



Spend some time at William Penn Charter School, and you'll feel the Friends' influence everywhere. As the world's oldest Quaker school, Penn Charter has MORE THAN 300 YEARS' EXPERIENCE weaving



the teachings and values of the Religious Society of Friends—the Quakers—into the fabric of school life. The school has changed much since its founding by William Penn in 1689, but Quakerism's core values—common to many religions—are still integral to our school today.

QUAKER VALUES ARE AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING we do and expect of our students, including what's taught in the classroom and how it's taught, students' behavior, and their relationships with one another and with their teachers. As the Statement of Philosophy asserts, Penn Charter is committed not only to "training the mind... cultivating the aesthetic, and developing the body," but also to "quickening the spirit." With the love and support of the school community, children grow as emotional, social and moral beings. Ultimately, we are concerned less with *what* students will become than with *who* they will become.



A QUAKER GLOSSARY: Meeting for Worship

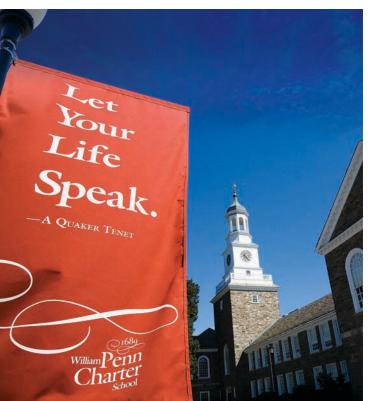
MEETING FOR WORSH P: Quakers believe that all people have access to the Divine and that the truth—which includes understandings in the Bible, the Talmud, the Koran, and other ancient tracts—continues to be revealed. These beliefs shape the form of the Quaker "service," called Meeting for Worship.

There is no clergyperson and no sermon. Instead, all who gather to worship are clergy. They sit together in silence until someone is moved to speak, sharing thoughts and inspirations with those assembled. The silence can be as powerful as the spoken word, which is called "ministry," and can be on any topic, overtly religious or not. Meeting begins as people enter the room and ends when a designated person shakes a neighbor's hand, whereupon everyone shakes hands.

At Penn Charter, students take part in Meeting for Worship each week, most often by division or grade. Typically, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children gather in their classrooms; in pre-K, Meeting is about 10 minutes and students are encouraged to stand and share what's in their hearts. Lower School students in first through fifth grades have Meeting for 15 to 20 minutes, Middle

School for 30 minutes, and Upper School for 40 minutes. Parents and grandparents are occasionally invited to join in, and they are also invited to come to a monthly Meeting with faculty and staff that provides an opportunity to worship and to better understand the experience of our students. Once a year, the entire school comes together for an all-school Meeting for Worship and, in the spring, seniors and their families attend a final, emotional Meeting for Worship in the days leading up to Commencement.

Whatever the group or locale, Meeting for Worship is a meaningful experience for children—a chance to relax and still both body and mind amid life's hectic pace. Many classes begin with a short moment of silence to encourage the same centering. Meeting provides an opportunity for students to listen to the ideas and feelings of others as well as to their inner voice, to reflect on what's important, to strengthen their own beliefs, and to be open to other beliefs and ideas. It's a place where all members of our community may speak and be heard. After they depart Penn Charter, many graduates report that they miss the solace provided by Meeting for Worship.





The Quaker religion does not espouse a doctrine or creed. At its root is the belief that there is "that of God in everyone," resulting in a respect for all people, for different opinions, and for each person's search for the truth. Here at Penn Charter, **WE STUDY AND CELEBRATE** many different religious traditions and welcome families of all religions and spiritual practices to our community. In fact, all of the world's major religions are represented in the student body, and most families are not Quaker. Regardless of religious background, our students find that exposure to Quaker values often serves to strengthen their

own convictions. Similarly, whether or not students observe a faith tradition, exposure to Quaker values helps them to strengthen their moral compass and develop into young people of integrity.

WE INVITE YOU TO EXPLORE

Penn Charter's rich Quaker tradition and how it's lived today.

