

## The Birth of the Friends Church: A Workshop on 17th Century Friends

### Purposes of course:

- To enrich Friends' knowledge and understanding of the first generation of Friends in 17th century England
- To use this understanding to help Friends today deepen our life together as a faith community
- To help churches talk with each other about key issues in the life of the faith community including theology, church government, and the ways we interact with the world around us.

**Leadership style:** It is particularly helpful although not necessary to have a teacher or retreat leader who has extensive knowledge of early Friends. This course will work best if the teacher/leader teaches in a very different style from most educational settings. The main goal is **not** to cram lots of information about early Friends to the participants or to carry out the leader's personal agenda for stimulating helpful changes in the meeting. She or he is seeking to create an opportunity for Friends to reflect on their own faith journey today and to explore key issues in the life we share with each other as Friends today.

### How time is spent:

20-25% Presentation / communication of ideas / information

20-25% Work alone or in two's or three's (can be great preparation for sharing in the group as a whole)

50-60% Various forms of sharing in the group as a whole - e.g. sharing responses to a question around the circle or sharing responses to a brief quotation.

**Setting the agenda:** The leader should explore with congregation's leaders requesting this retreat or course their goals for the program:

- Find out why the requesting group is interested in having the church undertake this program
- Find out if possible issues within the church community that may impact your work, such as areas of conflict or areas of need.
- Discern together which of the six possible topics listed below will be covered in this program

**Format:** This curriculum can be run either as a series of classes taught over a number of weeks or months or as a one day or weekend retreat. Each segment requires a minimum of 50 minutes (as a class session or section of a retreat - preferably 75-90 minutes. I would not recommend trying to cover more than 3 or 4 topics in a single day (i.e. morning and afternoon) retreat.

### Modules (class or retreat sessions):

<b>#1 The World Turned Upside Down</b> (historical background & beginnings of the new movement)
<b>#2 Christ Has Come to Teach His People Himself</b> (a new relationship with God)
<b>#3 Worship in Spirit and in Truth</b> (new approaches to worship)
<b>#4 This Is Our Testimony to the World - Part 1: Truth &amp; Sufferings</b>
<b>#5 This Is Our Testimony to the World - Part 2: Purity, Peace, Equality, Stewardship</b>
<b>#6 Gospel Order as a Blueprint for Church Community</b>

Although the first 3 modules are particularly important in terms of understanding early Friends, the modules on integrity and simplicity can lead to rich discussions as to how to live out these principles in the present day.

**Encouraging Friends to open up and share:** It is important that participants in this program approach these sessions with a respectful attitude towards other participants. The goal of this program is to encourage participants to share openly with each other their heart-felt responses to what is being learned about early Friends and to explore ways it can impact our own life together today. The leader can talk some before the first program about speaking for ourselves rather than speaking about whether the speaker agrees or disagrees with earlier statements.

Sample session (class or retreat segment - timing will vary depending on the length of each session):

**Opening prayer (5 mins.)**

**Introduction** of the subject by leader (5-20 mins.) - If the leader knows the material well enough to do so, it is best if she or he can talk freely about the subject without reading from the handout. Using a board of some kind to outline key points can help participants absorb what is being talked about - such as key dates and names on for the history session.

You may want to leave some time for answering questions. (Others in the group may know the answer better than the leader!)

**Hearing words of early Friends.** Choose several readings from handout and ask a participant to volunteer to read each reading. (5 mins.)

**Response to readings.** Can be done individually via reflection or writing down responses to reflection questions, sharing in twos or threes, or sharing around the circle in the whole group. (5-15 mins.)

**A skit or two on the topic.** These make the subject matter come more alive! (10 mins.)

**Exploring what this means to Friends today.** A period of sharing and discussion on the implications of early Friends' experience, belief, and practice has for issues facing us in our local and yearly meetings in the 21st century. Try to simply ask evoking questions and then just *listen!* (15-30 mins.)

**Closing prayer / worship (5-10 mins.)**

**An Irreverent Quaker Quiz** - This is something fun you may want to have participants do in the first session. Although many of the multiple choice answers are humorous, the correct answers are all accurate. If you feel this would be appropriate for your church, hand them out and let people fill out answers. You can go over answers right way or at end of the first session.

**Skits** - This curriculum includes skits for most of the sessions. These can add life and energy to the flow of the session and capture a bit of the feel of what life was like in the 17th century England. Get 2 or 3 volunteers to play the parts and give them each their own script. The 21st century skit on simplicity helps Friends reflect on how this issue still remains alive for Friends today in new ways.

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You are welcome to utilize or edit these materials freely but please note that the materials were originally developed by Peter Blood. You can contact me at [inwardlight1@gmail.com](mailto:inwardlight1@gmail.com)

## Birth of the Friends Church: Session #1 - **The World Turned Upside Down** (background & beginnings)

Quakerism was born in the mid-17th century in England. This was a period of great political and religious turmoil. The country was wracked by three civil wars between 1642 and 1651. After King Charles I was tried, convicted of treason, and beheaded in 1649, England entered its only period of being a republic, as opposed to being a monarchy.

There were many different small religious movements that sprang up at this time. A few of these survived (as Friends did), but most disappeared. George Fox was born in 1624 in a strongly Puritan village about a hundred miles north of London. His father was a weaver and man of deep faith, known as "Righteous Christer". George was apprenticed to a sheep owner and carpenter. He went through a period of seeking and spiritual turmoil at age 18. He began public preaching at age 23, gathering a handful of followers. An older woman, Elizabeth Hooten, is often considered Fox's first collaborator in building the new Quaker movement.

There was an informal movement in the late 1640's and early 1650's in Northern England known as the [Westmorland Seekers](#). They rejected many of the structures of the established church at the time and were looking for a rebirth of a more vital faith. In 1652, Fox had a vision looking northward from the top of a steep hill called Pendle Hill of a "great people to be gathered." He continued traveling northward to the area where these Seekers held their gatherings. On June 13, 1652, he preached for three hours to an outdoor gathering of a thousand Seekers in a windy open field called Firbank Fell. Many leaders of the Seekers became "convinced" by the spiritual power of Fox's message, and the new Quaker movement was born.

Quakers sent out men and women preachers, known as "The Valiant Sixty," throughout the British Isles, as well as to the Continent of Europe and the new American colonies. About 3000 Friends suffered imprisonment, with hundreds dying due to very unsanitary conditions, including several of the movement's most important leaders. Four Friends were executed in Massachusetts Bay Colony. The movement grew rapidly from 1652 through the Act of Toleration in 1689, when Friends in England numbered roughly 1% of the population (around 50,000 Friends out of an English population of around five million).

