

Concerns, Leadings, & Testimonies

For Friends the most important consideration is not the right action in itself but a right inward state out of which right action will arise. Given the right inward state right action is inevitable. Inward state and outward action are component parts of a single whole.

Howard Brinton, 1943

Friends are sometimes called “practical mystics” or “prophetic Christians” because Quaker worship has been a wellspring for service in the community and world that arises out of the ongoing revelation of the Light experienced in Worship. An old story relates the whispered question asked by someone attending meeting for worship for the first time and puzzled by the absence of overt activity: “When does the service begin?” The response: “When the meeting for worship ends.”

Concerns and Leadings

A concern is God-initiated, often surprising, always holy, for the life of God is breaking through into the world. Its execution is in peace and power and astounding faith and joy, for in unhurried serenity the Eternal is at work in the midst of time, triumphantly bringing all things unto Himself.

Thomas Kelly, 1941

Leading and being led: the words are simple enough. But for Quakers they have their most profound resonance as defining religious experience. Friends speak variously of being drawn to an action, feeling under the weight of a concern, being called or led to act in specific ways. We speak of being open to the leadings of the Light, of being taught by the Spirit or the Inward Christ. Extraordinary claims lie embedded in those phrases. They say that it is not only possible but essential to our nature for human beings to hear and obey the voice of God; that we can be directed, daily, in what we do, the jobs we hold, the very words we say; and that our obedience may draw us to become leaders in all spheres of human life – in the professions, arts, and sciences, but also in discovering the ethical, political, social, and economic consequences of following the will of God.

Paul Lacey, 1985

A Quaker social concern seems characteristically to arise in a sensitive individual or very small group.... The concern arises as a revelation to an individual that there is a painful discrepancy between existing social conditions and what God wills for society and that this discrepancy is not being adequately dealt with. The next step is the determination of the individual to do something about it – not because he is particularly well fitted to tackle the problem, but simply because no one else seems to be doing it.

Dorothy H. Hutchinson, 1961

A concern is an interest deeply rooted in the Spirit, which may move an individual and the meeting to action. A leading is an inner conviction that impels one to follow a certain course of action under a sense of Divine guidance. Modern Friends sometimes use the words interchangeably. Our testimonies were initially leadings inspired by Spirit as held by an individual, tested by the individual Friend and later by the meeting and became a concern of the meeting. Continued discernment over time by ever wider bodies of Friends eventually led all to come to unity with the concern and thus the concern was transformed into a testimony.

The impetus for service is often a concern, which, as Friends use the word, is a quickening sense of the need to do something or to demonstrate sympathetic interest in an individual or group, as a result of what is felt to be a direct intimation of God's will. A concern as an impetus to action arises out of Friends' belief that the realm of God can be realized here and now, not just in another place or time. A concern may emerge as an unexpected insight from prayerful study of a problem or situation, such as a concern to support national policies which promote international peace. It may also grow from an anxious interest in the welfare of a person or group which may result in inquiries or practical support.

When it initially arises, a concern may not yet be linked to a proposed course of action, but may simply be a troubled sense that something needs attention. A leading is a sense of being drawn or called by God in a particular direction or toward a particular course of action. Friends speak of "feeling led" or "being called." The leading may be short-term and specific in its fulfillment, or it may involve transformation of one's life and even the life of the Meeting.

Friends have long believed it important that leadings be tested before action is taken. The process of testing is a form of spiritual discipline for Friends. A Friend's concern and consequent leading may be an individual matter – something which one person is called to attend to without requiring assistance. In many cases, however, a Friend may receive guidance, aid, and encouragement from other members of the Meeting. Therefore, it has long been the practice of Friends to inform and consult with their Meeting when they feel a leading resulting from a major concern laid upon them.

The Meeting's Response

"Concern" is a word which has tended to become debased by excessively common usage among Friends, so that too often it is used to cover merely a strong desire. The true "concern" [emerges as] a gift from God, a leading of his Spirit which may not be denied. Its sanction is not that on investigation it proves to be the intelligent thing to do – though it usually is; it is that the individual ... knows, as a matter of inward experience, that there is something that the Lord would have done, however obscure the way, however uncertain the means to human observation. Often proposals for action are made which have every appearance of good sense, but as the meeting waits before God it becomes clear that the proposition falls short of "concern."

Roger Wilson, 1949

The Meeting's responsibility is to give serious consideration to requests from those seeking unity for a proposed course of action – and the Meeting may not always approve. Its Worship & Ministry committee or other designated committee may appoint a clearness committee (see P. XX) to help such persons gain clarity on whether to act upon a concern. Such a committee may also provide longer-term support, including ongoing testing and re-evaluation. Sometimes just testing a leading in a clearness

committee is all the action that is needed for a particular concern. In other instances, the concern needs to be brought to the Meeting for Business for seasoning by the whole meeting. In cases where Meeting approval is given to a proposed course of action which may result in allowing the Friend to be released to follow a leading, the Meeting often takes responsibility for providing financial assistance and family support, and continues to give oversight until the leading is fulfilled or laid down.

When a Meeting fails to unite with a member's concern, the member is asked to reconsider the concern very carefully perhaps setting it aside and waiting for further Light. Sometimes the individual and Meeting agree that the concern should be dropped, and the member may feel released from responsibility for action since the concern has been laid on the Meeting. The Meeting may be able to encourage the member to go forward even when the Meeting is unable to participate in furthering their witness.

Where the concern cannot be furthered without Meeting unity, and a member does not feel right about dropping it, the process of discernment continues. Often this process involves the formation of a small group, which includes Friends who come to the matter at hand from different perspectives. The concern, perhaps with a modified proposal for action, may be brought to the Meeting many times before unity is reached either in support or non-support of the concern.

Submitting the concern to the discernment of the Meeting is of value. The Meeting may be enlightened by the insights of those who bring concerns, and these Friends may be helped, through the sympathetic consideration of the Meeting, to clarify their leadings. The Meeting's care for its members causes it to take interest in all concerns felt by its members, even when it cannot unite with them or may feel obliged to admonish members against "running ahead of their Guide". (See glossary of terms)

Depending on the nature and scope of the concern, the Monthly Meeting may wish to lay it before the Interim Meeting and the Yearly Meeting through a Minute accompanied by personal presentation where possible. A Meeting may also request that a concern, brought by a member and deemed significant by the Meeting, be considered at a threshing session during the annual sessions of the Yearly Meeting.

