

Quaker Spiritual Experience

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1).

Introduction

The following collection of statements and quotations was largely compiled by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and supplemented by Wilton Quaker Meeting based on our discernment in establishing a Seekers Corner at our meetinghouse.

Quakers have traditionally been wary of creedal statements as limiting our understanding of God/the Divine/the Holy Spirit/the Inner Light. Many Friends have further avoided prescribed declarations of faith and statements of essential truths as hindrances to communication with the Divine.

The rejection of creeds does not imply the absence of doctrine or statements of belief. From the earliest times of our society, individual Friends, as well as small groups of Friends and Friends' Meetings, have issued written statements of their beliefs to the world. Among the doctrines finding wide acceptance by Friends are a universal saving light and continuing revelation. The selections that follow explore these and other beliefs widely shared among Friends.

Today Quakers encompass a wide range of beliefs from universal to evangelical. Friends and attenders of Wilton Quaker Meeting tend to fall closer to the former. We worship together in expectant silence, waiting for guidance from the Divine without need for clergy. We try to honor the testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Stewardship in our daily lives.

1

Friends find their essential unity in their profound and exhilarating belief in the pervasive presence of God and in the continuing responsibility of each person and worshiping group to seek the leading of the Spirit in all things. Obedience to the leading of that Spirit rather than to any written statement of belief or conduct is the obligation of their faith.

New England Yearly Meeting, 1985

2

There is a time of preaching faith towards God; and there is a time to be brought to God.

George Fox, 1657

3

What is the Quaker faith? It is not a tidy package of words which you can capture at any given time and then repeat weekly at a worship service. It is an experience of discovery which starts the discoverer on a journey which is life-long. The discovery in itself is not uniquely a property of Quakerism. It is as old as Christianity, and considerably older if you share the belief that many have known Christ who have not known His name. What is unique to the Religious Society of Friends is its insistence that the discovery must be made by each man for himself.

No one is allowed to get it second-hand by accepting a ready-made creed. Furthermore, the discovery points a path and demands a journey, and gives you the power to make the journey.

Elise Boulding, 1954

4

Sing and rejoice, ye children of the day and of the light; for the Lord is at work in this thick night of darkness that may be felt. And truth doth flourish as the rose, and the lilies do grow among the thorns, and the plants atop of the hills, and upon them the lambs do skip and play. And never heed the tempests nor the storms, floods nor rains, for the seed Christ is over all, and doth reign. And so be of good faith and valiant for the truth; for the truth can live in the jails.

George Fox, 1663

5

As Friends we believe that love is the unifying force in human relations. Let us understand what brotherly love is and what it is not. Love is not self-seeking; it is self-giving. Love does not try to make up a deficiency in that of God in another from an overabundance of divinity in ourselves; it opens us to the divine Light in him and rejoices in it. Love does not mean agreeing on all questions of belief, values, or rules of conduct; it means accepting with humility and forbearance such differences as cannot be resolved by open and patient give-and-take. Love does not recreate our brother in our image; it recreates us both in relation to each other, united like limbs of one body yet each distinctly himself.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1969

6

Now the Lord God opened to me by his invisible power that every man was enlightened by the divine light of Christ, and I saw it shine through all; and they that believed in it came out of condemnation to the light of life, and became the children of it; but they that hated it, and did not believe in it, were condemned by it, though they made a profession of Christ. This I saw in the pure openings of the Light without the help of any man; neither did I then know where to find it in the Scriptures; though afterwards, searching the Scriptures, I found it. For I saw in that Light and Spirit which was before Scripture was given forth... that all must come to that Spirit, if they would know God, or Christ, or the Scriptures aright.

George Fox, 1648

7

We do not want you to copy or imitate us. We want to be like a ship that has crossed the ocean, leaving a wake of foam which soon fades away. We want you to follow the Spirit, which we have sought to follow, but which must be sought anew in every generation.

Anonymous

8

True godliness don't turn men out of the world, but enables them better to live in it and excites their endeavors to mend it; not hide their candle under a bushel, but set it upon a table in a candlestick.

William Penn, 1668

9

Why gad you abroad? Why trim you yourselves with the saints' words, when you are ignorant of the life? Return, return to Him ... who is the Light of the World... Return home to within, sweep your houses all; the groat is there, the little leaven is there, the grain of mustard-seed you will see, which the Kingdom of God is like;...and here you will see your Teacher not removed into a corner, but present when you are upon your beds and about your labour, convincing, instructing, leading, correcting, judging, and giving peace to all that love and follow Him.