Characteristics of the early Quaker movement: They:

- Were "evangelical" - They actively recruited others into their movement, interrupting church services, preaching in market places, and were sharply critical of most other Christian groups at the time.
- Considered themselves to be returning to a primitive form of Christianity as practiced in the age of the Apostles (the time of James, Paul, Phoebe, etc. during the first century after Jesus' birth).
- Rejected set Anglican liturgies (mass, congregational reading of psalms), outward sacraments, and paid clergy.
- Believed that formal theological training was neither necessary nor sufficient for inspired preaching and leadership in the church. Many early leaders were of the working class with little formal education.
- Insisted that women play an active leadership role in the new church, rejecting arguments that it was wrong for women to preach or participate in church decision-making. Roughly 12 of the chief traveling preachers known as the "Valiant Sixty" were women. Many of these women wrote religious tracts.

### Reflection questions:

1. How would you react if a leader such as George Fox came to your church and challenged the beliefs and practices that everyone assumed were right?
2. Do you find the writings of early Friends exciting? strange? moving? disturbing?
3. Why do you think Friends grew so quickly and won so many adherents, in spite of terrible persecution?
4. Why do you think established church leaders (both Puritans and Anglicans) were so enraged and threatened by the Quaker message?
5. Do you think Friends today are practicing the same kind of religion as first generation Friends?

### Further reading:

*Journal of George Fox:* [Testimony of Margaret \(Fell\) Fox concerning her late husband George Fox...](#)

*Journal of George Fox,* [Chap 6: A New Era Begins 1651-52](#) (on Pendle Hill vision & Firbank Fell)

[New England Yearly Meeting Interim Faith & Practice](#) pp.49-51

John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey: A Short History of the Quakers*

## Session #2 - Christ Has Come to Teach His People Himself

Early Friends wrote thousands of tracts. Here are some characteristics of early Friends' beliefs:

**Direct revelation.** They believed that every person has access to guidance from Christ in the present time.

“The Seed, or Grace of God, is small in its first Appearance, even as the Morning Light; but as it is given Heed to, and obeyed, it will increase in Brightness, till it shine in the Soul, like the Sun in the Firmament at its Noon-day Height.” - Elizabeth Bathurst, 1655-1685

“Art thou in darkness? Mind it not, for if thou do it will fill thee more, but stand still and act not, and wait in patience till light arise out of darkness to lead thee.” - James Nayler, 1616-1660

“Sweet is this state, though low: for in it I receive my daily bread, which is given of the Lord; for I cannot live to him, but as he breathe the breath of life upon me every moment.” - Mary Penington, 1623-1682

“I declared Truth amongst them, and directed them to the light of Christ in them; testifying unto them that God was come to teach His people Himself, whether they would hear or forbear.

I directed the people to their inward Teacher, Christ Jesus, who would turn them from darkness to the light.

Therefore I exhorted the people to come off all these things, and directed them to the spirit and grace of God in themselves, and to the light of Jesus in their own hearts, that they might come to know Christ, their free Teacher, to bring them salvation, and to open the Scriptures to them. - George Fox's *Journal*

“The testimony of the Spirit is that alone by which the true knowledge of God hath been, is, and can be only revealed.” - Robert Barclay *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*

**Role of the Bible.** Friends recognized scripture a critical source of divine revelation. They believed it was impossible to understand the meaning of Bible and its messages for us unless one is living in the “life and power” in which the scriptures were originally given forth. They believed that their religious opponents misunderstood important parts of the Bible because they were **not** living in this same direct, living relationship with God in the present time.

See: Jack Smith (Ohio YM Conservative) “The Scripture as Understood & Used by Conservative Friends”, talk at QuakerSpring 2007 <http://quakerspring.org/about/resources/other-documents/>

“I told them the gospel was the power of God, which was preached before Matthew, Mark, Luke and John or any of them were printed or written; and it was preached to every creature (of which a great part might never see or hear of those four books), so that every creature was to obey the power of God; for Christ, the spiritual Man, would judge the world according to the gospel, that is, according to His invisible power. When they heard this, they could not gainsay, for the truth came over them. I directed them to their teacher, the Grace of God, and shewed them the sufficiency of it, which would teach them how to live, and what to deny; and being obeyed, would bring them salvation. So to that grace I recommended them, and left them.” - George Fox's *Journal*

**Universal priesthood.** Everyone has access to guidance from Christ. It is not restricted to ordained clergy or to those who receive formal religious training. They felt that the “Seed” (inward presence of God) acted in the lives not only of Christians but of those like Muslims or Native Americans with no knowledge of Jesus or the Bible.

“Oh you Rulers & Judges, do you think to overcome us by keeping [our teachers and ring leaders] in prison?. Nay, Christ is our teacher, and he cannot be removed into a corner... The Lord does not speak to us in an unknown tongue, but in our own language do we hear him perfectly, whose voice is better than life... We cannot own the teaching that is of this world, but that which cometh immediately from God, and that is pure and refresheth the soul...and it causeth us to meet together, to worship the Lord as we ought to do.”

- Esther Biddle *The Trumpet of the Lord Sounded Forth unto These Three Nations*, 1662

See account of Mary Fisher's trip to Sultan <http://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/187>

**Language.** Early Friends referred to this direct inward guidance from God in the heart of the believer using a variety of different terms: Inward Christ, Inward Light, The Seed, and "leadings".

The word Christ is Greek for "messiah" or savior. Early Quakers believed that Christ is and always has been one with God the Creator and that Christ continues to be present and active in guiding the church in our own time - teaching, healing, liberating, and leading the community of believers. They made no distinction between their present-time relationship with Christ and Christ as encountered in the man Jesus in biblical times. As a result, Christ's role of savior is viewed as not only a one time act of sacrificial death on the Cross but an ongoing process of transformation and redemption.

Friends found these concepts in the Bible, especially the Gospel of John (often called the "Quaker Gospel"):

"In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it...The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world."

(John 1)

The Comforter or Holy Spirit that God promised to send after Jesus' death.

"I shall always be with you, even to the end of time."

"Emmanuel" ("God-with-us")

"living water" (John 4:10)

"the Light of the World"

"true vine" (John 15).

**The "Offices of Christ".** Friends experienced God as touching and shaping their lives in a number of distinct ways. They had an odd-sounding (to us) way of referring to this: namely, the "offices of Christ". These "offices" (or roles) included king, prophet, counselor, comforter, shepherd, redeemer, mediator, reconciler, teacher, etc. These are all ways of talking about how God or Christ Jesus works in our lives in our own day (i.e. not only through redemptive acts of God in Jesus' birth, death and resurrection). The point was that they believed that God spoke to them, led them, upheld them, guided them, healed them, lifted them up when they were discouraged, reproved them when they strayed from the truth, held them accountable to be faithful disciples, etc.

