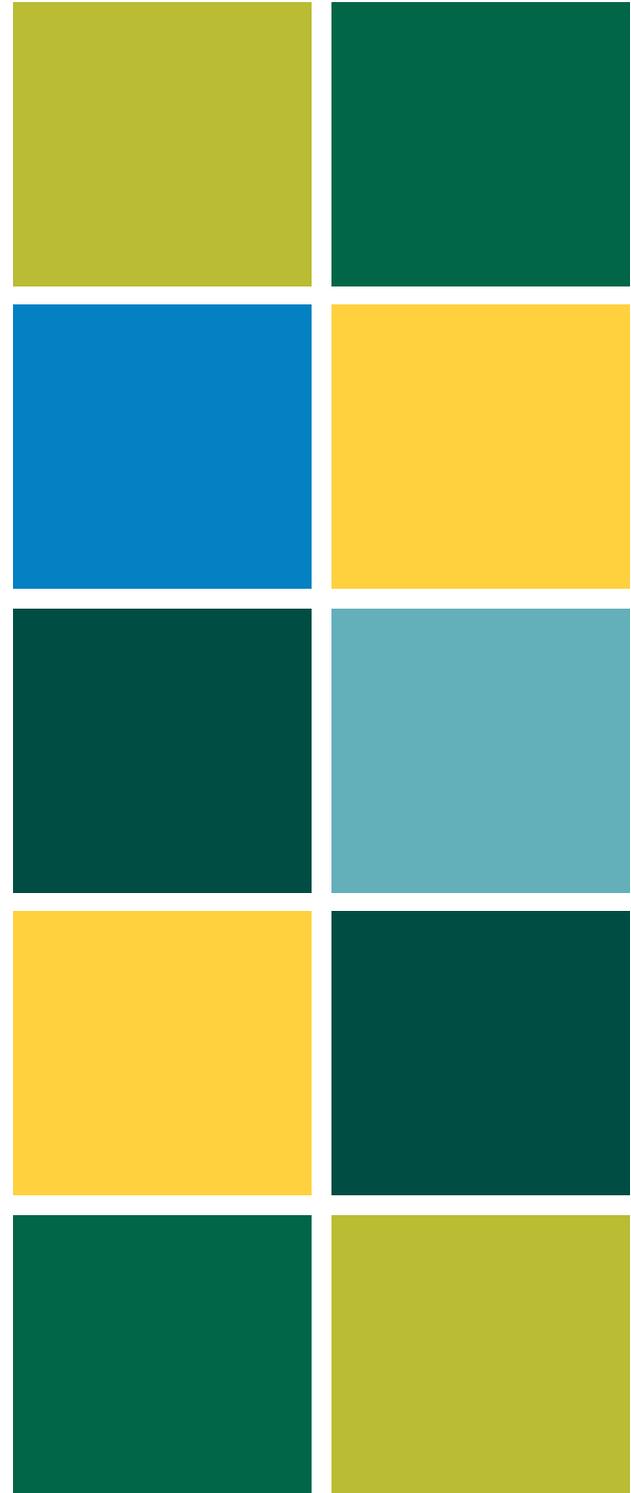




SANDY SPRING FRIENDS SCHOOL



"Let Your Lives Speak"



Quaker History, Terms and Practice
at Sandy Spring Friends School





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What is a Friends Education?

At Sandy Spring Friends School, we have a profound sense of hope in the individual's ability to create positive change within the world, and we foster the values that create change: simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and stewardship. These values are sometimes referred to by their acronym, the Quaker SPICES.



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An Introduction to Quaker Terms and Practices

What is Meeting for Worship at Sandy Spring Friends School?

At Sandy Spring Friends School, we intentionally provide our students time and space for silent reflection in their busy lives. Students participate in Meeting for Worship at least once a week during the school day. There are also opportunities for parents and families to participate in Meeting for Worship throughout the year.

Meeting for Worship is integral to the spiritual practice of the Religious Society of Friends and is at the core of our school. Our form of worship is based primarily on silence. It is a rich and living silence which connects us to each other and to our Guide by leading us to a deeper, more centered inner place. All present share equally in the service. Participants in a Meeting wait in silent anticipation, seeking the truth by listening for the “still small voice of God.” Meetings can be spent entirely in silent reflection, or students or adults may share a message. At the conclusion, the silence is broken by shaking hands with neighbors.

