

Who are Quakers?

- The Quaker movement arose in the mid-17th century in England. George Fox is generally considered the founder of the Quaker movement, although his intention was never to establish a “church.” His journey of faith led him - and others – to believe that every human had the ability to connect with his/her God without the trappings of clergy and structure of church.
- Early followers of Fox called themselves "Friends of Truth", as they thought of themselves as friends of Jesus (John 15:15). In time they came to be known simply as "Friends". The name "Quaker" was a nickname used by others, as it was said that they trembled or quaked with religious zeal. Friends have since adopted the term and today the words Friend and Quaker have the same meaning. The formal title of the Quaker movement is now: "The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)"
- Today, Quakers live on most continents and have regional, national and international organizations. But within the Religious Society of Friends, the core facet of organization is the local community of faith, usually known as the Monthly Meeting (although we worship at least weekly in community, “Monthly” refers to our periodic meetings to conduct business).

The Inner Light

This is the very heart of Quakerism: in every soul there is implanted a certain element of God's own Spirit and divine energy. This element is alternatively known as "that of God in everyone", "the seed of Christ", or "the Light Within", Friends generally believe that first-hand knowledge of God is only possible through that which is experienced, or inwardly revealed to the individual human being through the working of God's quickening Spirit.

Creeds, Theology & Sacraments:

Friends rely upon continuing revelation rather than an established creed. Some Friends faith is most clearly expressed in the traditional language of orthodox Christianity, while other Friends could be described as universalists. The absence of creeds is not meant to suggest that it does not matter what a person believes. Rather, since personal beliefs vitally affect behavior, views must be tested by the way in which they are expressed in action, and through community interaction. Friends are encouraged to seek new light from whatever source it may arise, and to share such revelation in community.

Similarly, Friends have traditionally not focused excessive attention on external ceremonies of sacraments, but rather on the sacredness of all aspects of life.

Responding to God's call - Testimonies

The writings of early Friends are full of stories of "meetings with God" and of "being led by the Holy Spirit". Sometimes these experiences helped their understanding. Sometimes it was an awareness of something that had to be done as part of God's purpose on this earth. Friends began to use the term 'concern' to describe the experience of Friends who believe that God might be saying to them: "this is what needs to be done - and you are to help do it."

As a result of this recognition of the Inner Light within all, Friends have developed some common testimonies. The word 'testimony' is used by Friends to describe a witness or commitment to the living truth within the human heart as it is acted out in everyday life. Some of these testimonies include:

- **Truth:** Truth is a complex concept. Sometimes the word is used for God, sometimes for the conviction that arises from worship, sometimes for the way of life.. The concern for truthfulness led Friends right from the first day to refuse to take oaths. An oath according to them was a sign that there were two different levels of truthfulness and they believed that you should tell the truth all the time.

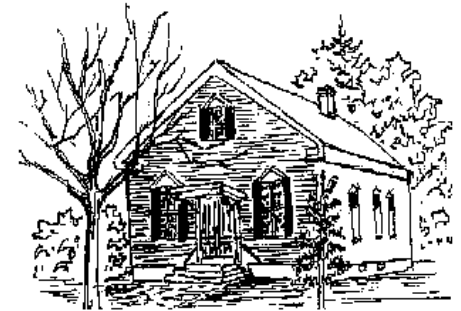
- **Equality:** If God is directly accessible to all persons, regardless of age, gender, race, nationality, economic, social or educational position - if every person is equal in God's love and has equal potential to be a channel for the revelation of God's Truth - then all persons are to be equally valued.
- **Peace:** How can one harm another child of God, a potential channel of Truth, no matter how misguided he or she may seem at the moment? This testimony has led Friends to oppose all wars and preparation for wars. The peace testimony has meant efforts to ease suffering of victims of war on all sides. It requires a constant search for nonviolent means of conflict resolution and reconciliation on a personal, community, national, and multi-national level.
- **Simplicity:** The testimony of simplicity seeks to focus our attention on what is essential and eternal, without distraction by the transitory or the trivial. Respect for God's creation and, therefore, concern for the environment and the right use of the world's resources is another obvious expression of this testimony. A growth economy based on extravagance, wastefulness, and artificially stimulated wants is seen to be fundamentally contrary to the testimony of simplicity.

About Smithfield Monthly Meeting

- Smithfield Meeting was formed in 1719. Our meetinghouse was the only house of worship in this area for over 100 years. The original meetinghouse was destroyed by fire in 1881 and was replaced in that year with the current structure.
- Our Meeting size is average in size for New England Quaker meetings – about 40 members and regular attenders.
- We are a pastoral Meeting with a part-time pastor. Both the conduct of worship and the provision of pastoral care is shared by pastor and a Committee of Ministry and Counsel.
- Worship is usually semi-programmed. It includes music and a sermon. But a portion of all meetings for worship is left to the leading of the Spirit We gather ourselves in waiting, silent worship from which Friends are sometimes lead to vocal ministry. The last Sunday of the month is usually fully unprogrammed, with no prepared message or music.
- We consider ourselves a faith community of diverse beliefs, open to sharing each other's individual journeys of faith, and desirous of living that faith in our daily lives.
- **We welcome all to join us in worship and other activities.**

Welcome to

Smithfield Friends Meeting



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