

New England Yearly Meeting  
*Faith and Practice* Revision Committee

# **Testimony: The Fruits of the Spirit**

Submitted for Preliminary Approval to NEYM 2026 Sessions

A text given preliminary approval is substantially acceptable to Friends for inclusion in the printed book. Meetings and committees are encouraged to start using it, to see how it works in practice, and to send comments to the Faith and Practice Revision Committee at [fandp@neym.org](mailto:fandp@neym.org).

The Committee may do further minor editing for style and clarity before presenting it for final approval, although major revision would require another preliminary approval.

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# Testimony: The Fruits of the Spirit

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law.”*

Galatians 5:22–23

*“Take heed, dear Friends to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose Light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life.”*

Quaker Faith & Practice, third edition,  
Britain Yearly Meeting

*“The Truth is one and the same always. Though ages and generations pass away — one generation goes and another comes; yet the Word, and the Power, and the Spirit of the Living god endures for ever and changes not.”*

Margaret Fell, 1710

## Introduction

- [1.] The basis of Friends’ lives is trust that the Light illuminates the heart of each individual and can change us inwardly. Being open to the Spirit may bring us to see the world and our actions in new ways, prompting changes in how we live our lives and interact with others. These changes flow from our new insight—a vibrant experience of the Spirit rising up in us. This witness in the human heart by God was referred to by early Friends as Truth’s Testimony. The Truth they experienced was not something they claimed to possess but something to which they were called. Their testimony to Truth meant following the Guide, the Inward Christ, over outward rituals, human doctrines, or social hierarchies.
- [2.] The convictions and actions that arise from this faithfulness are sometimes called “testimonies” since they testify to the work of the Spirit. The consistency of these testimonies in the Religious Society of Friends through the ages reflects their origins in the same Source. They are neither goals nor standards, but manifestations of the internal work of the Divine to which Friends have borne witness over many years. We are invited now to experience that same Spirit and respond to how it calls us to act today. The way we live in the world becomes our testimony.

## Leadings

- [3.] When we listen and respond to the promptings of the Inward Guide our daily lives become a testimony to that spiritual encounter. This spiritual invitation may be called a leading. Often it is for a small thing—pausing for a moment of prayer, calling a friend who comes to mind. Yet it is in learning to hear and trust the still small voice by following these leadings that seem small that we prepare ourselves to recognize that voice which may lead to bigger life-changing actions. Friends often speak of times in our lives when we feel nudged by the Spirit into new ways of living into our faith. Sometimes the nudge is deeply challenging or disorienting. We may recognize the persistent stirrings of a leading ourself,

or an experienced Friend may recognize the shift and encourage us to explore it. Prayer and attentive listening to the Divine are essential. The inspiration to deliver a message in meeting may, over time, become a call to ministry beyond one's home meeting. Similarly, the desire to be active in the meeting may lead to work beyond the meeting.

- [4.] At times Friends have found they need support in discerning how to live into a leading. Seeking accompaniment from Friends in testing a leading is an important step. A Friend may ask for a clearness committee to help them find clarity on how to respond to a leading. Over time the leading may develop into a ministry or a witness within the Quaker community or in the wider world. When individuals are faithful to divine prompting, the meeting may be lifted up by witnessing God at work in its midst, especially as it engages in support of the discernment and the work of its members.
- [5.] Later, a Friend may sense they have been released from a leading they have been following. Perhaps a specific body of work has been completed or the work is now being carried forward by others. It may be that the need continues for this work, but the Friend realizes it is **no longer** theirs to do.

## Corporate Witness

- [6.] A monthly meeting may be led to take up a corporate witness in response to a concern raised by an individual member or by a group within the meeting. The meeting then discerns whether it can embrace the concern and commit to it as a community. At times, this process is straightforward, especially when the concern is clearly shared by the meeting as a whole. At other times, it is more demanding, calling Friends into a deeper discernment that stretches them toward a more spiritual understanding of the concern. Faithful discernment depends on patient, careful attention to the information presented and humility in seeking God's will. Even when the meeting unites to take up a concern, we should remember the individuals may sometimes outrun their guide and the meeting itself may at times be mistaken. The meeting's regular revisiting of any corporate witness allows it to gauge whether the leading is still strong or if new insight has arisen and to seek clarity on how to proceed. There are times that a meeting supports an individual's concern, but does not feel called to carry it as a body. In this tender time, the meeting continues to recognize the faithfulness of all involved.

