

Faith and Practice
of
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
of the
Religious Society of Friends

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Foreword

All who use this *Faith and Practice* are encouraged to follow the admonition from the Meeting of Elders held at Balby, England, in 1656:

Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all with the measure of the light which is pure and holy may be guided, and so in the light walking and abiding, these may be fulfilled in the Spirit—not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

Elders of Balby, 1656

This edition of *Faith and Practice* of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends is thus intended to be a guide, and not a rule, for our members, attenders and others who seek to understand how Friends in our yearly meeting express our faith in our lives, our communities and our organizations. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting approved this edition of *Faith and Practice* in 20__.

Like early Friends, we proclaim that every person has been endowed with the capacity to enter directly, without mediation, into an empowering relationship with God. Also like those Friends, we gather in expectant silence with other seekers, open to the movement of the Spirit in ourselves individually and in our worshipping community. Friends seek to experience the presence of the living God in individual religious practice and in meetings for worship and for business. To be in the presence of God inspires awe, provides healing and comfort, and is a source of guidance for conduct. Out of this experience, we proclaim the intimate connection between religious faith and social justice and seek to express this understanding in our daily lives and actions.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting affirms that transformation comes when we, in daily life and in our meeting communities, trust in the Light that gives life and empowers everyone who comes into the world.

Preface

This revised edition of *Faith and Practice* embodies the labor and insight of a revision group appointed for this service by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Throughout the editing process, many individual Friends and monthly meetings have improved the drafts considerably through their close attention to both individual sections and to the whole text. The revision group is also grateful for the time and attention that Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in session, on several occasions, has devoted to this work.

The text reflects a commitment to recognize the diversity that exists within our yearly meeting and honor this rich variety of experience. Those who become members of Friends meetings within Philadelphia Yearly Meeting have followed very different paths. We each bring distinct religious vocabularies, images and metaphors to express our spiritual experience. Readers are encouraged to engage the book with an open mind and heart and, where necessary, to ‘translate’ the text into the wording that speaks to them. All Friends can recognize that those sitting next to them on meetinghouse benches may have a different way of expressing their understanding and experience—and that new insights can occur as we speak with and listen to one another.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting is also diverse in the size and composition of its constituent monthly meetings. The revision group hopes that the suggestions contained herein can be tailored to meet the needs of all Friends meetings whether they are large or small, and speak both to those who are quite familiar with the procedures outlined and to those who are new to Quakerism and are eager to understand the ways of Friends. Throughout the text, the revision group has attempted to describe current practice and to avoid prescription.

When the Faith and Practice Revision Group was appointed by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 2009, it was charged to describe the structure and organization of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and to bring *Faith and Practice* up to date. This group substantially reorganized the book for greater clarity and usefulness. It also incorporated commitments made by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting since the 2002 edition of *Faith and Practice* was published regarding both the integrity of the earth and the need to address racism within and beyond Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

During the drafting process, the yearly meeting undertook a long range planning process which was presented in the publication, “Re-Kindling Our Fire: A 5-Year Plan for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 2015-2020.” The resulting structure of the yearly meeting, approved in 2014, is referenced in this edition of *Faith and Practice* but not described in detail. Readers are invited to visit the yearly meeting website (pym.org) for up-to-date descriptions of the groups and individuals serving the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting community. The websites of other Friends organizations are included for complementary information and materials. (See Sections V. and VIII.) This edition of *Faith and Practice* is available online as well as in print.