

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Note: Some of the terms that follow are in common usage but Friends have given them a particular meaning. Others are essentially limited to Quaker usage.

Advices: Ideals stated as a continuing reminder of the basic faith and principles held to be essential to the life and witness of Friends. They arose from extracts from the minutes and epistles of early Friends and were intended to supply guidance, caution, and counsel to monthly meetings and their members on various aspects of daily life. The word Advices is also sometimes used to encompass the whole of a Friends book of discipline (*Faith and Practice*).

Affirm: A legal declaration provided for Friends and others who conscientiously refuse to take (or swear) judicial oaths. Following Jesus' directive "Swear not at all," Matthew 5:34, Quakers try to be truthful at all times. Swearing an oath implies having a double standard in regard to speaking the truth. Sometimes also used in meetings to recognize items of business not requiring a formal minute, i.e., "affirming" a committee report rather than "accepting" or "approving" it.

Anchor Committee: An anchor committee, or anchoring committee, is a support committee that guides and nurtures a Friend who is pursuing a ministry that leads him or her to travel away from meeting frequently. This term is heard most frequently in reference to traveling ministries supported by Friends General Conference (FGC).

Attender: Someone who attends with some frequency and participates in meeting for worship and other meeting functions but who has not yet sought and been accepted into membership in the meeting.

Birthright Friend: In early practice, an individual whose parents were both members of a Friends meeting and who as a consequence was automatically recorded at birth as a member of that meeting. Most meetings no longer have this category of membership and instead use associate membership for children in the meeting.

Book of Discipline: A document describing a yearly meeting's spiritual practice and procedures, including advices, queries, and often quotations or extracts from the experience of Friends. *Faith and Practice* is a book of discipline. The word *discipline* comes from the root word *disciple*.

Breaking Meeting: Term used to indicate the ending or closing of meeting for worship when a designated member shakes hands with Friends nearby. Friends then greet their neighbors in the same fashion. See also Rise of Meeting.

Called Meeting: A meeting of the monthly or yearly meeting specially called by its clerk to address a particular concern or item of business. In a called meeting for business, decisions are recorded as in a regular meeting for business.

Centered: Condition of an individual or group in touch with the divine presence.

Centering/Centering Down: The initial stage of worship when Friends endeavor to quiet our restless thoughts and open our hearts, in order that we may hear the divine presence speak directly to us.

Christ Within: That of God in everyone especially as illustrated in the teachings of Jesus. Also called the Truth, the Spirit of Guidance, the Inward Light, the Inner Teacher, the Seed, or the Holy Spirit.

Clearness: Confidence that after prayer and reflection an action or next step is consistent with the divine will.

Clearness Committee: Originally, a term for those appointed by a monthly meeting to oversee a request for membership or a marriage under the care of the meeting and conscientiously satisfy the meeting that there is nothing to interfere with the accomplishment of the membership or marriage. Other kinds of clearness committees have been used to help persons be clear about their leading to take a particular action, such as tax resistance or to witness publicly or to travel for Friends ministry. More recently, clearness committees have been requested to help individuals come to clearness regarding divorce issues, employment issues, gay marriage issues, and so forth.

Clerk: The person responsible for the administration of a Friends body and for being particularly sensitive to the guidance of the Spirit in the conduct of the business of that body, which also includes preparation, servant-leadership, and follow-up of meetings for business.

Concern: A concern, whether of an individual or a meeting, is a quickening sense of spiritual leading that motivates Friends to take action about a situation or issue in response to what is felt to be a direct intimation of God's will.

Conscientious Objection: A principled refusal to participate in certain social or political practices; commonly applied to the refusal to undertake military service or pay war taxes.

Consensus: A secular method, involving rational process and producing general agreement. The authority is in the group, with individual readiness to accept a decision reached by cooperative search. Not to be confused with "Sense of the Meeting."

Conservative Friends: Three unaffiliated yearly meetings in the USA—Iowa, North Carolina, and Ohio—call themselves Conservative. Historically, they share John Wilbur's objections to the pastoral system; at the same time they are more explicitly Christ-centered

than most meetings in Friends General Conference. It is a descriptive term, not an organization.

