

Third Haven Friends Meeting
Essence of Our Quaker Faith and Practice
Approved at meeting for business – 4.11.2010

Purpose

This sets forth essence of the Quaker faith and practice of Third Haven Friends Meeting. Its purpose is to facilitate understanding, communications and outreach to visitors and the broader community. *That of God* in each person is the core belief of our *faith* from which our *practices* – *silent worship*, *testimonies* and *community* – flow. Together these constitute the 4 essentials of our faith and practice.

1. That of God in Each Person

Third Haven Quakers believe that there is *That of God* in each and every person. Quakers refer to That of God in each person in many ways – the Inward Light, the Christ Within, Divine, God and Spirit.

Quaker faith and practice provides for a direct and unmediated relationship with God. Worship and prayer does not need to be led by clergy. Quaker faith and practice allows and requires substantial individual responsibility for one's faith, religious practice and spiritual journey. The notion of That of God in everyone entails essentially no doctrine, and little church hierarchy or institutional authority.

Quakers value the “life and teachings of Jesus” as an essential, even the primary, source of our understanding and expression how God guides us to believe and live in the world. The Quaker way is not the only path to the Divine. The Religious Society of Friends and Third Haven Friends acknowledge and employ variations in Quaker Faith and Practice. See *Faith and Practice*, pp 16-17.

2. Silent Worship

In Quaker worship, we listen in silence to hear leadings of the Spirit inwardly. During the meeting for worship, individuals discern leadings from the Spirit and are sometimes led to offer these messages as vocal ministry. Some leadings are for the individual alone, some for the meeting for worship. The spiritual discernment of vocal ministry in the meeting for worship is an essential Quaker practice. Listening for leadings collectively in worship is a powerful way to invite such leadings. God has spoken in all times and ages, not just Biblical times, and continues to speak to us today – as continuing revelation.

Quakers have worshiped in the silent or “un-programmed” manner for over 350 years. Third Haven, like many other Quaker meetings, worships in silence – waiting silently and expectantly for the leadings of the Spirit. The silence is used and valued as an opportunity for spiritual reflection, discernment, insight and understanding. The meeting for worship has been called a “meeting for relationship with God.” Friends honor the enormous continuity and the enduring tradition of silent worship. However, Third Haven Friends strive to make the meeting for worship and Quaker faith and practice contemporary and relevant. See *Faith and Practice*, pp 17-21 and 100-128.

3. Testimonies

George Fox, the founder of the Religious Society of Friends, set forth a first principle of our faith – “Let Your Life Speak.” Quakers believe that we should live our beliefs and faith in our daily lives, in witness, in action in the world. The life and teachings of Jesus inspire and guide us to live our lives in faithful witness.

Our Quaker Testimonies express our beliefs and guide us in living our daily lives, as we accept responsibility, make decisions and take action consistent with our faith. The Testimonies express our shared values and commitments in the Religious Society of Friends, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) and Third Haven. Testimonies have changed over time and vary among yearly meetings. Yearly meetings have different Testimonies and different numbers of them. PYM Testimonies are - *Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality* (justice, fairness) and *Stewardship* (of resources and the environment, and service). These are remembered as SPICES.

It is important that as Friends we live our daily lives led by God. Spirit consistently leads Friends to value and express these Testimonies. Quaker beliefs and Testimonies help us set priorities, avoid self-indulgence and achieve a spirit of humility. A life lived in the Spirit leads to an enlightened conscience, gratitude, harmony and peace. See *Faith and Practice*, pp 145-174.

4. Community

Third Haven is a community in how we worship, how we do the work of the Meeting and how we care for one another. A loving and nurturing community of Friends provides companions on the spiritual journey and community support for individuals, families and children. We welcome visitors, seekers, newcomers and new members. We are eager to share our faith and practice with seekers.

The Meeting community cares for the wellbeing of members and attenders, especially those not well and aging Friends. We are ready to offer assistance and to receive it. We conduct weddings, same sex spiritual unions and memorial meetings for worship in the manner of Friends.

Quakers are distinguished by our method of making decisions and conducting business. Our meeting for business is a meeting for worship with a concern for business. Business meetings and matters are to be led by the Spirit and conducted in a worshipful manner. Others sometimes call this consensus, but consensus is secular, not Spirit-led. Most Quakers call this method - decision-making in the manner of Friends. This “Quaker process” is based on *clearness* (understanding) and *unity* (agreement). Decision-making in the manner of Friends is deliberate, sometimes slow, but very powerful in its clarity and binding Friends together in direction and action.

The Meeting community is responsible for corporate (collective) discernment in the meeting for worship, the meeting for business and the Meeting community. Importantly, when leadings or courses of action are not clear or cause disquiet, we share these concerns with others in worship, worship sharing, discernment, clearness committees or meeting for business.

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