

Baltimore Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice Revision Committee Proposed Advices, Queries and Voices

Education: Advices

Seek for ourselves and for our children the full development of God's gifts, which is true education. Realize that education should continue throughout life, and that all should share its opportunities and privileges. Be ready at all times to receive fresh light from whatever quarter it may come; approach new theories with discernment.

Friends are concerned to educate for individual growth, community responsibility, a knowledge of God's world, and a sense of wonder at continuing revelation in this changing universe. Religious education begins early in the home as the child participates in family silence, prayer, readings from the Bible and other religious works, and in family discussions. We set an example in our own lives and seek actively to guide our children's development of sensitivity to God and the world. Thus children can learn how God works through and among all of us as exemplified in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Meetings should foster activities that bring all age groups together. Conferences, workshops, and retreats, organized by Monthly, Quarterly, or Yearly Meetings or other Friends' bodies, provide contacts with a variety of Friends' viewpoints. We should encourage adult members to follow their leadings in seeking education of all kinds and should be sensitive in offering the financial assistance sometimes needed to take advantage of such opportunities.

For many years Friends have been concerned about the problem of exclusivity in private schools especially those carrying the name of Friends. Those concerned with any Quaker-related school would agree that each institution has a continuing responsibility to discourage snobbishness and feelings of false superiority, to encourage economy and simplicity, and to cultivate a realization that with special opportunities go special obligations. A Meeting that has direct responsibility for a Friends' school, or that has any Friends' school in its community, should assist the school to maintain its Quaker character.

Education: Queries

How can we most effectively foster a spirit of inquiry and a loving and understanding attitude?

What effort are we making to become better acquainted with the Bible, our Judeo-Christian heritage, the history and principles of Friends, and the contributions of other religions and philosophies to our spiritual heritage?

Do we take an active and supportive interest in schools, libraries, and other educational resources in our communities and elsewhere?

How do we prepare ourselves and our children to play active roles in a changing world?

Education: Voices

Our labor is to bring all men to their own teacher in themselves.

George Fox, Journal

The belief that there is "that of God in each person" is the foundation of the Quaker approach to education. Education cultivates the fullness of the human spirit through both openness and discipline. We are open to the knowledge, understand, and wisdom that come from history, from our own life experience of God, and from the works and lives of others. We recognize all of life as an educational enterprise, that we are all teachers as well as learners.

Northern Yearly Meeting

BYM Proposed Advices, Queries & Voices

But I showed them by the scriptures that there was an anointing within man to teach him and that the Lord would teach his people himself.

George Fox, Journal

How is the Inward Teacher known? In joy and health, but also in loneliness and alienation; in the deepest encounters with other people and in dialogue with great ideas and works; in love but also in emptiness; in hunger but also in plenitude; in solitude but also in community. Wherever we are is the starting place for encountering the voice which can speak to our condition. We cannot compel the inner voice to speak, we can only try to practice openness and attention, and when we hear the voice we can only practice minding and answering.

Paul A. Lacey, Education and the Inward Teacher

Friends' openness to continuing revelation leads us to place equal emphasis on the educational process, personal development, and educational content....Scripture and existing knowledge are important. People are led to think critically and take joy in discovering new implications of knowledge gained.

Northern Yearly Meeting

The last reaches of religious education are not attained by carefully planned and externally applied lessons, taught to people through the outward ears. The fundamental religious education of the soul is conducted by the Holy Spirit, the living voice of God within us. He is the last and greatest teacher of the soul. All else is but pointings to the inward Teacher, the Spirit of the indwelling Christ. Until life is lived in the presence of this Teacher, we are apt to confuse knowledge of Church history and Biblical backgrounds with the true education of the soul that takes place in the listening life of prayer.

Thomas R. Kelly, Reality of the Spiritual World

In a sense, simplicity is an important element in all great art, for it means the removal of all details that are irrelevant to a given purpose. It is one of the arts within the great art of life. And perhaps the mind can be guided best if its activities are always kept organically related to the most important purposes in life. Mahatma Gandhi believes that the great need of young people is not so much education of the head as education of the heart.

Richard B. Gregg, The Value of Voluntary Simplicity

True education nurtures the insights that unite knowledge with behavior and ability with desire, changing one's life, not merely one's ideas.

Carol Murphy, Ministry of Counseling

What is to be the content of Quaker Religious Education? Lacking a creed, what is it we teach? Theology has been defined as faith reflected upon. For Friends, theology, or what takes the place of theology, is experience reflected upon. We begin by reflecting on our own experience, but as members of the Religious Society of Friends we are engaged in a corporate endeavor. Ours is not a do-it-yourself religion but a do-it-together religion.

Gene Hillman, Reflections on Quaker Religious Education for Adults, *Friends Journal* (July, 2003)