Individuals also may bring concerns to Yearly Meeting committees. After testing such a concern, a committee may or may not include it in its reports to the Yearly Meeting, either through Interim Meeting or at the annual sessions of Yearly Meeting.

When a concern is thus presented, the Yearly Meeting may reach a decision or may provide for further consideration of the matter. Deep sensitivity to Divine leading and to the insights of others is required on the part of both individuals and Meetings when controversial concerns are considered. Concerns involving intensely personal witness or public policy demand a special degree of forbearance, and unity may not always be reached.

Testimonies

Ever since I first came among Friends, I was attracted to the testimonies as an ideal. I wanted to belong to a church, which made the rejection of warfare a collective commitment and not just a personal option. I admired simplicity, a devotion to equality, and a respect for others, which reflected what I already knew of Christ. In a deceitful world I warmed to those who did not swear oaths and

strove to tell the truth in all circumstances. But this was a beginning in the spiritual life. The seed that was sown in my mind and my politics struck root in my soul and my faith.

The choice of the word “testimony” is instructive. The testimonies are ways of behaving but are not ethical rules. They are matters of practice but imply doctrines. They refer to human society but are about God. Though often talked about, they lack an authoritative formulation....

A “testimony” is a declaration of truth or fact.... It is not an ejaculation, a way of letting off steam, or baring one's soul. It has a purpose, and that is to get other people to change, to turn to God. Such an enterprise, be it in words or by conduct and example, is in essence prophetic and evangelical.

John Punshon, 1987

Since the 1650's, Friends have acted upon shared concerns through practices which historically have been distinctive and definitive. While the specifics of Friends' practice have varied as times have changed, Friends today continue to have concerns and underlying beliefs similar to those of past generations. Primarily, we testify that God is active in the world today and there is that of God in everyone.

The term “testimonies” is used to refer to this common set of deeply held, historically rooted convictions and modes of living in the world. They are based on “openings”, or revelations experienced by Quakers beginning with George Fox who preached that, “Jesus Christ has come to teach his people himself.” He also taught, “There is one, Christ Jesus that can speak to thy condition.”

Testimonies bear witness to the Truth as Friends in community perceive it – Truth known through relationship with God. The testimonies are expressions of lives turned toward the Light, outward expressions reflective of the inward experience of God's leading, differently described by various Friends and in changing eras. Often in the past they were defined specifically, such as the testimony against taking oaths; recently it has become customary to speak of them more generally, as in the testimony of integrity or simplicity. Through the testimonies, with that measure of the Light that is granted, Friends strive for unity and integrity of inner and outer life, both living with ourselves and each other and living in the world. Trusting strongly in the Holy Spirit to guide sincere seekers, Quakers today refrain from placing on each other particular outward requirements.

Let all nations hear the sound by word or writing. Spare no place, spare no tongue nor pen, but be obedient to the Lord God; go through the world and be valiant for the truth upon earth; tread and trample all that is contrary under.... Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone; whereby in them you may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.

George Fox, 1656

We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love, and unity; it is our desire that others' feet may walk in the same, and do deny and bear our testimony against all strife and wars and contentions.... Our weapons are not carnal, but spiritual.... And so we desire, and also expect to have liberty of our consciences and just rights and outward liberties, as other people of the nation, which we have promise of, from the word of a king.... Treason, treachery and false dealing we do utterly deny; false dealing, surmising or plotting against any creature on the face of the earth; and speak the Truth in plainness and singleness of heart; and all our desire is your good and peace and love and unity.

Margaret Fell, 1660

The Cross of Christ ... truly overcomes the world, and leads a life of purity in the face of its allurements; they that bear it are not thus chained up, for fear they should bite; nor locked up, lest they should be stole away; no, they receive power from Christ their Captain, to resist the evil, and do that which is good in the sight of God: to despise the world, and love its reproach above its praise; and not only not to offend others, but love those that offend them.... True godliness don't turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavors to mend it; not hide their candle under a bushel, but set it upon a table in a candlestick.

William Penn, 1682

Every degree of luxury of what kind so ever, and every demand for money inconsistent with divine order, hath some connection with unnecessary labor.... To labor too hard or cause others to do so, that we may live conformable to customs which Christ our Redeemer contradicted by his example in the days of his flesh, and which are contrary to divine order, is to manure a soil for propagating an evil seed in the earth.

John Woolman, c. 1763

Love was the first motion, and then a concern arose to spend some time with the Indians, that I might feel and understand their life and the spirit they live in, if haply I might receive some instruction from them, or they be in any degree helped forward by my following the leadings of Truth amongst them....

Afterward, feeling my mind covered with the spirit of prayer, I told the interpreters that I found it in my heart to pray to God, and I believed, if I prayed right, he would hear me, and expressed my willingness for them to omit interpreting, so our meeting ended with a degree of Divine love. Before our people went out I observed Papunehang (the man who had been zealous in laboring for a reformation in that town, being then very tender) spoke to one of the interpreters, and I was afterward told that he said in substance as follows: "I love to feel where words come from."

John Woolman, 1763

These testimonies are presented as a reference to actions Friends may be called to take. It is just as likely, however, that we will be challenged in different ways to live according to such key Quaker testimonies as equality, peace, simplicity, and integrity. Our testimonies are our guides as we seek to apply George Fox's advice in a world that is beyond his imagining, yet which offers myriad opportunities to be valiant for the Truth. For Friends, faith and practice are inseparable.

Testimony of Integrity

The call for honesty lies at the heart of Quakerism. It is a testimony rooted in the Quaker respect for truthfulness. ... Respect for this kind of integrity calls for a correspondence between what one professes and how one translates that into action in real life.

Wilmer Cooper, A Living Faith, 1990

Integrity was in a sense the first of the Quaker testimonies. Ever since Friends embraced Jesus' challenge to "Be ye perfect", the basis of our personal living has been laid deeper than mere respectability, deeper than the observance of some moral minimum based on the old law of "thou shalt not". Friends are called to live with integrity Jesus' teachings and example in obedience to the Holy Spirit. This way of living causes a transformation in the fabric of our lives. A simplicity of purpose arises to live in the present in the Truth and order one's life so as to help bring about the realization of God's kingdom of heaven here on earth.

