

A Guide to Quaker Practice

for Friends School of Minnesota



Friends School
OF MINNESOTA 

This booklet is available for download at www.fsmn.org/about-fsm/about-friends-school-minnesota

We know that people in the Friends School of Minnesota community come to this school from many different traditions, having had a variety of experiences in their spiritual lives. In these pages, we want to introduce Friends School of Minnesota's foundation in the Quaker tradition of spirituality. We hope to encourage conversations in the Friends School community and in your family about these beliefs and values.

In this booklet, we describe the history of Quaker testimonies and how Friends School does its Meeting for Worship. An explanation of testimonies and how they are lived at Friends School follows on page 3. Next, you will find suggested readings on Quakers and their lives and beliefs on page 9. At the very end are quoted individuals on page 10, describing the people quoted in the Queries sections.

We hope the document will be valuable to all readers regardless of spiritual tradition or personal beliefs.

Words Quakers Use

Faith and Practice—the Quaker title of writings about beliefs and how to live, which Quakers create and revise together. In this simple guide here we follow structures used in a Quaker Faith and Practice as we explore the Quaker values in Friends School of Minnesota's mission.

Testimonies—statements of Quaker principles to live a right life, which have come from our experience with the Light.

Leadings—messages or concerns received or understood in worship about how to live a right or just life in the world.

Queries—questions that deepen or broaden our reflection about the Testimonies.

Advices—quotes from well-known people that relate to the Testimonies.

Religious Society of Friends—the formal name of Quakers.

Inner Light, Spirit, Light, Divine Light, “that of God,” Inward

Teacher, Holy Spirit, God—various names Quakers use to refer to the same experience.

Right relationship, right living, living rightly—to live in accordance with leadings of the Divine Light.

FRIENDS SCHOOL OF MINNESOTA'S MISSION

To prepare children to embrace life, learning, and **community** with hope, skill, understanding, and creativity. We are committed to the Quaker values of **peace, justice, simplicity** and **integrity**.

Where Did the Testimonies Come From?

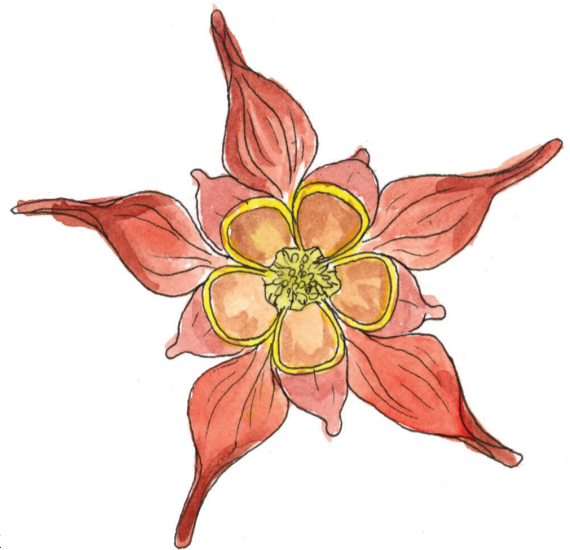
The testimonies came from the way early Quakers worshiped. Early Quakers sat in silence, clearing their heads from the thoughts of the ego and daily worries, waiting for messages to come from the Inner Light. They focused on the reality of their daily lives, their neighbors, their community and nation. Making their minds receptive to the message from “that of God” within them, Quakers devised the testimonies to guide them in living rightly with the world.

George Fox, the seventeenth century Quaker founder, preached to people that their spiritual teacher was always within them. The truth that came from within would make them free. Fox preached that no one could tell others what to believe; that it had to come from the teacher within, not the Bible nor the preachers of the Church. The early Quakers called themselves Friends in the Truth and Friends of the Truth. Pursuing Truth is what led Quakers to act in ways that were right with their beliefs.

These early Quakers, one of many rebellious groups in England at the time, were moved to make choices that often put them at odds with the larger society. Sometimes they were even sent to jail for their practices and beliefs. Yet Quakers did aim to walk cheerfully over the Earth speaking to “that of God” in everyone they met.