Francis Howgill, 1656

10

If you would know God, and worship and serve God as you should do, you must come to the means He has ordained and given for that purpose. Some seek it in books, some in learned men, but what they look for is in themselves, yet they overlook it. The voice is too still, the Seed too small, and the Light shineth in darkness.... The woman that lost her silver found it at home after she had lighted her candle and swept her house. Do you so too, and you shall find what Pilate wanted to know, viz., Truth. The Light of Christ within, who is the Light of the world, and so a light to you that tells you the truth of your condition, leads all that take heed unto it out of darkness into God's marvelous light; for light grows upon the obedient.

William Penn, 1694

11

The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious, and devout souls are everywhere of one religion; and when death has taken off the mask, they will know one another though the divers liveries they wear here makes them strangers.

William Penn, 1693

12

And, when thy children ask thee any questions of this nature, "What God is; where he dwells; or whether he sees them in the dark"—do not reject it; but wait to feel somewhat of God raised in thee, which is able to judge whether the question be put forth in sensibility or in vanity; and which can give thee an advantage of stirring the good, and reaching to that, which is to be raised both in young and old, to live to the praise of him who raiseth it.

Isaac Penington, 1665

13

We do distinguish betwixt the certain knowledge of God and the uncertain, betwixt the spiritual knowledge and the literal, the saving heart-knowledge and the soaring airy head-knowledge. The last, we confess, may be by divers ways obtained; but the first, by no other way than the inward immediate manifestation and revelation of God's Spirit, shining in and upon the heart, enlightening and opening the understanding.

Robert Barclay, 1678

14

There may be members therefore of this catholic church both among heathen, Turks, Jews, and all the several sorts of Christians, men and women of integrity and simplicity of heart, who, though blinded in some things in their understanding and perhaps burdened with the superstitions and formality of the several sects in which they are engrossed, yet being upright in their hearts before the Lord, chiefly aiming and labouring to be delivered from iniquity, and living to follow righteousness, are by the secret touches of this holy light in their souls enlivened and quickened, thereby secretly united to God and there—through become true members of this catholic church.

Robert Barclay, 1678

15

The Cross as dogma is painless speculation; the Cross as lived suffering is anguish and glory. Yet God, out of the pattern of His own heart, has planted the Cross along the road of holy obedience. And He enacts in the hearts of those He loves the miracle of willingness to welcome suffering and to know it for what is—the final seal of His gracious love.

Thomas R. Kelly, 1939

16

There is a spirit which I feel that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself. It sees to the end of all temptations. As it bears no evil in itself, so it conceives none in thoughts to any other. If it be betrayed, it bears it, for its ground and spring is the mercies and forgiveness of God. Its crown is meekness, its life is everlasting love unfeigned; it takes its kingdom with entreaty and not with contention, and keeps it by lowliness of mind. In God alone it can rejoice, though none else regard it or can own its life. It's conceived in sorrow, and brought forth

without any to pity it, nor doth it murmur at grief and oppression. It never rejoiceth but through sufferings; for with the world's joy it is murdered. I found it alone, being forsaken. I have fellowship therein with them who lived in dens and desolate places in the earth, who through death obtained this resurrection and eternal holy life.

James Nayler, 1660

17

There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names. It is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren in the best sense of the expression. Using ourselves to take ways which appear most easy to us, when inconsistent with that purity which is without beginning, we thereby set up a government of our own and deny obedience to him whose service is true liberty.

John Woolman, 1774

18

We need to guard against under-valuing the material expressions of spiritual things. It is easy to make a form of our very rejection of forms. And in particular we need to ask ourselves whether we are endeavoring to make all the daily happenings and doings of life which we call “secular” minister to the spiritual. It is a bold and colossal claim that we put forward—that the whole of life is sacramental, that there are innumerable “means of grace” by which God is revealed and communicated—through nature and through human fellowship and through a thousand things that may become the “outward and visible sign” of an “inward and spiritual grace.”