At Meeting for Worship it is appropriate to hold others in the Light in times of joy, celebration, and life transition. The concept of “light” is essential to Quaker practice, referring to the spirit or the divine light. Our school song, The George Fox Song, encourages people to “walk in the Light.” At SSFS, holding a person in the Light can mean lifting them up in your thoughts, praying for them, or silently and intentionally sending positive energy and love.

What are the “SPICES”?

You may hear students and staff at SSFS refer to the Quaker “SPICES.” This is an acronym that stands for six of the most common and enduring Quaker testimonies: Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, and Stewardship.

Who is a “clerk,” and what does he/she do?

A clerk refers to someone who presides at meetings for worship with a concern for business, or the head of a committee. A clerk of a meeting for business helps move the agenda along, calls on people to speak, and helps guide the group to reach a “sense of the meeting” (see below). Meetings for business may also have recording and reading clerks.

What is meant by the “sense of the meeting”?

In an effort to seek unity, Quakers strive to reach a “sense of the meeting,” rather than voting. Once a topic has been discussed and the clerk feels that a decision has been reached by the group, she/he states the sense of the meeting as a minute for the meeting’s approval. No vote is taken. Unity is sought, but if it is not attained to a reasonable degree, the clerk can hold the item over for reconsideration at a later time. The clerk must decide on the degree of unity required, basing that judgement on the importance of the subject and the experience and wisdom of those who speak to it.



Teaching Tolerance and Valuing Diversity

Irene McHenry | Executive Director, Friends Council on Education

Excerpt from *Readings on Quaker Pedagogy (2004)*, published by Friends Council on Education

A paper presented to an international conference of educators in Washington, D.C., in March 2003 on the topic of fostering tolerance and understanding in promoting social cohesion and world peace.

Two basic Quaker beliefs influence all of Friends education:

- Each human being has a Divine spark or light through which a greater spiritual wisdom can be experientially accessed, and,
- Truth seeking is a process of continuing revelation from multiple perspectives within a gathered community. These two beliefs lead to a constructivist approach in education, an inquiry-based pedagogy valuing multiple perspectives and a continual search for academic excellence within a values-centered environment.

How are these Quaker beliefs visible in the everyday life of a Friends school? This question is particularly interesting because over the centuries the number of Quakers in Friends schools has diminished while the number of Friends schools and the breadth of

the diverse public they serve have increased. The Quaker beliefs stated above and the resulting values of harmony, equality, integrity, and community are deeply embedded in the pedagogical and curricular approaches in a Friends school environment. This makes Friends education especially relevant as a model for engendering respect for diversity and cultivating tolerance, peaceful resolution of conflict, and civic engagement in the world.

Quakers believe that it is imperative for the survival and continual evolution of the human race that we learn to effect change through persuasion, not through violent means. Paul Lacey, a contemporary Quaker educator and clerk of the board of the American Friends Service Committee, speaks to the persuasive power of education in this way: “Education is, above all else, persuasion— persuasion about which tasks are worth doing, which subjects worth studying, which habits worth developing. Quaker education has evolved to be as uncoercive as possible, to trust that good sense and good will can convince people to learn” (Lacey, 2002).

The curricular and pedagogical approach in Friends



education is an approach that values the rich diversity of multiple perspectives, cultivated through the valuing of each student's voice engaged in inquiry. Stephen Cary, a Quaker social activist and educator, said that in Friends schools we are especially concerned about the cultural ambience of the institutions. We intentionally create environments that expose students to the values that we believe are important in order to provide a moral framework for the exercise of the knowledge that schools are created to impart. This combination of knowledge and an embedded value structure is crucial for student learning, as knowledge alone is not enough for survival of the human species in our modern complex world. Knowledge is not enough, and knowledge alone, without a context of values, can even be dangerous. Building community and trust, integrity and caring, a capacity to walk in another's shoes, and cultivating the optimism of the human spirit are even more important goals than the imparting of knowledge (Cary, 1996).

Pedagogy

How Does the Pedagogy in Friends Schools Teach Tolerance and Valuing of Diversity?

Friends believe that each person has the capacity for goodness and a responsibility to attain that goodness. Research on values and practices in Friends schools gives evidence of an emphasis on the process of reflection and inquiry in the school culture that comes from the fundamental Quaker belief in truth as a process of continuing revelation (Hays, 1994; Heath, 1991). Growing from this belief comes common pedagogy in Friends schools based on the following principles:

- Learning through inquiry.
- Learning through reflection.
- Learning through collaboration.
- Learning through service.
- A culture of respect.
- Teachers as partners in the learning process.