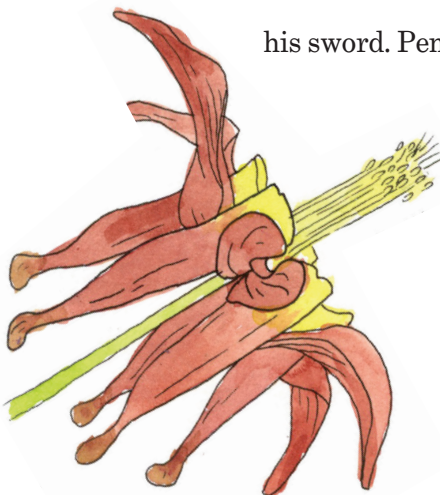
One story reportedly passed down from George Fox is about William Penn asking Fox how long he should wear his sword. Penn, a follower of Fox, was a wealthy

businessman who had worn his sword as a status symbol of belonging to the upper classes. Fox replied “Wear it as long as you can.” This nicely illustrates how different Fox was from the other preachers of his time.



**“We have found...
that the Spirit, if rightly
followed, will lead us
into truth, unity and
love: all our testimonies
grow from this leading.”**

—Britain Yearly Meeting
of the Religious Society
of Friends, Quaker Faith
and Practice, 4th Edition,
1995–2008.



Columbine

Meeting for Worship

Quakers often rely on advices and queries about the testimonies to serve as seeds of contemplation during Meeting for Worship, and for their own personal reflection and worship at home.

At Friends School of Minnesota, students and staff gather once a week during the school day to sit together in silence for about 20 minutes. People can speak from the silence if they are called to share a thought with the whole group. Sometimes we gather as a whole school, and sometimes we gather as a Lower School or Middle School or in other smaller groupings. Parents and visitors are always welcome to attend Meeting for Worship.

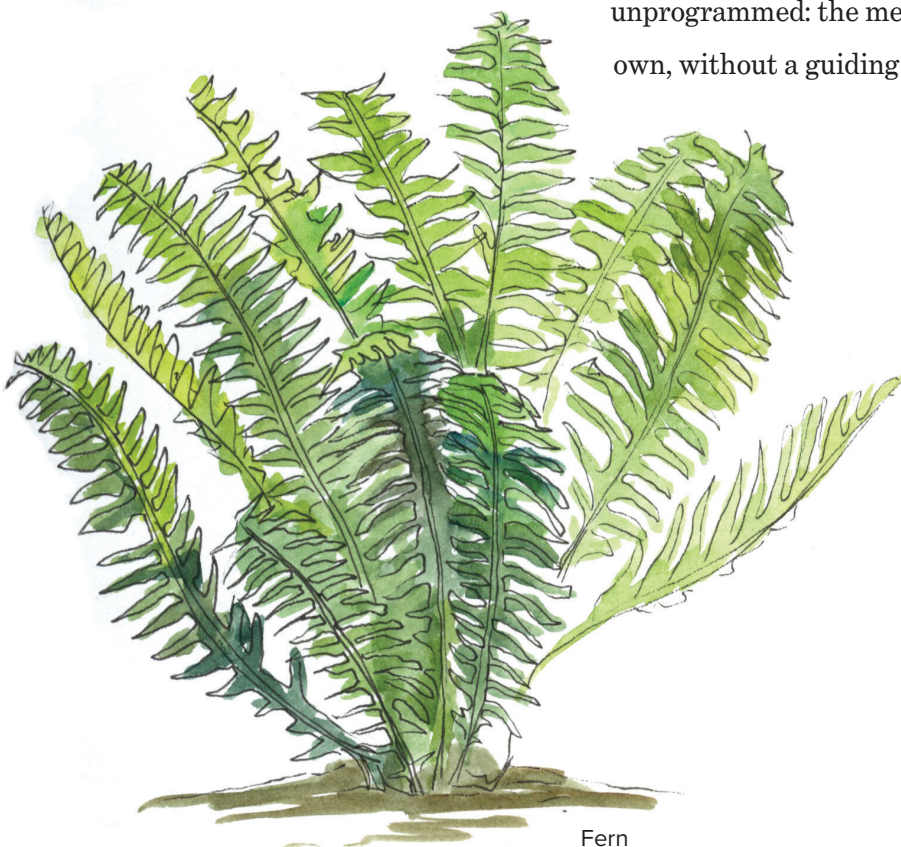
Many Meetings start with a query for people to think about. At least once each month, we seek to connect students back to our mission statement through our queries. Some Meetings are

unprogrammed: the members of the community reflect on their own, without a guiding question.

“At Meeting for Worship, friends gather as a community to search together in silence for the truth that is the core of their lives.”

—Meeting for Worship in Friends Schools, Occasional Paper, Friends Council on Education, 1957).