See: Sandra Cronk, *Gospel Order: A Quaker Understanding of the Faithful Quaker Community*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #297, 1991 (pp.17-20 on the "offices of Christ")

#### Reflection questions:

1. When (if ever) have you experienced Christ touching you or speaking to you directly? Was this a comforting experience or a disturbing one?
2. What verbs would you use to describe your experience of God/Jesus touching or influencing your life?
3. In your experience of other faith communities besides Friends, do you feel this idea of Christ is similar to or different from the ideas about God at the heart of other churches?
4. If this immediate and direct relationship with Christ is at the heart of Friends practice (our approach to worship, church government, our response to social issues, etc.), do you see this as being true in your experience of practice in your own church? In your yearly meeting?

Further reading: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (1676): 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> propositions (on immediate revelation and on scripture)

Samuel Caldwell, *The Inward Light: "How Quakerism Unites Universalism & Christianity"*. (Phila. YM Relig. Ed. Comm., 1997) ( [http://www.angelfire.com/dc/universalism/Inward\\_Light.html](http://www.angelfire.com/dc/universalism/Inward_Light.html) )

Thomas Kelly: *A Testament of Devotion* (section on Inward Light).

Colin Saxton "[Christ Has Come to Teach Us Himself](#)" (QuakerSpeak interview)

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### Session #3 - **Worship in Spirit and in Truth** (new approaches to worship)

How did early Friends worship? How did this form of worship evolve?

- They believed that spoken messages or vocal prayer should be directly guided by God's spirit rather than being prepared in advance, particularly as part of a fixed liturgy. (Barclay cited John 4:19-24.)
- They rejected outward rituals like holy communion and water baptism, seeing communion and baptism as inward spiritual experiences rather than liturgical ceremonies.
- The ability to provide effective preaching and teaching in worship was based on inward gifts rather than on formal religious training at a university or on being formally ordained by church hierarchy.
- Many of their worship gatherings at least began with a significant period of silent waiting.
- Early Friends probably did not engage in choral singing, certainly not the singing of psalms as a group. Individuals did apparently sing if led to do so by Christ's spirit during their meetings for worship.

“And this is the manner of their worship. They are to wait upon the Lord, to meet in the silence of the flesh, and to watch for the stirring of his life, and the breakings forth of his power amongst them. And in the breakings forth of that power they may pray, speak, exhort, rebuke, sing, or mourn, and so on, according as the spirit teaches, requires, and gives utterance.”

- Isaac Penington 1681

The early Quaker theologian Robert Barclay says that he was won over to the Friends movement primarily by the power of its worship. He writes: "I myself... who not by strength of arguments, or by a particular disquisition of each doctrine, and convincement of my understanding thereby, came to receive and bear witness of the truth, but by being secretly reached by this life; for when I came into the silent assemblies of God's people, I felt a secret power among them, which touched my heart, and as I gave way unto it, I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up, and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this power and life, whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed." "The Lord of Heaven and earth we found to be near at hand, and, as we waited upon him in pure silence, our minds out of all things, his heavenly presence appeared in our assemblies, when there was no language, tongue nor speech from any creature. The Kingdom of Heaven did gather us and catch us all, as in a net, and his heavenly power at one time drew many hundreds to land. We came to know a place to stand in and what to wait in; and the Lord appeared daily to us, to our astonishment, amazement and great admiration, insomuch that we often said one unto another with great joy of heart: 'What, is the Kingdom of God come to be with men? And will he take up his tabernacle among the sons of men, as he did of old? Shall we...have this honour of glory communicated amongst us, which were but men of small parts and of little abilities?' And from that day forward, our hearts were knit unto the Lord and one unto another in true and fervent love, in the covenant of Life with God; and that was a strong obligation or bond upon all our spirits, which united us one unto another. We met together in the unity of the Spirit, and of the bond of peace, treading down under our feet all reasoning about religion. And holy resolutions were kindled in our hearts as a fire which the Life kindled in us to serve the Lord...and mightily did the Word of God grow amongst us."

- Francis Howgill (one of the Westmoreland Seekers), 1663

“The first that enters into the place of your meeting...turn in thy mind to the light, and wait upon God singly, as if none were present but the Lord; and here thou art strong. Then the next that comes in, let them in simplicity of heart sit down and turn in to the same light, and wait in the spirit; and so all the rest coming in, in the fear of the Lord, sit down in pure stillness and silence of all flesh, and wait in the light... Those who are brought to a pure still waiting upon God in the spirit, are come nearer to the Lord than words are; for God is a spirit, and in the spirit is he worshiped.... In such a meeting there will be an unwillingness to part asunder, being ready to say in yourselves, it is good to be here; and this is the end of all words and writings—to bring people to the eternal living Word.” - Alexander Parker, 1660

In his *Apology for Christian Divinity* Robert Barclay lays out in detail the biblical justification for vocal prayer and ministry being Spirit-guided. <http://www.qhpress.org/texts/barclay/apology/prop11.html>

Early Friends made a distinction between two forms of worship:

1. **Threshing Meetings.** These consisted in public preaching, often at great length, by Friends who were recognized as having a special gift of prophetic preaching. These sermons (which could often last an hour or more) were often delivered in public places such as fairs, markets, or even pubs. They were delivered spontaneously without pre-planning, believing that Christ would provide the words needed. Although the person delivering such a spoken message would usually be accompanied by other Friends, the purpose of this kind of worship was largely to carry the truth that Friends had discovered to those not yet part of the Quaker movement.

Friends also often felt led to enter parish churches and deliver messages to those gathered. It was considered acceptable practice at the time to speak after the priest's sermon was completed during a time of open sharing, but Friends often interrupted the priest's sermon. This could lead to the Friend being beaten or arrested.

2. **Retired Meetings.** These gatherings were primarily (although not exclusively) for those who had already become "convinced" of the truth of the Quaker message, that is for those already part of the Friends group. They might be held in homes or barns or in public buildings such as pubs. It seems likely from quotes such as Alexander Parker above that Friends gathered in silence and took some period of time to allow hearts to become close knit together before anyone delivered spoken messages. Friends felt it was important that messages be limited to what the Holy Spirit directed. They saw danger of "running beyond one's Guide" – i.e. speaking one's own thoughts or ideas rather than what the inward guide Christ Jesus directed to be spoken.

In the 19th century many Friends Meetings began to plan worship services in advance including choral singing of hymns, planned readings from scripture, and prepared sermons. Meetings also often hired pastors. In many cases pastors planned worship services and delivered sermons during worship.

Friends still believe it is essential that the Holy Spirit guide those planning worship and fill the hearts of those leading the service and those taking part in the congregation.