## Our Life is Our Testimony

- [7.] Shaping our lives in response to the Inward Guide is a matter of spiritual integrity. While we hope our witness will bear fruit in the world and be of benefit, the greater importance is to follow divine leading, neither holding back through fear nor outrunning our Guide. For generations Friends have described a sense of peace, of grace, even in times of great difficulty, when they live faithfully by the Light they are given.

## Testimony Extracts

*Extracts are small samples of the lived experience of Friends through the years. They are intended to provide further insight and perspective to the primary text. There is no need to read from the beginning to end—read one or a few at a time, allowing the messages to find a home, in the same fashion that we listen to vocal ministry. Come back to the ones that speak to you and re-read the ones that didn't. You may find new treasure on a second or third reading.*

### Testimony

1. Early Friends spoke of “having a testimony” and understood this as the way in which they witnessed to the truth they had experienced: the truth of the Divine Presence that was immediately available to guide and transform their lives. They spoke of their testimony in the singular (“testimony” rather than “testimonies”), because the truth was one, all-encompassing, not easily subdivided or categorized—in contrast to the way we tend to separate out and itemize several distinct testimonies today.

What was perhaps most characteristic of early Friends was that they thought of their testimony not in terms of words or propositions, but in terms of what they did, the way they lived their lives. ... [T]estimony for them was to “do truth.” What we now call “the testimonies” were early Friends actions in the world, bearing witness to the truth they had experienced. Their testimony was an outward and visible manifestation of an inward transformation. This truth affected all aspects of their lives: how they worshiped, how they’re related to the state and the established church, how they interact with the rest of society, and how they related to each other.

Tom Gates, 2015

2. They were changed men themselves before they went about to change others. Their hearts were rent as well as their garments and they knew the power and work of God upon them ... (And as they freely received what they had to say from the Lord, so they freely administered it to others.)

William Penn, 1694

3. Though one may first be drawn to Quakers through the appeal of their apparent principles, one grows into the fullness of life as a Friend when one knows those principles as personal testimonies, arising from “the power and work of God” in one’s heart.

As a boy I struggled to manifest the teachings of Jesus in my own life. While I was powerfully drawn to those teachings, they were for me merely idealistic principles rather than true testimonies growing out of my own spiritual experience. Still, my earnest desire to realize them in my life led me to a more intimate encounter with the Light. As my spiritual life slowly deepens, my straining to conform to idealistic principles eases, giving way to a comforting Presence that softens my struggle and gladdens my heart.

Steve Smith, 2005

4. 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 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 rise from this experience.

Robert Griswold, 2005

## Leadings

5. In simple trust like theirs who heard,  
Beside the Syrian sea,  
The gracious calling of the Lord,  
Let us, like them, without a word,  
Rise up and follow Thee.

John Greenleaf Whittier, 1872

6. Making ourselves and our experience available for use by God is, I believe, the key to much of this; an attitude of openness and offering is required. ... When we feel empty and apparently have nothing to offer, it is even more important that we offer that. ... Through our vulnerability we become channels of comfort and consolation. By our faithfulness in risking ourselves we open barriers and enable God’s grace to flow into the world.

Jocelyn S. Burnell, 1989

7. We are called to obedient love even though we may not be feeling very loving. Often it is through the performance of loving acts that loving feelings can be built up in us. We may start with small, perhaps very tiny steps. It is only as we begin to allow Christ’s love to act in and through us that it can become a part of us.

Sandra Cronk, 1983

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

Isaac Penington, 1678

9. Wherefore, brethren, let us be careful neither to out-go our guide, nor yet loiter behind him; since he that makes haste, may miss his way, and he that stays behind, lose his guide.

William Penn, 1694

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

seems pointless or unimportant or even silly. The great social movements of our time may very well be part of our calling. The ideals of peace and justice and equality which are part of our religious tradition are often the focus of debate. But we cannot simply immerse ourselves in these activities. We need to develop our own unique social witness, in obedience to God. We need to listen for the gentle whispers which will tell us how we can bring our own lives into greater harmony with heaven.