Learning through Inquiry

Quakers value knowing experientially. The "query," a Quaker tool for corporate and personal reflection, provides a structure to test belief and action repeatedly.



This pattern of asking and answering relevant queries lends itself perfectly to an educational setting. Queries are used in classes and faculty meetings to inspire reflection and dialogue toward the goal of building a caring, respectful community.

In Friends schools, a commonly used pedagogical approach is inquiry-based learning. This involves shifting from a teacher-directed, lecture-style approach to a child-centered, inquiry-based approach. Rather than teaching the answers, the teacher's responsibility is to raise the inspiring questions in a sequential way that engages the students in their own process of inquiry and discovery. As a way of developing critical thinking, teachers engage students by using questions or queries to which there is no one right answer. This inquiry process engages students in observation, discussion, and openness to new learning, cultivating attitudes that negate habits of prejudice, irrational judgment, and stereotyping, thereby highly increasing students' openness to experiencing the value of diversity (Fremon, 2001).

Learning through Reflection

In his research on Friends schools, public schools and independent schools in the United States, Heath found that an important aspect of teaching in Friends schools is that of teaching students the process of reflection (1994). Teachers engage in making students aware of the process of their own thinking and growth. He also found that teachers in Friends schools give time and energy to the task of rigorously and honestly reflecting

about what they were learning from their own classroom interventions and innovations.

All Friends schools hold Meeting for Worship. It is a time period in which the school community gathers together in silence with instruction to be in a reflective, receptive mode, open to the divine spark within each person. Kim Hays' study of Quaker boarding schools in the United States revealed that from a student perspective, Meeting for Worship is a time for the process of both self-reflection and relational reflection (1994). Because Friends do not have doctrines and dogma, they place most emphasis on the manner in which people lead their lives and treat each other. This aspect, as well as the sense of genuine inquiry, allows young people from all religious traditions (or none) to feel comfortable and united during the silence of a Friends school Meeting for Worship. The meeting provides an opportunity for all to reflect quietly and gain a fresh perspective on daily life.

John Fothergill, a British Quaker educator, posited that a special Friends school contribution to the spiritual life of children is to habituate them to silence, attention, recollection and reflection (in Lacey, 1998). This capacity to be still, to wait patiently, to pay attention during silent reflection is an important habit to cultivate. Research shows that creating time to pause and reflect, creating contemplative time, is a practice that allows people living lives of commitment to the common good to be productive in unexpected, vital, and strategic ways (Daloz, Keen, Keen, Parks, 1996).



Learning through Collaboration

In Friends schools, collaboration is valued over competition. Research shows that the Friends school culture emphasizes the value of interconnection and relationship (Hays, 1994). Such pedagogical choices as not giving grades, class ranks, or standardized tests are hallmarks of many Friends elementary schools. A belief-based assumption in a Friends school is that each person is valued and respected for his or her capacity for access to truth through direct experience. This assumption leads to an approach that considers everyone in the room to have a piece of the truth and that together, they can create a more complex understanding of a piece of text or a laboratory experiment or a segment of history than any one could create individually (Fremon, 2001). Pedagogical techniques for collaborative work, inspired by Quaker ideals of testing individual insights by incorporating them with others, include:

- having an openness to a full range of voices, comfort with disagreement,
- acceptance of complexity,
- a willingness to be critical and to have one's ideas looked at critically,
- and an openness to new learning (Nourie, 2001).

In many elementary schools and middle schools, as well as in elective and some core courses in high schools, students work across age groups in academic and extracurricular settings for collaborative learning. Through collaborative learning teams and partnerships, students engage in teaching and learning content with each other and are simultaneously taught skills in listening, talking out problems, seeing other's points of view and mediating disagreements. This increases student capacity for interacting with, understanding and appreciating diverse, multiple perspectives, as well as capacity for handling any tension that this diversity might bring.

Learning through Service

"For Friends, service to others is the most direct way to live one's religious beliefs.... Friends became leaders in the great reform movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including abolition of slavery, women's rights, prison reform and mental health care reform" (Kashatus, 1995).

