NPYM Committee on the Discipline
Questions for Local Friends Groups
on WITNESS

This “Questions for Local Friends Groups” document shows what is currently in the NPYM book of Faith & Practice about witness. Page references are to the 1993 edition. For questions to stimulate discussion about this material, see the last section.

The introduction and some of the quotations from “Living in the World” on pp. 31-33 are combined here with advices and queries on Witness from p. 46.

Throughout our history Friends have testified that our lives are not meant to conform to the ways of the world but that we are meant to contribute to the transformation of the world through the light of truth.

Quotations

From p. 31

Let all nations hear the sound by word or writing. Spare no place, spare no tongue nor pen, but be obedient to the Lord God; go through the world and be valiant for the truth upon earth; tread and trample all that is contrary under…. 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 every one; whereby in them you may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.

George Fox, 1656

From pp. 15-16

At last after all my distresses, wanderings and sore travels, I met with some writings of this people called Quakers, which I cast a slight eye upon and disdained, as falling very short of that wisdom, light, life and power, which I had been longing for and searching after…. After a long time, I was invited to hear one of them…. When I came, I felt the presence and power of the Most High among them, and words of truth from the Spirit of truth reaching to my heart and conscience, opening my state as in the presence of the Lord. Yes, I did not only feel words and demonstrations from without, but I felt the dead quickened, the seed raised; insomuch as my heart, in the certainty of light and clearness of true sense, said: “This is he; this is he; there is no other; this is he whom I have waited for and sought after from my childhood, who was always near me, and had often begotten life in my heart, but I knew him not distinctly nor how to receive him, or dwell with him.” …

But some may desire to know what I have at last met with. I answer, “I have met with the Seed.” Understand that word, and thou wilt be satisfied and inquire no further. I have met with my God, I have met with my Saviour, and he hath not been present with me without his Salvation, but I have felt the healings drop upon my soul from under his wings.

Isaac Penington, 1667

From p. 31

My prison shall be my grave before I will budge a jot; for I owe my conscience to no mortal man; I have no need to fear, God will make amends for all.

William Penn, 1668

From p. 31

Answer the Witness of God in every man, whether they are the heathen that do not profess
Christ, or whether they are such as do profess Christ that have the form of godliness and be out of the Power.

George Fox, 1672

From p. 32

As Friends, we need to develop our spiritual lives so that we may become increasingly able to speak to “that of God” in those with whom we come in contact and to point out to them by our lives as well as our words that there is a power and a spirit within them that can make war impossible. We should show by our lives that they as well as we are responsible to this authority within, and none other.

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1950

From p. 33

It is thought that realizes will. Only a thinking man can live. Only a thinking people can create history. Only a thinking kind can live in the midst of the dead.

The future always belongs to us. It is neither the working of nature, nor that of fate. It comes by our resolution.

Only a person who resolves not to be enslaved enjoys freedom.

Only a person who resolves not to assert his own enjoys freedom.

Only the person who resolves to love even at the cost of his own life can win love.

The first ingredient of life is courage.

The problem of today is not that of knowledge or technology. It is a spiritual problem. It is a question which requires a revolution in our outlook on life, on history, and on the nation.

The world today does not require an increase in technology, nor an easier access to its store of learning. It requires faith and spirit to overcome the present hurdle. The age calls for a new religion.

Ham Sok Hon, 1965

From p. 21

We must be alert that the warm coziness which we find enveloping us at Yearly Meeting and in our Monthly Meetings does not snare us into imagining that this is all of Quakerism. A vital religion is one which goes from an encounter with the love of God to an encounter in service to that love, no matter how hopeless the situation may be.

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1967

Advices

From p. 46

We are glad to tell in words as well as deeds the faith that is in us. We seek fellowship with others of our own faith and with all people, realizing the oneness of humanity under God. Our witness is characterized by humility and a willingness to learn from others so that differences can be transcended. In discussion, we must not allow the strength of our convictions to betray us into making misleading or contentious statements. The experiences of others, especially those in circumstances different from our own, help us to discover what is true for us and may help us sense real kinship. We are constantly reminded that Truth is greater than the knowledge any of us has of it. God did not put all the fruit on one branch.

Queries

From p. 46

How do our lives testify to our convictions as Friends? What are we doing to share our faith? How do we practice listening to the Truth which may be revealed by others?

What ways do we find to cooperate with persons and groups with whom we share beliefs and concerns? Do we reach out with love and respect to those with whom we disagree?

What are we doing to make the larger community aware of our Friends Meeting?
Along with asking “Do I” instead of “Do we” in each query, Sandpoint Friends Meeting adds this query:

Are we faithful in witnessing to the Truth in our community and to the world?

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**Some questions for discussion around the Witness in NPYM’s *Faith & Practice***

From NPYM Friends and the Committee on the Discipline

- What does witnessing mean for liberal Quakers? **In your own daily life**, how do you witness? How does your worship group or meeting witness?
- **When have you invited someone to attend meeting for worship?** How did that go?
- **What is it about your life** that tells your acquaintances that you’re a Friend?
- **What’s missing** from this current material that you find central to Friends’ witness in today’s world?
- Are there parts of this section that you think would belong **better in some other part** of NPYM’s *Faith & Practice? Parts that you think could be deleted?*
- **Which quotations are the most helpful** to you?
- **What have you learned from other Friends** about witness? **What have they said** that has been worth remembering?
- What **books, pamphlets, articles, or other resources** can you recommend about Quaker witness?