A. Barrett Brown, 1932

19

Quakerism in spirit and ideal is neither a form of Roman Catholicism nor a form of Protestantism. Protestantism in its original, essential features called for an authoritative creed, specific sacraments, and an authentic form of ordination. Quakerism at its birth was a fresh attempt to recover the way of life revealed in the New Testament, to re-interpret and re-live it in this present world. Its founders intended to revive apostolic Christianity. They did not intend to create a new sect. They carefully avoided calling themselves a “Church.” They were content to be a “Society of Friends.”

George Fox said: “The Quakers are not a sect but are [a people living] in the power of God which was before sects were.”

Rufus M. Jones, 1937

20

If God ever spoke, He is still speaking. If He has ever been in mutual and reciprocal communication with the persons He has made, He is still a communicating God as eager as ever to have listening and receptive souls. If there is something of His image and superscription in our inmost structure and being, we ought to expect a continuous revelation of His will and purpose through the ages.... He is the Great I Am, not a Great He Was.

Rufus M. Jones, 1948

21

By ethical mysticism I mean that type of mysticism which first withdraws from the world revealed by the senses to the inward Divine Source of Light, Truth, and Power, and then returns to the world with strength renewed, insight cleared, and desire quickened to bind all life together in the bonds of love. These bonds are discovered by this process of withdrawal and return because the one inward Divine Source is itself the creative unity which seeks to bind all life together. But there is no necessary chronological order in the world of spirit. It may be that the desire to penetrate to the creative unity in the depths of the soul was first aroused by finding it in the outward affairs of daily life.

Howard Brinton, 1967

22

To say that Friends have no creed is not to say that each Friend has no belief. Far otherwise. Each one, and each group, has the responsibility to seek, and seek, and seek again where the Light is leading; to find what the life of God means in the life of man; to wrestle with the great facts and mysteries in the heart of our Christian experience, and to know what we believe about them. It is only when we have formulated our faith for ourselves that we can communicate it to others or know its incisive power in our own day-to-day discipleship.

Hugh L. Doncaster, 1963

23

In this day and age the place where Friends find their unity is in the kind of God they worship. Their apprehension of the relationship of Jesus Christ to God embraces every orthodox and unorthodox shade of theology from unitarian to trinitarian; but whether we regard Jesus... as God himself or as the supreme revealer of God to man, it is the same kind of God: a spirit of peace, truth, love, and redeeming power. We need to feel the influence of this spirit in our lives rather than to argue about our different modes of apprehending Him. Directly we begin to chide each other for orthodoxy or unorthodoxy, we cease to be the catholic body we are; for the logical end of such chiding is sanctions and the excluding of the weaker body by the stronger. Let us keep our different modes of apprehension and remember always that it is the same God we serve, revealing Himself to each according to his faith, his openness, and his need.

Beatrice Saxon Snell, 1961

24

The primary doctrine of the Society of Friends declares that the Presence of God is felt at the apex of the human soul and that man can therefore know and heed God directly, without any intermediary in the form of church, priest, sacrament, or sacred book. As present in man, God is both immanent and transcendent: immanent because He is not mechanically operating on man from without but sharing in his life; transcendent, for the Divine Life extends infinitely out beyond and above all human life. Many figures of speech are used to designate this Divine Presence which as immanent in man is personal, and as transcendent, is super-personal. It is a "Light," a "Power," a "Word," a "Seed of the Kingdom." God dwells in man to guide him and transform him into the likeness of His Son. Man's endeavor should be to merge his will with the Divine Will, as far as he is able to comprehend it, and by obedience to become an instrument through which God's power works upon the world. To seek such a goal is to seek to be an embodiment of the Divine Life through unity with it. In this search man's life acquires unity and purpose.

Howard Brinton, 1940

25

It is easy to misconstrue “Inner Light” as an invitation to individualism and anarchy if one concentrates on the subjective experience known to each one. But it is an equally important part of our faith and practice to recognise that we are not affirming the existence and priority of your light and my light, but the Light of God, and of the God who is made known to us supremely in Jesus.

Hugh L. Doncaster, 1972

26

As a black Quaker, I see the Inner Light as the great liberator and equalizer able to erase the psychological deficits of racism. The internalization of this divine principle has the potential to remove the sense of powerlessness that so often characterizes the thinking of the downtrodden. For if the Divine Light is the Seed of God planted in the souls of human beings, in that Seed lies all the characteristics of its source. Consequently, the Light within is also the Divine Power within. It is the indestructible power in us that is able to create from nothing, able to make ways out of no way, able to change what appears to be the natural order of things. It is the power in us that can never be overcome by the darkness of fear and hatred or altered by the might or money of people. It is the power in us in which lies unfathomable capacity to love and forgive even the most heinous of crimes.

