

Proposal for Updating the *EFC-ER Faith and Practice Testimonies*

Introduction:

Since the beginnings of our movement in seventeenth-century England, Friends have emphasized an *experiential faith*, rooted in the conviction that the living Christ makes Himself available to all who seek Him. As a result, while highly valuing the Scriptures as authoritative and God-breathed, Friends have also emphasized the necessity of the Holy Spirit's inner witness alongside the written Scriptures as the true and trustworthy interpreter of the Bible. Likewise, while recognizing the importance of doctrinal statements that faithfully articulate our theological commitments as Friends, we have also emphasized, as of equal importance, the expressions of *lived Christianity* in daily life that have defined us as a community of faith. Traditionally, we have referred to these as our "Testimonies".

For Evangelical Friends, both Doctrine and Testimonies play an important role in our understanding of how to faithfully walk with Jesus in our world. Broadly speaking, we view Doctrine as a systematic description of our core beliefs about God and his world, and the Testimonies as descriptions of the ways we attempt to live out those beliefs within God's world. Put another way, Doctrine represents our *orthodoxy*, while the Testimonies represent our *orthopraxy*. Over the past 375 years, each new generation of Friends have needed to wrestle with questions of how best to live out our Testimonies within the unique context in which we find ourselves in ways that reflect our commitment to the Lordship of Christ, the authority of the Scriptures, and the witness of God's Spirit within us. We have undertaken this current task of refreshing our EFC-ER Testimonies with these commitments in mind.

Goals:

This reframing of our Testimonies has several goals. First, the content has been condensed and simplified in order to bring more clarity. Second, our hope is that the new format used to present the Testimonies is more inviting, engaging, and user-friendly. Our desire is that this material could be easily adapted by local congregations to discuss Friends' distinctives. Third, we have attempted to avoid protectionist and negative language whenever possible, opting instead to highlight the positive outcomes of our convictions. We believe this document should represent what we are "for" much more heavily than what we are "against." Fourth, these reframed Testimonies are designed to encourage a high-level of discussion and application within our local churches. Instead of a prescriptive lists of rigid check-boxes, we hope this document is more of a culture-making resource. Finally, in the process of evaluating and editing the existing Testimonies, we have kept three questions in mind: As Friends, who have we been, who are we today, and who do we believe the Spirit is leading us to

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become? Our centuries-old Friends heritage still matters. The current realities across our nearly 100 churches in EFC-ER also matter. And, it matters that we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in order to continue to be formed in Christ-likeness within our ever-changing world.

Structure:

The most notable structural change in this new version of the Testimonies is the way it is organized. We have chosen to take the existing Testimonies and sort them under six headings: Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, and Stewardship. When looking at the wide arc of Friends history, these are themes that consistently rise to prominence in guiding Friends on how to live in various times and places. They represent well who we have been. In the early phase of this process, we were glad to find they still represent who we are—nearly every topic covered in the existing Testimonies was able to find a home under one of these headings. We also believe many of the biggest questions and discussions in our world today connect with one or more of these themes. Our historical points of emphasis are still extremely helpful in interpreting how to love God, and neighbor, in our contemporary culture.

200 SIMPLICITY

We believe we should order our lives in such a way that nothing detracts from our pursuit of Christ.

201 Simplicity in Lifestyle

- a. All outward manifestations of simplicity spring from an existing inward simplicity. Jesus speaks to this kind of simplicity when he encourages us to seek his kingdom and righteousness above all the worries and pressures that weigh on us.¹ The psalmist shares similar thoughts while writing about how an “undivided heart” has a proper reverence for God and depends on his faithfulness.² Attempts to live a simple life—without first having a simple, kingdom-oriented, undivided heart—will likely result in lifeless legalism.
- b. Amidst the growing complexity, busyness, and materialism in our world, Evangelical Friends are reminded that our citizenship is not of this world.³ The New Testament command, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world,”⁴ encourages us to wisely see the patterns of covetousness, greed, abundance, and overextended restlessness around us. Our response should be characterized by simplicity and contentment, no matter our circumstances.⁵ The earliest Friends affirmed this testimony most visibly in the simple and modest manner of their dress.⁶ Friends today should consider how their relationship to material possessions can be a powerful witness of godly contentment in Christ, and also an opportunity to avoid the temptations and traps of an affluent lifestyle.⁷
- c. Choosing to live simply frees us to live generous lives with a concern for the welfare of others. In this way, the testimony of Simplicity aids us in living out Jesus’ command to love our neighbor as ourselves.
- d. Sabbath is an opportunity to simplify our approach to life for one day each week, emptying it of its typical busyness and fullness, so that God may restore us for the good deeds he has prepared for us.⁸ In celebration of our Lord’s rising on the first day of the week, and in order to honor and glorify Him, the early church established Sunday as the day for Christian worship and rest.⁹ Evangelical Friends should joyfully consider how to make the most of a Sabbath day for the Lord’s service and worship, as well as for rest of body and mind from the week’s labors.¹⁰

