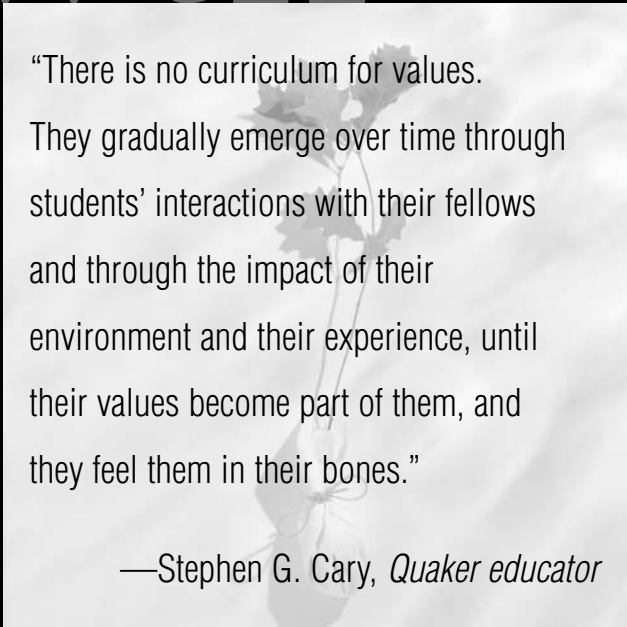


Sidwell Friends School



Testimonies

growth



“There is no curriculum for values. They gradually emerge over time through students’ interactions with their fellows and through the impact of their environment and their experience, until their values become part of them, and they feel them in their bones.”

—Stephen G. Cary, *Quaker educator*

values

This pamphlet is intended to give members of the Sidwell Friends School community insight into the core values of Sidwell Friends as a Quaker institution. The testimonies may serve as a basis for continuing discussion and discernment about the Quaker character of Sidwell Friends School. The testimonies speak to the nature of the values and commitments to which the Sidwell Friends School community aspires.

The choice of Testimonies as the name for the pamphlet reflects the Quaker heritage of Sidwell Friends School. Testimonies have important standing and meaning within the Religious Society of Friends:

Testimony is different from a secular value. The word testimony is used by Quakers to describe a witness to the living truth within the human heart as it is acted out in everyday life. . . . Testimony is a way of living not a creed. Its is not a form of words but a mode of life based on the realisation that there is that of God in everybody, that all human beings are equal, that all life is interconnected.

— Jonathan Dale, *Faith into action: Quaker social testimony*, 2000

The pamphlet uses queries to illuminate and explore these testimonies. Since the late 1600s, Friends have used queries to reflect upon and assess their faith and practice.

Rooted in the history of Friends, the queries reflect the Quaker way of life, reminding Friends of the ideals we seek to attain. . . . Friends approach queries as a guide to self-examination, using them not as an outward set of rules, but as a framework within which we assess our convictions and examine, clarify, and consider . . . the direction of our lives and the life of the community. . . . the queries have been marked by consistency of convictions and concerns within Friends testimonies—simplicity, peace, integrity, stewardship, equality and community—as well as by strength derived from worship, ministry, and social conscience.

— Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, *Faith and Practice*, 1997

These testimonies are presented, not as rules, but as guidance in the manner of Friends. The spirit of such Friendly guidance has long standing in the Religious Society of Friends:

Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all, with the measure of light which is pure and holy, may be guided: and so in the light walking and abiding, these may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not in the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

— Letter from the Meeting of Elders at Balby, 1656

The Sidwell Friends Testimonies Committee prepared this pamphlet over a two-year period, with the advice and participation of constituencies throughout the School community. The Sidwell Friends School Board of Trustees authorized and approved its purpose, process and content. The pamphlet sets forth nine testimonies, consistent with Friends' conviction that there is "that of God" in everyone. In addition, the pamphlet illustrates the central role and influence of meeting for worship in the life of Sidwell Friends School. These testimonies comprise a living document which can serve as a basis for continuing exploration and discussion of the values, commitments and practices of the Sidwell Friends community.

Respectfully submitted,
Sidwell Friends Testimonies Committee

That of God in everyone

The Light Within
Truth
Love

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Do you live life in the spirit of love and truth and peace, answering to that same spirit in everyone?

Do you reach for the best that is within yourself? Do you look for it in others?

“...Walk cheerfully over the world answering that of God in every one.”

