Friends are reminded that our Religious Society took form in times of disturbance, and that its continuing testimony has been the power of God to lead men and women out of the confusions of outward violence, inward sickness, and all other forms of self-will, however upheld by social convention. As death comes to our willfulness, a new life is formed in us, so that we are liberated from distractions and frustrations, from fears, angers, and guilts. Thus we are enabled to sense the Inward Light and to follow its leadings. Friends are advised to place God, not themselves, in the center of the universe and, in all aspects of inward life and outward activity, to keep themselves open to the healing power of the Spirit of Christ.

Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Seek to live in affection as true Friends in your Meetings, in your families, in all your dealings with others, and in your relationship with outward society. The power of God is not used to compel us to Truth; therefore, let us renounce for ourselves the power of any person over any other and, compelling no one, seek to lead others to Truth through love. Let us teach by being ourselves teachable.

EXTRACT FROM THE EPISTLES OF THE YEARLY MEETING OF PENNSYLVANIA AND THE JERSEYS, 1694 AND 1695

... a charge to you all in the presence of the living God, be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, island, 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 ye may be a blessing, and make the witness in God in them to bless you. - George Fox, 1694

FOX, GEORGE. THE JOURNAL OF GEORGE FOX. ED. NORMAN PENNEY. NEW YORK: COSIMO CLASSICS, 2007. 17. PRINT.
“...when the inward weather is just right; when selfish impulse has been hushed; when the clouds and shadows ... are swept away and genuine love makes the whole inner atmosphere pure and free from haze, then I know that I find a beyond which before was nowhere in sight and might easily not have been suspected.”

RUFUS JONES. RELIGION AS REALITY, LIFE AND POWER. WILLIAM PENN LECTURE, 1918.

Robert Purvis has said that I am “the most belligerent non-resistant” he ever saw. I accept the character he gave me and I glory in it. I have no idea because I am a non-resistor of submitting tamely to injustice inflicted on me or on the slave. I will oppose it with all the moral power with which I am endowed. I am no advocate of passivity. Quakerism as I understand it does not mean quietism. The early Friends were agitators, disturbers of the peace, and were more obnoxious in their day to charges which are now so freely made than we are.

LUCRETIA MOTT 1859

The community itself can become the test or touchstone for authenticating leadings. The experience of being united in Truth produces the expectation that the perceptions of a person truly under divine guidance in a particular situation will be consistent with the perceptions of others who also are – or have been – attuned to divine guidance. Truth is one, not several, and does not alter from person to person. So the perceptions of discerning people may be extremely helpful in helping a person to distinguish or discern the sources of her own perceptions and motivations.

LORING, PATRICIA. SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT: THE CONTEXT AND GOAL OF CLEARNESS COMMITTEES. WALLINGFORD: PENDLE HILL, 1992. 7. PRINT.

Behind the Clearness Committee is a simple but crucial conviction: each of us has an inner teacher, a voice of truth, that offers the guidance and power we need to deal with our problems. But that inner voice is often garbled by various kinds of inward and outward interference. The function of the Clearness Committee is not to give advice or “fix” people from the outside in but rather to help people remove the interference so that they can discover their own wisdom from the inside out. If we do not believe in the reality of inner wisdom, the Clearness Committee can become an opportunity for manipulation. But if we respect the power of the inner teacher, the Clearness Committee can be a remarkable way to help someone name and claim his or her deepest truth.

PALMER, PARKER J. THE CLEARNESS COMMITTEE: A COMMUNAL APPROACH TO DISCERNMENT IN RETREATS.
Action that arose from clarity and action that arose from despair often took the same outward form...I was no Gandhi, no Martin Luther King. Whereas they had struggled through their own fear and anger and uncovered reservoirs of hope and inspiration, I was drowning in my anger and in my desperation to make things better. Whereas they drew on a lifetime of tempering their souls against the hard edges of injustice, I was young, naive, and willing to take risks for which I was ill prepared. They were fed by inward springs that refreshed and renewed them even in the face of death. I was fed by surges of emotional energy with which I tried to lift myself out of an undertow that threatened to swallow me into its depths.

SYNDER, DANIEL. QUAKER WITNESS AS A SACRAMENT. WALLINGFORD, PENDLE HILL. 6. PRINT.