Deborah Haines, 1978

11. Some of us aren't called to the edge, but our role is no less important. In fact, if we aren't faithful to our piece, those who are called to the edge cannot be faithful to go to the edge.

Deborah Fisch, 2007

12. Twenty years ago, when I started teaching, I received a leading, the leading to work with children and later with teachers on issues of conflict and conflict resolution.

It took me a while to recognize it. There was no bolt of lightning. There was no voice coming from behind the clouds as it did for George Fox saying, "There is one, even Christ Jesus, who can speak to thy condition." The leading was quiet. And it happened over time. ... But the leading is always there. And when I have stayed true to that leading, the way has opened for me in ways that I can't explain, that make no sense to me. But I know it experientially.

William J. Kreidler, 1993

13. Several years ago I spent the winter knitting hats. I took the hats to the Preble Street Resource Center in Portland (ME) and walked out thinking, "I am supposed to work here." ... It became clear to me that God has called me to work with asylum seekers arriving in southern Maine, but God has not given me a road map. ... This work nurtures me. It has opened my heart and given me gifts beyond measure. I have learned a lot about forgiveness and grace and trust. I have learned about faith and hope that remain strong despite incredible hardships. I struggle with the word "ministry," but this is work that God is calling me to. It is work I cannot NOT do.

Ann Dodd-Collins, 2022

14. Obedience in the world means doing what you're told, when you're told. But for people of God, obedience isn't some hollow, occasional eye-rolling, compliance. The word's original meaning was "to hear or listen toward." Not simple action without hearing, but action that grows from listening. I like the idea of listening toward God—it creates an intensity that fits faithfulness, I think. To listen, to test what I hear, and to act on what I hear God telling me—obedience, in a constantly opening understanding of what God calls me toward.

Carl Williams, 2009

15. Begin where you are. Obey now. Use what little obedience you are capable of, even if it be like a grain of mustard seed. Begin where you are. Live this present moment, this present hour as you now sit in your seats in utter, utter submission and openness toward Him.

Thomas Kelly, 1939

## Integrity

16. A neighbour ... desired me to write his will: I took notes, and, amongst other things, he told me to which of his children he gave his young negro: I considered the pain and distress he was in, and knew not how it would end, so I wrote his will, save only that part concerning his slave, and carrying it to his bedside, read it to him, and then told him in a friendly way, that I could not write any instruments by which my fellow-creatures were made slaves, without bringing trouble on my own mind. I let him know that I charged nothing for what I had done, and desired to be excused from doing the other part in the way he proposed. Then we had a serious conference on the subject, and at length, he agreeing to set her free, I finished his will.

John Woolman, 1756

17. Friends regard the custom of taking oaths as not only contrary to the teachings of Jesus, but as implying the existence of a double standard of truth. Thus, on all occasions when special statements are required, it is recommended that Friends take the opportunity to make simple affirmations, thus emphasizing that their statements are only part of their usual integrity of speech.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1972

18. I come back again and again in my own mind to this word Truth. “Promptings of love and truth”—these two sometimes seem to be in conflict, but in fact they are inseparable. If we are to know the truth, we must be able to see with unclouded eyes, and then we will love what is real and not what is duty or fancy. Once when I was in the middle of a difficult exercise of Quaker decision-making, I wailed to an older and wiser Friend, “How can I speak the truth in love when I feel no love?” Her reply was, “Unless you speak the truth there never will be love.”

Alison Sharman, 1986

19. I, and many in the environmental movement who were trying to protect fragile ecological systems or to stop wasteful consumption, felt that the only way to achieve this goal was to rely primarily on protest and opposition. But it was easy to demonize those whom we identified as the “others,” whether they were corporations, government agencies, or individuals. It was not long, however, before some of us began to see that this approach could easily deny our common responsibility and humanity; it ultimately produced more hostility, polarization, and entrenchment and less and less understanding on both “sides.”