). Friends school pedagogy emphasizes the value of life L experience in the world outside of the classroom with critical reflection on that experience. A case study research project in one Friends school revealed that students learned and gained confidence as knowers through direct, concrete experience in the world (McHenry, 1996). When this experience is in the form of service accompanied by sufficient time and structure for reflection, students begin to assume greater responsibility for their own lives and values-based behavior.

Education can prepare students to serve others. Research shows that happiness and success are linked to lives of service (Heath, 1994). The emphasis on service to the world is significant in Friends education and underscores the idea that education should be democratic and focused on developing responsible community and world citizens.





A Culture of Respect

In Friends schools, violence is taboo. For example, an incident of pushing and shoving becomes a matter for serious conversation, and if appropriate, for discussion in the student discipline committee. Bullying, put-downs and hurtful words between students are attended to, not with automatic consequences, but through reaching out to those concerned. The investment of teachers and administrators working with students in immediate conversations to resolve these conflict situations sends the message that the community cares, and that it cares for everyone involved.

The Friends Council’s research study of moral growth in Friends high schools, *Embracing the Tension* (1998), found that participants named respect as a common theme across schools: “Respect is the coin of the realm. It is treasured, invested, expected. It is practiced in classrooms, in meetings for worship and meetings for business, in relationships, and in communication” (Friends school administrator). “Tensions are expected and acknowledged. The school community spends much time and energy working through things, living with differences in ways that are ultimately constructive of respect, of understanding, and of good outcomes” (high school teacher).

Teachers as Partners

Research by Heath demonstrated that Friends schools create environments that both faculty and students describe as significantly “caring” (1991). This ethos of care cultivates respect for individual differences and creates an environment where “children learn the habits, which make them caring, tender toward others, and respectful of the natural world” (Lacey, 2002). This prepares them for encountering more complex situations, and differing points of view, as they grow older.

Research from *Embracing the Tension* showed that students in Friends high school valued the warm and caring interpersonal relationships they had with their teachers (1998). Three main value themes were evident from the interview transcripts in this study of moral

growth in Friends high schools. These themes were:

- caring and compassion;
- listening, patience and openness;
- acceptance, equality and diversity.

This validation indicates that witnessing these values in action in a school community is a powerful and essential influence on the learning and moral growth of the members in the community.

Practice

How Does the Curriculum Build a Capacity for Civic Engagement and Valuing of Diversity?

Howard Brinton, a twentieth century Quaker educator, proposed that Friends schools are experiments in the desired social order based on four main social doctrines of harmony, equality, integrity and community (Brinton, 1940). There is no official list of Quaker values; however, the valuing of diversity, multiple perspectives and tolerance can be noted in the mission statements of the many diverse Friends schools. A clear example is the mission statement of Oakwood Friends School, Poughkeepsie, New York, established in 1860: Oakwood is “guided by Quaker principles of tolerance and inclusion, the peaceful resolution of conflict, simplicity and social justice, and the recognition of the worth of each individual” (Lacey, 1998).

The goal of values-based curricula is that these values become habits—habits of mind for learning and for conscious choice and action in the world. Belief in equality means making egalitarian behavior a habit. Belief in justice means acting justly in every daily interaction. To believe in community means making decisions based on the good of the whole community, rather than the individual preference. Belief in diversity means embracing the tension that diversity may initially bring and valuing the challenge of the encounter and the difference of the other person, culture, or perspective.

The core values embedded in the curricula and ethos of the schools, as reported by Friends schools in the



research study *Embracing the Tension* (1998) are: honesty and integrity, courage, concern for others, caring and compassion, acceptance, equality and diversity, self-reflection, community, listening, patience, openness and responsibility. The following list provides current curricular emphases in Friends schools organized according to the four main values described by Brinton: harmony, equality, integrity and community. These values are the basis for teaching all children, from pre-kindergarten through high school, to respect, appreciate and embrace diversity.

Harmony (peace):

- Studying peacemakers, civil rights leaders, and movements for social change using non-violent means through the study of individual lives and group movements worldwide, historically and through current local and world events.
- Education for social justice through the study of the roots causes of inequity and violence.
- Teaching peaceful resolution of conflict in the classroom and on the playground, and engaging faculty and students in developing the school's own conflict resolution curriculum.
- Teaching harmony with nature through environmental studies and the teaching of stewardship and equitable use of resources.