Integrity, essential to all relationships between one and another and between one and God, has always been a basic goal of Friends. Friends have been concerned to interact with integrity, to make our words and actions fit the Truth, as we understand it. We endeavor to speak and act honestly and forthrightly, speaking plainly from our own experience of the Light in our lives. Friends strive to make their statements as accurate as possible, without exaggeration or omission. Thoughtful listening is as important as speaking and is a necessary part of communication. If we listen attentively to the expression of the Spirit, in ourselves and in others, words and action can become a means of knowing God. It sometimes takes courage to live according to our faith that God's power operates in us. As we attempt to conform our lives to the leadings of the Spirit, to integrate our beliefs and our actions, and to become more honest and authentic, we receive the strength and courage to follow our religious principles.

Friends regard the custom of swearing oaths as not only contrary to the teachings of Jesus but as implying the existence of a double standard of truth. Early Quakers were persecuted for refusing to take judicial or loyalty oaths. 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 a part of their usual integrity of speech.

However, I say to you do not swear at all... Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'.

Matthew 5:34-37 (NRSV)

People swear to the end they may speak the truth, Christ would have them speak the truth to the end they might not swear.

William Penn (1644-1718)

Another by-product of truth telling was the establishment of the one-price system of exchange. Prior to the introduction of this method by Friends, the price of goods and services was always haggled over and bartered until agreement was reached between buyer and seller. Often merchants had one price for the nobility and a different sometimes higher price for the commoner. With the one-price system of trade, people knew they wouldn't be taken advantage of by a Quaker merchant.

At the first convincement, when Friends could not put off their hats to people, or say You to a single person, but Thou and Thee; when they could not bow, or use flattering words in salutations, or adopt the fashions and customs of the world, many Friends, that were tradesmen of several sorts, lost their customers at the first; for the people were shy of them, and would not trade with them; so that for a time some Friends could hardly get money enough to buy bread. But afterwards, when people came to have experience of Friends' honesty and truthfulness, and found that their Yea was yea, and their Nay was nay; that they kept to a word in their dealings, and that they would not cozen and cheat them; but that if they sent a child to their shops for anything, they were as well used as if they had come themselves; the lives and conversations of Friends did preach, and reached to the witness of God in the people.

George Fox, 1653

Living The Testimony of Integrity

Excerpted from The Testimony of Integrity in the Religious Society of Friends by Wilmer A. Cooper, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #296 pp. 18-24.

The Testimony of Integrity can be articulated and practiced by Friends in four distinct ways.

- The first is truth-telling, or simply not telling lies. This is the most obvious place to begin to live out the Testimony of Integrity. Friends have always been known for truthfulness and honesty in their relationships and dealings with others. This standard of truthfulness was grounded in Jesus' and James' biblical injunction not to take an oath or to swear that one will tell the truth (Matthew 5:33-37; James 5: 12). Friends were very conscientious about this, not only because taking oaths and swearing was forbidden by the Scriptures, but because it implied a double standard of truth, thus suggesting that when not under oath it is all right to lie. Friends' concern was that followers of Christ should be known for telling the truth all the time, and not just when one was called before a judge and sworn to tell the truth.

. . . Many Quakers suffered persecution and imprisonment because they refused to exercise a double standard before judges in courts of law. Early Friends were thrown into jail more often for refusing to take the oath than for any other reason. Anybody who didn't like the Quakers could make a charge against them, have them arrested and brought before a judge, whereupon they were automatically thrown into jail, guilty or not, because they refused to swear that now they would tell the truth. . . . The Testimony of Integrity calls for truth-telling under all circumstances and at all times.

- Second, Integrity calls for authenticity, for genuineness, and for veracity in one's personhood. It calls us to be truly who we are and not be two-faced by trying to be something or somebody we are not. ...

The opposite of integrity of course is hypocrisy, which means phoniness, sham and deception. Jesus has some scathing words for hypocrites in Matthew 23. He declares seven woes against the religious authorities of his time, the Scribes and Pharisees, who were hypocrites and pretenders of virtue and piety. We are all tempted to become pretenders in this way. The tendency to misrepresent our true selves is a common shortcoming we all have, but we do not always realize that we are violating our integrity every time we respond this way.

- Third, Integrity calls for obedience, or if you prefer, faithfulness to conscience illumined by the Light Within. For Quakers this is the seat of religious authority and, therefore, the touchstone of our faith. Here Quaker truth and integrity take on an existential quality. It is truth which may well have objective validity, as I believe it does, but if it is not truth which is internalized in each of us, and for which we take ownership, then it is not truth which is valid and binding for us. But once it lays hold of us, it is truth that will not let us go until we have acted upon it. This kind of truth is new and fresh and therefore vital. It is not grounded in dogma, creeds, abstract philosophical ideas, or theological affirmations. It is not to be found in religious textbooks or Quaker books of discipline, but it is grounded in a living faith and experience of the present moment. It is the basis for the Quaker testimonies – the testimonies which are a living witness to the inward leading of the Spirit of God in our lives.
- Fourth, the root meaning of the word “integrity” calls for wholeness. The word comes from the Latin *integritas*, which refers to a state or quality of being complete, that is, a condition of wholeness. The word “integrity” and the mathematical term “integer” all have a common meaning. When we look at this common meaning of *integritas*, or “integrity,” it points to a unity, which when applied to persons, we call community. Integrity creates a sense of togetherness and belonging when applied to persons in community. Integrity forms the basis for a covenant relationship in which persons exercise a sense of responsibility and accountability toward one another. Individualism, which is preoccupied with doing one’s own thing, often with little concern for how it affects other people, dominates much of our behavior in western society, and in our American culture in particular, and it affects the Religious Society of Friends as well. Thus, we need to recover the Testimony of Integrity, to balance this other attitude when applied to wholeness in the corporate life of persons where there is a sense of responsibility and accountability toward one another. . . .

Integrity in its root meaning and search for wholeness leads to an even deeper sense of community than we have described so far. This level of wholeness goes beyond the community of persons to a spiritual community with “the ground of our being,” to use the words of Paul Tillich. Here we need to associate integrity with the religious concept and experience of salvation. Now that may seem strange, because the word “salvation” is not fashionable anymore, except among radio and television evangelists, and a few Fundamentalist church folk. But according to Paul Tillich the root meaning of “salvation” can be derived from the Latin *salvus* (or *salus*), which means “health” or “wholeness.” Surely all of us hope for health and wholeness in our lives, both physical and spiritual. If the wholeness aspect of integrity leads to a sense of community of persons, likewise it can lead us to an experience of spiritual wholeness in our relationship with God. This comes very close to what Saint Augustine meant when he prayed: “Thou hast created us for Thyself [Oh God], and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.”