#### Reflection questions:

1. Do you feel the approach early Friends took to worship has relevance for how worship is planned and carried out in your church today?
2. Have you felt your heart turning towards God as you entered worship (as described by Alexander Parker)? Is it hard to move your thoughts away from busy-ness and worries to an attitude of living worship of Jesus?
3. Do you feel you have experienced your heart being knit deeply with others present and with God?
4. If you have participated in planning or leading worship, how often do you feel Christ's spirit is guiding you as you prepare or lead worship, preach, or offer vocal prayer?
5. Do you experience the preaching in your church as being directed by Christ's spirit?

#### Further Reading:

"Excerpts from various YM disciplines on the subject of Spirit-led Vocal Ministry"

[http://www.inwardlight.org/excerpts\\_on\\_vocal\\_ministry.html](http://www.inwardlight.org/excerpts_on_vocal_ministry.html)

Peter Blood "[Biblical Roots of Quaker Worship](http://www.inwardlight.org/biblical_roots_of_quaker_worship.html)" (about Robert Barclay's 11<sup>th</sup> Proposition concerning Worship) [http://www.inwardlight.org/biblical\\_roots\\_of\\_quaker\\_worship.html](http://www.inwardlight.org/biblical_roots_of_quaker_worship.html)

"[Nurturing Gospel Ministry](#)" a minute summarizing an evening of reflection at QuakerSpring 2008

Session #4 - **This Is Our Testimony to the World** (witness, ways of living, sufferings for truth)  
Part 1: Truth & Sufferings

Early Friends did not talk about social concerns as is often done today. Early Friends did certainly live a way of life that was radically separated from non-Friends around them, leading initially to severe persecution.

**Integrity.** The main differences between Friends' and non-Friends' way of living and what led them to being persecuted fall primarily under what are often referred to today as the "Testimony on Integrity". [Romans 12:1-2](#)

"Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone; whereby in them you may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you." - Statement of 1656, from *The Works of George Fox* (1831)

Friends strongly emphasized the necessity of living in a manner fully in keeping with their beliefs.

Speaking truth was extremely important. The admonitions to avoid oaths ([Matthew 5:33-37](#)) got them in trouble when they were asked to either swear that they did not support the king or (later) to support the king. Friends like Fox were often administered such loyalty oaths at their release, landing them right back in prison again. The Letter of James also talks about limiting what we say to what is really essential.

Other applications:

- They believed it was wrong to speak in the plural to refer to persons of higher social status (i.e. addressing people with "ye" or "you" rather than "thou" and "thee". They considered this a form of lying.
- They held their worship services in public rather than in secret (as some dissenting groups did), which often led to imprisonment.
- They felt it was wrong to pay tithes to support hired clergy they rejected. Their property was often seized.
- They charged fixed prices for goods rather than reaching a price via bargaining (or "haggling").
- Friends (and also often Puritans) felt it was wrong to use the names of pagan gods that they didn't believe in to refer to days of the week and of the month.
- They also shared with Puritans rejection of church holidays such as Christmas and Easter not specifically mentioned in scripture. They did, however, honor the Sabbath ("First Day") as a day set aside for rest.

#### Reflection Questions

- **Do you at times push the limits at times of what is really honest (for example on paying taxes)?**
- **Does your meeting discuss issues of personal ethics together?**
- **Would you ever tell a friend you disagree with something she or he did that is dishonest or unethical?**
- **Is being scrupulously honest as important today as it was in the 17<sup>th</sup> century?**
- **Where might you not be strictly committed to truth-telling (e.g. hiding runaway slaves or Anne Frank)?**
- **Do you think Friends still have a public reputation for honesty?**

Thousands of Friends were sent to prison for keeping to their beliefs on issues like loyalty oaths and holding non-Church of England worship services in public. Many, perhaps hundreds, died in prison. Others including George Fox had their lives shortened by repeated imprisonment in extremely unhealthy jails.

Four Friends (including one woman, Mary Dyer) were hung on Boston Common for returning to Boston and preaching publicly what they believed to be truth in spite of being banished by the Puritan government. Many lost their property for refusal to pay tithes.

- **Do you think that Friends today are being called to prophetic faithfulness around issues such as peace, climate or racial justice?**
- **Why do you think far fewer Friends have faced imprisonment or death for their beliefs since the 17th century (though some Friends do still face severe penalties for acts of conscience & witness today)?**
- **Are there any issues that are so important to you that you would risk imprisonment or even death?**

Session #5 - **This Is Our Testimony to the World** (witness, lifestyle & sufferings)  
Part 2: Purity, Peace, Equality, Stewardship of the Earth

**Purity (or “Simplicity”).** Friends believed it was important to discern if recreational pursuits, clothing, or other possessions, got in the way of being able to be connected to God and hear God’s voice in their hearts. Margaret Fell Fox wrote that she felt the objection to brightly colored clothing was a “silly gospel”. cf. [Matthew 6:19-34](#).

Friends shared Puritans’ rejection of the use of musical instruments, plays, and dancing.

- Why do you think early Friends were so concerned about being separated from the world around the issues of widely practiced holidays like Christmas, instrumental music, dress, plays, or dancing?
- Can you think of modern day ways we might learn from 17<sup>th</sup> century Friends’ concerns about these kinds of activities?

**Peace.** Many early Friends had fought for Oliver Cromwell in the English Civil War. Friends made several public declarations in 1660 rejecting outward fighting as a way of distinguishing themselves from the Fifth Monarchist religious insurrection (the attempt to fight against the restoration of King Charles II). However it was not uncommon for Friends to enlist in the army or navy even after these declarations. [1660 Declaration to King Charles II](#) Note: Margaret Fell penned an earlier declaration on this subject six months before George Fox did so. See also: [Barclay on Jesus’ teachings re violence](#).

Early Friends writings about war referred more often to the passages in the Epistle of James about how outward fighting springs from greed (“lust for things”) than to the passages in the Sermon on the Mount about turning the other cheek. (cf. John Woolman’s later teaching that the “seeds of war” are in our possessions.)

**Equality.** Friends were centuries ahead of their time in encouraging women to take active leadership in the faith community. They not only allowed women to preach but wrote many tracts justifying this. First Friends also took a strong stand against class oppression, insisting that God could speak as readily through unschooled working people as through those from the upper classes who received formal theological training in a university.

On the other hand, many Friends in the American colonies owned slaves, including William Penn. The [1688 Germantown Statement](#) is considered perhaps the first official statement from a religious group stating principled objection to slavery as being inconsistent with Christianity.

Although some Friends were deeply involved in antislavery work in the 19th century, this kind of political activity was very controversial among Friends. Only a very small percentage of U.S. Friends were involved in the Underground Railroad (helping slaves escape to Canada) or political work against slavery. Friends of African descent were required to sit in a separate seating area in the back or in the balcony of many meetinghouses.

- How do you think Friends were able to be so enlightened on the God working through women and those of lower classes but so blind to the contradiction between slaveholding and Friends beliefs?
- How does the early Friends belief in the universal access of all people to the inward light of Christ inform our own reflections and work today around gender, race, and class?