—George Fox, 1656

“Each person has inside a basic decency and goodness. If he listens to it and acts on it, he is giving a great deal of what it is the world needs most. It is not complicated but it takes courage. It takes courage for a person to listen to his own goodness and act on it.”

—Pablo Casals

“Learn to be quiet enough to hear the sound of the genuine within yourself so that you can hear it in other people.”

—Marian Wright Edelman, 1992

“There is a principle, which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names. It is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from anywhere the heart stands in perfect sincerity.”

—John Woolman, 1774

“Though all of us are attracted to physical beauty, cleverness, wittiness, and intelligence, the Quaker affirmation that there is that of God in each person asserts that being worthy of respect does not depend on possessing attractive qualities or skills. Until we can respect another person without justification except that he or she is a child of God, it is not really respect.”

—Paul A. Lacey, *Growing into Goodness*, 1998

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Are honesty, truthfulness, and respect for others central in our School community?

Are you honest with yourself as well as with others?

Do we stand firm when an ethical principle is challenged?

“Personal integrity and academic honesty are fundamental principles that must be upheld by all members of the Sidwell Friends community in order to create an atmosphere in which trust, scholarship and friendship may flourish...”
—*The Honor Code*, Sidwell Friends Upper School

“Speaking the truth is so central to Quaker belief that Quakers have always refused to take oaths. Since they are expected to tell the truth at all times, they reject the idea that there are two standards of truth -- one for everyday concerns and one for the courtroom. The prick of conscience that comes with the violation of truth is a reminder that integrity is the first principle of life... Truth-telling simplifies life... Lying burdens and complicates life.”

—Robert Lawrence Smith, *A Quaker Book of Wisdom*

“This above all: To thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

—William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

“Truth is the only safe ground to stand on.”

—Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Integrity

Honesty
Sincerity
Truth
Trust

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Peace

Harmony
Understanding
Reconciliation
Nonviolence
Serenity

Do you live in peace with yourself and others?

Do we recognize and address the causes of conflict and all forms of violence within our community?

“George Fox was in prison in the early 1650s because of his beliefs. He was offered freedom if he would fight for Oliver Cromwell, the leader of the Parliamentary forces in the Civil War at the time. He refused in words that Quakers have quoted ever since:

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

Peace is not just the absence of war. It is about our day-to-day relationships with our families, our neighbors, people in our towns and cities, and in other countries. Peace is also how we cope with people we may find difficult and different from ourselves. It is about accepting that there are different cultures and ways of doing things and that different does not mean worse.”

—Harvey Gillman, *A Portrait of Friends*

“Peace is the state in which we are in accord with God, the earth, others, and ourselves... A Peacekeeper holds the vision of peace for all beings in all worlds, as beautiful expression of harmony and balance resonating through thought, word, and deed...”

—North Pacific Yearly Meeting, *Faith and Practice*

“Peace is not a distant goal that we seek, but the means by which we arrive at that goal.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Victory attained by violence is tantamount to a defeat, for it is momentary.”

—Mahatma Gandhi, 1919

Do you put yourself in others' shoes and try to understand their experiences?

Do we reach out to persons in need?

"My religion is kindness."

—The Dalai Lama

"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

—Atticus Finch in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*

"—If you do not care for each other, who will care for you?"

"—The heart is like a garden. It can grow compassion or fear, resentment or love.

What seeds will you plant there?"

—Jack Kornfield, *Buddha's Little Instruction Book*

"If I can stop one heart from breaking,

I shall not live in vain;

If I can ease one life the aching,

Or cool one pain,

Or help one fainting robin

Unto his nest again,

I shall not live in vain."

—Emily Dickinson

"We have to continue to practice mindfulness and reconciliation until we can see a child's body of skin and bones in Uganda or Ethiopia as our own, until the hunger and pain in the bodies of all [people] are our own...[Then] we can do the real work to help alleviate suffering."

—Thich Nhat Hanh

Compassion

Caring

Love

Kindness

Empathy

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Simplicity

Balance
Priority
Clearness

Do we spend our time and energy doing what is truly worthwhile?

Do you clear away the clutter in your life so that you can more readily hear the “still, small voice of God”?