Testimony of Equality

The testimony of human equality before God is one of the earliest Quaker social testimonies and is a cornerstone of Friends’ belief. Quaker equality does not imply equality of ability or economic

resources, but is based on the concept that there is that of God in every person and therefore that each person is due equal respect. This has led to a conscious effort to eliminate negative words and behavior that arise from distinctions in class, race, gender, sexual orientation, social status, age or physical attributes.

It was opened to Early Friends that God does not distinguish between priesthood and laity. Within the meeting, there are no positions of privilege. We are all responsible for the spiritual life of the meeting and the practical aspects of continuing and strengthening the community of Friends. All may be called to ministry and service according to their gifts.

As the Quaker movement became more organized through the establishment of regular local and regional gatherings for the care of Friends (monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings), questions arose regarding church authority. Unity emerged through listening closely to the Spirit, particularly in the leadings of more experienced Friends.

And thus the Lord Jesus hath manifested himself and his Power, without respect of Persons; and so let all mouths be stopt that would limit him, whose Power and Spirit is infinite, that is pouring it upon all flesh.

Margaret Fell, 1666

In the highly stratified English society of the 17th century, Friends' adherence to this testimony outside the Meeting often made them seem rude or ill mannered. Quakers refused to use titles of honor or salutations implying superiority. It was common among English society at that time to address superiors in the royal plural "you," and familiars or inferiors in the singular "thee" or "thou".

This way of speaking proceeds from a high and proud mind... because that men commonly use the singular to beggars and to their servants; yea and in their prayers to God – so hath the pride of men placed God and beggars in the same category.

Robert Barclay, Apology, 1678

In keeping with this testimony Friends also refused to practice "hat honor," the taking off of one's hat in the presence of superiors or magistrates as a mark of respect. Even before Friends became pacifists they were dismissed from the army for refusing to treat officers as superiors.

Friends pioneered in recognizing the gifts and rights of women. Women were members and leaders of their early meetings, listened to and respected.

And may not the spirit of Christ speak in the female as well as in the male? Is he there to be limited? Who is it that dare limit the holy one of Israel? For the light is the same in the male and the female, which cometh from Christ, he by whom the world was made, and so Christ is one in all and not divided; and who is it that dare stop Christ's mouth?

George Fox, 1656

In 1671 George Fox urged the monthly meetings to set up parallel men's and women's meetings for business. A significant aspect of early Friends' organization was separate regular meetings of women, which arose to free women from customary social restraints on women's self expression.

Women shared in the work of Quaker ministry as well as taking the lead in caring for the poor and imprisoned Friends. The first person the George Fox convinced was Elizabeth Hooten, an English general Baptist minister, who shortly afterward became one of the first Quaker ministers. She preached in the English public places, wrote pamphlets and letters to King Charles II protesting the innocence of Quakers. This Quaker grandmother traveled in the ministry to the New World and died in Jamaica on her second missionary trip while traveling with George Fox.

As much as George Fox is credited with the vision that gave rise to the movement, Margaret Fell must be recognized as the nurturing spirit that helped sustain Friends through years of persecution and establishing the practical groundwork of our religious community. She had the gift of organization and the concern for Friends in need. She wrote letters to struggling Friends encouraging them in their witness, pamphlets in support of women's public preaching and letters to King Charles II petitioning for the release of George Fox and other Friends imprisoned. She provided a safe haven at Swarthmore Hall for Friends to recuperate after prison or persecution. She visited Friends in prison and was herself imprisoned for her public witness.

And now also some ancient women-friends did meet together, to consider what appertained to them as their most immediate care and concern to inspect the circumstances and conditions of such who were imprisoned on truth's account, and to provide things needful to supply their wants. And what did or might more immediately concern men-friends, the women would acquaint them therewith. These women did also inquire into, and inspect the wants and necessities of the poor, who were convinced of the truth. And they sat not still until the cry of the poor came to their houses.

William Crouch, 1712

How healing to come into the Religious Society of Friends, whose founder saw clearly that the Light of God is not limited to the male half of the human race. Membership and participation have helped me grow toward wholeness, as I have followed my calling into a ministry that embraces all of life. Though I believe deeply in women's liberation, I cannot put men down, or I join in consciousness-raising activities that foster hatred of everything masculine. I have loved the men in my life too deeply for that kind of betrayal.

As women gain rights and become whole human beings, men too can grow into wholeness, no longer having to carry the whole burden of responsibility for running the affairs of humankind, but in humility accepting the vast resources, as yet not very much drawn on, and the wisdom of women in solving the colossal problems of the world.

Elizabeth Watson, 1975

Friends believe that everyone is a "child of God" and should relate to one another in those terms. Everyone is regarded as of infinite worth and must be treated as a person who can be drawn by love to

live a full and worthwhile life, which manifests respect and consideration for others. When Friends are at their best, that love leads to unity in their meetings. It can also be effective in relations among all people.

There is no longer Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave nor free, there is no longer male nor female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28 NRSV

Friends came more slowly to recognize the evil of slavery and of discrimination in general, and some have been guilty of the prejudices of the broader society. In recent years, however, most have taken increasingly clear stands against all forms of discrimination. As we continue to seek the Light, habits and attitudes of a less sensitive past must increasingly give way to new understandings that affirm the value of all human beings.

Living the Testimony of Equality

Social Justice

Friends have worked in a variety of ways to further social justice. Historically, Friends have worked for the abolition of slavery, improving conditions in prisons and mental health hospitals and the women's right to vote among other concerns. Today some work with groups who have been victimized by prejudice or exploitation. Friends should recognize that prejudices are very prevalent even within the Religious Society of Friends and that the problem of prejudice is complicated by advantages that have come to some at the expense of others. Exploitation impairs the human quality of the exploiter as well as of the exploited.

Enunciation of the principle of equality among human beings in the sight of God is important and necessary, but it is not sufficient. Realization of equality involves such matters as independence and control of one's own life. Friends seek to bring to light structures, institutions, language, and thought processes which subtly support discrimination and exploitation. Therefore, Friends are led to aid the efforts of the exploited to attain self-determination and social, political and economic justice, and to change attitudes and practices formerly taken for granted.