**Stewardship of the Earth.** Both George Fox and John Woolman were very aware of the close connection between faith and the creation. Both also had respectful relations with Native Americans who lived close to the earth.

“Now I was come up in spirit through the flaming sword into the paradise of God. All things were new, and all the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter.” - George Fox, 1648

“To know the secrets of nature is to know the works of God; and to know the works of God within the creation is to know God himself, for God dwells in every visible work or body.”

- Gerrard Winstanley, leader of the Digger community, later a Quaker, 1652

## Session #6: Gospel Order as a Blueprint for the Church Community

**“Gospel Order”** is an old-fashioned Quaker term for the radical transformation and re-ordering of lives and relationships that results from the close relationship between the Church and Christ. Consistent with Matthew 18, Gospel Order seeks to preserve and strengthen loving relationships within the faith community while moving towards unity in our understanding of God’s will for us.

- “Order” refers to the many concrete changes that are made in our lives and relationships - not just an inward feeling but a way of life expressed in virtually every area of living.
- “Gospel” refers not to a creed or dogma, but to a close active relationship with living spirit of Christ in our midst. The central focus is not right beliefs or right actions but life and power in God.

As Fox says: “Many have had the letter but lost the life, the notion but lost the possession, the profession but lost the substance, Christ Jesus.” This is the “true sap” which Jesus describes so vividly in [John 15](#) (which, significantly, is also the chapter from which “Friends” took their name for themselves.) Fox also wrote: “Therefore take heed of the world’s fashions, lest ye be moulded up into their spirit, and that will bring you to slight truth, and lift up the wrong eye, and wrong mind, and wrong spirit, and hurt and blind the pure eye, and pure mind, and quench the holy spirit.”

Further reading:

Sondra Cronk “Gospel Order: A Quaker Understanding of Faithful Church Community” [Pendle Hill Pamphlet #297](#). (provides wonderful examples of how issues are addressed & resolved in a traditional Quaker meeting community)

Lloyd Lee Wilson, *Essays on the Quaker Vision of Gospel Order*. [order from FGC Books](#)

In the late 1660’s George Fox began devoting more and more time to setting up monthly, quarterly and yearly meetings across Britain, on the Continent, and in the American colonies. There were a number of reasons he felt called to do this:

**Sufferings.** Friends experienced imprisonment for following their faith up until the late 1680’s when King James II began to end religious persecution (presumably to protect his fellow Catholics). In some cases an entire meeting might be in prison. Others lost property because of refusal to pay tithes to support the “hireling priesthood”.

There was no formal membership in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Meetings drew up lists of those needing support and this evolved much later into formal membership. The representative meeting of London Yearly Meeting is still known as “Meeting for Sufferings”.

**Support for Ministers.** Friends felt the need to provide spiritual oversight and support for those carrying out public ministry, including providing elders to accompany those called to journey to spread the Friends message and provision for spouses or families who stayed behind.

**Second Day Morning Meeting:** This group may have begun as an informal gathering of those who felt a special calling or gift to vocal ministry on Second Day (i.e. Monday) in London to share with each other their experiences of worship the previous day (or perhaps week) - presumably involving many of those identified as part of the Valiant Sixty. It later came to play a much more institutional role and actually had a role of approving or censoring proposed publications by Friends. It was roundly criticized by some Friends who felt this was a usurpation of power by some individuals over other Friends.

Eventually, those who had a recognized gift of vocal ministry began to meet regularly in each meeting with those who were recognized as having a gift for nurturing spiritual gifts (“elders”). Meetings of Ministers & Elders were held on the monthly, quarterly & YM level. These are the predecessor of today’s Ministry & Worship Committees.

“Eldership: Nurturing Others’ Spiritual Gifts” - a lot of different resources on this subject collected & posted by Peter Blood on his website at <http://www.inwardlight.org/eldership.html>

**Clarity of Message.** Friends strongly emphasized inward leading (“experimental” knowledge). Many argued that no one else should judge others’ leadings. But some leadings endangered the safety of the entire Quaker community, or at the minimum risked confusing others’ about Friends message.

Several events led many Friends to see a strong need for corporate testing of individual Friends’ leadings:

- In 1656 a leading Friend, James Nayler, entered Bristol re-enacting Christ’s entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He narrowly escaped the death sentence in his blasphemy trial before Parliament.
- A number of Friends took part in the abortive Fifth Monarchist uprising against King Charles II in 1661.
- Hat Controversy (John Perrot & others) 1661-early 1670s – Friends refused to take off their hats before others as a form of idolatry. But it became a practice of men to remove their hats when someone offered vocal prayer as a sign of respect for God. Others felt this was a form of programming of worship.

Further reading “Tradition vs. Innovation: The Hat, Wilkinson-Story, and Keithite Controversies” in *Quaker Studies*, 8:1. ( <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context=quakerstudies> ) (discusses the controversy between original emphasis on individual leading and desire of many to provide corporate limits on individual leading. [Matthew 18:15-22](#))

**Corporate Discernment.** Fox wanted a form of durable structure for the passionate movement that he helped launch to help it endure over the long run. Traditionally decision-making has been made in one of two ways:

- Hierarchical (e.g. Catholic Church: pope, archbishop, bishop, parish priest)
- Democratic – votes taken within the local congregation, where autonomy largely rests (Congregational, Methodist, Baptist, etc.)

Our form of “church government” as embodied especially in the practice we call “meeting for business” represents a radical departure from the above two methods of reaching decisions. Discernment of God’s will for the meeting body through a clerk who discerns the sense of the meeting arising from meeting for business where hearts are gathered together in the Holy Spirit is a practical way that Christ our leader can provide similar direct guidance over church decisions via guidance in the hearts of Friends present.

**Women’s & Men’s Meetings.** Separate meetings for business were set up in each meeting for women and men. This was at least as revolutionary as allowing women to preach openly. Women were “recorded” (officially recognized) as having a gift of vocal ministry and also served as elders of the meeting.

There was controversy over the fact that women’s meetings had a primary role in discerning the rightness of couples marrying. Even if women’s meetings did not always consider all the same items as the men’s meetings, they provided huge opportunities for women to develop and exercise leadership skills which led Quaker women to play active roles in many social movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Further reading: “Quaker View of Women” ( [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quaker\\_views\\_on\\_women](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quaker_views_on_women) ) describes significance of holding separate women’s meetings for business for first 250 years of Quakerism.

