

A Brief Introduction to Friends

WELCOME

This leaflet provides a brief introduction to Quakers. We welcome you to correspond with us. We hope you will seek further information which may be available from us and other Christian Friends' writings.

Our Christian Background

The name "Quakers" was given to members of this Society over 370 years ago. George Fox, a well known minister of that day, urged a prosecuting judge at Darby, England, to "tremble at the word of the Lord." The name "Quakers" was first used in ridicule. Sometimes, though Friends have felt an inner, or demonstrated an outer, trembling response to the Lord's powerful presence in worship meetings.

The Society of Friends began when George Fox (1624-1691), a seeker of religious truth, became disillusioned with the formal religious organizations and leaders of his day. While meditating one day, near the point of despair, he experienced a voice saying, "There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition." In response, Fox declared, "My heart did leap for joy."

Shortly thereafter he began to proclaim that Christ had come to teach his people himself. The message, George Fox and the first Friends preached, was that the power of God was available to all without the need of ritual or clergy. This was a revolutionary return to the faith of the first Christians.

The experience of receiving and believing in Christ's Light or Spirit empowered the early Friends to become obedient children of God. This led to much persecution which helped to spread their radical

understanding and experience of the gospel throughout the world, especially Europe and America.

The Light Within

The early Friends first experienced, and then preached, the good news, that Christ gives power to become the children of God to all who will receive him and walk in his light. As each is obedient to what is shown, more light is given to see and to do God's will. This inward Light, Jesus Christ, "that of God" in everyone, is available to each one who seeks to know it. Obedience to God's leading is the way to grow in knowledge of him. As we follow him more closely, he gives us inner peace and joy.

The Bible

The Scriptures were written by people of God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. They are profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness and are important as a sole source of inspiration. The Bible is not to be interpreted by ones own mind, but is correctly understood by revelation from the Holy Spirit who will guide us into all truth.

Worship and Ministry

The central feature of our lives together as Friends, desiring Spirit-led lives, is the meeting for worship, which begins in silence. God is always with us. It is important for worshippers to come prayerfully together into the stillness and wait expectantly to feel God's presence. As we quiet our minds from our thoughts, our attention should turn to that still, small voice within our hearts. This voice is the Spirit of God speaking directly to us, individually and corporately. Our experience of God in Worship appears to us in different ways. Sometimes we feel a sense of happiness, peace and encouragement which can hardly be described. At other times we may

have a sense of our own failure to do what is right as we “hunger and thirst after righteousness.”

While waiting in Worship, an inward message may come to us either personal or to be shared with others. Christ, by his Spirit, is the source of any rightly led message. Anyone may be led to speak or pray by his Spirit. Before speaking, a person should feel clearly that the message has a Divine source and is intended by God to be spoken aloud. When God sends a message, the speaker’s own feeling of personal inadequacy should not prevent him from speaking. Compliance to such an inward prompting can be vital to the encouragement of everyone in the meeting. The obedient speaker will often have a feeling of inner peace. The message which such a minister brings has been given freely by God.

The Peace Testimony

Out of our experiences in meeting for worship have grown many testimonies, one of which is the Peace Testimony. It is our profound belief that the people of the world desire peace, but we do not believe that it can be achieved through a policy of military strength or self motivated action. Peace is possible only when we live in that experience which removes all occasion for war and seek to solve common problems in a spirit of reconciliation and humility. True followers of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace act with love, forbearance and forgiveness; trusting in God’s Spirit to work in all persons.

In a statement presented to King Charles II of England in 1660 in reference to participation in the military, early Friends declared: “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 into it; and we certainly do 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.”

Some books that may be used for further study

*The Holy Bible

*George Fox’s Journal

*John Woolman’s Journal

*Barclay’s Apology

*The Book of Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of Christian Friends (Evangelical Quakers) (2020 Edition).

The following are only a few of the many Bible verses by which the beliefs referred to in this tract can be substantiated.

*1 Kings 19:12

*Isaiah 50:10; 40:31; 66:5

*Psalms 36:9; 46:10

*Proverbs 4:18

*Lamentations 3:25, 26

*Matthew 3:1-17; 10:19, 20; 18:20

*John 1:5-9, 3:16-21; 6:35; 8:12, 10:27; 12:35, 36; 14:7-21; 15:14, 15; 18:36

*1 John 1; 2:15-20

*Ephesians 5:11; 6:10-18

*Galatians 2:20

*2 Corinthians 4:6, 7; 3:6; 10:3,4

*2 Timothy 3:15-17

*2 Peter 1:20, 21

*1 Corinthians 9:15-18; 12:3

*Romans 5:1-5, 6; 12:17-21

Evangelical Quakers, 2020