Simplicity:

- Cultivating reflective habits of mind in each curricular area through activities including reflection on text and reflective writing, as well as reflection on personal experience through discussion.
- Developing awareness of materialism and the correlations between materialism and social problems via social studies, arts, and humanities curricula, often through interdisciplinary studies.
- Engaging in a constant search for truth through dialogue and reflection; questioning the author's perspectives and developing an awareness of writing for particular audiences and purposes.
- Emphasis on living with integrity by requiring academic honesty, honesty in social interaction, and speaking clearly and honestly.

Equality:

- Emphasis on gender equality through selections of text materials, authors, speakers, and thematic studies.
- Emphasis on multiculturalism, respect for difference, and appreciation of human diversity in all areas of school life through selections of texts, authors, speakers, performances.
- Teaching respect and appreciation for diverse religions, cultures, races, abilities, and worldviews, especially in the social studies, humanities, and foreign language curricula.
- Cultivation of student voice and engagement in wrestling with diverse perspectives and through student leadership in government and decision-making committees.

Community:

- Creating an ethos of caring throughout the whole community—inside the classroom and the school, as well as caring outwardly through community service and service learning.
- Holding classroom and school community meetings using participatory decision-making processes to develop understanding of and skill with consensus decision-making and active listening to diverse perspectives.
- Cultivating self-discipline and a sense of responsibility to and for the school community and the outside community through service learning curricula, community service projects, and engagement with civic affairs.

Integrating Respect for Diversity into the Curriculum

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, tragedy, Chip Poston, a teacher from The George School in Newtown, Pennsylvania (a boarding school for grades 9-12 with a large international population), posed this question for educators in public and private schools across the country: How can we teach any subject in a way that enhances student understanding of justice, basic human and legal rights, and global justice? His ideas in response to this question included:

- Teach students to examine root causes of the cycles of violence in the world.
- Work with students to increase tolerance by practicing tolerance within our own school communities and encourage truth telling from diverse perspectives. For example, after September 11, many schools organized all-school assemblies and invited speakers to speak from different perspectives: Patriots and pacifists; Muslims, Jews, and Christians.
- Teach students to investigate systems—the politics of oil, energy, sustainability, and the environment.
- Challenge students and their families to look to our human relationship with the earth.
- Engage students in examining the concepts and practices of justice and forgiveness—what is justice and what does it mean for justice to be done? (Friends Journal, 2002)

“*The habits of mind reflect attitudes and behaviors that contribute to the development of character by increasing students’ capacities for reflection, metacognition, appreciation of cultural differences, and multiple points of view.*”

At the William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (kindergarten–12), the faculty worked together to develop a “curriculum map” that outlines by time frame the concepts, topics, skills, assessment methods, and habits of mind that are covered in each area of the curriculum. The curricular maps are dynamic, living documents intended to be reviewed and revised on a regular basis and integrated across disciplines wherever possible (Granger, 2003). The habits of mind reflect attitudes and behaviors that contribute to the development of character by increasing students’ capacities for reflection, metacognition, appreciation of cultural differences, and multiple points of view.

Working together to develop a precise curricular map and considering the habits of mind, as well as the content to be covered, helps faculty select appropriate text materials and build activities into courses that will affect the students’ moral development and raise consciousness of the values promoted by the school community. Below is an example of several habits of mind (from over 350 items in the art curricular area) that cultivate appreciation of diversity in the William Penn Charter School.

| Concept | Topic | Skills | Assessment | Habits of Mind |
|------------------|--------------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|
| Non-European art | Iranian art | critical rdg. | studio project | overcoming cultural assumptions |
| Dark Ages | Nomad art | discussion | quiz | undoing stereotypes |
| The art of peace | Aegean art | analysis of documents | unit test | multiple points of view |
| Pot making | pots as puzzles | discussion & listening | group critique | respect for diverse perspectives |
| Museum project | creating artifacts | team work | group critique | questioning & problem solving |

Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C. (prekindergarten-12), notes several points related to curricular change to promote understanding and respect for diversity:

- Investing in a sensitive and diverse faculty—along with good multicultural materials—makes a difference.
- Carefully selected reading material can provide a springboard for discussion.
- Workshops on multicultural materials and methods are scheduled yearly.
- Teachers form book groups to read and discuss landmark publications, such as *The Anti-bias Curriculum*.
- There is no end to diversity work. (Saunders and Lodish, 2001)

Integrating Service Learning into the Curriculum

Community outreach and service learning are embedded in Friends schools. Teachers develop service projects with an intention to take students out of the classroom and into areas of the community that are beyond their scope of daily experience. This civic engagement engenders an understanding of and respect for diversity.