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RESPECT

FINDING THAT OF GOD IN EVERYONE





If Penn Charter is a structure whose foundation is built on Quaker values, then respect is our cornerstone, the direct result of seeing "that of God in everyone." From the youngest grades, children are taught to respect all members of the school community, including themselves. Teachers not only talk about respectful behavior—especially the nonviolent resolution of conflicts—they model it. By the time students reach Middle and Upper School, they are well versed in the art of getting along, working together, and appreciating the gifts each person has to offer. Students affirm that they view one another—and people in general—in a positive light.



Perhaps the greatest testaments to Penn Charter's climate of respect are the warm and open relationships that develop between students and teachers, who serve not only as instructors, advisors and coaches, but also as mentors, confidants and friends. Children respect and are respected by their teachers, who know and treat each student as an individual.

Respect for the individual is also seen in Penn Charter's curriculum and pedagogy. Just as we celebrate student achievement in different areas—from academics to athletics to the arts—we also understand students' varied learning styles. The Lower School, for example, has created a program that strives to identify and teach to each child's strengths, offering differentiated instruction that respects different learners. As a visiting Quaker educator remarked after spending time in Middle School, "In every class I visited, education was perceived as an opening up—not filling up. The faculty saw each student as a unique challenge who needs to be met where he or she is."

LETTING THEIR LIVES SPEAK

As part of a school-wide Quaker self-study, Lower School children were asked to answer the question: "How are you supposed to treat other people in our school?"

- "TREAT PEOPLE THE WAY YOU WANT TO BE TREATED."
- "BE FULL OF KINDNESS."
- **●** "TREAT PEOPLE FAIRLY."
- **№** "INCLUDE OTHERS."
- "ACT PEACEFULLY."
- "WALK AWAY WHEN SOMEONE GETS ON YOUR NERVES."
- **∅** "TREAT OTHERS TRUTHFULLY."
- **\u00e4** "LISTEN TO OTHERS."
- **●** "BE PATIENT. TALK THINGS OUT."
- ↑ "TREAT EVERYONE NICELY: CHILD, TEACHER, OR SOMEONE WHO CUTS THE GRASS."
- "GIVE RESPECT TO OTHERS AND RESPECT YOURSELF."
- "BE EVERYONE'S FRIEND."

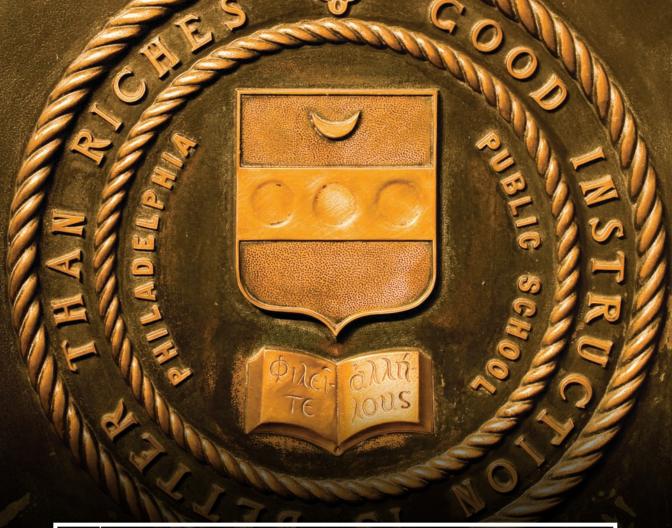
RESPONSIBILITY

LIVING UP TO HIGH EXPECTATIONS IN A COMMUNITY BASED ON TRUST



Seeing "that of God in everyone" includes seeing it in yourself. Quakers look within for the Divine Spark or Inner Light and strive to live in harmony with it. This can take many forms, from telling the truth to dealing fairly in business to following a "leading" to act on behalf of a particular cause. Whatever the action, the impetus is to do the right thing.







A QUAKER GLOSSARY: Testimonies

TESTIMONIES: Though Quakerism has no creed, a group of core values reflecting the practices and principles of Friends has emerged over time. These are called the testimonies: community, equality, integrity, peace, service, simplicity, social justice and stewardship.