Racial Equality

What began as an understanding that all men were equal, and was first manifest in Quaker practices that denied class and social distinctions, was expanded over time to recognition of gender equality and later to racial equality as well. John Woolman's long witness (from approximately 1745 to his death in 1772) against slavery put Friends at the front of an ongoing effort against racial bigotry. Today, we are brought to a new consciousness of the continuing need for that self-examination and witness by various Quaker committees on racism.

It is a simple truth to say that if we would cast out racism we must "love one another as Jesus has loved us," yet most need more detailed instruction. The goal of good human relations is a community in which each individual and each group can feel sure of opportunities for self-development, full realization of potential, and rewarding relations with others.

If one begins with presumptions of moral and mental greatness founded upon body color, the conduct and conclusions flowing there from will be erroneous. If one begins with prayer and intellectual honesty, profound consideration of the Queries together with a sharing of truthful – if embarrassing – answers will prime our spiritual pumps so we may start to reverse the descent from grace and begin to move towards spiritual wholeness.

Almanina Barbour & Walter Sullivan, 1984

From “Reflections on the Racial Concerns from Kaimosi”, PhYM News

Testimony of Peace

All human beings are children of God, thus Friends are called to love and respect all persons and to seek to overcome evil with good. Friends’ peace testimony arises from the power of Christ working in our hearts. Our words and lives should testify to this power and should stand as a positive witness in a world still torn by strife and violence. In explaining his unwillingness to serve in the army, George Fox said of the Commonwealth in 1651:

I told them ... that I lived in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars.

To early Friends, pacifism flowed so inevitably and directly from other more fundamental principles that little is said about it until Quakers were accused of plotting to overthrow the English government. In 1660, a few Friends were arrested in the belief that they were involved with a group called the “Fifth Monarchy.” This group tried to seize London by force in preparation for the second coming of Christ. In response George Fox and other Quaker ministers stated the position of the Religious Society of Friends clearly in the following Declaration to Charles II (1660):

We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatsoever; this is our testimony to the whole world.... The Spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil, and again to move us unto it; and we certainly know, and testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ, which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the Kingdom of Christ nor for the Kingdoms of this world.... Therefore, we cannot learn war any more.

The Religious Society of Friends is a historic peace church. Since Friends’ first allegiance is to a loving God, we are called to obey God rather than human law when this allegiance is challenged by the demands of the state. We support those who oppose war by performing work as conscientious objectors and those who resist any cooperation with the military. We hold in love, but disagree with, those of our members who feel that they must enter the armed forces. We recognize that the entire military system is inconsistent with Jesus’ example of love. We work toward the day when armaments and conscription will no longer be tolerated and we can live in the peaceable kingdom.

Our historic peace testimony is nothing if not also a living testimony as we work to give concrete expression to our ideals. We would alleviate the suffering caused by war. We would refrain from participating in all forms of violence and repression against people. We would make strenuous efforts to

secure international agreements for the control of armaments and to remove the domination of militarism in our society. We would seek to be involved in building interpersonal skills, local, national and transnational institutions to deal with conflict nonviolently. The almost unimaginable devastation that results from modern war makes ever more urgent its total elimination.

O that we who declare against wars, and acknowledge our trust to be in God only, may walk in the light and therein examine our foundation and motives in holding great estates. May we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses, and our garments, and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions?

John Woolman, 1763

The most basic task of our peacemaking is to fill the spiritual void in our world by replacing the fear which cripples human efforts with faith in the power of God's love. We look beyond the evil we oppose to the establishment of the "blessed Community." Lifelong, sacrificial efforts in peacemaking require us to acknowledge our inability in a complex society to disengage ourselves completely from it. Each Friend has the responsibility to seek and to live the full personal implications of the peace testimony. This is a spiritual and very practical challenge. Following God's promptings, the Inward Christ roots out that which is selfish and impels us to share each other's suffering in that which brings unity and peaceful relationships. Our hope lies in the power of God's peace moving through our meetings, small devotional groups, and wider associations.

Living the Testimony of Peace

The Individual and the Peace Testimony

In our individual lives, the peace testimony leads us to accept differences as an opportunity for loving engagement with those with whom we disagree. That love can often be expressed in creative, nonviolent resolution of the disagreement. When we encounter people of sincere religious conviction whose views are profoundly different from our own, that love can also be manifested by acknowledging the sincerity of the other, while faithfully expressing our own convictions.

The peace testimony also leads us as individuals to consider seriously our employment, our investments, our purchases, our payment of taxes, and our manner of living as they relate to violence. We try to become sensitive to the covert as well as the overt violence inherent in some of our long-established social practices and institutions. Friends wish to avoid, for example, benefiting not only from the manufacture of arms or the excessive use of natural resources, but also from company practices that do violence to employees, consumers, or the natural world.

Friends and Military Activity

We support those who do not cooperate with conscription and those who oppose war by performing work as conscientious objectors. While counseling against military service, we hold in love our members who feel they must undertake it. Some Friends have decided to serve in the military as non-combatants.

Friends work as we are able to alleviate the suffering caused by war. We acknowledge the contribution that military forces have made in some situations to the relief of suffering, but we are troubled by the use of agents of destruction for such purposes, and by the failure of nations to support the creation of nonviolent groups to undertake humanitarian missions.

Alternatives to War

The almost unimaginable devastation that results from modern war makes ever more urgent its total elimination. We work for greater understanding at all levels, from the kindergarten to the United Nations, of proven techniques for the nonviolent resolution of conflict. We would promote and assist programs of conversion to peaceful uses of facilities built for war. Friends are led to support the Peace Tax Fund, the World Court and the United Nations as alternatives to war.

World Order

Friends in America since William Penn have sought to promote institutions of peace. In this era we promote a vision of global living that recognizes the essential unity of a human family sharing a fragile planet. We prefer governing institutions that work face-to-face, within small communities. But we acknowledge the need for governing institutions at all levels, both as supportive, coordinating bodies, and as courts of appeal from the arbitrary actions of lesser jurisdictions. We are deeply distressed by a world dominated by heavily armed nation-states. We apply our gifts – of spirit, of intellect, of time and energy – to work for a new international order, within which our communities will be able to redirect their resources from over-dependence on the manufacture of arms to human needs and the preservation of the earth.