Quakers believe that these leadings arising from silence are the result of listening for “that of God” within themselves. Students and staff may consider the silence in these terms, or for meditation, reflection, or simply as a pause in their day to be quiet and think on their own. This practice of silence is also used at other times during the day as way of starting or ending classes, or as an opportunity to reflect upon something particularly poignant or difficult.



The Testimony of Integrity

To have integrity is to be a whole person whose words and actions reflect one's beliefs. Quakers seek always to be honest in all instances toward both others and themselves. Integrity can be viewed as the most basic testimony. It strengthens the other testimonies—and our lives—by saying that we will say and do what we are. Integrity is also doing your best at all things you do. Quakers strive to live with the truth in the world in every waking moment, with guidance from the Light in worship and from the testimonies.

At Friends School of Minnesota, students are given the freedom to act with integrity. The whole school uses conflict resolution. Students learn how to voice their concerns to each other, and figure out together how to reach a common understanding. Each finds their own voice—and their own integrity—in this process together. Directly communicating about conflicts or concerns is also actively practiced by staff, and it is a principle that guides the whole school community.



Fern frond



Fern frond unfurling

ADVICES:

“Live with the truth and be what you say you are.” —George Fox

“Do what you feel in your heart to be right—for you’ll be criticized anyway.”

—Eleanor Roosevelt

“Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.” —C.S. Lewis

QUERIES:

How does my life show my values?

When is it right to tell the truth even if it may cause hurt?

Have I ever been afraid to say the truth? What did I learn from this experience?

The Testimony of Community



Bottle gentian

Among Quakers, community refers to how we as a group can nurture and sustain the Light within each person. When we live in right relationship, we are fair, honest, and caring. Community helps members understand how they are led to be of service in the world. Quakers believe that worshipping together is the source of a deep sense of community.

Building community is consciously fostered at Friends School of Minnesota. Every Wednesday all students and faculty join for silent meeting for worship in the manner of Quakers, as noted earlier. In classroom morning meetings each day, each child is acknowledged. Community is created throughout the school experience in all kinds of ways, through all-school recess, buddies, scheduling, common projects, traditions, conflict resolution, work and play. We hope families experience this deep sense of community.

Many opportunities exist in our community for families to make connections with each other. And when families experience illness, injury or other disruptions to their lives, the Community Care Committee can help.

ADVICES

“From the depth of need and despair, people can work together, can organize themselves to solve their own problems and fill their own needs with dignity and strength.” —Cesar Chavez

“Use your capabilities and your possessions not as ends in themselves, but as... gifts entrusted to you. Share them with others; use them with humility, courtesy, and affection.” —Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice, Revised, 1972.

“With wisdom and knowledge... you may be lights for the world, salt for the earth, and thus... instrumental in opening the eyes of others.” —George Fox

QUERIES

Have I given willingly of my time and energy to efforts that serve the health of my community?

How does my school community give me strength?

How do I help to resolve problems and struggles among my friends and family?

The Testimony of Equality

Quakers believe there is a measure of Divine Light in each person. This belief lets us explore, develop, share, and be fully recognized for our unique gifts. Human equality means that there can be no equal opportunity for all without justice for all. Historically, Quakers have been active in working to abolish slavery, to establish workers' rights, and to advocate for women's voting rights. Today, Quakers follow their leadings from the Inner Light to work for economic, racial and immigration justice.

At Friends School of Minnesota this testimony is visible in many ways. Teachers are called by their first names because equality means treating everyone with respect, regardless of an individual's position or status. Similarly, we place the same importance on the activities of all students, not just the oldest. Our curriculum asks students about how justice and equality matter, in their own lives, throughout history, and in the world.

ADVICES

"My humanity is bound up in yours for we can only be human together. We are different precisely in order to realize our need of one another." —Desmond Tutu

"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences."
—Audre Lorde

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere... Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

QUERIES

Have I ever felt that nobody was listening to me? How did it feel? What did I do about it?

Do I allow my peers and friends to speak for themselves?

What is something unique about each person in my class, or in my family?



Michigan lily

The Testimony of Peace

Quakers follow the advice of George Fox to confront conflicts with respectful words and actions, and not to engage in verbal or physical violence. This practice stems from the belief that there is “that of God” within each person. This has long led to compassionate work with people affected by violence, including helping all sides heal during times of conflict. Because Quakers do not believe in the usefulness of violence, most do not fight in wars. Some Quakers will serve their country in other ways. The Peace Testimony also asks us to be careful with our words and how they can wound, to be respectful of people who are different from ourselves, and to work for justice and equality for all peoples.

