

Worship Sharing 8/10/2021

A Peculiar People - excerpts

(NEYM Faith and Practice - 2014)

At our best, Friends live according to inner, rather than outward, promptings. The Inward Teacher is experienced as full of grace, eternal, not belonging to the self but entirely at the self's center. This inner voice is the basis of our spiritual being and how we discern our values. No outside authority, be it church, government, employer, or family, speaks to us with the same authority or power.

Friends often speak of "the Inner Light," which we understand to be Divine. We name this Seed in many ways. Whatever name we use, we are clear that each person can live in a direct relationship with the Divine. We experience a divine Spark that unites us with all of creation.

Quakers are "peculiar," both within the Christian tradition and beyond it, in that we do not base our religion on a system of outward requirements (either of belief or behavior) or rewards (either in this world or the next). Quakerism invites much freedom for personal spiritual inquiry and guidance. This suggests a basic optimism about the goodness of life and belief in God's availability to teach, to comfort, and to minister to each person directly. Central to this experience is a willingness to be transformed, not just once but over and over. That means a willingness to test ideas and processes. It also means living as pilgrims, always seeking new openings.

As pilgrims ourselves, our meetings are open to others who seek. We do not profess what we have not experienced, nor do we ask anyone else to profess what he or she has not experienced. But we need to name experiences of the Divine in others and in ourselves. We affirm that ours is a community that provides an opportunity to seek, and indeed rejoices when people affirm, "This I know from my own experience!"

Queries:

How do these quotes speak to your experience as a Friend?

Are we truly open to being transformed, over and over?

In what ways do we live as pilgrims, always seeking new openings?

