

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting  
Faith and Practice Revision Group  
**The Light Within**  
[Draft 5.31.12]

Friends believe that every person can have a direct and unmediated experience of the Divine. It is by means of this experience that we find guidance in our everyday lives and are brought together as a community of faith.

Friends have used many different terms or phrases to designate the object of this experience as the source and inner certainty of our faith. The Spirit of Truth, Spirit, the Divine Principle, that of God, the Christ Within, the Inward Teacher, the Seed, and the Light Within or Inner Light are examples of such phrases. George Fox refers in his *Journal* to “that Inward Light, Spirit, and Grace by which all might know their salvation” and to “that Divine Spirit which would lead them into all truth.”

For Friends, the Light Within is not the same as the conscience or moral faculty. The conscience is a human element that is conditioned by education and the cultural environment; it is not, therefore, an infallible guide to a Spirit-led life. Friends are encouraged to test the leadings that arise in such a life by seeking clearness, through direct communion in the meeting for worship and through the clearness process (cf. p. ) Such testing enhances and clarifies insight so that one becomes more truly aware of and obedient to the Light Within.

Friends’ experience has been that this faithfulness brings a state of peace that is independent of the tangible results of the action taken. Spiritual power arises from living in harmony with the Divine Principle. George Fox often refers to the experience of power and to the relationship between power and the Light. For instance, he declares that “the power of God sprang through me” and admonishes us to “hearken to the Light, that ye may feel the power of God in every one of you.”

Continuing faithfulness to the Christ Within increases our gratitude for God’s gifts, including an awareness of enduring values, the joy of life, and the ability to resolve problems in accord with divine leading. Under the guidance of Spirit in corporate worship, individuals grow in the capacity for discernment and sensitivity to the needs of the meeting. This helps the meeting make decisions and face undertakings in a spirit detached from judgment, prejudice, or self-interest. Basic Quaker testimonies such as equality, simplicity, nonviolence, integrity, and community arose among early Friends from a deep sense of individual and corporate responsibility guided by the Inward Teacher.

Recognizing that God’s Light is in every person overcomes our separation and our differences from others and leads to a sympathetic awareness of their needs and a sense of responsibility towards them. Friends believe that the more widely and clearly the Light is recognized and followed, the more the human family will come into harmony. “Therefore,” writes George Fox, “in the Light wait, where unity is.”