The more difficult but necessary work is to seek the way of reconciliation and integrity. It is to answer the call to “speak truth to power,” Friends say, yet without losing sight of the humanity of those with whom we disagree, and without denying the extent of our shared responsibility.

Jennie M. Ratcliffe, 2009

20. The Quaker testimony of integrity calls us not only to speak the truth but to live it, even when that truth is complex, embodied, or unsettling. We understand integrity not only as

truthfulness but as wholeness and authenticity. It is about living openly in the Light, even when that means defying social expectations or resisting unjust laws. For transgender, nonbinary, or intersex Friends, the journey toward truth has often required courage in the face of misunderstanding, silence, and sometimes violence. But it has also revealed the presence of Spirit in the most intimate and transformative ways.

Ted Heck and Jim Fussell, 2026

21. A life of integrity is the fruit of a life that is whole and a heart that is undivided. The starting point of a life of integrity is an inward focus. It's paying attention to our heart and seeking to live a life that is whole and undivided.

Scott Wagoner, 2016

## Simplicity

22. Simplicity is the name we give to our effort to free ourselves to give full attention to God's still, small voice: the sum of our efforts to subtract from our lives everything that competes with God for our attention and clear hearing.

Lloyd Lee Wilson, 1993

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

Thomas R. Kelly, 1941

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

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1955

25. [The simple life] begins inside with the quality of the soul. It is first and foremost the quality of sincerity, which is the opposite of duplicity or sham. ... Unclouded honesty at the heart and centre of the man is the true basis of simplicity. ... This kind of simple life will call, among other things, for an attitude of meekness and humility. ... It involves not merely honesty and sincerity in all the relationships with one's fellow men, but it also calls for utter clarity of spirit in all one's relationships with God.

Rufus M. Jones, 1927

26. I said to one of the Cuban Friends, "It must be hard to be a Christian in Cuba." He smiled. "Not as hard as it is in the United States," he said. Of course, I asked why he said that, and he went on, "You are tempted by three idols that do not tempt us. One is affluence, which we do not have. Another is power, which we also do not have. The third is technology, which again

we do not have. Furthermore, when you join a church or a meeting, you gain in social acceptance and respectability. When we join, we lose those things, so we must be very clear about what we believe and what the commitment is that we are prepared to make.”

Gordon M. Browne, Jr, 1989

27. It is a challenge to define simplicity in a complex world of harsh material contrast, of an inequitable distribution of goods...What does it really mean to “live simply”? Will we arrive once we sell our blender and our stereo? Does it mean giving up electricity and building an outhouse? Does simplicity come from making our own bread and granola? Is it really a matter of our material possessions or; rather; a state of mind, heart, and spirit? ...

True simplicity should connote not poverty but, rather, a richness of spirit, a joy in living, the nurturing of creativity, sensibility to the natural world, and love for all its creatures. As an expression of this love, this true simplicity, we must then, too, commit ourselves to building a more equitable world—a world in which simplicity may thrive and be enjoyed by everyone.

Ann Kriebel, 1984

## Peace

28. The first step to peace is to stand still in the light.

George Fox, 1653

29. Our principle is, and our practices have always been, to seek peace and ensue it and to follow after righteousness and the knowledge of God, seeking the good and welfare and doing that which tends to the peace of all. ... That 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.

George Fox, et al., 1660

30. The Peace Testimony of Lincoln School, Providence, RI, was crafted with input from the entire school community (toddlers through 12<sup>th</sup> grade), faculty, staff, and graduates.

### Peace Testimony

We don't know if Universal Peace is possible. We don't even know if it's possible for each of us to become a completely peaceful person. But we do know that these two are connected. We know that we cannot be a peaceful community without being people of peace.

It is not enough to make rules so we can get along, while in our hearts we carry hard feelings or ill will. We must each start with ourselves, not just saying we want peace, but taking action every day to make peace with ourselves and those around us. This means being truthful and trustworthy even when it is difficult. It means being respectful of each other even when we do not like each other or are angry. It means living with kindness and humility rather than criticism or judgment. It means speaking out when we witness actions that divide

rather than unite. It means listening past our differences until we can hear and know the inner goodness we all share. We know we are not many and most of us are young, but we also know that every act of trust, honesty, kindness, and love increases the trust, honesty, kindness, and love in the world.