Continuing Revelation: A central Quaker belief that the revelation of God's will is an ongoing process. George Fox and the other early seekers believed that the same Spirit that rendered the original Biblical words was available to those who waited prayerfully and quietly upon the Lord for the truth. Howard Brinton in *Friends for 350 Years* says that Friends in unprogrammed meetings believe that "the Spirit of God which gave forth the Scriptures [is] still at work ... in the human heart. It [is] more important to hear what He [is] saying directly ... than what He once said centuries ago."

Convener: Member of a committee, usually the first person listed by the nominating committee, who is asked to convene the first meeting of the group before a committee clerk is named. Also, it is the correspondent or contact person of a worship group.

Convinced Friend: A person who, after deciding that the Religious Society of Friends provides the most promising home for spiritual enlightenment and growth, becomes a member of a monthly meeting. Traditionally distinguished from a birthright Friend.

Corporate Worship: The action of a group's seeking together the will of God for their individual and community life. The meeting for worship is corporate worship. The activity of the group decision process – quiet waiting and group discussion – is intended to reflect the group's corporate search for truth.

Covered Meeting: A meeting for worship or business in which the participants feel the power and inspiration of God so strongly that they all are united in that Spirit and understanding which is the reward of waiting upon God. See also Gathered Meeting.

Discernment: The process of arriving at the right course of action through spiritual perception and clear rational thought. Seeks to

incorporate God's will to rise above mere "deciding." It is wisdom to see clearly and to differentiate the truth from other impressions.

Discipline: Following a particular path. Also see *Faith and Practice*.

Disownment: The practice of dismissing an individual from membership in the Society of Friends. Historically, a person could be put out of meeting ("read out" or "disowned") by a monthly meeting for violating prohibitions or practices of the Society regarding worldly dress, amusements, marrying a non-Quaker, and so forth. This practice is no longer used among Friends.

Elder: Elders (regardless of their age) are spiritually sensitive persons appointed by the monthly meeting to foster the ministry of the meeting for worship both vocal and silent and the spiritual condition of the members. Historically, he or she was often appointed as a traveling companion to a minister traveling beyond the monthly meeting.

Eldering: The act of encouraging and/or questioning an individual's behavior and/or expression. Eldering is to be done with courtesy and loving concern for the spiritual well-being of the individual, even when offered as a correction.

Embraced Friend: A Friend whose leading for ministry has been affirmed by the yearly meeting and is supported at the yearly meeting level.

Epistle: A public letter of greeting and ministry. Such letters are sent from a Friends meeting or organization to other Friends groups to supply information, spiritual insight, and encouragement.

Evangelical Friends: Evangelical Friends emphasize Christian doctrine based on the authority of the Bible. They point

to Jesus Christ as the unique revelation of God. Through their deep concern for mission, they have parented groups of Friends in Latin America, Africa, and India. Their worship is programmed, and their theology is evangelical, with a strong scriptural base. Like other Friends, they hold testimonies of peace, simplicity, and equality.

Experiential Religion: A religion in which personal spiritual experience is the foundation for belief and practice. The word *experiential* was used by early Friends with this meaning.

Facing Benches: In older Friends meetinghouses, rising tiers of benches facing the meeting, traditionally occupied by recognized ministers and elders. Metaphorically, the group of leaders occupying those benches. Meeting houses without benches most often have seats arranged circularly or squarely around the room to emphasize equality.

Faith and Practice: An official edited book of Friends' testimonies, beliefs, experiences, and practices compiled by a yearly meeting body of Friends. The book is meant to provide guidance (queries and advices) for individuals and organizational groupings of the religious body. The structure and membership of the group, the procedures of well-ordered business, the formalities of marriage and other events (death, divorce), and stewardship of group property are explained. These are sources of tradition and not dogma. They are periodically updated to respond to current needs. Sometimes called "A Book of Discipline."