Testimony of Simplicity

Simplicity, also called simple living, has long been a testimony of Friends. A life of simplicity is one that is centered in God and focused on core values and faith. It need not be cloistered and may even be a busy life, but its activities and expressions should be correlated and directed toward the simple, direct purpose of keeping one's communication with God open and unencumbered. Simplicity is cutting away all that is extraneous. Simplicity is being without sham and is based in the right ordering of one's priorities in placing devotion to God at the center of life. When sought intentionally, simplicity, like the other testimonies, is not something one should be driven to achieve. It is in essence a free gift of God's grace.

It's a dangerous thing to lead young Friends much into the observation of outward things, which may be easily done, for they can soon get into an outward garb, to be all alike outwardly, but this will not make them true Christians: it's the Spirit that gives life. I would be loath to have a hand in these things....

Margaret Fell Fox, 1698

My mind through the power of Truth was in a good degree weaned from the desire of outward greatness, and I was learning to be content with real conveniences that were not costly; so that a way of life free from much Entanglements appeared best for me, tho' the income was small. I had several offers of business that appeared profitable, but saw not my way clear to accept of them, as believing the business proposed would be attended with more outward care & cumber than was required of me to engage in. I saw that a humble man, with the Blessing of the Lord, might live on a little, and that where the heart was set on greatness, success in business did not satisfy the craving; but that commonly with an increase of wealth, the desire for wealth increased. There was a care on my mind so to pass my time, as to things outward, that nothing might hinder me from the most steady attention to the voice of the True Shepherd.

John Woolman, c. 1744

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 get distracted by the intellectual claim to our interest in a thousand and one good things, and before we know it we are pulled and hauled breathlessly along by an over-burdened program of good committees and good undertakings. I am persuaded that this fevered life of church workers is not wholesome. Undertakings get plastered on from the outside because we can't turn down a friend. Acceptance of service on a weighty committee should really depend upon an answering imperative within us, not merely upon a rational calculation of the factors involved. The concern-oriented life is ordered and organized from within. And we learn to say No as well as Yes by attending to the guidance of inner responsibility. Quaker simplicity needs to be expressed not merely in dress and architecture and the height of tombstones but also in the structure of a relatively simplified and coordinated life-program of social responsibilities. And I am persuaded that concerns introduce that simplification, and along with it that intensification which we need in opposition to the hurried, superficial tendencies of our age.

Thomas R. Kelly, 1941

For some there is a danger that care for the future may lead to undue anxiety and become a habit of saving for its own sake, resulting in the withholding of what should be expended for the needs of the family or devoted to the service of the Society. The temptation to trust in riches comes in many forms, and can only be withstood through faith in our Father and his providing care.

London Yearly Meeting, 1945

Simplicity consists not in the use of particular forms but in avoiding self-indulgence, in maintaining humility of spirit and in keeping the material surroundings of our lives directly serviceable to necessary ends. This does not mean that life need be poor and bare or destitute of joy and beauty. All forms of art may aid in the attainment of the spiritual life, and often the most simple lines, themes or moments, when characterized by grace and directness, are the most beautiful.

Living a simple life can take forms as diverse as the people we are, and requires listening to the Inward Light for guidance in making choices. Considerations include all aspects of our lives, including what material possessions we acquire, how much and what kind of activities and relationships we engage in, how we nurture our spiritual lives. Do we choose what is simple and useful? Do we take joy in our commitments?

Living the Testimony of Simplicity

Walking Gently on the Earth

Poverty [Simplicity] does not mean scorn for goods and property. It means the strict limitation of goods that are for personal use. It means the opposite of the reckless abuse and misuse of property that leaves our country spotted with the graveyards of broken and abandoned machinery. It means a horror of war, first because it ruins human life and health and the beauty of the earth, but second because it destroys goods that could be used to relieve misery and hardship and to give joy. It means a distaste even for the small carelessnesses that we see prevalent, so that beautiful and useful things are allowed to become dirty and battered through lack of respect for them. We have in America in this day the strange spectacle of many comely and well-equipped small homes kept in a state of neglect and disorder that would shock peasants anywhere.

Mildred Binns Young, 1956

We recognize that the well being of the earth is fundamentally a spiritual concern. 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 more 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. We must now consider how to combine the belief that we humans are called to act as stewards of the natural world with the growing view of human actions as the major threat to the ecosystem.

Friends are indeed called to walk gently on the earth. Wasteful and extravagant consumption is a major cause of destruction of the environment. The right sharing of the world's remaining resources requires that developed nations reduce their present levels of consumption so that people in underdeveloped nations can have more, and the earth's life-sustaining systems can be restored. The world cannot tolerate indefinitely the present rate of consumption by technologically developed nations.

Friends are called to become models and patterns of simple living and concern for the earth. Some may find it difficult to change their accustomed lifestyle; others recognize the need and have begun to adopt ways of life which put the least strain on the world's resources of energy, clean air, water and soil.

Rapid population growth leads to famine, war, and destruction of natural resources. In simplifying our own lives we may find it difficult to limit the number of children we have. Voluntary restraint in procreation and simplicity in living hold the promise of restoring ecological balance.

Recreation

Recreation can promote spiritual well being; it may bring a needed balance into life and contribute to the wholeness of personality. Simplicity directs the individual to choose those forms of recreation that rest and build up the body, that refresh and enrich mind and spirit. One should consider the proper expenditure of time, money and strength, the moral and physical welfare of others as well as oneself. Healthful recreation includes games, sports and other physical exercise; gardening and the study and enjoyment of nature; travel; books; the fellowship of friends and family; and the arts and handicrafts which bring creative self-expression and appreciation of beauty. Recreations in which one is a participant rather than merely a spectator are particularly beneficial. Also, Friends find that simplicity involves refraining from excess in general, including avoiding the addictive use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, gambling, and even a compulsive engaging in work, causes or hobbies. Such excess can lead to a life harmful to health, loving relationships, and spiritual experience.

In 1755 London Yearly Meeting issued this query on alcohol:

Are Friends careful to avoid the excessive use of spirituous liquors, the unnecessary frequenting of taverns and places of diversions and to keep to true moderation and temperance on account of births, marriages, burials and other occasions?

Implicit in the above reference to "places of diversions" is the Friends testimony against gambling.