Students, faculty, and parent volunteers engage in service work in many locations in the communities that surround the schools. Typical sites for service learning include childcare centers, retirement communities, hospitals, homeless shelters, agencies providing food and clothing to those in need, environmental protection agencies, and community development

In service learning projects the emphasis is on building relationships with others and valuing relationships with diverse people, so that an appreciation of the similarities and differences across humanity can be experienced.

A study by Kuh (1991) notes that the strong Quaker ethos at Earlham College reflects the Quaker phrase, “Let your lives speak” by emphasizing global awareness and social action. Service learning is a pathway for learning social activism. A study by Astin states that “commitment to developing a meaningful philosophy of life... is strengthened by exposure to a peer group that emphasizes social activism and community” (Astin in Lacey, 1998, p. 253).

Service learning in the curriculum is part of a values-based curriculum that exposes students to a vision of a nonviolent and just society. “The school, itself, becomes the living model for tomorrow. It is a protected human environment—and alternative and new village—encouraging young people to see and feel the possibilities of an expanded peaceable kingdom. Of even greater importance, the teachers and the tone of the school will inspire in our youth the confidence, the knowledge, and the courage to work toward their own vision of a more inclusive and civil society” (Harrison, 1997).

Conclusion

How can we create schools where children learn to value diversity, respect differences, and become peacemakers in the 21st century?

Our world is more in need of schools that engage in the important work that nurtures responsive leadership for a world where peace and justice can flourish. To accomplish this, curriculum design, choice of text materials and pedagogical training for teachers must be focused on peace education, social justice, community building, service in the world, respect for others, and appreciation of human diversity.



We have a responsibility to see that all children learn to value diversity and to respect others, learn alternatives to using force to resolve differences, and learn the importance of careful reflection and consideration of multiple perspectives as a ground for action. What the schools teach the students also reaches their families. Together we must work at nurturing the development of humanitarians and peacemakers with a capacity for moral leadership and resilience in the face of challenge. We must habituate children to reverence so that they encounter others and the environment with joy and awe. We must teach them “to place high value on the beauty and order of the natural world and on the capacity of the human imagination to empathize with people very different from ourselves” (Lacey, 2002).

As educators, we are challenged to create and maintain good schools for every child. Robert Lawrence Smith (1998), former head of Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C. provides us with this vision for a good school:

"At a good school teachers and students are jointly engaged in a search for truth, in what Quakers call continuing revelation. Students greet the school day with enthusiasm. Teachers and administrators are there to guide, to respond, to teach, and to learn. They hold high expectations for their students, knowing that students work toward expectations. And aim is to help each student respond to the best that is in him or her."

From research by Daloz, Keen, Keen, and Park, (1996), we know that a common theme for human growth and survival in the complexity of the twenty-first century is the importance of the human capacity to hold contradictions open while searching for integration – to hold paradox and to hold difference, while opening up to a larger sense of self and community. This research also revealed two common characteristics found in people who lived lives of commitment to social action and the common good:

1. Ways of thinking that were reflective and dialogical, and,
2. A systemic perspective and understanding of the world.

The findings of the Friends Council’s research study on moral development in Quaker schools, showed that the capacity of schools, students and teachers to embrace difference, and to have in place a process for working through the conflict that inevitably comes from difference, was essential for the moral growth of the school community (1998).

How can we create curricula, choose text materials and use pedagogy to develop leaders and responsible world citizens with reflective habits of mind, openness to engaging in dialogue and valuing of multiple perspectives, and an understanding of the world as one complex and unified system? That is our challenge as educators in the twenty-first century.

Silent Worship and Quaker Values: An Introduction

Marsha Holiday

If you have never before attended an unprogrammed Friends (Quaker) meeting for worship, your first meeting may surprise you.