“ ‘Tis a gift to be simple,
‘Tis a gift to be free,
‘Tis a gift to come down
Where we ought to be.”
—*Shaker Hymn*

“Living simply is the right ordering of our lives and priorities.”
—Leonard Kenworthy

“Everything should be made as simple as it can be, but not simpler.”
—Albert Einstein

“Simplicity is not just simple clothes and a simple lifestyle. It’s an organization of the mind that enables you to sort out the unimportant details that often clutter your thoughts.”
—Sidwell Friends 7th grader

“Simplicity is cutting away all that is extraneous.”
—North Pacific Yearly Meeting, *Faith and Practice*

Do you use and perfect your gifts for the benefit of others?

Do we regard our time, talents and wealth as gifts to be shared?

Do we respect the balance of nature?

Do we act to preserve the natural world rather than seek dominance over it?

“Those who think to win the world
by doing something to it,
I see them come to grief.
For the world is a sacred object.
Nothing is to be done to it.
To do anything to it is to damage it.
To seize it is to lose it.”

—Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, version by Ursula K. Le Guin

“Our greatest responsibility is to be good ancestors.”

—Jonas Salk

“...all we possess are the gifts of God to us; now in distributing it to others, we
act as his stewards...”

—John Woolman

“All things are connected. We did not weave the web of life. We are but a strand
in it. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the people of the earth.”

—Chief Seattle

“The world we are told was made especially for man—a presumption not
supported by the facts...[W]hy should man value himself as more than a small
part of the one great unit of creation?”

—John Muir

Stewardship

Responsibility
Conservation
Protection
Nurturing

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Justice

Fairness
Respect
Equality
Action

Do we act fairly after considering all perspectives?

Do we examine ourselves for prejudice based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability and economic advantage?

How does our School community respond to injustice and promote fairness?

“A story is told about Fiorello LaGuardia, former mayor of New York City. Before becoming mayor, LaGuardia served as a judge in a local court. It was during the Depression, when jobs were scarce and many people were poor and hungry. A woman appeared before him who had stolen food to feed her children. Wanting to satisfy the demand of both justice and mercy, LaGuardia ruled as follows: ‘I fine the defendant ten dollars for stealing, and I fine everyone else in this courtroom, myself included, fifty cents each for living in a city where a woman is forced to steal to feed her children.’ The money was immediately collected from everyone in the room and given to the woman, enabling her to pay her fine and have some money left over.”

—adapted from *Jewish Wisdom* by Rabbi Telushkin

“...[C]ease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression...”

— *Isaiah 1:16-17*

“This country will not be a good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a good place for all of us to live in.”

—Theodore Roosevelt

“Stability and peace in our land will not come from the barrel of a gun, because peace without justice in an impossibility.”

—Desmond Tutu

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

—Edmund Burke (1729-1797) - English statesman

“Speak truth to power.”

—American Friends Service Committee, 1955, taken from a charge given to 18th-century Friends

Do we understand that just as service is a gift so too is the opportunity to serve?

Are we generous with what we have?

Do we seek opportunities to use our gifts to serve others?

“Past the seeker as he prayed came the cripple and the beggar and the beaten. And seeing them, the Holy one went down into deep prayer and cried, ‘Great God, how is it that a loving creator can see such things and yet do nothing about them?’ And out of the long silence, God said, ‘I did do something. I made you.’”

—*Sufi teaching story*

“Unless someone like you
Cares a whole awful lot
Nothing is going to get better.
It’s not.”

—Dr. Seuss

“A small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

—Margaret Mead

“Be the change you want to see in the world.”

—Mahatma Gandhi

“Let your life speak.”

—*Quaker tenet*

Service

Serving
Sharing
Helping
Respect

Learning

Teaching
Questioning
Discovering
Creating
Truth-seeking

Do teachers and students get to know and appreciate one another as individuals?

Do we maintain a challenging and vigorous learning environment?

Do we help imagination and creativity take flight?

Do we let learning change both our minds and our lives?

“Rabbi Tarfon sat conversing on serious matters with other learned men in a house of Ludd. The question was raised: ‘Which is more important—learning or action?’

Rabbi Tarfon replied, ‘Action is more important. Of what earthly use are fine words and preachments unless they are put into practice?’

Rabbi Akiba upheld the contrary viewpoint ‘Learning is more important,’ he said.

The sages finally concluded that both were right. ‘Learning is more important when it leads to action,’ they declared.”