First Day: The first day of the week, Sunday. Historically, the Society of Friends numbered the days and months rather than using the names which came from non-Biblical often pagan sources. This custom is still in common usage for official documents and optional usage among the meetings.

First Day School: Friends' designation for the Sunday religious

education program provided by a monthly meeting for children and adults.

Friends: Members of the Religious Society of Friends; also called Quakers. The term “Friends,” or “Friends of the Truth,” was used as early as 1652. The name “Friends” is inspired by John 15:12-14.

Friends Education: See Quaker education.

Gathered Meeting: A phrase used to describe those special occasions when in the meeting for worship or for business those present feel a particularly deep meditative quality and a sense of the Divine Presence touching each worshipper, uniting all in the shared experience of holy fellowship. See also Covered Meeting.

Good Order: Those procedures for the conduct of Friends’ business and witness that encourage a meeting to carry out its corporate activities under divine leading. The term “rightly ordered” is also used in this sense.

Gospel Order: A term used by George Fox and others to describe the new covenant order of the church under the headship of Christ. It concerns how we live faithfully in relationship with God and with each other.

Half-Yearly Meeting: The name of a regional gathering of Friends who meet socially, or for business, between yearly meetings.

Hold in the Light: To ask that divine guidance and healing will illumine a person, situation, or problem, whether in concern or thanksgiving; also, to give prayerful consideration to an idea.

Inner Light/Inward Light/The Light Within: Terms which represent for Friends the presence of God in our hearts and lives. Some other equivalent terms often found in Quaker writings are the

Spirit, Spirit of Truth, the Divine Principle, the Seed, the Guide, the Christ Within, the Inward Teacher, that of God in every person, and the Holy Spirit.

Integrity: One of the basic practical principles or testimonies of Friends. It involves both a wholeness and harmony of the various aspects of one's life and truthfulness in whatever one says and does.

Interim Business Meeting (IBM): In Southeastern Yearly Meeting, a broadly representative body open to all, meeting twice annually [fall (FIBM) or winter (WIBM)] to conduct the business of the yearly meeting between its annual sessions.

Lay Down: A decision to discontinue a committee or concern when its work is complete; occasionally, a decision to discontinue a meeting or other Friends organization when it is no longer viable.

Lay Over: In Quaker business process, to postpone or continue the discernment on an issue or the presentation of a report from one meeting for business to another, which allows time for further reflection, discussion, and discernment.

Leading: A sense of being called by God to undertake a specific course of action. A leading often arises from a concern. A Friend may submit a leading to the meeting for testing by corporate wisdom.

Letter of Introduction: A Friend who is traveling socially or otherwise may request a "Letter of Introduction" from her or his monthly meeting to affirm association with Friends.

Liberal Friends: Liberal Friends hold that belief must be verified by religious experience. Religious experience derives from the direct revelation of God through the Light of Christ within. For Liberals, Jesus' life, teachings, and death are a supreme example of love.

Historically, Liberal Friends have reconciled science and religion, incorporating freedom of thought, tolerance and humanitarian service in their expression of religious faith and practice, maintaining a balance between individual liberty and community. It is a descriptive term, not an organization.

Lift Up: To emphasize or make explicit a particular point or concern.

Marriage After the Manner of Friends: See Chapter 8 – “Marriage and Commitment” of this *Faith and Practice*.

Marrying Out: Marrying someone who is not a member of the Society of Friends. Until 1859, many were disowned for marrying those who were not Quakers.

Meeting for Worship: A gathering of individuals in quiet expectant waiting for the enlightening and empowering presence of God, which may inspire any one of the group to offer a message or prayer; the central focus of the corporate life of the Religious Society of Friends.

Meeting for Worship with a Concern for (Attention to) Business: A meeting for worship during which the corporate business of the meeting is conducted. All business meetings, held in the spirit of worship, deal corporately with both spiritual and practical aspects of Friends’ community and/or action. There is never a vote but instead a careful search to find unity with the divine will, or more commonly known as “the sense of the meeting.”

