

FOUNDED 1700
PLYMOUTH MONTHLY MEETING
OF THE
RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
PLYMOUTH MEETING PA. 19462

Why Friends do not say the pledge allegiance to the Flag?

A Minute of Plymouth Monthly Meeting Third Month, 2003

We write this statement as an explanation of our faith, which provides us with strength and guidance by which we live in this world. Recognizing the sincerity of the many spiritual fellowships that draw people into deep and abiding relationship with God, Friends understand that our way of faith is but one of many.

Since the founding of the Religious Society of Friends in the 1600's, we have been challenged to explain why we do not have symbols of our faith in our Meeting Houses (Churches), schools or administrative buildings. The walls of our rooms of worship are unadorned by symbols or icons that hint to an attender the source of our faith or nature of our fellowship. Our classrooms are filled with pictures and sayings from all cultures. Missing is the prominent position of a flag of the United States in front of the room. Judged by outward appearances, what kind of faith are we expressing without symbolism?

We believe that symbols of faith, church hierarchy, and the outward sacraments cannot replace the inward personal transformation of our hearts as we engage the real invitation to come into communion with God in every aspect of our lives. We strive to come humbly into the very presence of God. Each Friend seeks to know the will of God personally in the very concrete moments of their lives. From within the silence of our Meetings for Worship or from the daily personal devotions comes clarity of vision that draws us into outward actions. It is the transforming inward experience of God's spirit that calls us to live a life that seeks to act in love, speak truth, and seek justice for all of God's creation. The outward works of our lives are the fruits of this inward living relationship with the Divine presence in this world. When people live in harmony with Devine will, they become co-creators of God's Peaceable Kingdom.

The Peaceable Kingdom is not only the vision of a nineteenth century Quaker but continues to be the enduring vision of our religious society. Friends have always seen governments as an integral part of God's Peaceable Kingdom. Since the founding of Pennsylvania, Friends have sought to join obedience to God's will with the administration of civil government. We call this process the "Holy Experiment". Daily striving to act outwardly in accordance with our inward relationship with God, we are called into a life that is consistent with our relationship to God. Friends have historically found guidance in Jesus' words where he instructs us: "I say to you do

not swear at all... let your Yes be Yes and your No be No.” We do not take oaths or swear on the Bible to testify to our truthfulness and rightness of action. In like manner we do not pledge allegiance to organizations or nations but rather by our lives we strive to be responsible citizens. Through this prayerful filter of Gods’ guiding spirit, we strive to act as responsible citizens as we seek to understand what actions love and justice require of us. For these reasons we take citizenship very seriously in our personal lives and in our schools. Therefore, we teach our students that their civic responsibility comes not from pledges and the display of flags, but from a personal responsibility to live a life consistent with their inward relationship with God reflected in their outward relationship with others.