Friends School of Minnesota teaches the principles of peace through conflict resolution techniques which involve talking about feelings and observations, and respectful listening. The testimony of peace is woven throughout the formal and informal curriculum, from how we study about conflict to how we choose science fair projects.



Trout lily

ADVICES

“While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart.”

—Francis of Assisi

“If we desire a society of peace, then we cannot achieve such a society through violence.” —Bayard Rustin

“You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness.”

—James 1:19-20

QUERIES

How can I reach peace with someone I’m in a disagreement with when I’m angry?

How can I become comfortable acting nonviolently in response to other people’s violence?

Can there be true peace without justice and equality?

The Testimony of Simplicity

Quakers believe in simple living, as outward things in life can interfere with our inward spiritual lives. Historically, simple living has meant simple dress, plain speech, respect for all, not deferring to people some may think are superior, and unadorned places of worship. Today, Quakers live simply by carefully choosing possessions and activities, in order that we can care for ourselves and be present to one another. Quakers also strive to live simply by speaking plainly to the heart of an issue. Quakers try to avoid distortion and exaggeration, with the understanding this allows one to be fully present with others.



Sweet black-eyed susan

Simplicity is an important consideration at Friends School of Minnesota in the classroom. Most important is allowing children to explore ideas and topics in a way that is not pressured and rushed. We strive for balance between what we hope to create and how we go about doing it. We value learning that focuses both on what we create and how.

ADVICES

“Simplicity is the name we give to our effort to free ourselves to give full attention to God’s still, small voice... subtract[ing] from our lives everything that competes with God for our attention and clear hearing.” —Lloyd Lee Wilson

“In life, as in art, whatever does not help, hinders. All that is superfluous to the main object of life must be cleared away, if that object is to be fully attained.”
—Caroline Stephens

“Out of clutter, find simplicity. From discord, find harmony. In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.” —Albert Einstein

QUERIES

When examining activities and possessions in my life, how much is too much and how much is enough?

How might I live out the testimony of simplicity at school, at work, and in my free time?

When examining my attempts for a simple life, how might I include over-attachment to desires, places or even people?

The Testimony of Stewardship

Stewardship asks that we take care of our precious resources and make wise use of them. Precious resources include our time, talents, relationships, property, finances and the natural environment. As good stewards in the world, we seek ways to find peace, equality, community, and simplicity in all our relationships.

Friends School of Minnesota seeks to prepare students to become citizens and stewards of the earth. At Friends School, students apply the values and practices of taking care of the world in which they live. Students study and spend time in nature with the goal of helping to foster their sense of place and attachment to the natural world, understanding that they are not alone in depending on the earth's resources.



Wood poppy

ADVICES

“... all we possess are the gifts of God to us, now in distributing it to others, we act as his stewards.” —John Woolman

“If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito.” —Tenzin Gyatso

“...How could we find the impudence to abuse the world if we were seeing the great Creator stare us in the face through each and every part of it?” —William Penn

QUERIES

How do I share my gifts of time, talents and treasure?

What are challenges I face in trying to live in right relationship with things and people in my life?

How can I work to protect nature?

How can I be more thoughtful about my use of resources?

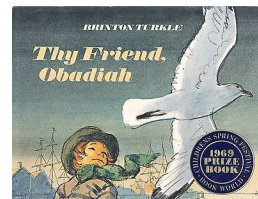
Suggested Age-Appropriate Readings

about Quakers, Quaker life, and Quakerism

This list, together with their annotated descriptions, is just a selection of what is available for purchase from the Quakerbooks.org website. Many of these books are available for loan through Friends School of Minnesota.

EARLY ELEMENTARY

Brinton Turkle. *Thy Friend, Obadiah*. The story of a New England Quaker boy's encounter with a seagull. A Caldecott Honor Book, and a classic Quaker children's story. This is one of several stories of Obadiah Starbuck and his Quaker family who live in Nantucket in the early 1800s. Quaker classics.



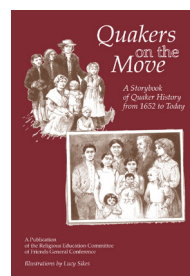
Marguerite de Angeli. *Thee Hannah!* Catch a glimpse of pre-Civil War Quaker life through the story of Hannah and her family.