202 Simplicity in Speech

- a. Historically, Friends have been known for intentionally maintaining simplicity in their speech in ways that were distinct within their culture. In keeping with the testimony of integrity, early Friends declined

¹ Matthew 6:25-33

² Psalm 86:11

³ Philippians 3:20-21

⁴ Romans 12:2

⁵ Philippians 4:11

⁶ 1 Timothy 2:9

⁷ 1 Timothy 6:6-10

⁸ Isaiah 58:13-14; Ephesians 2:10

⁹ Matthew 28:1-7; Mark 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-6a; John 20:1

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Isaiah 58:13-14

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to “swear” under oath, choosing instead to simply affirm the truth. Doing so was a way to obey Jesus’ command to “let our yes be yes¹¹” and also a manifestation of the conviction that speaking the truth should be our normative, ongoing practice. In keeping with the testimony of equality, early Friends rejected the common cultural practice of showing partiality and favoritism by using privileged language to elevate some people over others.¹² Instead, they chose more simple, common language when addressing any person, regardless of his/her social standing.

- b. While what is culturally distinct changes over time, our speech still reveals the condition of our hearts.¹³ In a world today that is overflowing with communication of all kinds, Friends should continue to practice a simplicity in speech that is consistent with the biblical directive to be “quick to listen, and slow to speak.”¹⁴ Our words, whether spoken aloud or communicated in digital spaces, should be rooted in integrity, expressed with respect, and used to build one another up.¹⁵

203 Simplicity in Worship

- a. The worship of Friends, from the beginning, has been rooted in an emphasis on the immediacy and availability of Jesus' real presence to all who gather. Simple forms of worship reflect our conviction that Christ is present within the gathered body of believers.
- b. While many of the earliest Friends gathered for worship to wait in silence for the Spirit to prompt them to speak, Evangelical Friends have, over time, recognized the value of “programmed” worship gatherings that include congregational singing, preaching, and other components. The worship experience in our churches can vary greatly, but each congregation should take care that our gatherings do not become overly complex or elaborate and therefore distract worshipers from what the Spirit wants to say to each one.
- c. Congregations are encouraged to construct and maintain their worship buildings and facilities with prayerful consideration of their function. Doing so reminds us of the moderation and simplicity that characterizes the testimony of Evangelical Friends and reflects the teaching of Jesus that the physical context of our worship matters little compared to worshipping the Father in Spirit and truth.¹⁶
- d. Weddings, funerals, memorials, or other similar occasions are also opportunities for worship. Consequently, Friends should seek simplicity in their services of celebration and remembrance, and temptations toward extravagance should be avoided. Simplicity within these public circumstances can be a compelling witness to the world about what is truly valuable, important, and lasting.¹⁷

¹¹ Matthew 5:37

¹² Deuteronomy 1:17; Job 32:21; James 2:9

¹³ Luke 6:45

¹⁴ James 1:19

¹⁵ 1 Thessalonians 5:11

¹⁶ John 4:19-24

¹⁷ Matthew 6:30-33; 1 Timothy 6:6-7

210 PEACE

We believe we are called to patiently demonstrate the love and compassion of Christ toward others, working to restore harmony within our broken world wherever possible.

211 Peace with God

- a. A genuine and sustainable testimony of peace must begin with, and remain rooted in, the peace with God we receive in Christ as a gift of grace through faith.¹⁸ It is through the shed blood of Jesus that God reconciles all things to himself and offers us peace.¹⁹ The efforts of the peacemaking to which we are called²⁰ find their foundations in Christ and the Cross.

