

About Red Cedar Friend's Quaker Meeting

By Richard Lee, member of the Membership and Outreach Committee

Red Cedar Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends is a gathering of individuals who worship and have fellowship in the manner of Friends. Quakers are a historic Christian religious body that began in the mid-17th century in England. We have always called ourselves 'Friends', which a name based upon a statement by Jesus that *if you do what I ask of you, then you are my friends*. The term, 'Quaker' was used in mockery by a 17th century judge, but Friends of that time decided to turn it into a good term, rather than a mocking one.

In 1656, George Fox, one of the earliest and most prominent Quakers, began preaching a new vision of Christianity that emphasized the leadership of the Holy Spirit over scripture. The first Friends also had an early understanding of the *Universalist* concept that all faiths could come to God. This concept is based, in part, on the historic Quaker belief, "There is that of God in everyone." Today, Friends, including those at Red Cedar, have a variety of beliefs coming from a variety of religious and non-religious traditions.

On a Sunday, also called "*first day*," approximately 35-50 folks gather for silent worship. This manner of worship is sometimes called, "*expectant waiting*." Those in worship are waiting for a prompting of love and truth that comes from a divine source. Sometimes, these promptings are intended to be shared, in which case, a Friend will rise and share the message. Sometimes, the message is in the form of a song. Sometimes, the message is meant only for the individual to whom it is given.

Often, the meeting for worship is totally silent. Friends find that within the silence lies *healing, truth, peace, love, kindness, wisdom, guidance, nurturing* and a whole list of other marvels, too numerous to name. A totally silent meeting can be as much of a blessing, as is one where powerful ministry is shared.

Much could be said about the *Testimonies* that Friends strive to live by. Briefly, Friends' Testimonies are a set of beliefs and practices that Quakers have tried to follow since our beginnings in the 1650's. Our "*Holy Experiment*" was to preach the Truth, not only with words, but also with our lives. Our Testimonies therefore, express in action, a belief and faith in the following concepts: *equality, simplicity, peace and integrity*. These primary testimonies have evolved into modern testimonies dealing with such things as: *race relations, the environment, the death penalty, education, stewardship and most recently, equality of treatment based upon gender orientation*.

At this time of conflict in the world, Friends often find strength and inspiration in our Peace Testimony. An early expression of this Testimony is from the 1660 "Declaration from the Harmless and Innocent people of God, called Quakers," ...***We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever; this is our testimony to the whole world.*** Our testimonies remain a source of inspiration, faith and hope for Friends around the world. George Fox, advised in 1656, while in Launceton Prison, that Friends should ...***be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, 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...*** This "walk" is what Quakers try to do through living out our Testimonies.

Please join us in our walk with the testimonies. Everyone is welcome, childcare and 1st day school is available for children, and you do not need to leave your intellect at the door! If you have questions about our meeting, or our practices, please ask a member of the membership and outreach committee, or our Clerk who presides over the close of worship. We are glad that you are walking with us on our exciting journey.