Reflection questions:

1. To what extent have you experienced Friends meetings for business or committee meetings as a form of worshipful waiting upon Divine Guidance in your local church? In your yearly meeting?
2. What do you see as some of the major roadblocks to this form of decision-making working as it is intended? What do you see as possible barriers in yourself to your own fruitful and prayerful participation in this process?
3. What specific gifts or skills contribute to successful service as clerk in helping the church discern God’s guidance? What do or could churches do to nurture the skill of clerking as a critical gift in the life of the church?
4. What are the pros and cons of a church formally recognizing spiritual gifts exercised within the local meeting?
5. Many Friends in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have emphasized an individualistic understanding of faithfulness as opposed to a communal or “corporate” view of faithfulness. Do you think this has been a good thing or a bad thing? How much was it the result of Friends being influenced by “the world” (i.e. values in the larger surrounding culture that emphasize individualism as opposed to shared life together.)

## An Irreverent Quiz on Fox & the very first Friends

- 1) Which would be the best way to describe Oliver Cromwell if he lived in the world today?
  - a) King
  - b) Revolutionary
  - c) President
  - d) Military dictator
- 2) What did George's "Da" (daddy) do?
  - a) He was a poor shoemaker
  - b) He was an admiral and gave George a sword & lot of land
  - c) He was a rather well-off weaver
  - d) He was a shepherd who kept sheep on Pendle Hill
- 3) What was his dad's nickname?
  - a) Chris
  - b) Christopher the Good
  - c) Righteous Christer
  - d) That Old Fox
- 4) Why did George Fox leave home at age 19?
  - a) To join the army
  - b) To seek his fortune
  - c) His mom & dad told him it was time to get his own place
  - d) His girlfriend dumped him
  - e) He was curious about God and wasn't happy with the answers the local priest gave him
- 5) Who joined George's merry band first?
  - a) Billy (William) Penn
  - b) Meg (Margaret) Fell
  - c) Frank (Francis) Howgill
  - d) Liz "the Hoot" (Elizabeth) Hooton
- 6) How hard is it to climb Pendle Hill?
  - a) It isn't really a hill because I went to Pennsylvania and saw it and it was really flat.
  - b) Kind of steep
  - c) Really steep
  - d) You have to use mountain climbing equipment to get up it
  - e) Too steep for Annie (on the day Peter, who made this course, and his wife Annie were there)
- 7) Why did George climb Pendle Hill
  - a) To see what he could see
  - b) Because the road from Fenny Drayton to Firbank Fell went over it
  - c) Christ told George to do it in his heart
  - d) It has a really good view to the North and Christ wanted to show George all the places where a bunch of the Seekers lived who might join his new movement

- 8) Who were The Seekers?
- a) An American folk music band in the 1960's
  - b) A Quidditch player who is lightest, fastest & best at catching the Golden Snitch
  - c) A bunch of 17<sup>th</sup> century Dissenters with ideas close to George Fox's - many of whom joined his religious movement
  - d) People looking for the truth
- 9) What was Firbank Fell like in 1652?
- a) A windy pasture on a ridge in the middle of nowhere
  - b) A village where a lot of Seekers lived
  - c) A bustling market town
  - d) Margaret Fell's house (that's why they called it Firbank Fell)
- 10) What is Firbank Fell like now?
- a) A shopping mall
  - b) A housing development
  - c) A used car dealership
  - d) A windy pasture on a ridge in the middle of nowhere
- 11) Why did George go to Firbank Fell? He heard there was going to be:
- a) A big gathering of Seekers
  - b) A peace demonstration
  - c) A rock festival
  - d) A Civil War Reenactment
  - e) A meeting that Margaret Fell was going to be at and he wanted to meet her
- 12) What did Meg Fell's husband Tom do?
- a) He repaired shoes
  - b) He worked as a justice of the peace
  - c) He served as Vice Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
  - d) He herded sheep on Firbank Fell
  - e) He kept George out of prison (whenever he could)
- 13) Who were the Valiant Sixty?
- a) Superheroes in an early Marvel comic book series
  - b) A really big rock band
  - c) The main followers of Oliver Cromwell
  - d) A bunch of early Quakers who traveled around converting people to the new Quaker movement
- 14) Roughly how many of the Valiant Sixty are thought to have been women?
- a) None - because women weren't allowed to preach back then
  - b) None - because it was too dangerous for women to travel around back then
  - c) Two: Elizabeth Hooton & Margaret Fell
  - d) About 12
  - e) About 20

## Answers to Quiz:

1. d (Some might argue “b”) Although he ruled in the name of Parliament, he basically ignored and manipulated it freely and in reality ruled by military edict. His power was based squarely on the strength of the New Model Army.
2. c
3. c
4. e
5. d. It is not certain that Hooton was his first “convert” but she was definitely one of his earliest followers. Some suggest that she converted George rather than the other way around. They were certainly two of the earliest leaders of what became the Friends movement. (She was not actually known as Liz the “Hoot”.)
6. c & e. (Annie denies “e.” She just said she was a bit tired & needed a break)
7. c & d (assuming we can in fact know God’s intentions)
8. all of the above (Quidditch is an imaginary game that plays a role in the Harry Potter novels.)
9. a
10. d
11. a
12. b, c & e (modern nicknames are for amusement only)
13. d
14. d. The exact number of women in the Valiant Sixty is not known. Some give this as 12. But it was certainly a significant number. It was also revolutionary that **any** of this group of traveling preachers were women.

## Timeline on the Birth of Friends

- 1439 - Gutenberg develops first printing press in Europe
- 1517 - Martin Luther posts 95 theses on a church door launching Protestant Reformation
- 1533 - Henry VIII breaks with Rome launching Reformation in England
- 1535 - Tyndale Bible published (first mass printed in English)
- 1600 - Elizabeth Hooten born
- 1611 - King James Bible published
- 1614 - Margaret Fell born
- 1616 - James Nayler born
- 1624 - George Fox born
- 1642-51 - English Civil War
- 1643 - George Fox leaves home to search for spiritual answers
- 1648 - Hooten & Fox begin gathering converts & forming first local Friends meetings
- 1649 - King Charles I is convicted of treason, sentenced to death by Parliament and beheaded
- 1652 - Fox has a vision of a "great people to be gathered" from atop Pendle hill, preaches to 1000 Seekers on Firbank Fell. Fox meets Margaret Fell.
- 1656 - James Nayler arrested and convicted of blasphemy  
First organized gathering of Friends from across Britain held in Balby in Yorkshire
- 1659-60 - Four Quakers hung on Boston Common after violating their banishment
- 1660 - Restoration of monarchy (Charles II), Fifth Monarchists abortive uprising  
Declaration to Charles II (first Quaker public statement of "Peace Testimony")  
James Nayler is beaten by robbers and dies
- 1661 - first annual session of New England YM (first yearly meeting in the world)
- 1662 - Quaker Act - requires Quakers to swear allegiance to king  
leading to imprisonment of many Friends unwilling to swear oaths
- 1664 - Conventicle Act - bans worship of five or more unrelated individuals outside standard worship services of Church of England
- 1676 - *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* by Robert Barclay is published
- 1682 - William Penn founds the colony Pennsylvania and many Quakers settle there
- 1688 - Glorious Revolution (James II is out, William & Mary are in), Act of Toleration  
Germantown Quaker Petition against Slavery (first corporate church statement)
- 1691 - George Fox dies
- 1702 - Margaret Fell dies