212 Peace in the Church

- a. The unity of Christ's church serves as a visible demonstration of God's peace to the watching world. Jesus prayed for harmony among his followers both because it reflects the relational oneness within the Trinity, and as an effective witness to the mission of his incarnation.²¹ Consequently, Friends should make every effort to maintain unity in the Spirit through the bond of peace, seeking relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ that are characterized by humility, gentleness, and patience.²²
- b. In pursuit of peace, congregations—with the guidance of the Pastor and elders— should be quick to discern differences of opinion in order to prevent those differences from degenerating into serious conflicts among the members of the congregation. If dissension or resentment arise, the Pastor and elders should admonish all parties and lead them in a Christ-centered path toward peace,²³ attempting to reach genuine forgiveness and reconciliation as swiftly as possible.²⁴

213 Peace in our World

- a. The earliest Friends were passionate in forsaking the patterns of violence and strife associated with war between nations. George Fox, during a time of social and political unrest marked by violent conflict in England, gave voice to this testimony of peace while publicly declaring to King Charles II that Friends— led by the Spirit of Christ—would not engage in “fighting with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatever . . . for the Kingdom of Christ nor for the kingdoms of this world.” Standing upon this conviction, many Friends suffered imprisonment, cruelty, and death rather than violate their conscience.
- b. In keeping with the teachings and example of Jesus, Evangelical Friends affirm our call to be actively engaged in peacemaking within our world, to alleviate suffering, work for reconciliation, and seek a peace that is just, sustainable, and leads to fullness of life. As Jesus did in his own life, we believe that we are called to bear witness to God's love for us and his love for our enemies by suffering for them, if

¹⁸ Romans 5:1-2, Ephesians 2:8-9

¹⁹ Colossians 1:20

²⁰ Matthew 5:9

²¹ John 17:20-23

²² Ephesians 4:2-3, Hebrews 12:14

²³ Matthew 18:15-17

²⁴ Church leaders should use guidelines from *Faith and Practice* 312ciii as needed.

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necessary, even unto death.²⁵ In this way, the church serves as a visible sign of the kingdom of God in anticipation of the day when God's peace will once again cover the earth.²⁶ As citizens of that kingdom, we affirm that our struggle is not ultimately against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil at work in our world.²⁷ Embracing Jesus' command to love both neighbor and enemy, Friends should work diligently to see justice and righteousness extended to people in every nation and to live at peace with all others so far as it depends on us.²⁸

- c. We recognize the moral complexity inherent in issues of war and peace and the policing of civil order, and the difficult choices faced by governments and individuals. Followers of Jesus throughout the centuries have held differing convictions as to how best to apply Christ's commands to pursue love and justice within a fallen world. Even among Evangelical Friends, there are disagreements regarding Christian participation in armed conflict. While each person must live out his or her understanding of Scripture, the traditional Friends' counsel is to decline to serve, or where the state allows, to give alternative service. Therefore, we continue to support those Evangelical Friends who choose conscientious objection to war rather than active military service.
- d. While affirming our historic peace testimony, Evangelical Friends also recognize that many of our members have felt compelled to serve in the armed forces as an expression of their devotion to Christ and with a desire to protect innocent lives against unjust aggression. In doing so, these Friends likewise seek to live out their calling to be actively engaged as peacemakers within our world. On this difficult issue, we respect individual conscience and surround our members with loving care whether they for Christ's sake refuse military service or feel obligated to serve in some capacity in the armed forces.

214 Peace as our Lifestyle

- a. Our commitment to peacemaking extends far beyond issues of armed conflict. We believe that peacemaking is a basic, day-to-day element of Christian obedience and discipleship. Intentional efforts toward peace are critical in our neighborhoods, our churches, our families, and our individual lives. Resisting the temptation of revenge, and refusing to use violence as a means of addressing conflict, Friends should be instruments of peace and ministers of reconciliation whenever possible, seeking to overcome evil with good.²⁹

220 INTEGRITY

We believe our daily lives should model honesty, uprightness, and accountability, displaying the holy character of God for all to see.

²⁵ Romans 5:6-8; 1 Peter 2:21

²⁶ Isaiah 2:4

²⁷ Ephesians 6:12

²⁸ Romans 12:18-21

²⁹ Romans 12:17-21

221 Integrity in Vocation and Commerce

- a. By demonstrating a testimony of integrity within their business dealings, our Friends ancestors gained a reputation for honesty and trustworthiness. No matter their vocation, Friends were commonly known to treat customers, employees, employers, and co-workers with consistent fairness. Friends granted loans equitably, and loans received by Friends were repaid honorably and fully. Evangelical Friends today would do well to reflect these practices in their own finances and vocations.
- b. Evangelical Friends recognize the lordship of Christ over all things and in all areas of human engagement. Our members should joyfully participate in business, the arts, the academy, and various other professions, bringing a distinctly Christian perspective to each of these fields.³⁰ Each vocation carries within it unique challenges to maintaining integrity, and so it is important to remember that all work we do is not merely done for the benefit of an employer, but also for the Lord.³¹ Therefore, Friends are encouraged—except in cases in which Scripture or a Spirit-led conscience would be violated—to work passionately within the vocation to which they feel called.