We believe these are the seeds of peace.

Lincoln School Middle and Upper School  
[6–12 grade] communities, 2007

31. Thomas Lurting was impressed into the British navy in 1646 at the age of 14. He fought bravely for many years, becoming a convinced Friend while on shipboard. He and his Quaker mates were considered sound, reliable fighters. Then, in the midst of a naval engagement in Barcelona sometime shortly before 1655, he had an opening.

[W]e, called *Quakers*, fought with as much Courage as any, seeing then no farther; and for my part, I was strip'd into my Wastcoat, (every one in fighting Habit) and went to it in earnest, and with as much Courage as ever; and I went into the Fore-castle, and levell'd the Guns; *but*, said I, *Fire not till I go out to see where the Shot lights, that we may level higher or lower*; and here I was as great a Fighter as most: But he that hath all Mens Hearts in his Hand, can turn them at his Pleasure; yea, he in a Minute's time so far chang'd my Heart, that in a Minute before, I setting my whole Strength and Rigor to kill and destroy Mens Lives, and in a Minute after I could not kill or destroy a Man, if it were to gain the World; for as I was coming out of the Fore-Castle Door, to see where the Shot fell, the Word of the Lord run through me, *how if I had kill'd a Man*; and it was with such Power, that for some time I hardly knew whether I was in the Body or out of it; but when I came to see, and felt what it was, I turned about, and put on my Clothes, and walked on the Deck, as though I had never seen a Gun fir'd, under a great Exercise of Mind; and some ask'd me, *If I was Hurt* I answered, *No, but under some scruple of Conscience on the Account of Fighting*, altho' I had not heard that the *Quakers* refused to Fight.

Thomas Lurting, 1711

32. I have sometimes been asked what were my reasons for deciding on that refusal to register for war duties that sent me to Holloway Jail twenty-two years ago. I can only answer that my reason told me that I was a fool, that I was risking my job and my career, that an isolated example could do no good, that it was a futile gesture since even if I did register my three small children would exempt me. But reason was fighting a losing battle. I had wrestled in prayer and I knew beyond all doubt that I must refuse to register, that those who believed that war was the wrong way to fight evil must stand out against it however much they stood alone, and that I and mine must take the consequences. The “and mine” made it more difficult, ... [But w]hen you have to make a vital decision about behaviour, you cannot sit on the fence. To decide to do nothing is still a decision, and it means that you remain on the station platform or the airstrip when the train or plane has left.

Kathleen Lonsdale, 1964

33. I believe that the most important way we can each live the Peace Testimony is to be realistic about the violence built into our society, to name that violence, to witness it in our lives, and to speak truth to power. If we are silent, we accept the violence and violate the testimony.

Linda Segar, 2023

34. I believe that violence is used at many levels to control other people. For many years Quakers have held that international violence is to be avoided at all costs. I believe that violence in relationships is the ground in which other violence grows and that, if we are to develop a just and peaceful society, we must look to reducing the violence within our families. Thus, for me, working towards a reduction in domestic violence is very much part of my belief that peace is an essential component of life as it should be.

Topsy Evans, 1990

35. While a student at Howard University, David Hartsough joined a group of students protesting the segregation of lunch counters. In June of 1961, the group started a sit-in at a lunch counter in Arlington, VA.

...we sat there for two days waiting for something to eat. And it was the most challenging two days of my life. People came up and spat at us in the face. They put lit cigarettes down our backs, our shirts. People would punch us in the stomach so hard that we would fall on the floor, and then they would kick us.

And each time something like this would happen, we would try to respond in a nonviolent, loving way. The American Nazi Party did come with their swastikas and using all kinds of violence against us.

Toward the end of the second day, I heard a guy come up from behind me and he said, "If you don't get out of the store in two seconds, I'm gonna stab this through your heart."

I looked at him in the eyes and his eyes were filled with hatred. And in his hand was a switchblade. I had two seconds to decide, do I really believe in nonviolence or is there some other way to deal with this guy?