Ayesha Clark-Halkin Imani, 1988

27

As a teenager I looked for proof of the existence of God, but soon realised that there would be none. I chose to adopt as a working hypothesis a belief in God, and to go on from there. I have not felt the need to revise that hypothesis—yet. I believe in a powerful, all-knowing God, but a caring and a forgiving God. I believe he says to us: “All right, you’ve got life, get on with it, live it! I am there behind to guide you, to help you live it; but don’t expect me to interfere to make life smooth for you—you are old enough to stand on your own two feet.”

From what I have learnt as an astronomer I believe that the Universe evolved itself without any active participation from God, and it seems reasonable to me that the world continues, at least on a grand scale, to evolve by itself—that God does not directly interfere with the running of the world; but that he does through people and their attitudes....

I believe that we are God’s agents in this world and that he may require things of us. A lot of my effort goes into trying to understand what God

expects of me. I do this by trying to maintain an orientation towards God—to live my life in the spirit—to bring my whole life under the ordering of the spirit of Christ—to acknowledge my discipleship.

S. Jocelyn Burnell, 1976

28

The word “sacrament” has been defined as meaning “the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace,” and according to the Quaker belief, that “outward and visible sign” is a life lived in absolute obedience to God, a revelation of His indwelling Spirit in the heart. This, of course, is an integral part of the Christian faith, the eternal truth behind all symbols and observances. But every section of the Christian Church has some special witness to uphold, and for over three hundred years the Society of Friends has testified to this sacramental conception of the whole of life.

Elfrida Vipont Foulds, 1962

29

Each of us can be a theologian. We can enrich our spiritual lives and those of people around us by articulating our spiritual experiences. In drawing on theological writings from the past, we can find continuity and wipe out feelings of isolation. We can divine answers to our toughest concerns.... We can dare to find out what God is saying to us.

Shirley Dodson, 1980

30

We are called to obedient love even though we may not be feeling very loving. Often it is through the performance of loving acts that loving feelings can be built up in us. We may start with small, perhaps very tiny steps. It is only as we begin to allow Christ’s love to act in and through us that it can become a part of us.

Sandra Cronk, c. 1983

31

The mystical accent in Quakerism does not lessen its Christian rootage even though it does break down barriers and contains within it a strong ecumenical current. In the years immediately following the First World War, the Quakers worked in Poland distributing food and clothing. A woman worker who served a cluster of villages became ill with typhus and in twenty-four hours she was dead. In this village there was only a Roman

Catholic cemetery, and by canonical law it was quite impossible to bury one not of that confession in its consecrated ground. They laid their cherished friend in a grave dug just outside the fence of the Roman Catholic cemetery and the next morning they discovered that in the night the villagers had moved the fence so that it embraced the grave. This moving outward of every type of fence so that it may embrace but not erase the unique and very special witness of the different religious groups comes close to the core of the meaning of this ecumenical current.

Douglas Steere, 1984

32

I come back again and again in my own mind to this word Truth.

“Promptings of love and truth”—these two sometimes seem to be in conflict, but in fact they are inseparable. If we are to know the truth, we must be able to see with unclouded eyes, and then we will love what is real and not what is duty or fancy. Once when I was in the middle of a difficult exercise of Quaker decision-making, I wailed to an older and wiser Friend, “How can I speak the truth in love when I feel no love?” Her reply was, “Unless you speak the truth there never will be love.”

Alison Sharman, 1986

33

The life of a religious society consists in something more than the body of principles it professes and the outer garments of organisation which it wears. These things have their own importance: they embody the society to the world, and protect it from the chance and change of circumstance; but the springs of life lie deeper, and often escape recognition. They are to be found in the vital union of the members of the society with God and with one another, a union which allows the free flowing through the society of the spiritual life which is its strength.

William Charles Braithwaite, 1905

34

Does anything unite this diverse group beyond our common love and humanity? Does anything make us distinctively Quaker? I say yes. Each of us has different emphases and special insights, but wherever Friends are affirming each other’s authentic experience of God, rather than demanding creedal statements, we are being God’s faithful Quakers. Wherever we are seeking God’s will rather than human wisdom, especially when conflict might arise, we are being faithful Quakers. Wherever we are affirming the total equality of men and women, we are being God’s faithful Quakers.