222 Integrity in Recreation

- a. With the increase of leisure and the wide availability of entertainment of every kind, Evangelical Friends should carefully consider the recreation and amusements to which we give ourselves, our interest, our time, and our money. Amusements can have a large influence upon the formation of our character and can easily claim an unhealthy amount of our attention.³²
- b. While many forms of leisure and entertainment—engaged in proper measure—are gifts from God and good for bringing recreation and rest into our lives, Friends should altogether avoid viewing, attending, or participating in activities of a de-moralizing nature because of the desensitizing power they have to draw us away from God's will and instead attract us to worldly desires.³³ In pursuit of holiness and wholeness, Friends should also avoid interaction with forms of media or entertainment that may be detrimental to Christian growth.³⁴
- c. Among de-moralizing and detrimental amusement and media, pornographic materials are especially harmful and carry unique potential to cause damage in our souls and our relationships, and thus should be diligently avoided at all times with no exceptions. The production and use of these materials contribute to lustful attitudes and activities condemned by Scripture.³⁵ Additionally, in both production and use, they dehumanize people made in the image of God.³⁶ Exposure to these materials entices us into the uniquely destructive kinds of sexual sin through which we disobey the Lord and desecrate our own bodies, which are intended as temples where the Holy Spirit may dwell.³⁷

³⁰ Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 3:17

³¹ Colossians 3:23

³² I Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17; James 1:21-22

³³ 1 John 2:15-17

³⁴ Ephesians 5:8; 15-16

³⁵ Matthew 5:27-28; Romans 13:12-14; II Peter 2:14, 18-19

³⁶ Genesis 1:27

³⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

223 Integrity in Speech

- a) The earliest Friends were convicted to express the integrity of their speech by refusing to “swear” an oath during court proceedings, believing that doing so would elevate some speech as more honest than others. Some Friends feel a conviction to continue this practice, insisting that merely affirming the intention to tell the truth is sufficient to verify the integrity of our words. We are grateful that the civil authorities have long granted us, and all others of like mind, the right to this practice.
- b) However, a full-life ethic of integrity in our speech encompasses much more of our everyday lives. Keeping a tight rein on our speech is a critical component of the proper practice of our faith.³⁸ For example, Friends should not use obscene or coarse language,³⁹ or speak in ways that may be technically true but are intended to deceive and conceal the fullness of truth.⁴⁰ Our speech also lacks integrity if the voices we use to worship the Lord are also used to demean and devalue His image bearers.⁴¹ Our conversations should be inviting and full of grace,⁴² our words should be used to build one another up,⁴³ and the truth that we speak should always be accompanied by love.⁴⁴

230 COMMUNITY

We believe the Christian life is ordained by God to be lived out in loving relationship with others as an image of the community of the Trinity.

231 Community within the Church

- a. The community of the local church includes far more than worship gatherings. Friends should find inspiration and application from the church community described in the book of Acts when considering how to live together faithfully. A church community should be characterized by unity, generosity, joy, sincerity and encouraging fellowship that extends into our homes and everyday lives. In the midst of this kind of community, we believe God will be powerfully active, our witness will be enhanced, and the Lord will continue to add to the number of those who experience the saving knowledge of Jesus.⁴⁵
- b. Friends should not forsake gathering together for worship. Members should attend the services of their congregation regularly and faithfully and commit themselves to both serve and be accountable to their church.⁴⁶
- c. Because God and his glory are ultimate, corporate worship is a critical component of the church’s local ministry. In these experiences, Friends unite themselves together to reverently and joyfully express

³⁸ James 1:26

³⁹ Ephesians 5:4

⁴⁰ Proverbs 24:28b

⁴¹ James 3:9-12

⁴² Colossians 4:6

⁴³ Ephesians 4:29

⁴⁴ Ephesians 4:15

⁴⁵ Acts 2:42-47

⁴⁶ Hebrews 10:23-25

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genuine adoration, love and gratitude to the Triune God.⁴⁷ Worship gatherings will regularly include times of prayer, praise, giving, and preaching, as well as frequent opportunities for reflection, meditation, and decision.⁴⁸