The testimonies are at once self-explanatory and ripe for exploration and interpretation. Take simplicity, for example. In former times, Quakers embraced simplicity by avoiding material possessions and by dressing and speaking plainly. Today, simplicity is demonstrated not by wearing gray clothing but by focusing on what is most important and downplaying distractions and superficialities, so that each person can hear the Spirit and lead a life consistent with

his or her values. Our school motto, "Good instruction is better than riches," is in keeping with the testimony on simplicity.

Each month a testimony is featured here at school, and a Meeting for Worship may be devoted to that testimony. Perhaps someone will read a poem about peace, or students will speak about what community means to them. During a recent academic year, the whole school embraced the theme of stewardship, and we had discussions and took actions aimed at caring for ourselves and others, the environment and the world. As our students progress through each grade, they develop a deeper and more personal understanding of the testimonies.





At Penn Charter, doing the right thing—taking responsibility for your actions and environment—comes naturally when children respect their community and the individuals in it. Personal integrity is both taught and valued here. Our Middle and Upper School students agree to abide by a code of conduct that begins, "The William Penn Charter School is a community based on trust." Expectations for appropriate behavior are clear, and students generally live up to them. When problems do arise, members of the community work together to help solve them. For example, the Upper School Community Council, which deliberates on discipline cases, includes student representatives from each grade and from student government as well as administrators and faculty.

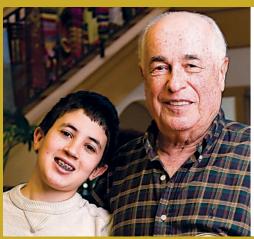
Arriving at decisions is done "in the manner of Friends," which at first can be challenging for children but ultimately provides valuable life lessons. Issues are not voted on, and the majority does not rule. Everyone involved in a decision must agree for approval, as the

entire senior class does when they select their yearbook dedication. Sometimes this takes time, as people share their opinions and passions and strive to see the merits of other points of view. Eventually, most groups reach a "sense of the meeting," often referred to as "consensus." This doesn't mean that all are of one mind, but rather that all agree that the solution is the best for the community.

Through periodic sessions called Meeting for Business, held in Middle and Upper School divisions, as well as in day-to-day school life, Penn Charter students get lots of experience in Quaker decision-making. They develop collaborative problem-solving skills, feel empowered by the process, and know that, as one Upper School student put it, "Our voices are heard." But students also learn that being free to speak comes with the obligation to speak carefully and that it is not the same as doing whatever they want. Though it is not a uniquely Quaker concept, the notion that with freedom comes responsibility is vital in a Friends community.

COMMUNITY

THE STRENGTHS OF EACH, THE STRENGTH OF ALL





Of all the Quaker testimonies, perhaps none is more visible at Penn Charter—in classrooms and Meeting rooms, in hallways and on playing fields—than community. Seeing that of God in all members of the school community leads students to appreciate the strengths of each one and the strength of everyone. The power of Meeting for Worship lies not just in sitting expectantly in silence but in sitting together. Quaker decision-making avoids a potential tyranny of the majority, aspiring instead for an outcome that works for all.

LETTING THEIR LIVES SPEAK

"As I leave Penn Charter, I will remember the loving and caring people in it. This place is a part of me. I am a part of it. [As we] leave here to pursue what life has next in store for us, we are comforted by the assurance that we will always be in this place, and this place in us. Community is everything."

- Penn Charter student commencement speaker



Picture a typical first-grade class. In this small community of petite but full community members, children with birthdays sit in the center of a circle while their classmates take turns saying something nice about them. It's a fitting birthday present for a Friends school. Here at Penn Charter, a strong sense of community stems from respect and care for everyone. Teachers truly know each child and are committed to bringing out the best in them. Learning is seen as a collaborative process in which the whole community learns from one another—teachers from students as well as the other way around. Academically, students are encouraged

to reach their full potential; those who excel are not held up above their peers, and those who need support get it so they, too, can achieve their best.