We'd had a lot of practice and done role playing about situations like this. I just looked at him in the face and said, "Friend, do what you believe is right, but I'll still try to love you." It was absolutely amazing. His face that was contorted with hatred, his jaw began to drop and his hand with the switchblade began to fall and he left the store. And something in the way I responded to him had touched his humanity.

David Hartsough, 2024

## Equality

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

Meeting for Worship has brought the same awareness to all who have seen and understood the message that everyone is equal in the sight of God, that everybody has the capacity to be the vessel of God's word. There is nothing that age, experience and status can do to pre-judge where and how the Light will appear. This awareness—the religious equality of each and every one—is central to Friends. Early Friends understood this and at the same time they fully accepted the inseparable unity of life, and spoke against the setting apart of the secular and the sacred. It was thus inevitable that religious equality would be translated into the equality of everyday social behaviour. Friends' testimony to plain speech and plain dress was both a testimony of religious equality and a testimony of the unacceptability of all other forms of inequality.

Ursula M. Franklin, 1979

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

London Yearly Meeting, 1952

38. As a white South African, I have known racism at its very, very worst—and have spent the better part of my lifetime protesting against it, often at some personal risk. As an environmentalist, the Quaker testimony there is that of God in everyone is a lovely reminder of the importance of our (bio)diversity, the importance of our differences in creating a (holy) whole. By listening and looking with a loving attention, we get to know who the other is: we learn, we expand, we grow, and the other ceases to be other and becomes us. I have puzzled over what equality means, and have reached the conclusion that for me it means we are all equally important—if one of us is missing, unrecognized, unheard, Creation is incomplete; God's work is incomplete.

Helen Holleman, 2023

39. Guided by the Light of God within us and recognising that of God in others, we can all learn to value our differences in age, sex, physique, race and culture. This enables mutual respect and self-respect to develop, and it becomes possible for everyone to love one another as God loves us. ... It is unreasonable to expect assimilation or to ignore difference, claiming to treat everyone the same. This denies the value of variety, ... Personality, sex, race, culture and experience are God's gifts. We need one another and differences shared become enrichments.

Meg Maslin, 1990

## Social Justice

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

wholeheartedly into the present. That is the beauty of the way of love, it cannot be planned and its end cannot be foretold.

Wolf Mendl, 1974

41. Robert Albright, a student at Deep Springs College, had sought to invite Rustin to come to campus, but it seems that the board of the school decided against the invitation, prompting Rustin to write one of his most thoughtful statements on the importance of developing an ethic of empathy. At the time, Rustin was delivering speeches on both race relations and the dangers of atomic warfare.

January 10, 1947

Dear Robert Albright,

...I wish to thank the student body for the stand which they took and to let you know that I am convinced that we have a great deal to be thankful for in the situation when students are seeing as clearly and behaving as creatively as many groups are today. I am very sorry that the board did not see fit to extend the invitation, but we ought not to be discouraged, for the racial problem, like most other problems we face in our time, springs from an emotional rather than a basically intellectual source. When one is dealing with human attitudes, longsuffering, perseverance, and consideration for those who disagree with you is a very necessary step. Our aim must be to place ourselves in the position of others and to see that if we had had their experiences we would be very much as they are. Once we have faced this fact we can then struggle against injustice with that spirit which in the long run takes away the occasion of injustice.

Again, I wish to express to you what an inspiration it has been to receive your letter.

Sincerely, Bayard Rustin

Bayard Rustin, 1947

42. [W]hat does the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God.

Micah 6:8

43. I was blessed with the leading to dig down for truth about our Quaker history and its ongoing consequences for Native Americans. ... I think Friends were off the mark when they ran the Indian Boarding Schools, but they prayed and listened to the still small voice within just as I do now. How can I be certain that I am led and not misled? ... The old Quaker query, "Friend, how does the truth prosper with thee?" has led me to wrestle with a lot of uncomfortable truths about myself ... [and] about us as Quakers. And as I have begun to act on these truths, the Light is revealing ways forward. ... I'm excited, too, that Quakers in Canada and the US are beginning to organize and support each other as we come to grips with the hard truths and ask how can we move forward now with Native people toward healing. ... To the churches that want to support this healing, ... [Native peoples] say, learn the truth, acknowledge the harm that was done, apologize, make amends. To my ears these steps to healing sound very much like the steps to spiritual peace that early Friends practiced.