- d. We believe that both Christian baptism and communion are spiritual realities which are symbolically portrayed within the church through the physical elements of water in baptism and bread and cup in communion.⁴⁹ In keeping with our heritage when observing of these ordinances, Friends should guard against any temptation to allow the outward symbols to replace or take preeminence over the inner spiritual reality to which they point.⁵⁰ Regarding baptism specifically, Friends churches practice “believer’s baptism” for those who profess faith in Jesus and a desire to be joined to the Body of Christ.
- e. Friends affirm that God continues to graciously give the gifts of the Spirit in our day.⁵¹ These gifts are distributed to individual Christians according to God’s wisdom and should be used in ways that glorify the Lord and edify His church.⁵² We do not regard any particular gift as a necessary sign of the fullness or baptism with the Spirit but believe that God distributes to each one individually just as he wills.⁵³ Specifically, regarding the gift of glossolalia (speaking in tongues), we encourage our churches—and individual members—to refrain from exercising the use of tongues in public ways during times of corporate worship due to their tendency to lead to division within the community during such gatherings. Our desire is not to quench the work of the Spirit, but to give primacy to the need for unity,⁵⁴ clarity⁵⁵ and order⁵⁶ within the worshiping community. Friends with the gift of tongues are encouraged to exercise this gift in times of private devotion or in appropriate group settings.

232 Community within Marriage

- a. The covenant of marriage should be entered into only after much forethought, planning and prayer, and “in the fear of the Lord.” For those who pursue marriage, it is vital that Evangelical Friends seek spouses who share their Christian faith and convictions in order to avoid becoming “unequally yoked” in marriage.⁵⁷ Marriage is the union of one man and one woman into a oneness that no other human relationship can provide. Made before divine and human witnesses, the marriage vow unites a couple so fully that they “become one flesh.”⁵⁸ Marriage also involves mental, emotional, and spiritual union. Evangelical Friends should therefore enter into marriage believing that it is a life-long commitment and union.

⁴⁷ John 4:21-24; Acts 2:42-47; Romans 12:1

⁴⁸ Psalm 22:22-23; 95:6; 100:2; I Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 5:19-21

⁴⁹ Mark 14:22-15, 16:16; Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 22:14-20; Acts 2:39, 10:47; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 1 Peter 3:21

⁵⁰ Matthew 3:11, 15:8-9; 1 Corinthians 11:27-30

⁵¹ Romans 12:6-8

⁵² 1 Peter 4:10-11

⁵³ 1 Corinthians 12:11

⁵⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:7, 12

⁵⁵ 1 Corinthians 14:19

⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 14:40

⁵⁷ II Corinthians 6:14a

⁵⁸ Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31

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- b. Evangelical Friends believe that sex is a beautiful gift of God given to humanity in order to join a husband and a wife together in self-giving love as well as to bring children into the world.⁵⁹ We hold that this gift is therefore appropriately received only within the covenant of marriage between husband and wife.⁶⁰
- c. The sanctity of the marriage vows requires Friends to seek earnestly to prevent serious marital discord, perhaps through counseling, and to make every effort toward a happy, harmonious, and holy marriage. We grieve the severing of any marriage by divorce, while also recognizing the prevalence of that reality in our fallen world. However, since the only explicit Biblical allowances for divorce are adultery⁶¹ and abandonment,⁶² Evangelical Friends discourage seeking a divorce on any other grounds, and even biblically permitted divorce should be sought only after genuine attempts at reconciliation have been exhausted.⁶³
- d. The break-up of many marriages in our world—including within our churches—places great responsibility upon the congregation to be sensitive to the needs of those becoming involved in such crises and to be quick in showing loving concern for them.⁶⁴ Evangelical Friends discourage remarriage after divorce except for the innocent party in cases of adultery and abandonment. However, given the redemptive message of Christ, each case should be carefully and compassionately considered by the couple alongside the local church pastor and/or other leaders as needed.
- e. Evangelical Friends believe that all forms of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse are sin.⁶⁵ These forms of sin violently dissolve the communities of marriage and family. Our churches have a responsibility to vigilantly guard against incidents of abuse, confront abusers, and protect the abused, which includes the responsibility to report abuse to proper civil authorities.⁶⁶ Ongoing abuse by a spouse represents an abandonment of the marriage vow and as such may be grounds for biblical divorce and remarriage.⁶⁷

