deeper spiritually, to know God and Christ more intimately (the mystics and contemplatives), and those calling the Meeting to put faith into action (those calling for the Meeting to be active in peace and justice work). The roots and fruits are both important to survival and dependent on each other. If either is allowed to wither, the tree (faith community) will be in danger of dying away. We have all been given different gifts and we are called to use those gifts in various ways. And the greatest gift which we have all been given is Love.” – *Faith and Practice, Canadian Yearly Meeting, Section 3.37*

#### Agenda

1. Worship (5 minutes)
2. Preparing to be present – a brief check-in (15 minutes)
  - a. What do you bring with you to this Meeting for Learning?
  - b. What do you hope to leave at the door?
3. (Optional) Revisit the ground rules
4. Reflections on our Spiritual Community (30 minutes).
  - a. Is there anything that struck you about Deborah Fisch’s letter?
  - b. What aspects of community, as described here, have you experienced or observed in your Meeting or Worship Group?
  - c. What aspects of community do you long for and may not have yet found?
  - d. What challenges you most about our faith community?
5. (Optional) Committees of Care – Discussion (15 Minutes). If you were first-named on a Committee of Care for an older Friend going into long-term care, how would you approach the first meeting of the Committee? What questions might you ask? What is your role?

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6. (Optional) Clearness Committees – Discussion (15 minutes). A Friend has been offered an opportunity to attend Pendle Hill or Woodbrooke Study Centre for six months. What queries/questions would you ask them to help them discern his or her leading regarding this opportunity? (Be careful to avoid including your own opinion or point of view in the questions).
7. Evaluation (30 minutes)
  - a. Normally, someone should send around an evaluation to all the participants so they can share their thoughts about *the course and the facilitator*
  - b. Right now, focus on speaking to *each other*, because this is their last chance in the course
  - c. What moments were most helpful to you from what *others participants* said? Were there any parting thoughts you wanted to share with the group?
  - d. How would you describe this course to someone else?
  - e. How can this community that has been built keep growing? Are there any next steps we feel called to take?
8. Closing Worship (5 minutes)

(Total ~ 1 hour 55 minutes)

### **Selections from Faith and Practice, Canadian Yearly Meeting**

3.28. Community reminds us that we are called to love, for community is a product of love in action and not of simple self-interest. Community can break our egos open to the experience of a God who cannot be contained by our conceptions. Community will teach us that our grip on truth is fragile and incomplete, that we need many ears to hear the fullness of God's word for our lives. And the disappointments of community life can be transformed by our discovery that the only dependable power for life lies beyond all human structures and relationships. — *Parker J. Palmer, 1977*

3.32. Meeting is not a place of shelter from the world so much as a place where we are shaped in order to become God's instrument in the world. The primary reality is our relationship with God, and the world is an arena in which that relationship is lived out. — *Lloyd Lee Wilson, 1993*

3.53. I am clear in my own mind about the importance of membership. It is spiritual in nature; it is based, not on doctrinal agreement, nor on our worthiness, but on an attitude of humble learning; it is a way of life involving responsibilities, not least to the Society of Friends. — *Philip L. Martin, 1974*

3.66. Let us not underestimate our own ability to help each other. Perhaps we delegate too much of such responsibility to committees because we fail to see the caring that we ourselves may give.

Care can be very simple and yet be appropriate and valuable. A smile can take on a meaning far beyond appearances. We are not always thinking about the other person, but often of how they might think about us. The little things are an important part of caring. — *Canadian Yearly Meeting, 1980*

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Advice 27. Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community? Let your life speak. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God's guidance and offering counsel to one another? – *Faith and Practice (2011), Chapter 6, Advices and Queries*

### **From *Organization and Procedure, Canadian Yearly Meeting (2012)***

#### *Clearness Committees, Committees Of Care and Oversight Committees (Section 8.1)*

Faced with difficult decisions, or imperative concerns, Friends have often asked others to help them to discern the will of God and the leading of the Spirit in their lives. Friends in difficult situations have also asked others for help and encouragement to enable them to carry out their tasks rightly. Sometimes these arrangements are informal; sometimes the Meeting itself takes the initiative. Friends are then found who will meet those in need and offer their presence, prayers, love and support.

There are three types of committees on which Friends may draw. These are: Clearness Committees, Committees of Care, and Oversight Committees. In the work of all of these committees, the qualities of clearness and discernment are paramount.

### **References for those who wish further resources**

*Canadian Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice – Chapter 3 - The Meeting Community, pp 81 – 85, 89 – 99. (2011)*

[\*Organization and Procedure, Canadian Yearly Meeting \(2012\)\*](#). See chapter 8 – Clearness, Committees, Committees of Care and Oversight Committees.

Geoffrey Durham, *The Spirit of the Quakers*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.

Charlotte Fardelmann, *Nudged By The Spirit - Stories Of People Responding To The Still, Small Voice Of God*, Pendle Hill 2001