—*Jewish folklore*

“The secret in education lies in respecting the student.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”

—Marcel Proust

“A teacher translates the rudiments of hope, will, purpose and competence . . . [and] conveys logic much beyond the literal meaning of the words s/he teaches and . . . outlines a particular world image and style of fellowship.”

—Erik Erikson [Paul A. Lacey p 79]

“Formal education is only a jumping-off point for a lifetime of learning and doing, and what concerns good schools and good teachers is how students apply the learning they acquire to living their lives.”

—Robert Lawrence Smith

Do we help make our Sidwell Friends community a safe, secure and loving place?

Do we face conflicts with patience, forbearance and openness to healing?

Do we offer assistance when someone is in need?

Do we truly welcome newcomers and include them in our Sidwell Friends community?

“Our Religious Society endures as a community of friends who take thought for outward society by first taking care of one another. Friends are advised to maintain love and unity, to avoid tale-bearing and detraction, and to settle differences promptly and in a manner free from resentment and all forms of inward violence. Live affectionately as friends, entering with sympathy into the joys and sorrows of one another’s daily lives. Visit one another. Be alert to give help and ready to receive it. Bear the burdens of one another’s failings; share the buoyancy of one another’s strengths. . . . In all the affairs of the . . . community, proceed in the peaceable spirit of Pure Wisdom, with forbearance and warm affection for each other.”

—*Advice* from the Epistles of the Yearly Meeting of Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, 1694 and 1695

“Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much.”

—Helen Keller

“Perhaps community is a constellation. Each one of us is a light in the emerging collective brightness. A constellation of light has the greater power of illumination than any single light would have on its own. Together we increase brightness.”

—John O’Donohue, *Eternal Echoes*

“I note obvious differences between sort and type,
but we are more alike my friends,
than we are unlike.”

—Maya Angelou

Community

Caring
Inclusion
Interdependence
Welcoming

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Meeting for Worship

Silence
Listening
Sharing
Reflection
Gathered

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Do you come to meeting with heart and mind prepared for the silence?

Do you listen openly and expectantly in the silence and to vocal messages?

Do we feel the power of the community drawing us together in the meeting for worship?

“One of the main characteristics of a Friends Meeting for Worship is silence. We usually affirm children for their words, but do we ever affirm them for their silence? Silence can be the capacity to not have the easy answer. We need to affirm the time for dreaming, for imagining, for vision-making—the time for the interior images to meet the images of the world... Silent time can become a centerpiece of the school's rhythms, a way to deal with problems, to celebrate, to respond to tragedies, either in the school or in the world.”

—Dorothy Flanagan, *The Mystery of Meeting for Worship*, Friends Council on Education

“Be still and know that I am God.”

—*Psalms* 46:10

“We listened and heard the silence.

We listened and felt the silence.

We listened and tasted the silence.

We closed our eyes

And saw the great silence dwelling within.”

—Moses Shongo, a Seneca Elder who lived in the 1800s

“A true message from out of the silence may stick in the listener's mind throughout the meeting, throughout the day, or throughout a lifetime.”

—Sidwell Friends senior

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philosophy

The Sidwell Friends School

Sidwell Friends School is a community dedicated to educating and nurturing the mind, body, and spirit of girls and boys in grades pre-kindergarten through twelve. Embracing the Quaker belief in the unique worth of each individual, we seek students of diverse cultural, racial, religious, and economic backgrounds—students of ability and promise whose qualities of mind and heart indicate that they will thrive in an atmosphere of intellectual, creative, and physical vitality intended to foster strength of character and concern for others.

We offer our students a challenging curriculum and a vigorous learning environment built on long-held standards of Quaker education. In keeping with the ideals of justice and peace, we emphasize personal integrity, respect for consensus, and commitment to service. We undertake to develop in our students a combination of independent thinking and high personal expectation, complemented by openness to the ideas of others and a spirit of compassionate generosity. We encourage our students to inquire, to challenge, to be adventurous, yet to cherish stillness and quiet reflection. We strive to be sensitive to differences in learning styles and developmental needs. Above all else, we seek to nourish in all our students that genuine love of learning which will enrich them and animate their efforts to engage thoughtfully and responsibly with others throughout their lives.

Approved by the Board of Trustees, February 15, 1995

Joyce Zickler & TCCorl
Testimonies 021902.SFT
February 20, 2002

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