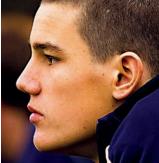
This is not to say that healthy competition is absent at Penn Charter. We are proud of our rich tradition of academic and athletic success, and the enthusiasm and camaraderie displayed for our "Quakers" teams and among teammates are strong. Quaker values aren't left in the locker room, however, and a spirit of fair play prevails. Coaches, like their academic counterparts, want students to work hard and achieve their potential. All who want to pursue sports can find a team to play on, and dedication and sportsmanship are honored. Quakers victories—and there are many—are celebrated by everyone.

Children come to understand that the school community is broad, encompassing not just their friends or their grade, but all students, teachers, staff and families. Following adults' lead, our students take pride in the accomplishments of all—artists and performers, scholars and leaders—watch out for those in need, and support one another in difficult as well as good times. They are mindful of the give-and-take involved in creating a successful shared experience. And, while learning how to nurture their school community, they discover their place in a wider one.

QUESTIONING

BEING A SEEKER OF TRUTH







Asking questions is at the heart of Quakers' relationship with their faith. They pose queries (see below) as a means of examining their beliefs and the consistency of their beliefs and actions. Because they believe in an ongoing search for God's truth, they trust that answers may be made clear if they are open to finding them.



A QUAKER GLOSSARY: Queries

QUERIES: Since the time of George Fox, the Englishman regarded as the founder of Quakerism, Friends have posed open-ended questions called queries. Queries don't ask for simple yes-no answers but rather in-depth consideration of a topic. Each month, general queries are read in Quaker Meetings, asking members to ask themselves questions such as "Am I careful to speak truth as I know it, and am I open to truth spoken to me?"

In this tradition, Quaker schools pose queries to children to get them to think about the moral issues that are important in their world. At Penn Charter, each division approaches queries in age-appropriate ways. In Lower School, for example, children may read a testimony and some related queries together in worship sharing groups. Later, in Meeting, they are encouraged to reflect on their answers and speak if they're moved to.



A Friends education includes a lot of questions. Here at Penn Charter, faculty members do not simply provide facts but instead foster a spirit of inquiry. Acknowledging that no one knows everything, teachers challenge students to figure out what to ask as well as how to answer it. As a result, students not only learn how to devise good questions but are not afraid to ask them, preparing them for college success and a lifetime of learning.

Along the way, our students naturally learn that some questions are hard. Sometimes there's more than one right answer or more than one way to get to an answer. Sometimes there is no apparent answer. That's not only accepted but expected in a Penn Charter education. Not all people share the same opinion, and not all shared opinions are correct. Students are encouraged to question assumptions and the status quo. We believe that questioning and the dialogue that ensues are marks of a healthy Quaker community.

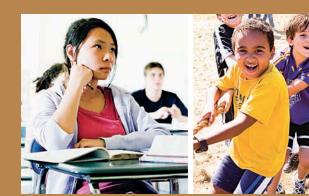
LETTING THEIR LIVES SPEAK

"Penn Charter... developed in me the ability to question my world and the confidence to listen to the answers."

- Penn Charter graduate

DIVERSITY

EMBRACING A MULTIFACETED UNDERSTANDING OF DIVERSITY





Many schools today strive for a diverse student body and faculty to enrich the educational experience. For Friends schools like Penn Charter, that effort is rooted in the core Quaker belief in the equality—and divinity—of all people. This principle has led many Quakers in history to work for justice for people of different races, religions, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, political persuasions, genders and sexual orientations. So it's not surprising that Penn Charter should seek to build a community representing diversity in all of those areas as well as in learning style, geographic area and opinion. Our emphasis on sharing and celebrating differences creates a welcoming atmosphere where diverse individuals can thrive.



LETTING THEIR LIVES SPEAK

"I believe the quiet respect for all individuals I learned at Penn Charter impacts almost everything I do in daily life."

- Penn Charter graduate



Though the school was founded in 1689 with a mandate to educate students of all religions, and supported that mission with financial aid beginning in 1701, significant diversity has been achieved in the last several decades. More than 30 percent of students receive financial aid and more than 27 percent are students of color. Buddhism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Protestantism and Quakerism are all represented, and many of our families blend different religious backgrounds. Students, faculty, administrators and board members include individuals of many faiths.