233 Community within the Family

- a. The many biblical references to the family assure us of its divine origin and of God's concern for the family and the home.⁶⁸ Families within Friends churches are encouraged to establish rhythms of discipleship within the home that reflect a deep love for God in order to both strengthen the community of family and encourage growth in Christian discipleship for each individual member.⁶⁹

⁵⁹ Hebrews 13:4

⁶⁰ Please see the "Family" and "Marriage" statements in the 160 Humanity section of our Doctrine for more on this topic.

⁶¹ Matthew 5:32

⁶² 1 Corinthians 7:1-16

⁶³ Mark 10:2-9

⁶⁴ Genesis 6:1-2

⁶⁵ Ephesians 5:28-29; Colossians 3:19; James 1:19-20; 1 Peter 3:7

⁶⁶ Psalm 9:9, 72:4; Romans 13:3-4

⁶⁷ 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; 1 Timothy 5:8

⁶⁸ Genesis 1:27-31; Psalm 68:6a; 127:3-5; 2 Timothy 1:5

⁶⁹ Deuteronomy 6:4-9

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- b. From the bringing together of Adam and Eve⁷⁰ to the blessing given to Abraham's offspring,⁷¹ the importance of family is affirmed many times over throughout the Old Testament. Israel is also repeatedly instructed that those who suffer breakdowns in family relationships (widows, orphans and foreigners) should receive special care from God's people.⁷²
- c. The New Testament reaffirms the value of family, and outlines expectations for familial relationships.⁷³ At the same time, Jesus communicates that the value we place on the institution of family must be rightly aligned with Kingdom principles. A devotion to family should never hinder us from following Christ, and our loyalty to God and his family must take precedence even over our loyalty to our natural families.⁷⁴
- d. The Scriptures speak regularly about the blessing and responsibility of parenthood.⁷⁵ Caring and providing for one's household is a key value of the Christian faith.⁷⁶ Children should honor and obey their parents,⁷⁷ parents should be sensitive to the needs of each child while setting an example—in word and deed—of a Christ-centered life, and all members of the family should seek unity with one another.⁷⁸

234 Community within Society

- a. While speaking about the "greatest" of commandments, Jesus included love of neighbor.⁷⁹ Our neighborhoods, and surrounding communities, are our primary mission fields. The people who reside nearby—whether the home next door, across town, in a nearby city, or down the country road—are the ones we are called to know, love and serve. Within the relationships that develop with our neighbors, Friends should be known for their hopeful lives and be ever prepared to share the Source of that hope in ways that are gentle and respectful.⁸⁰
- b. God intends for His people to bless the larger society in which we live. Churches should actively look for ways to serve their neighborhoods and communities. The lives of Friends within society should reflect the biblical injunction to "seek the welfare of the city" into which we have been sent, knowing that as it prospers, so shall we.⁸¹
- c. Individual Friends are encouraged to bless their communities by serving in various civic organizations such as local school boards, volunteer fire departments, community centers and other charitable groups outside of the church. When considering one's involvement in any organization, Evangelical Friends should carefully consider the time, commitment, and resources required, as well as the likely influence

⁷⁰ Genesis 2:18-24

⁷¹ Genesis 15:4-5; 17:19-22

⁷² Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 14:28-29; Zechariah 7:10

⁷³ Ephesians 5:21-6:4; Colossians 3:18-21

⁷⁴ Matthew 10:34-39; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 9:57-62

⁷⁵ Psalm 127:3-5

⁷⁶ John 19:25-27; 1 Timothy 5:8

⁷⁷ Ephesians 6:1

⁷⁸ Ephesians 4:32

⁷⁹ Matthew 22:39

⁸⁰ 1 Peter 3:15

⁸¹ Jeremiah 29:7

of the organization upon them. Friends should especially avoid affiliation with “secret societies” which base their rituals on a distorted understanding of the Bible and directly or indirectly give Jesus Christ less than divine nature, even though they may appear to have spiritual value. The oath-bound character of such societies seems not only unnecessary, but also likely to prove harmful to our testimony of Integrity.