Stacey Currie. *We Are Going to Quaker Meeting!* Written for Preschool through Early Elementary students in Friends schools, this book explains the sometimes mysterious Quaker practice of Meeting for Worship in simple language.

OLDER ELEMENTARY

from Quaker Press of Friends General Conference:

Quakers on the Move. From FGC: "We hope that the children who read these stories will gain new understandings, not just of a Quaker history alive with faithful struggles and transformations, but of a contemporary, spirit-led, Friends movement..."

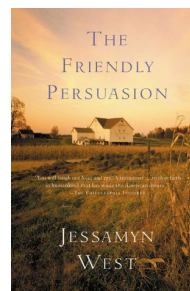


Lighting Candles in the Dark. Stories of courageous people who used nonviolent and creative action in difficult and dangerous situations. Some are taken from Quaker history. some focus on helpfulness, fairness, the power of love, and care of the earth.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Friends General Conference. *Lighting Candles in the Dark* (see description above, under Older Elementary).

Jessamyn West. *The Friendly Persuasion*. The classic novel about life for a Quaker family in Indiana during the Civil War, and the basis for the William Wyler film starring Gary Cooper.



Daisy Newman. *I Take Thee Serenity*. In this novel, young Serenity discovers love and her Friendly heritage.

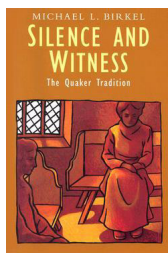
Daisy Newman. *A Procession of Friends*. Represents not only the events of Quaker history but the growth of Quaker principles, from George Fox's call in 1640 to the recent past.



Margaret Hope Bacon. *The Back Bench*. It's 1837. Fourteen-year-old Quaker Myra Harlan's mother has died, forcing her to leave her home and family in the country to live in Philadelphia. Shocked by the racism she sees all around her and caught in the aftermath of the Orthodox-Hicksite split in the Religious Society of Friends, Myra longs for her mother and struggles to make friends until she finds the Female Anti-Slavery Society, Lucretia Mott, Sarah Douglass, and—ultimately—herself. The ebook version is available in mobi (for Kindle readers) and epub (for all other ereaders).

ADULTS

Rex Ambler. *The Quaker Way*. Although Quakerism is fairly well known, it is not well understood, so the purpose of this book is to explain how it works as a spiritual practice and why it has adopted its particular practices. Primarily for non-Quakers.



Michael Birkel. *Silence and Witness*. This is a meaty and inviting introduction to Quaker thought and spiritual life. His chapter on the inward experience of worship is both an excellent introduction and a seasoned examination of centering techniques.

Howard Brinton. *Friends for 350 Years*. The updated edition of Brinton's classic overview of basic Quaker understandings, practices, and history. An essential book for every meeting and member.

Vanessa Julye and Donna McDaniel. *Fit for Freedom Not for Friendship*. This study of Quaker history documents the spiritual and practical impacts of discrimination in the Religious Society of Friends in the expectation that understanding the truth of our past is vital to achieving a diverse, inclusive community in the future.

John Punshon. *A Portrait in Grey*. Revised edition of this comprehensive and thoroughly readable introduction to the history of Quakerism, from its origins in 17th century England to the development of the differing varieties found around the world today.

Individuals quoted in the testimonies

Chavez, Cesar. 20th-century labor rights activist | **Fox, George**. 17th-century itinerant minister credited with founding of the Religious Society of Friends | **Francis of Assisi**. Late-12th-century Christian mystic and philosopher | **King, Martin Luther Jr.** Civil rights leader and Christian minister | **Lewis, C.S.** Mid-20th-century author and Christian theologian | **Lorde, Audre**. 20th-century author and civil rights activist | **Penn, William**. 18th-century Quaker notable and philosopher | **Roosevelt, Eleanor**. Mid-20th-century public figure and social justice advocate | **Rustin, Bayard**. Mid-20th-century Quaker pacifist and civil rights leader | **Stephens, Caroline**. Late-19th-century Quaker notable, from her book *Quaker Strongholds*, 1890 | **Tenzin Gyatso**. Fourteenth Dalai Lama, contemporary Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader and philosopher | **Tutu, Desmond**. Contemporary Christian minister and civil rights activist | **Williams, Lloyd Lee**. Mid-20th-century Quaker quoted in 1947 from North Carolina Yearly Meeting | **Woolman, John**. 18th-century Quaker minister and vocal opponent of slavery

Illustrations by Ruby Thompson, Friends School of Minnesota class of 2012; layout by Pat Thompson