While all Quakers meet for worship to hear more clearly God's "still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12), Friends in the unprogrammed tradition base our worship entirely on expectant waiting. We take the Psalmist's advice literally: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

“ Although Friends value spoken messages which come from the heart and are prompted by the Spirit of God, we also value the silence and find that expectant worship may bring profound leadings. ”



We meet in plain, unadorned rooms because we feel that, in such places, we will be less distracted from the small still voice. Our benches or chairs face each other because we all are equal before God. There are no pulpits in our meeting rooms because we all minister to each other. We have no prearranged prayers, readings, sermons, hymns, or musical orchestrations because we wait for God's leadings (guidance and direction) and power in our lives.

Occasionally, during meeting for worship, someone is moved to speak out of the silence. Although Friends value spoken messages which come from the heart and are prompted by the Spirit of God, we also value the silence and find that expectant worship may bring profound leadings. The meeting ends when one Friend, designated in advance, shakes hands with his or her neighbors. Then everyone shakes hands. No two meetings are ever the same.

Like our style of worship, Quaker theology also differs from other religions. Because creeds could never fully represent all revelation and could limit or confine our perceptions of truth, Friends write no creeds. Instead, we write queries which help us reflect on our beliefs and actions; and yearly meetings, which are regional organizations of monthly meetings, record our common values and experiences in manuals entitled Faith and Practice.

Without creeds, Friends have become diverse in our beliefs about God. Nonetheless, Friends' common experience of God's presence within and among us has led us to realize that there is that of God, or something of the Divine, in everyone. This realization is central to Quakerism. It is confirmed in the Bible and referred to by Friends with such terms as "the Christ Within," "the Inward Light," and "the Seed of Truth." As Friends have attempted to respond that of God in everyone, some common values have arisen that united us.

Among them, Friends value life as sacred. Because there is that of God in everyone, Friends try to avoid all violence. We have found that when we hurt others, we harm ourselves and that of God in us. We try, instead, to find nonviolent solutions to conflicts and differences and to help others through service, the promotion of social and economic justice, kindness in daily living, and the support of each other's search for that of God within.

Similarly, God's inward presence is universal. Because there is that of God in everyone, anyone anywhere can experience God directly. Quakerism is just one way to know God, and authentic expressions of God's leadings are also found in other religions.

Moreover, Quakers were the first religion to recognize the equality of women and men. Since our beginning, almost 350 years ago, Quaker men and women have shared equally in the work of Friends, and Quaker schools have educated both girls and boys.

Because there is that of God in everyone, anyone at any time may express God's leadings. Therefore, revelation, or messages from God, is continuous. Friends affirm

that God inspired the writing of the Bible and other sacred literature and is still inspiring us. Although we are not always receptive, God continues to reveal Divine guidance and unchanging truth to all of us today, just as in the past.

To be more receptive to revelation, Friends practice simplicity and integrity. For Friends, simplicity is putting God first in one's life. Simplicity requires clear priorities and often inspires plainness and lack of clutter. Simplicity persuades one to affirm, not to flatter or overplay words or emotions, and to avoid extravagance and paraphernalia. Simplicity requires integrity, which is honesty in all dealings, telling the truth on all occasions, and consistent adherence to one's values. Simplicity and integrity have much in common: just as simplicity avoids cluttering one's environment, integrity avoids complicating one's relationships.

Simplicity and integrity bring us closer to the truth, and truth is of such importance to us that, originally, our name was "The Religious Society of the Friends of Truth." The search for truth inspired George Fox, one of our founders, to refuse to swear in court to tell the truth, in part because of the Biblical admonition against swearing (Matthew 5:34-37), but also because swearing to tell the truth on one occasion implies that there are other occasions when one would not tell the truth.

Another consequence of Friends' search for truth is that scientific discoveries do not tend to challenge the basis of our faith. Like the scientific method, Quaker faith and practice rely upon experience as a guide. We come to know truth experientially. The search for truth is more important to us than the maintenance of beliefs, and so we try to remain open to new approaches to the truth.

As we each possess a different perspective, the insights of community members help illuminate additional new approaches to the truth. Friends, therefore, bring our personal revelations to our communities for "clearness" in discerning the truth. The variety of insights within our communities also helps us achieve wholeness and balance.

Our search for truth has further confirmed that "way opens," situations change or circumstances develop, enabling us to find the direction in which to proceed. As we move in that direction, specific steps forward, which were not previously known to us, become apparent.

In our corporate search for truth, Friends use the worshipful Quaker process of decision making, a process for finding unity in all decisions which affect our communities. For Friends, unity is not usually unanimity, which is agreement without dissent. Unity is more often agreement with dissent, staying together despite differences and moving forward with guidance from our common values. It sometimes means that, out of respect for the unity of the whole, one may "stand aside."