- d. Evangelical Friends are convinced that the New Testament requires the Christian to respect their government and its leaders. Therefore, it is necessary that we obey the laws of the nation insofar as they are not in conflict with our obedience to God. When it becomes necessary for Evangelical Friends to disagree with the practices and requirements of government, we should do so out of concern for the promotion of righteousness and justice, and not out of delight in controversy or strife.⁸²
- e. Within a democratic context, where the populace has a part in choosing its leaders, Friends are encouraged to use Christ-centered principles and a Spirit-led conscience when casting any vote—while also avoiding hateful, disrespectful or insulting speech aimed at voters or candidates in the opposition. While positively engaging in the political process, Friends denounce any ideology or movement that co-opts the language, commitment, or passion that is fit for religious devotion alone and joins them with efforts to gain or maintain a form of political power. Friends should offer petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving for all those in authority, so that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.⁸³

240 EQUALITY

We believe every human being, without exception or qualification, is created in the image of God and one for whom Jesus laid down his life – and should be treated accordingly.

- a. Evangelical Friends believe that all people are equal in the sight of God and all are loved by God. We believe that every person is created in the image of God and should be treated with dignity, love, and respect regardless of race, nationality, age, sexual orientation, gender identification, social or economic status, personal history or religious affiliation.⁸⁴
- b. The Christian virtue of love should characterize Evangelical Friends in caring for the material needs of the poor, underprivileged, neglected, or victimized within our membership and in the larger society. Alongside acts of charity, Friends should advocate for just laws that promote equitable opportunities for all people.⁸⁵
- c. As various factors around the world lead to destabilization, injustice and violence, it is often true that the vulnerable and victimized seek safety, shelter and stability within nations and regions that have the ability to assist with those needs. This has been evidenced in nations like the United States and Canada for generations. Based upon the abundance of biblical support for caring for the stranger/foreigner

⁸² Matthew 22:21b; Romans 13:1-7; I Timothy 2:1-2

⁸³ 1 Timothy 2:1-2

⁸⁴ See 160 Humanity in Doctrine for more on sexuality and gender

⁸⁵ Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Proverbs 14:31; Galatians 6:10; I John 3:16-18

among us, Friends who reside in well-resourced nations are encouraged to seek ways to offer compassion and care for immigrants and refugees that are suffering in these ways.

- d. Evangelical Friends reject all forms of racism. We believe that humanity has one ancestor in Adam, created in the image of God to love and live in harmony with God and other people.⁸⁶ Racism is a product of the Fall of mankind into sin and has no place in the life of the believer.⁸⁷ Evangelical Friends should seek to be sources of reconciliation across racial and cultural divides and work to eradicate racist ideologies, behaviors and systems within society.⁸⁸
- e. Evangelical Friends believe that every human life is a gift of God. We recognize the sanctity of human life and seek to preserve it from conception to natural death. As a result, we are opposed to intentional acts that violate the image of God found in each person. This includes the use of induced abortion for the purpose of ending the life of an unborn child. Instead, we must do all we can to preserve both the health and welfare of the mother and the life of the child.⁸⁹ We are also opposed to the practice of euthanasia and instead encourage those giving care to loved ones whose physical health is failing to work with health care professionals committed to the “comfort care” needed in those situations. Finally, Friends should find opportunities to support both suicide prevention as well as ministering to families who are affected by this tragedy. When confronting this difficult circumstance, Friends should always encourage trust in the love of God that is so unfathomably deep it is beyond our ability to fully understand.⁹⁰
- f. All believers are encouraged to worship and participate in the life of Evangelical Friends Churches as equal recipients of God’s grace.⁹¹ Further, Jesus’ call for the continued expansion of the Kingdom of God through the multiplication of disciples is equally given to all those who claim Christ as Lord. The sharing of the Gospel was never intended as a privilege or responsibility for a select few people, or only those with certain giftings. We desire to cultivate an environment in which all men and women of our churches are actively engaged in ministry to our world.⁹²
- g. Since its inception and throughout its history, the Friends movement has recognized and celebrated equality between men and women within leadership. This conviction is rooted in the biblical evidence of both male and female leadership among God’s people throughout Scripture.⁹³ We believe that the Holy Spirit bestows the gifts—and calling—needed for Christian leadership on both women and men.⁹⁴ Therefore, we celebrate the Recording of Ordination for men and women called into vocational pastoral ministry.