## **Skits on Early Friends**

**(Note: All scenes take place in 17 century England except the first and last)**

### **for Session #1 - Comparing 21<sup>st</sup> c. US & 17 c. England**

#### **Scene 1: What people talk about today**

Two friends, Matthew (a mechanic) and Elizabeth (a software engineer) talk in a bar today. (2 roles)

#### **Scene 2: What people talked about in the 1650s**

Two friends, Isaac (a sheep farmer) and James (a cobbler) speak in a pub in England in 1651. (2 roles)

### **for Session #2 – A People to be Gathered**

George has been preaching to a large group of people taking part in a country fair in Sedbergh in June 1652. He is speaking with another preacher named Francis Howgill. (2 roles)

### **for Session #3 – May Women Preach?**

Father Phillip Whitstanley is just finishing his sermon in a parish church in 1658. In this church there is often an open discussion at the end of the sermon. Mary, a Quaker leader, stands to speak. (2 roles with contributions from others)

### **for Session #4 - Persecution: George & Margaret**

It is December of 1673, George Fox and Margaret Fell are traveling together towards their home, Swarthmoor Hall, in the north of England. (2 roles)

### **for Session #5 - The Testimony of Simplicity (or “Purity”)**

#### **Scene 1: A Quaker Family in 1691**

2 Quaker parents in 1691 are upset about some things their ten year old son, William, has done. They are having a discussion about this at the dinner table. (3 roles)

#### **Scene 2: A Quaker Family in 2019**

2 Quaker parents in 2011 are upset about some things their ten year old daughter, Elizabeth, has done. They are having a discussion about this at the dinner table. (3 roles)

**Session #1, Scene 1 - What people talk about today**

Two friends, Matt (a computer programmer) and Kristin (a mechanic) talk in a bar in Springfield in 2011.

Matt: Whassup Kristin? How's your old man?

Kristin: Same old, same old. What about those Patriots huh?

Matt: Yeah. What losers. I can't believe they lost to the Jets in the first round!

Kristin: What do you think of Obama?

Matt: I don't like my prices going up at the pump. It cost me 80 bucks to fill up my truck the other day.

Kristin: Yeah, but those other guys are idiots too.

Matt: Obama's wife seems nice. Maybe we should have elected her. You know I heard on the radio that Obama was really a radical Muslim Socialist in disguise born and raised by Mau Mau terrorists in Kenya.

Kristin: Well, you can't believe everything you hear on the radio.

Matt: How about them Celtics, huh?

**Session #1 / Scene 2 - What people talked about in the 1650s**

Two friends, Isaac (a sheep farmer) and James (a cobbler) speak in a pub in England in 1651.

Isaac: Greetings, James. How does thy good woman?

James: Much better, thank thee, James. Although her joints still cause her much pain with the gout.

Isaac: What thinks thou, of our Great Protector?

James: I did not like our old king. Methinks he thought to bring the papist priests back to our shores. I would not see England ruled from Rome.

Isaac: It is very strange though not to have a king.

James: Verily. I never heard of a time when it was so.

Isaac: Methink perhaps our Oliver would be king.

James (whispering loudly): Close thy lips! There are soldiers over there! Wouldst thou have us hauled before the judge?

Isaac: No, thou art right.

James: I will tell thee a strange thing. I was in the market in Nottingham Saturday last and I saw a woman preaching to many good folk.

Isaac: How can this be? A woman preaching?! Did not Paul write that a woman must keep silent in church?

James: This was not in the church. But listen: she said many strange things. She said the Bible is not the Word of God. But rather the Word of God is Christ!

Isaac: The holy book is not God's word? Well, 'tis true that in the first chapter of John's gospel it is written that the "Word was with God in the beginning and was only then coming into the world", so perhaps she spoke truth?

James: And she said that Christ lives today amongst us here in England. That Christ is within each of us, even the poor and uneducated and women. And that this living Seed will teach us and lead us and tell us what is right and wrong.

Isaac: In each of us? Does Christ speak even in poor Jack my hired man who cannot read? And even in women? Verily we live in very strange times!

## Session #2 - A People to be Gathered

George has been preaching to a large group of people taking part in a country fair in Sedbergh in June 1652. He is speaking with another preacher named Francis Howgill.

Francis: Thou spoke with great authority to the people today. Thy words struck me to the core. What is thy name?

George: My name is George Fox. I thank thee for thy words of rebuke to those priests and others who would have me thrown out of yon steeplehouse yard. But if there was any authority in my words, it came from the Lord, not from myself.

Francis: I have heard thy name before. Others have heard stories of thee and thy teaching. How came you to Sedbergh this day?

George: I have been traveling from the south with two friends. Let me tell you of a strange thing that happened just 3 days past. As we passed near a great hill called Pendle, I was moved of the Lord to go up on top of it. This I did with difficulty, it was so very steep and high. When I was come to the top, I could see the sea beyond Lancashire and the mountains further to the north in the lake country. From the top of this hill the Lord revealed to me a vision of what places he had a great people waiting to be gathered. I could see in my mind's eye gatherings of many tender people in villages and towns in these very parts.

Francis: I wonder if perhaps thou hast seen a vision of the people who are called "Seekers". I am one of those so called. There are many of our kind in this area who have been meeting these past few years. We have often spoken of some of the same principles which thou preached this very day in Sedbergh.

George: I have also heard of these Seekers. I sensed a quickening in many hearts as I spoke today among many who listened to the words I spoke.

Francis: Indeed there are many more that would thirst, I believe, to hear thy words.

George: They are not my words but of Christ, who is my only teacher.

Francis: Tomorrow we Seekers have planned a great meeting on Firbank, a place only three miles west of here. We will meet in the morning. Perhaps if thou comest there, thou might speak to those gathered. It is a wild, open hilltop, yet there may be a thousand of our Seekers in this place, even families with children. Many hunger to hear the kinds of words as were spoken today at Sedbergh fair.

George: I will pray on this. It may be that your Seekers **were** some of those the Lord opened to me on top of Pendle. But if I come, I do not preach from any plan or text. I will only preach if the Lord asks and gives me the words to speak.

Francis: Then on the morrow we shall see whether the Lord **does** have thee speak to the many gathered on Firbank on that day.

### Session #3 - Should Women Preach?

Father Phillip Whitstanley is just finishing his sermon in a parish church in 1658. In this church there is often an open discussion at the end of the sermon.