Gambling by risking money haphazardly disregards our belief that possessions are a trust. The persistent appeal to covetousness ... is fundamentally opposed to the unselfishness which was taught by Jesus Christ and by the New Testament as a whole. The attempt, which is inseparable from gambling, to make profit out of the inevitable loss and possible suffering of others is the antithesis of that love for one's neighbor on which our Lord insisted. Moreover, we must consider the moral and spiritual plight of those who by indulgence in gambling become possessed of large financial resources for which they have rendered no service to the community.

London Yearly Meeting, 1959

Concerns Arising From Multiple Testimonies

Unity in the Community

One of the queries in longest continuous use asks, "Are love and unity maintained among you?" (1682). Early Friends did not consider themselves a sect, an institutionalized permanent minority, but

rather part of a great movement that would soon sweep the world. Unity and mutual care within the Quaker community in the face of persecution demonstrated as a witness to the world the working of Christ among his people. Without formal church membership, doctrine or creed, early Quakers relied on the movings of the Spirit, seeking God's will in the "sense of the meeting" and the leadings of "weighty Friends." The process of individuals submitting themselves to the corporate revelation of God's truth forms the basis of Friends' approach to Christian unity.

The way is one; Christ the truth of God; and he that is in the faith, and in the obedience to that light which shines from his Spirit into the heart of every believer, hath a taste of the one heart and of the one way, and knoweth that no variety of practices, which is of God, can make a breach in the true unity.

Isaac Pennington, 1659

True unity may be found under great apparent differences. This unity is spiritual, it expresses itself in many ways, and we need divine insight that we may recognize its working. We need forbearance, sympathy, and love, in order that, while remaining loyal to the truth as it has come to us, we may move forward with others to a larger and richer experience and expression of the will of God.

London Yearly Meeting, 1916

Stewardship of Economic Resources

All that we have, in our selves and our possessions, are gifts from God, entrusted to us for our responsible use. Jesus reminds us:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ... You cannot serve God and mammon [wealth].

Matt. 6: 19-24 (NRSV)

Stewardship is an outgrowth of our major testimonies. To be good stewards in God's world calls on us to examine and consider the ways in which our testimonies for integrity, peace, equality, and simplicity interact to guide our relationships with all life.

In a world of economic interactions far more complex than George Fox or John Woolman could have imagined, Friends need to examine their decisions about obtaining, holding and using money and other assets, to see whether they find in them the seeds, not only of war, but also of self-indulgence, injustice, and ecological disaster. Good stewardship of our resources consists both in avoidance of those evils and in actions that advance peace, simple living, justice, and a healthy ecosystem. Good stewardship also requires attention to the economic needs of Quaker and other organizations that advance Friends' testimonies.

Right Sharing

Friends worldwide have accepted the idea that the testimony of equality implies a commitment in the economic realm to the right sharing of the world's resources. Friends in comfortable circumstances need to find practical expression of the testimony of simplicity in their earning and spending. They consider the meaning for their own lives of economic equality and simplicity, and what level of income is consonant with their conclusions. They should consider likewise what portion of that could be shared beyond the immediate family. That decision entails balancing the social value of self-sufficiency against the social value of greater help for those more needy. It also requires judgments about what expenditures are essential and what are discretionary, and about the values that will underlie discretionary expenditures.

Civic Duties

As a part of our witness to what society may become, Friends may be called to participate in public life as voters, public officials, or participants in community groups or professional societies. As private citizens in the public arena, Friends bear witness by demonstrating respect for others, flexibility, reconciliation, and forgiveness in difficulties, as well as faithful persistence in pursuit of their leadings. In public office, Friends have an opportunity to bear witness to the power which integrity, courage, respect for others, and careful attention to different points of view can exert in creating a just community. Where there is a conflict between loyalty to God and a seeming necessity for action as a public official, a prayerful search for Divine guidance may lead to a suitable resolution of the conflict or to a decision to resign. Our primary allegiance is to God.

Criminal Justice

Many early Friends were victims of an arbitrary and unreasonable legal system. Knowledge of that experience has opened many later Friends to that of God in convicted persons. Friends continue to undertake work in prisons by ministering to the spiritual and material needs of inmates. Believing that the penal system often reflects structural and systemic injustice in our society, Friends seek alternatives. Friends have acted out of the conviction that redemption and restorative justice, not retribution, are the right tasks of the criminal justice system. We strongly oppose capital punishment, finding it contrary to the teachings of Jesus and the principle of "that of God in every person."

Seeking to heal the wounds of criminal actions, Friends are called to many different kinds of service in the criminal justice system. Prison visiting, victim support services, conflict resolution training for staff of correctional institutions and offenders, and work to abolish the use of the death penalty are typical of these services. Such service is undertaken in order to restore the victim, the offender, and the community to the greatest extent possible. The healing love, and the trust in divine leading that such disciplined service requires, can greatly assist the rebuilding of broken lives.

Civil Disobedience

From their earliest days Friends have counseled obedience to the state except when the law or ruling involved has appeared to be contrary to God's leading. The state has no claim to moral infallibility. Primary allegiance is to God.

If the state's commands appear to be contrary to Divine leading, Friends take prayerful counsel before responding. This usually also involves testing one's proposed action by the judgment of the Meeting. When the decision is to refuse obedience to the law or order of the state, in accordance with the dictates of one's conscience as revealed in the Light, Friends act openly and to make clear the grounds of their action.

If the decision involves incurring legal penalties, Friends generally have suffered willingly for the sake of their convictions. Friends not personally involved in such actions can strengthen the Meeting community by supporting their fellow members with spiritual encouragement and, when necessary, with material aid.

Membership in Secret Societies

Friends' testimony against membership in secret societies has some of its source in the opposition in England to the Quaker Act of 1662 and the Conventicle Acts of 1664 and 1670. These acts forbade the attendance at Friends' meetings (Quaker Act) and later at any other non-conformist religious services (Conventicle Acts). While Quakers continued to meet openly and publicly, others of the "separated peoples" (separated from the Church of England) began to meet in secret for fear of the resulting persecution. Quakers have noted the inherent ethical and moral problems of groups who meet in secret. The 1953 edition of the discipline of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) states:

The Society of Friends bears testimony against membership in any secret organizations. While some of these are less objectionable than others, wherever the obligation to secrecy exists, Friends should not join. We believe no one has any moral right to pledge obedience by oath or affirmation to the dictates of another and thus surrender independence of judgment. Secret societies are capable of producing much evil and incapable of producing any good, which might not be effected by safe and open means.

