



Opening to Transformation, Asking Hard Questions

Overview

Friends will reflect upon a lecture by a contemporary Quaker writer that challenges us to reclaim the experience of early Friends who were transformed by the Inward Light, Christ, the Seed, working in them.



90 min.



High School & up

Aims & Objectives

When you have completed this topic, you will have experience in hearing the voice(s) of contemporary Friends calling us to reclaim the transformative experience of encountering the imminent and indwelling presence of God; You will also have experience reflecting, on your own and with other Friends, how these voices are speaking to us today.

Materials & Set-up

Video: *Open for Transformation: Being Quaker*, Ben Pink Dandelion

To watch the YouTube video together, you will need internet access or WiFi. Set up the space so that everyone can see and hear. Because the video is an hour long, you may want to plan for a mid-point break. The group may choose to watch the video of the lecture before meeting together (share the link over email), or may want to watch together.

Instructions:

The “Swarthmore Lecture” is an annual lecture in the UK, sponsored by Woodbrooke. Pink Dandelion gave his lecture at the University of Bath in 2014. This is a reflection of a contemporary British Friend, primarily addressed to British Friends. The exercise of deep listening will help participants discern how much Ben’s words can speak to Friends in North America.

Pink Dandelion calls modern Friends to reclaim the radical, transformative experience of early Friends, in which the imminent and indwelling presence of God profoundly changes individuals, faith communities, and the wider world.

It is inevitable that some of the material in the lecture will give many contemporary Friends pause--because of language or because of content. Do not skip over these words or passages. Sit with them. Reflect on why they give you pause. Do they express a difficult Truth that we have tried to evade in the interest of “not making waves”? If they use religious language that is or has become unfamiliar to you, can you trust the Inner Light to make clear what the underlying intent is?

After watching the video, respond to these queries by journaling or through a pair-share:

- Does the author speak to your condition? How are you called to respond?
- Do these words speak to the condition of your Meeting and/or the condition of Friends in the United States? How are you called to respond?
- Other thoughts?

Come together as a group for worship sharing to hear and reflect upon participants’ responses to what was read or heard. Explain the process of Friends worship sharing, if it is possible that any present are unfamiliar with it. The following is an outline of the process:

Worship sharing is done out of the silence of worship.

Unlike in a Meeting for Worship, in worship sharing there is an expectation that each person will wish to speak, though anyone who wants to “pass” may do so.

Sharing is done from the heart and from personal experience. When speaking, take enough time to express your thoughts, but also consider the number of people in the group and leave enough time for each to speak.

When someone is sharing, simply listen to hear and understand what is said, rather than considering whether you agree or disagree.

Do not respond in any way to what another has shared.

After each person speaks, the group settles back into worship for a time before the next person speaks.

Begin with a period of centering worship, out of which each person may speak as the or she is ready. When about five minutes remain in the time set aside for worship sharing, or after a considerable time has passed without further sharing, the facilitator asks if anyone else would like to share. Return to worship. If there is no further sharing, offer a simple “Thank You” to the group when the allotted time is over.

Reading List

Consider following up and going deeper by reading and reflecting on Lloyd Lee Wilson’s essay “Quakerism and the New Creation,” which appears in his *Essays on the Quaker Vision of Gospel Order*, pp. 15-30. Written well over two decades ago, this essay encourages modern Friends to focus on the inner transformation of one’s entire perspective (the “gestalt”) that lies at the heart of authentic Quakerism.