Acknowledge your unrighteousness, let the Light open your heart and give you the courage to change what needs changing. This is the way to peace. I believe that healing as well as history can bind Friends together with Native peoples. If we want to move with Native peoples toward healing, toward peace, let's remember these words from Lilla Watson, an indigenous leader in Australia. She said, ... "If you have come here to help me, you're wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation, your peace, is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

Paula Palmer, 2018

44. May we look upon our treasures and the furniture of our house, and the garments in which we array ourselves and try whether the seeds of war have any nourishment in these our possessions or not.

John Woolman, 1763

45. In his faithful insistence, Bill [Kreidler] seldom hesitated to challenge Friends to live up to the Light they had been given. As a gay man in a Society which could be variously vague, blind, or hostile to issues of sexuality, he lovingly challenged us. He challenged us not for the sake of his own comfort or peace in the Society, but because vagueness, blindness, and hostility have no place in the Light where Friends strive to live.

Beacon Hill Friends Meeting Memorial Minute  
for William Kreidler, 2001

## Stewardship

46. It's reasonable to ask what is particularly Quaker about stewardship, which many think of as the second "s" in the SPICES acronym often used as a shorthand for Quaker testimonies. After all, the sacred texts and teaching traditions of Christians, Jews, and Muslims all contain charges for believers to be stewards of the earth and its plants and creatures. What do we Friends have to add to or elaborate on the concept? I'd posit that all of what we think of as our testimonies are interrelated, and stewardship is another angle for us to perceive the path toward right action.

Gabriel Ehri, 2023

47. [T]he traditional understanding of stewardship, starting with biblical admonitions, is steeped in mastery and control, arrogance, and separation: all the earth and its creatures shall be under our dominion. ...

We need a new frame, centered in connection and belonging. We belong to our families, our communities, our ecosystems, the biosphere. They are part of us, and we are part of them. When we can know this truth deep in our bones and embody the loving spirit that is at its core, the role we can play—from within—to best enhance the whole becomes easier to discern.

Pamela Haines, 2023

48. From the beginning, it was through the wonders of nature that people saw God. How we treat the earth and its creatures is a basic part of our relationship with God. Our planet as a whole, not just the small parts of it in our immediate custody, requires our responsible attention.

As Friends become aware of the interconnectedness of all life on this planet and the devastation caused by neglect of any part of it, we have become more willing to extend our sense of community to encompass all living things.

Linda Seger, 2023

49. I'm going to talk about letting go of ourselves and our preconceptions in order to become powerful people ... we were doing all these good political action things but it wasn't working. I found myself burned out. Stressed out. The movement was suffering and I was suffering. ... Looking back I can see now that I think it was because I was living a life disconnected. I was demanding that the world change without requiring of myself to change. I was expecting from my point of privilege that my words would be powerful enough for governments to change, for politicians to make hard choices, for the most powerful corporations in the world to give up their core business and to leave trillions of dollars of assets and investments in the ground. Of course it wasn't going to work. How could I have had so much hubris?

Jay O'Hara, 2015

50. What we love we protect. If we bear witness to the beauty and the suffering of all our relations on earth, we might be led to action: to be a voice for those who have no voice. The survival of life on earth as we know it depends on the relationship that humans have with Mother Earth.

Gail Melix (Greenwater), 2025

## Community

51. Yet another special meeting for worship for me came, unintended, as our AFSC delegation of four people found ourselves about to be arrested in South Africa. We were stopped at Kalfontain station by the white Afrikaner security police for daring to ride in the black section of the then segregated train. Scarnell Lean was an elderly white Quaker who was a member of Johannesburg Meeting. ... He was standing on the train, having given his seat to a black woman. When the security police gave him an order to leave that section of the train and move to the white section, or else be arrested, Scarnell shouted out firmly that he could not obey that order because he had orders from a Higher Authority that he had to follow. When the policeman asked him to show him those orders, Scarnell replied, "I can't, because they are written on my heart."