There is a tendency today, in this generation, to suppose that the religious life must prove its worth because it changes the social order. The test of the importance of any supposed dealing with Eternity is the benefits it may possibly bring to affairs in time. Time, and the enrichment of events in time, are supposed to pass a judgment upon the worth of fellowship with the Eternal...We are in an era of This-sidedness, with a passionate anxiety about economics and political organization. And the church itself has largely gone “this-sided,” and large areas of the Religious Society of Friends seemed to be predominately concerned with this world, with time, with the temporal order... I submit that this is a lamentable reversal of the true order of dependance. Time is no judge of Eternity. It is the Eternal who is the judge and tester of time. – Thomas Kelly, 1941


It is also true that we may leave the hush of the meeting [for worship] with a heightened sensitivity to the injustice, violence, and pain all around us. Yet we can hope (and Quaker history seems to bear this out) that the same Power which allows us to suffer increased sensitivity to social evil also empowers us to reach out more creatively to touch the right spot or to pull the right handle to begin healing in lives and situations around us and to start a process of social change. Fortunately, the same Power which makes us more sensitive to evil and pain also makes us more open to an increasing awareness of beauty and spiritual resources which can enable us to be faithful followers of the Way of which Jesus spoke.

TABER, WILLIAM P., JR. FOUR DOORS TO MEETING FOR WORSHIP. WALLINGFORD: PENDLE HILL, 1992. 26-27. PRINT.

To speak of this discipline as Quaker witness, as testimony, is to make it clear that our outward work is grounded in ‘the virtue of that Life and Power that takes away the occasion of all wars.’ This would not be so clear if we spoke of our work merely as following Quaker guidelines or adhering to ethical commitments. Such
words suggest principles that could be derived from a book or a list of rules. The words 'witness' and 'testimony' suggest something much deeper: that we are giving voice and form to that which we have come to know from direct encounter. Thomas Kelly once wrote that he worried that ‘too many well-intentioned people are so preoccupied with the clatter of effort to do something for God that they can't hear Him asking that He might do something through them.’ It is this simply stated but nevertheless crucial distinction between working for and being worked through that is at the heart of sacramental living. This does not mean that we should abandon strategic thinking or that we should not use the tools of political and economic analysis, only that we are called to work away on behalf of what is right and just but leave the outcomes to God.

DANIEL SNYDER, “QUAKER WITNESS AS SACRAMENT”, PH PAMPHLET #397, PP. 31-32. USED BY PERMISSION OF PENDLE HILL.

At this moment each man in the world possesses a limited energy for social action. Let us consider this quantity similar to the contents of a drinking cup. If we use a portion of this energy in fear, another portion in frustration, and still another in preparation for violent aggression, soon we shall discover that our power is greatly diminished. But, if we can discipline ourselves – and that is a matter requiring a practical, willing, and thorough-going devotion – we can remove fear, hatred, bitterness and frustration. Then the cup will overflow with energy, a great deal of which can be used in finding a creative solution to our problems.

BAYARD RUSTIN. “IN APPREHENSION HOW LIKE A GOD!”, WILLIAM PENN LECTURE 1948 DELIVERED AT ARCH STREET MEETING HOUSE, PHILADELPHIA
The true “concern” [emerges as] a gift from God, a leading of the Spirit which may not be denied. Its sanction is not that on investigation it proves an intelligent thing to do – though it usually is; it is that the individual (and if the concern is shared and adopted by the meeting, then of meeting) knows, as a matter of inward experience, that here is something which the Lord would have done, however obscure the way, however uncertain the means to human observation. Often proposals for action are made which have every appearance of good sense, but as the meeting waits before God, it becomes clear that the proposition falls short of ‘concern.’ - Roger C. Wilson, 1949

Our practices are in place to nurture that transforming power and process and to allow us to be faithful to the fruits of this way of life. It is what we are about. As William Penn said of early Friends, they were changed people themselves before they went to change the world. (Quaker faith & practice 2013: 19.48). We are, and always have been, open to spiritual change and to discerning and obediently following holy leadings to use our gifts as part of our ministry to change the world for God... If as Quakers we are not open to transformation, or do not understand that Quakerism is centered on that kind of experience, we misunderstand Quakerism. Quakerism is not a spirituality of passivity, not a spiritually of options; our testimonies are not a pre-packaged set of values. Our spiritual experience, our openness to being led and to living a guided life, leads us to a life we have little choice over. Testimony is the outflowing life we cannot help but lead.

The spiritual traditions do not deny all reality of the outer world. They simply claim that we help make that world by projecting our spirit on it, for better or for worse. If our intuitions are rigid, it is because our hearts fear change; if they set us in mindless competition with each other, it is because we value victory over all else; if they are heedless of human well-being, it is because something in us is heartless as well. We can make choices about what we are going to project and with those choices we help grow the world that is. Consciousness precedes being; consciousness, yours and mine, can form, deform, or reform our world. Our complicity in world
making is a source of awesome and sometimes painful responsibility – and a source of profound hope for change. It is the ground of our common call to leadership, the truth that makes leaders of us all.