Standing aside occurs when one allows a decision to go forward with which one is not entirely comfortable but for which one has no moral misgivings. For Friends, staying together despite differences is an important aspect of community. Friends realize that the more differing opinions we consider, the more closely we may come to the truth. In Friends' meeting for business, we refer to the experience of unity as "a sense of the meeting."

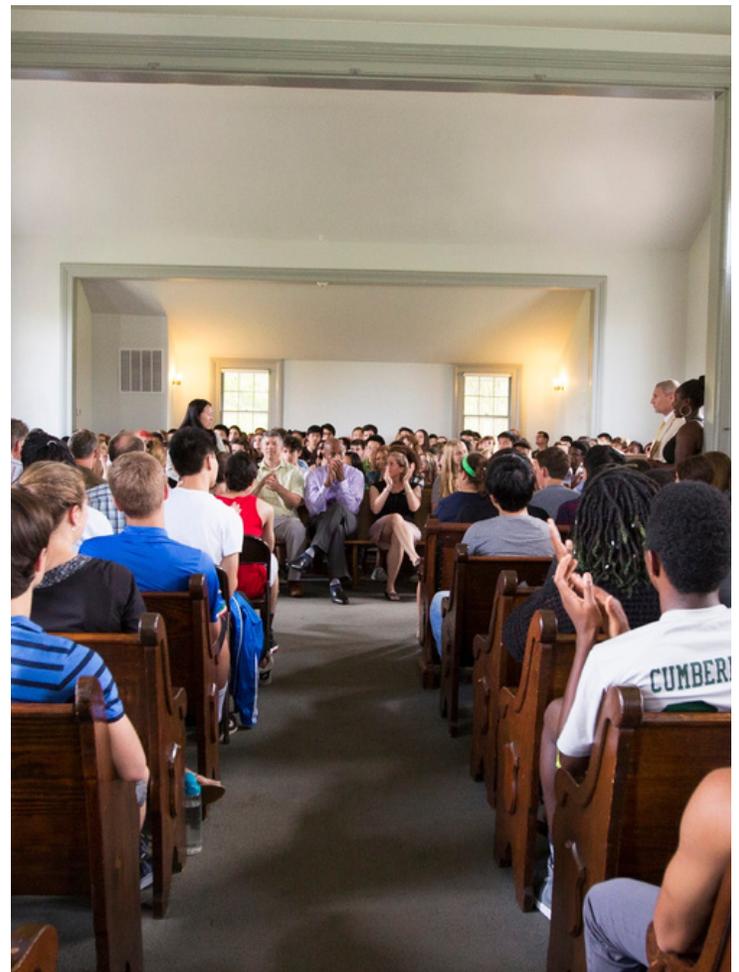
While invigorating, Quaker diversity is not usually easy. The differing opinions and beliefs of individual Friends are challenging to many Friends and to many Friends' meetings. Although Friends have our roots in Christianity, some individual Friends do not call themselves Christians. Moreover, those Friends who are Christians may have differing definitions of Christianity. We have unitarian and trinitarian Friends, evangelical and nonevangelical Friends. Some Friends attend other religious services as well as meeting for worship.

Despite our diversity, Friends find that we can live in accordance with our common values. When we do, our values become our testimonies, or witness, to the world. Friends' testimonies on peace, equality, simplicity, integrity, truth, community, and diversity

have evolved over time and are the outward expressions of Friends' attempts to turn our idealism into action.

Friends value actions which reflect our ideals. Not only do Friends expect that we can live Divinely inspired lives, we expect that, with Divine power and guidance, we can attain social justice and peace on earth.

That we do not always attain the ideal does not mean we will not continue to strive for it. Consequently, in our meetings for worship and business and in our daily lives, Friends try to manifest our common values: life is sacred; God's inward presence is experienced universally; revelation is continuous; simplicity, integrity, community, and diversity are essential in the search for truth; truth and unity are goals for worship and business; and way opens, making the ideal attainable. These values follow from our realization that there is that of God in everyone.





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For Friends, unity is not usually unanimity, which is agreement without dissent. Unity is more often agreement with dissent, staying together despite differences and moving forward with guidance from our common values.

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References

Teaching Tolerance and Valuing Diversity

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