Phillip: And so as we can see, the Bible says that we must respect our priests and obey them in all matters that relate to Christian beliefs and teachings.

(Mary Biddle stands to speak)

Mary: And yet John wrote that the Light enlightens **every one** that comes into this world. He does not say that the Light enlightens only those called “priests”.

Phillip: A woman must not speak in this church!

Mary: Dost thou refer to this steeplehouse as a church or to this mixed multitude? Paul tells us that the church is the people of God, united together as one in Christ. I do not see that those in this building are so united...

Phillip: Thou must sit down Mary. It is said that women do not even have souls!

(audience shouts out: “Sit down, Mary! Sit down!”)

Mary: Who has the authority to tell me thusly?

Phillip: The same Apostle Paul wrote that thou must not speak or preach or quote scripture.

Mary: In the Bible it is written that Miriam and Deborah were prophets in ancient times. Paul says that Priscilla and other women were his coworkers in spreading the gospel. And the Lord chose to reveal himself first to two women after he rose from the dead. Even today Christ chooses many women across England and in the American colonies to be His prophets and carry forth His gospel. He uses men and women, rich and poor, educated and uneducated to deliver His truth.

Phillip: (angrily) Thou speaketh blasphemy and this will not be allowed in my church!

Mary: Why becomest thou angry Friend Phillip?

Phillip: I am not a friend to thee and thou must address me as Father Whitstanley!

Mary: My father is named Matthew not Phillip and thee may see that he sits across this room in yon pew. And it is true that I do not find thee a friend to the Truth. But the same Paul that thou quotest badly to deny me the right to speak also wrote that all are equal who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, even Gentile and Jew, free and slave, men and women. I have seen this same Spirit at work in many who are of the so called weaker sex.

(Audience: “She makes some strong points, Father Whitstanley!”)

#### Session #4 - George & Margaret (and Suffering for Truth)

It is December of 1673, George Fox and Margaret Fell are traveling together towards their home, Swarthmoor Hall, in the north of England.

Margaret: I long greatly for our return home. It has been so long since we could dwell together there in peace.

George: I too wish for that kind of peaceful time with thee.

Margaret: That was a very blessed meeting we had today in John Halford's barn.

George: Yes, it is a wonderful thing to be able to meet with so many precious Friends. (sighs)

Margaret: I sense a kind of sadness in thee, dear heart. Art thou ill at ease?

George: I fear, my Margaret, that more travail is upon me. I forsee another great suffering that I must undergo. I have a vision of those who would persecute me again drawing near, perhaps this very night.

Margaret: This fills me with great sadness. We have had so very little time together my love in all these years.

George: The Lord has required much of us.

Margaret: Yes, but thou hast not been well of late. Thou art no longer the young man thou wast. We have lost so many dear Friends already in their foul jails. I fear thou mayest perhaps be lost to us as well. And thou hast much more work to do. Is there no way this suffering might be avoided while remaining true to the Lord?

George: I can see that thou art much grieved as I speak of being sent back into their jails. Yet thou knowest well I can never flee from those who would do us harm. Be content with the will of the Lord God.

Margaret: I am content and yet I grieve if this be true.

George: The Lord's power is over all: blessed be His holy name forever!

## Session #5 - Scene 1: A Quaker Family in 1691

2 Quaker parents in 1691 are upset about some things their ten year old son, William, has done. They are having a discussion about this at the dinner table.

Father: How was thy day, William?

Matthew: It was well, Father.

Mother: Hast thou read the book that was assigned to thee in school?

Matthew: Thou knowest I am a good student and read what is assigned, Mother.

Mother: 'Tis truth. Matthew, thy father & I have a concern we wish to raise with thee.

Matthew: I have done all my chores, Mother.

Mother: This does not concern thy chores. We learned that thou hast been spending time at the Cornwallis home in the village. Thou knowest well that they are not Friends and do not share our beliefs.

Matthew: But thou hast always told me that I should love all people and not be unfriendly to others just because of their beliefs. Jacob is my friend!

Father: Thou art right about that. Our concern is not that thou art a friend to Jacob Cornwallis. I ran into Jacob's father in the market. He told me thou playest Jacob's lute with great skill. He said this to give me joy because he does not know our beliefs about musical instruments. He also told me that you and Jacob went to see a play.

Mother: You know, Matthew, that we have strong beliefs as Friends about doing things that turn us away from God and...

Matthew: (interrupts) But Mother...

Father: Please listen to all thy mother has to say.

Mother: Lutes and plays are things that the "world's people" use to amuse themselves. We believe that it is important to lead a serious, quiet life. Your Father and I find pleasure in simple things like working in the garden and taking a walk beyond the village and reading the Bible.

Matthew: But the lute is very beautiful. It makes sounds like a bird or the wind.

Father: We are very afraid of where these things will lead you, Matthew. There are many things that the world's people do that make it hard for them to hear Christ's voice in their hearts. It is easy to quench that voice if one runs after worldly things. Wouldst thou even celebrate Christmas or do country dancing one day?

Matthew: Certainly not! But I am not even certain I wish to be a Friend when I grow up!

Mother: That is something thou wilt have to decide in thy heart. For now, though, thou mayest not play instruments or go to plays.

## Session #5 - Scene 2: A Quaker Family in 2011

2 Quaker parents in 2011 are upset about some things their ten year old daughter, Elizabeth, has done. They are having a discussion about this at the dinner table.

Mom: Hi Megan. How was your day at school?

Elizabeth: Same old, same old.

Dad: Have you finished all your homework?

Elizabeth: Dad! You know I always finish it. Don't go there.

Dad: Megan, there's something your mom & I want to talk to you about.

Elizabeth: I emptied the kitty litter already, Dad!

Dad: Thank you for doing that without us reminding you. It's not about chores.

Mom: Honey, you know how we agreed as a family to try having Sundays be family days when we don't watch any TV or DVDs or play video games or anything? We were upset that you were playing World of Warcraft yesterday when you said you were going to be practicing your violin.

Elizabeth: Mom! First of all I didn't agree to that idea. It was your idea & I think it's **dumb**.

Dad: We feel that all those electronic things just take over our lives. Mine too. We wanted to just try making things and taking walks and talking to each other, even if only one day a week.

Mom: Also we had asked you not to use those things after ten o'clock at night so we can have peaceful energy in the house in the evening. Last night I heard you using your I-pod under the covers around 11pm when you should have been asleep.

Dad: We want everyone in our family to be able to slow down and feel the way the Spirit works in us. It's hard to do that if we're constantly being bombarded by the media and internet and games and everything.

Elizabeth: Don't try to run my life! And please stop imposing your beliefs on me! I'm not even sure I'm a Quaker....

Mom: Well, that may or may not be true but we still want you to try these things that we have asked you to so we can all see what happens.