Wherever there is no division between our words and our actions, we are being faithful. Whenever we affirm that no one—priest, pastor, clerk, elder—stands between us and the glorious and mystical experience of God in our lives, we are faithful Friends. Whether we sing or whether we wait in silence, as long as we are listening with the whole of our being and seeking the baptism and communion of living water, we will be one in the Spirit.

Val Ferguson, 1991

35

We are an instrument in this world. No matter which way we look, no matter where we go, we know we have a world Wlled with injustice, inequality, racism, thousands of problems, whether out in the open or hidden.... We are told that the light that comes from God to us, comes to everyone to light the world—this is what we call the Inner Light.... That Light has to illuminate our problems, but we must not live only for resolving our internal problems and nothing else.

Heredio Santos, 1991

36

We can actually rejoice in ... diversity; we do not always need a formula which will iron out differences. That seems to me to be Quakerism in practice. When I talk about the content of the Quaker treasure chest, I often refer to that wonderful epistle sent out to Friends everywhere written by Young Friends from all parts of the Quaker family in Greensboro in 1985. Here, after many tears and misunderstandings and strong disagreements, a group of Young Friends sat down together and, respecting each other, wrote out what for them was the essence of the Quaker good news. They came up with the four sources of authority: The Light or voice in the heart, the discernment of the worshiping group, Christ speaking in the heart, and the words of the Bible. These four elements are in tension in the world family of Friends. We do not all agree on them, but the Quaker treasure chest offers these diverse heirlooms. Some parts of the family are happier with some of the jewels than others. But the greatest disservice we can do is to keep the chest shut. By sharing the jewels with our guests, our guests may actually begin to feel as if the home belongs to them as well. And who knows, our guests may even become the next generation of hosts and show off the jewels in a new light.

Harvey Gillman, 1993

37

Let us recognize that while spiritual life in its externals often presents us with a bewildering diversity, the saints of each spiritual tradition are practically indistinguishable from each other in their lives, their way of being. Though their theological concepts may be different, their feelings and conduct are amazingly similar. They dwell in love, and God dwells in them because God is love. Increasingly in this modern age, the capacity to apprehend the One in the many constitutes the special responsibility of those who would dwell in love. May this capacity to apprehend the One in the many, and the love it expresses, be the special gift of the friends of Jesus to people of faith everywhere!

Daniel A. Seeger, 1994

38

Someone in worship today gave a brief summary of the naturalistic interpretation of religion. How rational, judicious, and powerless seemed our intellectual expressions and how little they met the need of a young attender, obviously in need of deeper ministry, who left, overcome by emotion, in the middle of meeting. The real ministry of our meeting came from the concern of several who followed him out to give him comfort. I saw that such lovingkindness, call it love or agape, is the manifestation in the natural world of that which transcends it. Love does have power—not the political or mechanical power the world seems to covet, but a basic power that works in another way, not by overcoming but by reunion. Such a working, when it points to its source, can be called a miracle—not a breach of nature, but an inbreak of love....

Going home, I mused on the occasional tensions in our meeting between its rational-academic and its quietly religious tendencies. Sometimes the balance tips one way, sometimes the other. At times, a few members have fallen away to worship in more congenial, more “spiritual” meetings; this is a pity, for a secularized meeting needs a religious few to leaven the lump, just as a more religiously enthusiastic meeting needs a few good agnostics as burrs under its saddle.

Carol Murphy, 1989

39

I was under great temptations sometimes, and my inward sufferings were heavy; but I could find none to open my condition to but the Lord alone, unto whom I cried night and day. And I went back into Nottinghamshire, and there the Lord showed me that the natures of those things, which were hurtful without were within, in the hearts and minds of wicked men. The

natures of dogs, swine, vipers, of Sodom and Egypt, Pharoah, Cain, Esau, etc. The natures of these I saw within, though people had been looking without. And I cried to the Lord, saying, “Why should I be thus, seeing I was never addicted to commit those evils?” And the Lord answered that it was needful I should have a sense of all conditions, how else should I speak to all conditions. And in this I saw the infinite love of God. I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. And in that also I saw the infinite love of God and I had great openings.