And more specifically from New England Yearly Meeting, 1930:

We especially admonish our younger members against college societies whose proceedings are hedged with secrecy ... the exclusiveness of secret societies gives to the fellowship which they promote a flavor of selfishness.

Sexuality

Quakers, like others, in recent years have experienced a growing understanding and appreciation of human sexuality and its important role in our lives. In the words of the British Friends who wrote *Towards a Quaker View of Sex*, Revised Edition 1964:

Sexuality, looked at dispassionately, is neither good nor evil – it is a fact of nature and a force of immeasurable power. But looking at it as Christians we have felt impelled to state without reservation that it is a glorious gift of God. Throughout the whole of living nature it makes possible an endless and fascinating

variety of creatures, a lavishness, a beauty of form and colour surpassing all that could be imagined as necessary to survival.

In contrast to this recognition of vibrancy and beauty, there are lingering misunderstandings and ignorance about sexuality, especially in relation to our specific sexual needs and urges. This can be harmful to people of all ages. Fuller knowledge and understanding are sorely needed. Sex education is therefore important for everyone. Readily available information and open discussion of human sexuality are to be encouraged for both children and adults.

People experience their sexuality from the beginning of life and need to learn what this means to them. Parents and the Meeting can encourage children in their learning about this meaning by constructively supporting the child's natural interest in his or her own sexuality and in that of others. Parents teach their children primarily by the example of their lives together. Ideally they demonstrate mutual love, affection, consideration, and trust in a lasting relationship that includes sexual gratification and joy.

We are challenged to discipline our sexual behavior in the light of our growing awareness of overall sexuality. This concept includes keeping sexual behavior in the context of the total interpersonal relationship, rather than treating sexual activity as an end in and of itself. Casual, exploitative, or promiscuous sexual behavior can produce emotional and physical suffering and harm. In dealing with sexual matters, care and concern for others is no less important than care and concern for one's self.

The mystery of sex continues to be greater than our capacity to comprehend it, no matter how much we learn about it. We engage in it, in often too frantic efforts to enjoy it but, more subtly, also to try to fathom its ever recurring power over us. Surely this power and its mystery relate to the mystery of God's relationship to us. The mistake we have made throughout the ages has been to load onto sex the incubus of success or failure of marriage, to look upon sex as a resolution, an ending. In reality it offers us, if we could only see it, a fresh beginning every time in that relationship of which it is a part.

Mary S. Calderone, 1973

Sexual Preference

We are concerned with the quality of relationships, not with their outward appearances. This insight has brought increasing light to our views of those who are in nontraditional relationships, both gay and straight, and we are looking anew and without judgment at, for example, committed relationships outside of marriage, and the choice to be a single parent.

Now more aware of the socially inflicted suffering of people who love others of the same sex, we affirm the power and joy of non-exploitive, loving relationships. As a Society and as individuals we oppose arbitrary social, economic, or legal abridgement of the right to share this love.

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1972

In a world which hears vitriolic statements against homosexuals made by elected officials and religious persons, we who proclaim a concern for equality and our love for all are called to act. In our Religious Society the call may not find such unity in expression, yet it exists. We work to create and sustain a loving, affirming, safe community within the Society of Friends where all committed relationships can be honored, nurtured and celebrated in the manner of Friends. We are called to love “that of God” in the world’s peoples and strive to bring about this same loving, affirming and safe community worldwide.

Home and Children

Parents are the child’s first teachers. It is in the home that Friends’ principles first become practices. The home is founded upon love and depends constantly upon loving sympathy, understanding and cooperation. Love binds the family together and yet allows freedom for each member to develop into the person he or she is meant to be. Loving guidance that is constructive, and not authoritarian or possessive, will help children discover their potential and their interests. Love reaches further than words and is understood long before words have meaning. The love of parents for God, for each other and for their children brings stability and security. This outpouring of the Spirit contributes to the religious atmosphere of the home.

Hospitality in the home is a vital force in spiritual nurture. The contacts of parents with their children's companions, and the child's association with adult guests, are important influences. Parental attitudes toward neighbors and acquaintances are often reflected in the children. Family conversation may determine whether or not children will look for the good in the people they meet, and whether they will be sensitive to that of God in everyone.

The organization of the business of living so that there is time for companionship, for sharing the beauty and the wonder of small, everyday happenings, is an important responsibility of parents. A home that is not cluttered with too many possessions, where there is orderliness without a sense of constraint and where there is time for the family to enjoy one another will help to develop well-integrated lives.

The home provides an opportunity for devotional reading and prayer. Many parents feel the need for regular times of daily worship. Children may not consciously feel this same need, but in everyday happenings they are often keenly aware of the closeness of the Holy Spirit. Family worship is especially appropriate in hours of joy, sorrow or special difficulty.

I have seen much advantage to children, and indeed to whole families, from the practice of a solemn pause at meals. It learns children stillness, decency, and reverence; and where it is done in a feeling manner, with minds rightly turned to feel after God, and experience his blessing, and is not practiced in a slight formal manner, it tends to season and solemnize the minds of young and old. I am morally certain, that I have many a day gone through the cares and concerns of life, with much more composure, stability, satisfaction and propriety, for the strength and assistance I have found in drawing near to God in solemn silence in my family; and I wish the practice of reverently adoring him in this way, may increase more and more.

Journal of Job Scott, (1751-1793)

Friends' Experience of Living the Testimonies

The promise of the Holy Spirit was to a group. We need one another to strengthen each other's will to goodness. The concern of an individual should be laid before the worshipping group, so that corporate guidance may be given by an expression of unity or disunity. The life and teachings of Jesus, seen not so much in detail as in totality, provide another check, which should be employed in seeking guidance.

Friends World Conference, 1952

Our testimonies arise from our way of worship. Our way of worship evokes from deep within us at once an affirmation and a celebration, an affirmation of the reality of that Light which illumines the spiritual longing of humanity, and a celebration of the continual resurrection within us of the springs of hope and love; a sense that each of us is, if we will, a channel for a power that is both within and beyond us.

Lorna M. Marsden, 1986

A Quaker testimony is a belief that stems from our fundamental understanding of religious truth. It is a corporately held belief about how we should individually act. In practicing them, we witness to our understanding of the very nature of God's spirit of love and truth.

Jonathan Dale, 1996