At Penn Charter, however, our focus on diversity extends beyond the makeup of the school community. The curriculum weaves international and multicultural perspectives into academic studies. In an extracurricular Middle School activity, students partnered with counterparts at a school in Pakistan to explore solutions to the global challenge of water deficits. Recently, the entire school took an interest in two schools being built in Cambodia, igniting a greater understanding of the country through research, a guest speaker and Friendly letter writing. The Student Diversity Discussion Group tackles issues involving gender, disability, race and ethnicity, and works with the Religious Life Committee to organize the division's annual Friends Multicultural Day. Focusing on both diversity and Quaker testimonies, the day is filled with workshops, run by students and teachers, that explore a theme. (The photo at left shows students in a workshop on Irish step dance.)

One of the great lessons of diversity is learned not when everyone embraces everyone else's differences but when people disagree. Students are encouraged to share their views, even when—and especially when—they hold a minority opinion. Then, tolerance and open-mindedness become more than something *other* people should practice. Penn Charter welcomes the constructive sharing of opinions, recognizing that controversy is proof that all voices are being heard.



STEWARDSHIP

CARING FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS, OUR ENVIRONMENT, AND THE WORLD



According to the Quaker guide Faith & Practice, "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." Most often used to refer to concern for the environment, stewardship actually involves a caretaking approach that goes beyond going green. "Taking care" is a way of being that is integrally connected to the other Quaker testimonies.



When a Lower Schooler makes a new classmate feel welcome, that is stewardship. When an Upper Schooler helps at a local homeless shelter, that too is stewardship. And when Middle School students design their own fund-raising projects to support a school in Cambodia, that is stewardship. In the last few years, the entire school has become involved in efforts to be more environmentally responsible. Recycling bins are

used throughout the school, an environmental club was formed, the school uses green cleaning products and energy-efficient lightbulbs, and the new David L. Kurtz Center for the Performing Arts will be the first major "green" building in East Falls. Thanks to a recent yearlong focus on stewardship, the greatest long-term benefit may be a new awareness of each person's role in taking care.

LETTING THEIR LIVES SPEAK

"I'm just trying to clean up our world."

- First grader, on why he picks up trash

SERVICE

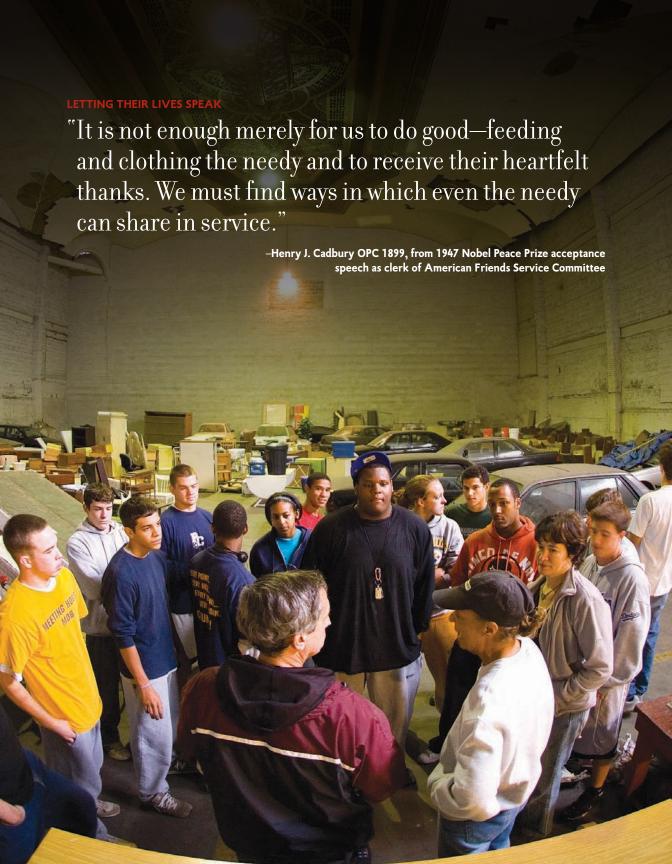
EVERY DAY IS A DAY OF SERVICE





On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the entire Penn Charter community, like many other schools, takes part in a day of service. But at Penn Charter, the day before MLK Day and the day after and the day after that are likely to be filled with service as well. Almost every day, a van takes interested Upper School students to service opportunities in the Philadelphia area. Performing service is not just a graduation requirement. It is woven into the fabric of the school and into the curriculum in every grade.