PALMER, PARKER J. LET YOUR LIFE SPEAK. SAN FRANCISCO: JOSSEY-BASS, 2000. 77-78. PRIN
1. How to Use Grounding Quotes

   Here are some suggestions for exploring the introductory essays, texts, and videos in the Grounding section of each topic. Be creative and consider using different processing techniques over time in order to spark the various learning styles of your participants: discussion, personal reflection, artistic expression, music, worship sharing, creative writing, and deep listening.

2. Friendly Bible Study

   The Friendly Bible Study process applies to Scripture as well as other materials. This process is good for a group of newcomers and old timers, allowing participants to speak about what is exciting and what is problematic about the text.

3. Find the Truth

   Choose one idea or sentence that rings true for you. Share with a partner an experience you have had that relates to that sentence/idea.

4. What Do You Notice?

   Shorter variations might be: What one phrase or idea sticks out for you? Sit with it for a few minutes and see what rises for you. Now journal/share with a partner.

5. Art Response

   Draw or doodle in response to this text. Allow yourself to be Spirit led – what color do you want to pick up, and how do you want to use it? This is not art for to view. This is exploration and expression. Alternatively, invite participants to make a visual or 3D response to the text using art materials such as clay or play dough, magazines for collage, paint, mural paper, pipe cleaners, objects from nature (acorns, feathers, grasses, flowers, seeds, bark), or building blocks or Legos.

6. Visit the Text in Worship

   Sit in worship with this material. Let it work on you. Try not to “think” about it – just let it sit on your lap and soak in. Now, turn to your partner and share something about your visit with this text.

7. Journaling

   Write your reaction to the text, how it applies to your life today, what you’re grappling with, or what you’re grateful for. Use one
of the General Questions for Reflection or free-write. In general, journal writing is kept confidential.

8. Set it to Music

If you have a group that is willing to be creative, break into small groups and ask each group to write a tune for the quotation or an excerpt (or assign a different quotation to each group). Tunes are a great way to “memorize” quotations so that they will stick with you. Check out Timeless Quaker Wisdom in Plainsong for some beautiful examples.

9. Homework

Share a quotation, introductory essay, QuakerSpeak video link, or set of quotations with group participants. In preparation for the next Spiritual Deepening group session, give the participants some “homework” to do. This could include:

1. reflecting on the text during their daily spiritual practice or during Meeting for Worship
2. journaling about their response to the text
3. rewriting the message in their own words
4. writing a prayer about the topic
5. finding a song, object, or image that represents to them the theme of the message
6. creating a piece of art that illustrates their response

As part of your next group sessions, invite participants to share or report back on their homework assignment.

10. Worship Sharing

Settle into worship and invite participants to speak into the silence and share their thoughts about a query. Craft a query directly related to the text or choose one of the General Questions for Reflection. A more detailed description of worship sharing can be found here.

11. Lectio Divina

Treat the quotation as a holy text and pay attention to how it speaks to you. Learn more about the Lectio Divina process.

12. Group Brainstorm

Ask a question that will elicit one-word answers or short phrases. On a flipchart paper, record the responses as participants share. Consider questions such as: What word stands out to me in this text? What feelings arise in
me as I consider this message? What question do I want to ask Spirit about this message? Invite participants to comment on what they notice about the brainstorm list.

13. Writing Prompts
   Invite participants to briefly contemplate the quotation and then respond to a writing prompt. Create a prompt specifically related to the text or choose one of the General Questions for Reflection.

14. Pair-Share or Triads
   Divide the group into pairs or sets of three to discuss the quotation. Return to a large group and share any themes that arose.

15. Group Discussion
   Ask a question directly related to the text or choose one of the General Questions for Reflection.

16. Make it Personal
   Rewrite the quote in your own words or to reflect contemporary society and language.

17. General Questions for Reflection

1. How is the Divine/Truth/Love speaking to me through this text?
2. What experience in my life reflects the message of this text?
3. What do I have to learn from this message?
4. What resonates with me in this quotation?
5. What stands out to me in this text?
6. What surprised me about this message?
7. What questions arise about my life as I contemplate this message?
8. What canst thou say? (What do I have to say in response to this message?)
9. What feelings arise in my body as I consider this message?
10. An image that comes to mind as I listen to this quotation is...
11. Where is the growing edge for me around this issue?
12. If I could rephrase this message in my own words, I would say...
13. This Truth tastes like... (smells like... sounds like... feels like... looks like....)
14. In relation to this topic, I used to be......, but now I’m ......
15. I’d like to ask Spirit / the Universe / God / the Inward Teacher ...... about this message.
16. The point on my spiritual journey when this idea has been most alive in me was...