Meetinghouse: The building in which Friends meet. The name is used in place of “church.”

Message: A spoken message of ministry by an individual inspired by divine leading in a meeting for worship. A message may come to

an individual that is personal or not for the group, and it is a matter of discernment whether or not to stand and deliver the message to a gathering.

Mind the Light: An admonition to attend to the Light Within for guidance in one's life. It means both active obedience to divine leadings and careful nurturing of one's openness to the Light.

Ministry: Sharing or acting upon one's gifts, whether in service to individuals, to the meeting, or to the larger community.

Minute: The record of a corporate decision reached during a meeting for worship with a concern for business formalizing the sense of the meeting. More broadly, the account of a single transaction in the written record of a meeting for business or other body. In the plural it is a compilation of transactions at a single session.

Minute of Exercise: An expression of insights and concerns on a specific unresolved topic at the close of a meeting for business. Historically, a closing summary of vocal ministry and spiritual concerns expressed during yearly meeting sessions.

Monthly Meeting: 1] A recognized congregation of Friends who meet regularly for worship and to conduct corporate business. 2) A monthly gathering of such a body for worship and business.

Moved: Led or prompted by the Spirit.

Opening: A moment of unexpected enlightenment or inspiration from God.

Overseers: A committee of those members who are appointed by the meeting to give pastoral care and nurture to all members and attenders.

Pacifist: A person who renounces war and any use of violence and seeks to resolve conflicts peacefully.

Pastor: The preferred term in programmed Friends churches for minister.

Pastoral Meeting: A meeting or church relying on a minister or a Friend (with spiritual gifts) to provide direction for a programmed worship service of sermon and song. See Programmed Meeting.

Peace Testimony: The corporate commitment of Friends to pacifism, nonviolence, and peace-making.

Pendle Hill: 1) The hill in northern England where George Fox, in May 1652, envisioned “a great people to be gathered.” 2) In 1930, a Quaker study and retreat center near Philadelphia, PA was founded and named Pendle Hill.

Plain Dress/Plain Speech: The witness of early Friends to the testimonies of equality and integrity by dressing and speaking simply. These served into the twentieth century as outward symbols and reminders of our distinctive beliefs.

Plain Friend: A plain Friend is a Friend who adhered to simple dress and plain language to protest ornamentation and use of the formal second-person pronouns (you) to individuals as indicative of class.

Plain Language: Friends’ language using the familiar second-person singular “thee” and “thou” for all persons including judges and royalty, who in the seventeenth century were accustomed to the formal second-person “you” as a statement of respect for their social class. Early Friends based their choice on the principle of all persons having equal status. Friends generally have not used honorific titles, such as Rev., Mrs., Dr., and Your Honor, as a further testimony to their belief in the equality of all persons.

Popcorn Meeting: As implied, numerous speakers “pop up” to “minister” to the meeting for worship, often elaborating upon

each other's messages and leaving very little "silence" for reflection between speakers. A contemporary term.

Preparative Meeting: 1] In Southeastern Yearly Meeting, an organized group of attenders and members of other monthly meetings and/or yearly meetings who meet together usually under the care of a nearby monthly meeting to prepare to become a monthly meeting. 2] An organized group of members of an established monthly meeting which ordinarily gathers for worship at another place.

Presiding Clerk: The person who presides at a meeting for business. See Clerk.

Proceed As Way Opens: To undertake a service or course of action without prior clarity about all the details but with confidence that divine guidance will make these apparent and assure an appropriate outcome.

Programmed Meeting: A Friends meeting under the leadership of a pastor, with an arranged order of worship that usually includes a short period of silent worship. See also Unprogrammed Meeting.

Quaker: Originally, a derogatory term applied to Friends because their excitement of spirit when led to speak in a meeting for worship was sometimes expressed in a shaking or quaking motion. Now this term is simply an alternative designation for a member of the Religious Society of Friends.

Quaker Education: A style of education that seeks to provide an integrated curriculum appropriate to the needs of the whole individual, emphasizing the personal value of each student. Both in Britain and in the Americas, Quakers emphasized education and were among the first to provide coeducational schools for their children and among the first to teach the sciences.

