Quakerism 101
Unit C Quaker Universalism
January 31, 2010

Reading

Samuel D. Caldwell, "The Inward Light: How Quakerism Unites Universalism and Christianity."

Dan Seeger, "The Place of Universalism in the Society of Friends, or Is Coexistence Possible?"

Background on Readings

Samuel D. Caldwell, former General Secretary of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, presented "That Blessed Principal … " as an address to the Quaker Universalist Fellowship in 1988. It is a clear, succinct argument for a Quaker Christian Universalist perspective.

Dan Seeger, Executive Secretary of Pendle Hill until 2002, is a writer and spokesperson for a Quaker universalism that recognizes and draws from the spiritual wealth of many religious traditions. This article is one of many he has written on this general theme.

Reflections

Please reflect on the following questions as you read and once you have read the reading.

What do you believe? Write down, in a few sentences, some of the religious beliefs you hold that are important to you.

How did you come to these beliefs? What experiences in your life have shaped your religious beliefs?

What characteristics does Sam Caldwell list for the light? How does his description fit your experience?

How is Friends' concept of the Light universalist? How is it Christian?

What is "pseudo-universalism"? Why does Sam Caldwell see it as threatening to Quakerism? Do you agree? Defend your perspective.

How would you react if Milwaukee Meeting declared that it was not a Christian group? Why? How would you respond if Milwaukee Meeting said that membership should be restricted exclusively to professing Christians? Why?

How do you respond to the Quaker universalism expressed by Dan Seeger? Why does he say, "genuine universalism is very demanding of its practitioners"? Do you agree?

How do you feel about the diversity of religious belief in the Society of Friends? What are the advantages of openness to a wide variety of perspectives? What are the disadvantages?

Do you believe that all Friends should adhere to certain minimal beliefs? If so what should they be?