George Fox, 1647

40

The word we have is not a purse of gold bestowed unilaterally on us, which we in turn may dole out unilaterally upon others. It is a living spring which may well up alike in others as in ourselves.

Ferner Nühn, 1967

41

This much is clear: Christians and Universalists need each other. Our culture is grounded in ancient Christian symbols, which, if we listen, still quiver with dense ineffable meanings. In an effort to persuade us to listen to those meanings, Christians try to find words for them. The danger is that the words may become idols: creeds graven in stone.

Universalists, alive to this danger, remind us that other cultures have other symbols which—could we but attune ourselves to their resonance—are just as fraught as ours. There are other ways of seeing. Here the danger is that we may abandon particularity altogether and find ourselves adrift on an ocean of light without stars, landmarks, or anchorage.

Christians would call us back to terra firma lest we dissolve. Universalists would have us venture forth lest we petrify. The interplay of universal and particular must be as old as religion itself. Each has dangers which the other counteracts.

The Church Universal needs both its seafarers and its stay-at-homes. Why is that so difficult? Why have I myself never understood it until now?

Esther Murer, 1986

42

We see that the teachings of [the] divine spirit have been the same in all ages. It has led to truth, to goodness, to justice, to love. Love was as much held up among [the] old [Testament] writers, [the] old religious teachers, and as clearly set forth, as in the later days. Their testimony fell upon ears that heard not, upon eyes that saw not, because they had closed their eyes, shut their ears, and hardened their hearts. They had substituted something else for this divine light; this word, which...Moses declared to his people was “nigh unto them, in the mouth, and in the heart.”...Believe not, then, that all these great principles were only known in the day of the advent of the Messiah to the Jews—those beautiful effects of doing right.

Lucretia Mott, 1858

43

Quaker theology and the Biblical precedents supporting it show that both man and woman are to share in the oversight of the creation, as well as other roles in the Church. Neither man nor woman is to dominate the creation or each other, but all are to live under God’s guidance. The power to be used by both man and woman is God’s power, and not human power.

Virginia Schurman, 1990

44

Quakers from the whole world await a message of hope. But how shall they hear? The presence and work of the Spirit is much more important than our words and forms of worship. That within us should also be transformed outward.

Some of us place special emphasis on the historical Jesus Christ as our personal Savior; others on the Light within everyone, which is interpreted by some of us as the Holy Spirit, and by some as the Christ principle; while others emphasize the universal spirit of God. We see these as three aspects of the one God and rejoice in our unity.

As we love one another, we find unity and become peacemakers. The barriers that separate us are broken, as Jesus broke the barrier between the Samaritans and the Jews through the conversation between him and the Samaritan woman. We should support each other in the diversity of our witness. We are one world trying to live our lives as Christ did.

Mable Lugalya, 1991

45

Imagine a religion that is not based on an ancient doctrine or scripture but based entirely on the direct and immediate experience of the Divine Light, what some call God. Consider a community of faith that has no creeds, hierarchy or authority figures. Quakers don't offer promises of afterlife salvation or absurd threats of damnation directed at anyone, especially those on other faith journeys.

Quakers believe that the experience of the Divine Light changes you and so changes the way you order your life. As a community, we gather for worship in silence, where only the Presence of God's Light guides us. We exclude no one because each person has the ability to perceive the Light of God. We trust this Living Presence as the only True Authority.

Don Badgley 2016

46

The Divine Spirit is in every human being

All have immediate access to God, and God to us. Since all are ministers, there is no need of ordained priests; nor do we need consecrated buildings.

Worship is most blest by gathering together in expectant silence to wait for God's guidance, which comes either through the stillness or through the word of those moved to speak.

A return to "primitive Christianity" enables all to truly follow the *religion of love* taught by Jesus as a way of life and the one way that should permeate our everyday living.

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47

We can encounter the Divine directly. There is no need for a text or separated priesthood.

We have developed ways to interpret those experiential encounters. Discernment plays an important role, even as we conduct our business.

We have developed forms of worship that nurture that experiential encounter. Sitting in silence creates an absence leading to a sense of presence.

We have a persistent imperative to lead a particular kind of life coming out of this experiential encounter. We campaign against war and social injustice and lead our lives in line with our callings, our testimonies.

Ben Pink Dandelion, Swarthmore Lecture, Bath 2014