Then I felt a powerful meeting for worship beginning there on the train, right in the middle of a dangerous situation. In fact, it seemed that time stopped for us, ancient Quaker testimonies came to life, and we were all oblivious to the situation we were in. Each of us felt mutually supported and lifted to a higher plane by a force much greater than ourselves. ... It was as if I was looking down on all this from someplace above me when I heard a voice saying, "You

can't arrest him, and if you do, you will have to arrest me too!" I was surprised to realize that the voice was mine. ... We were all arrested together, afraid of what might come next, but bound together and uplifted by the love of God. What a powerful meeting for worship that was!

James Fletcher, 2007

52. I was in a Quaker summer project for college students when God gave me my basic life assignment. Uneasy one night at bedtime, I told my roommate I was going to walk for a while on a nearby beach. I walked most of the night. My unease grew until I asked God what my life was centrally to be about. The answer was unmistakable: to rouse people to struggle bravely for justice, equality and peace. I realized that would often mean being willing to risk ... even my life. The example of Jesus was huge for me, and even Jesus needed community—how much more would I? These Quakers who set up this project: I'd better get to know them better. They'll help me when God starts handing me specific assignments.

Quakers did that. When Spirit led me to volunteer for a high-risk peace witness in which our sailing ship *Phoenix* might be sunk by warships, my Meeting assured me they'd take care of my family if I didn't come back alive.

George Lakey, 2025

*Also see extracts 1.49 to 1.59 in Chapter 1 of the Interim Faith and Practice 2014.*

## Testimony Advices

*Advices convey some of the accumulated wisdom of Friends gained from experiences of trying to live faithfully in the Light. They are offered here as sources of support, counsel, and sometimes, challenge. As is true with much advice in general, some may be useful now and some later.*

1. Bring the whole of your daily life under the ordering of the Spirit. Maintain integrity in word and deed.
2. Open yourself to the Spirit of Truth from which “the traditional Quaker testimonies” arose. Let that Spirit guide you. Bear its witness faithfully in large and small matters as it is laid upon you.
3. Keep your witness clearly grounded in faith and regularly test your leadings with other Friends. Humility requires us to consider that our discernment may be flawed.
4. Keep your spiritual roots watered and nourished. They will wither if you rely solely on your own energy.
5. Take care that your perspectives are not led astray by the trends and biases of the broader culture. Find the strength to be faithful when called to step out of the mainstream.
6. Consider whether your patterns of consumption detract from a life of the spirit, or contribute to injustice or ecological destruction—cherish the gift of the world and all its inhabitants in their beauty and variety.
7. Do what the Spirit reveals to you. Through our faithful actions we become witnesses to God’s desires for our lives and for this world.
8. “As we grow in the faith God expects us to take a larger role in our ministry in discernment of right action. But we are not without assistance at any time. Let us use the assistance we are given so that we might be faithful in the service we are offered.” *Lloyd Lee Wilson*<sup>1</sup>
9. “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 ye may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.” *George Fox*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson, Lloyd Lee, 1993, *Essays on the Quaker vision of gospel order*. Philadelphia, PA: Quaker Press FGC, p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> Fox, George, 2005, *Quaker faith and practice*. London Yearly Meeting, p. 19.32.

## Testimony Queries

1. Do I stay open to the guidance of the Spirit and what it puts before me?
2. Do I bear witness to truth in love?
3. How do I embody my Quaker faith? Is my life my witness?
4. Am I mindful of the Source of the testimony to which I bear witness?
5. Do I regularly examine my own life for the roots of violence and fear?
6. Have I, perhaps unwittingly, participated in a culture that does not reflect my commitments to equality and justice?
7. Do I treat each person I meet as a beloved child of God? How do I work to do this in difficult interactions?
8. Do my commitments and activities interfere with a focus on my spiritual life? Do I strive to stay in right relationship with people with whom I do not agree?
9. Do I uphold those who are acting under concern, even if their way differs from mine? Can I lay aside my own wishes and prejudices while seeking with others to find God's will?
10. How do I know when I have outrun my Guide? What helps return me to faithfulness?
11. Has the time come that this work is no longer Spirit-led for me? How will I know?

Note: These queries may be used for individual reflection or, by changing "I" to "we," may be used by a group.

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