Quakerism: Quakerism is a way of life in which Quakers try to live their religious convictions. Distinctions may include actions for peace, striving for a consistently simple lifestyle, a respect for all people and conditions, and a reliance on God's leadings from the Spirit.

Quarterly Meeting: A regional gathering of members of constituent monthly meetings, traditionally on four occasions each year. Some quarterly meetings also oversee the operations of institutions. This practice is usually used in large yearly meetings and not by Southeastern Yearly Meeting.

Queries: A set of questions, based on Friends' practices and testimonies, which are considered by meetings and individuals as a way of both guiding and examining individual and corporate lives and actions. As such, they are a means of self-examination. Queries to be considered regularly are included in *Faith and Practice*; others may be formulated by a committee or meeting that seeks to clarify for itself an issue it needs to address.

Recorder: The person appointed by a meeting to maintain statistics and contact information of the members and attenders of that meeting.

Recording Clerk: The person appointed to take minutes at regular and called meetings for business of a monthly meeting or other Friends body.

Released Friend: A Friend whose leading to carry out a particular course of action has met with approval from a monthly meeting which then promises to provide such spiritual and material support as would enable the Friend to follow that leading.

Religious Society of Friends: Official name of the denomination (movement) commonly called Quakers. Many variations of this name are in use. The name Friends is inspired by John 15:12-14.

Rise of Meeting: A term used to indicate the end of a meeting for worship or business. Meetings for worship “break” (are sensed complete) when the clerk or other designated person initiates “shaking of hands” to signify meeting is over. Also called “close of meeting.”

Seasoned Friend: See Weighty Friend.

Seasoning: Taking the time to seek the Light rather than moving into a matter hastily.

Sense of the Meeting: An expression of the unity of a meeting for worship with a concern for business on some issue or concern; the general recognition, articulated by the clerk or some other person, that a given decision is in accordance with the divine will. It is not the same as consensus or unanimity.

Settled: All together under the leading of the Spirit. A well-established monthly meeting.

Silence: Solemn waiting, meditation, and quiet time in meetings. The holding of hands in a circle, involving the children in being “silently thankful” before meals, is another way Friends practice silence in the meeting community.

Silent Meeting: See Unprogrammed Meeting.

Simplicity: A Quaker testimony that is closely associated with integrity, equality, and stewardship. Essentially, to limit the material circumstances of one’s life in a way that allows/enables one to follow divine leadings. Quaker simplicity is living without extravagance in order that a person may give time and money to the most meaningful things as the person is led by Spirit.

Sojourning Friend: A member of a monthly meeting who may temporarily reside at some distance from that meeting but close to

another monthly meeting and who upon formal request is accepted by the latter as an active member in Southeastern Yearly Meeting, with the financial obligations of an attender.

Speaking to My/One's Condition: The conviction that a message, whether directly from God or through the words or actions of another, meets one's own deepest needs and purposes.

Spirit: Spirit of God, Christ, Truth, Holy Spirit, Holy Ghost, Inner Light, Inner Spirit, and Teacher Within are terms which Friends use to refer to the Divine Presence.

Standing Aside: An action taken by an individual who has genuine reservations about a particular decision but who also recognizes that the decision is clearly supported by the weight of the meeting. The action of standing aside allows the meeting to reach unity. A person may ask to be recorded as standing aside.

Standing in the Way: A seasoned Friend who feels a spirit-led objection to a decision or proposed action of the meeting may stand in the way, thus preventing further action at that time until the objection is heard and resolved.

State of the Meeting (Society): A self-evaluation of the meeting done at intervals by members. This report usually includes spiritual matters, the way members have involved themselves in ministries, statistics of membership, and so forth. In Southeastern Yearly Meeting, meetings are asked to prepare a written report annually that is due to the administrative secretary by winter interim business meeting and printed in the "Documents In Advance" of the yearly meeting annual gathering. See *Advices; Queries*.