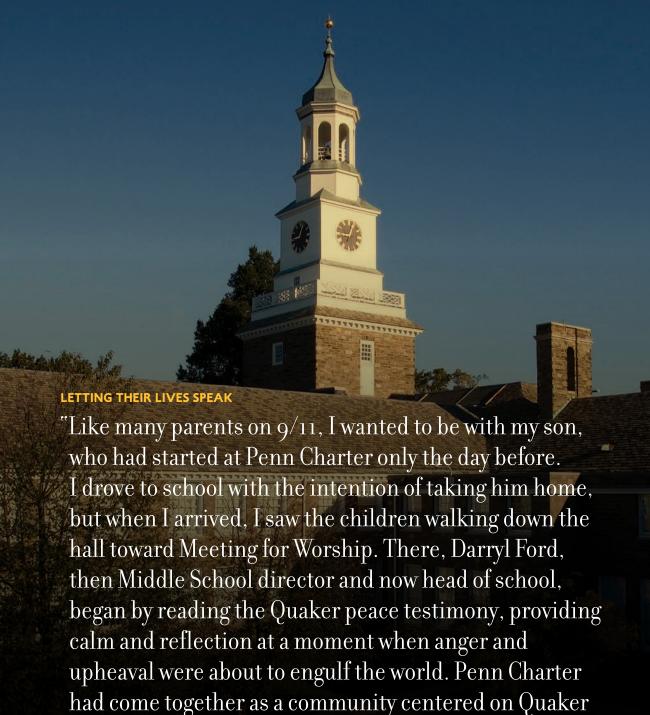
Service, considered one of Quakerism's core values—and an expression of other testimonies such as integrity, community, equality and stewardship—has been a major part of living a Quaker life since the days of founder William Penn. An only slightly tongue-incheek response to the oft-asked question, "How do you know when a Meeting for Worship is over?" is "When the service begins."

Service and service learning begin in pre-kindergarten. What's the difference? Community service is something we do with a sense of good will. Service learning represents an engagement in social issues with an educational component. An array of courses in all grades incorporate service learning: in kindergarten, growing worms as a fund-raising activity; in Upper School English, visiting a home for the elderly to

gather oral histories; and in Spanish class, collaborating with second graders at a nearby public school to write bilingual storybooks.

Service benefits both the served and the server. Getting out into underserved communities exposes students to ways of living they may not have realized existed. It develops empathy, responsibility, leadership, commitment and character. A member of our religious studies faculty says, "Our students have gone places, seen other people's lives, and they become sensitive to the issues that other people face."

The amount and variety of service performed at Penn Charter is great indeed; for more information, see the Services pages at www.penncharter.com.



values. Realizing that this was exactly what my son

needed, I went home."

FINAL THOUGHTS

Throughout their Penn Charter careers, children learn about Quakerism in age-appropriate ways. In studying famous Pennsylvanians, third graders learn about William Penn and his good relationship with the Lenape. A quarterlong seventh grade Quakerism class includes a video project in which students interview Quaker faculty. By 10th grade, they are ready for a more intellectual and historical approach to the topic. Mostly, however, children learn about Quakerism by watching it in action—in Meeting for Worship, in efforts to reach decisions by consensus and to solve problems without resorting to violence, in the good sportsmanship exemplified on teams, and in the genuine respect students and teachers have for one another here.

Penn Charter offers periodic programs about Quakerism for families interested in learning more. Questions may also be directed to the directors of each division. All are welcome in this community of Friends.



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"Walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone."

- George Fox, a founder of Quakerism, 1624-1691



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