Stewardship: For Friends, stewardship is an element of integrity. Good stewardship directs Friends' investment of time and money in sustainable and renewable resources and in work that supports Quaker values and beliefs.

Stop/Stop in the Mind: A clear uneasiness in the face of a proposed decision or action and an unwillingness to follow it.

Testimonies: Friends testimonies (religious and social) are an outward expression of inward spiritual leadings and discernments of truth and the will of God. Testimonies are the application of Friends' beliefs to situations and problems of individuals and society: i.e., equality, integrity, peace, simplicity, and community. They constitute the moral and ethical fruit of the inward life of the Spirit. Testimonies are our outward witness to the world.

“That of God in everyone”: A Quaker belief that all humans have a divine spirit enabling them to hear, be aware of, and respond to the movement of the spirit of God in the heart.

Threshing Session: A meeting to consider in depth a controversial issue, but in a way that is spirit-centered and free from the necessity of reaching a decision.

Traveling Minister: A Friend traveling with a concern who received approval by the monthly meeting releasing him or her to speak to specific groups or persons. Traveling ministers have been called “visiting Friends” by their hosts.

Travel Minute: The endorsement a meeting gives to one of its members who is traveling under the weight of a concern.

Truth: The revealed will of God, as experienced in communion with the Inner Light or Inward Christ. Early Quakers called themselves the Religious Society of Friends of the Truth.

Under the Care Of: Describes an activity, program, or event for which a meeting takes responsibility and to which it gives oversight: thus, a marriage, a preparative meeting, a traveling minister, or a school might all be said to be under the care of a monthly meeting.

Under the Weight Of: Giving high priority to an issue arising from a deep feeling of concern. Said of an individual or meeting that is struggling to reach an appropriate decision about such an item of business.

Unity: A recognition of the truth emerging from a group's corporate search and yielding to the Holy Spirit in its decision-making.

Universalism: The belief that there is a universal spiritual truth to be found at the base of all religious traditions.

Unprogrammed Meeting: A meeting for worship with the emphasis being on members and attenders centering down in silence to seek spiritual unity and guidance, minus the need for a pastor or prearranged program. Any worshiper may feel led to speak briefly during the meeting for worship. Meetings for worship in which the whole time is spent in silence can also be occasions of great inspiration.

Valiant Sixty: A group of fifty-four men and twelve women who were first convinced by George Fox. As early as 1654, they traveled extensively preaching the Quaker message.

Visiting Friends: See Traveling Ministry.

Vocal Ministry: The sharing of a Spirit-inspired message or prayer during a meeting for worship.

“Wear it as long as thou canst”: Words (perhaps legendary) of George Fox to William Penn’s question about his sword. The expression is used to indicate that each person must seek to know and decide on which issues he or she will stand.

Waiting upon God: Actively seeking and attending to God’s will in expectant worship.

Weighty Friend: A Friend who is respected for spiritual depth, wisdom, and long service to the Religious Society of Friends. Also called a seasoned Friend.

Witness: To let one's life speak. To stand up for a truth or deeply held belief.

Worship Group: A group of worshipers who meet regularly but who may or may not have established a formal affiliation with an established monthly meeting or yearly meeting and therefore is unable to "keep" official membership records or to certify marriages.

Worship Sharing: A modern group practice in which participants share personal and spiritual experiences, thoughts, and feelings, often in response to a prearranged theme or questions and in a manner that acknowledges the presence of God and respect for all participants.

Yearly Meeting Friends: Quakers known for their involvement at the yearly meeting level.

Yearly Meeting: Those Friends from a geographically extended area who gather in annual session to worship and conduct business together. Yearly meeting has an advisory and supportive role to the monthly meetings.

Youth Member: One of several membership designations in the Religious Society of Friends used by many monthly meetings. A youth member is a minor child recorded as a member at the request of parents, one or both of whom are members of the monthly meeting. Youth members may be transferred to full membership at their own request, in writing, after they have reached an age of decision and when they are familiar with Friends' principles or at age twenty-five when youth membership expires.