250 STEWARDSHIP

We believe the Lord has called us to be conscientious and wise custodians of everything He has

⁸⁶ Genesis 1:27; Acts 17:26

⁸⁷ James 2:8-9

⁸⁸ Psalm 82:3

⁸⁹ Genesis 2:7; Job 33:4; Psalm 139:13-16; John 15:13

⁹⁰ Ephesians 3:17-19

⁹¹ Genesis 1:27; I Corinthians 12:21-26; Galatians 3:26-29

⁹² 1 Corinthians 12:4-26; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Peter 2:9

⁹³ Judges 4:4-5; 2 Kings 22:11-20; Esther 4:12-14; Romans 16:1-2

⁹⁴ Acts 2:17-18; Acts 21:8-9

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entrusted to our care.

251 Stewardship of Creation

- a. Evangelical Friends believe that God in the beginning gave people dominion over the earth and expected them to be wise stewards, caring for the created world as God does. Proper concern for our world and its resources serves as a witness to our neighbors, blesses the world's most vulnerable populations, and expresses our love for God the Creator.⁹⁵ Wasteful and destructive use of the earth's resources is contrary to God's purposes.⁹⁶

252 Stewardship of our Finances

- a. The practice of tithing our income and giving offerings to the Lord began in the Old Testament and is referenced during the ministry of Jesus.⁹⁷ Evangelical Friends believe that generous giving is still the biblically prescribed method for supporting the ministry of the church and its mission to forward the Kingdom of God.⁹⁸ Each person who stewards his/her resources in these ways should do so with conviction and gladness, not reluctantly or out of a sense of compulsion.⁹⁹
- b. Additionally, Friends do well to let a wider generosity beyond the tithe characterize the stewardship of financial resources. Wise and discerned giving is encouraged beyond the ministry of the local church, especially to care for the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized in our communities. These forms of generosity focused on mercy and justice should be offered in addition to the tithe, not in its place.¹⁰⁰ All forms of generosity are rooted in the teaching of Jesus that there is more blessing in giving than in receiving.¹⁰¹
- c. Evangelical Friends should prepare legal wills and testaments while in good health and sound judgment in order to express their wishes regarding their possessions and families. In the distribution of their estates, Friends are encouraged to consider contributions to the work of God in the local congregation and the ministries of EFC-ER.¹⁰²

253 Stewardship of our Talents

- a. Evangelical Friends believe that all persons have natural abilities and spiritual gifts from God with which they are to make contributions to the work of God.¹⁰³ It is therefore the joyful duty of each individual to steward his/her particular gifts liberally in the ministry of the church.
- b. Evangelical Friends also believe that God provides for the Church by calling certain men and women to serve in vocational ministry. For the edifying and equipping of the Church, Jesus Christ confers on them

⁹⁵ Genesis 2:8-9; Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalm 95:3-5

⁹⁶ Genesis 1:28-31

⁹⁷ Genesis 14:17-20; 28:20-22; Leviticus 6:20; 27:30; Deuteronomy 16:17; Malachi 3:6-12; Matthew 23:23

⁹⁸ Proverbs 11:24-25, Proverbs 19:17; 1 John 3:17; Proverbs 22:9; Psalm 112:5; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; Hebrews 13:16

⁹⁹ 2 Corinthians 9:6-7

¹⁰⁰ Matthew 23:23

¹⁰¹ Acts 20:35

¹⁰² Proverbs 24:27; Proverbs 21:5; Matthew 6:19-21

¹⁰³ Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 12:42-48; Romans 12:3-8; I Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11-13

the gifts of “apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.”¹⁰⁴ While still embracing the “priesthood of all believers,” Friends acknowledge that those who give evidence of these kinds of gifts may have unique callings and leadership roles in the local congregation.

254 Stewardship of our Bodies

- a. Our members should avoid participating in activities or engaging in behaviors that result in destructive addictions, being mindful of the abundant suffering that has resulted from such behaviors, not to mention the tragic effect on health, mind, money, and relationships. As a result, Friends should avoid all drunkenness and the use of any illicit drugs.¹⁰⁵ While acknowledging that the Bible does not wholly prohibit the use of alcohol by believers, because of its destructive potential, Friends are encouraged to consider refraining from its use.¹⁰⁶
- b. As an expression of our devotion to Christ, Evangelical Friends should abstain from any food, drink, drugs, or practices which harm the body or jeopardize our own or another’s faith.¹⁰⁷ The practical application of this commitment—as in many other areas of our lives as followers of Christ—must be lived out in accordance with the individual conscience of each believer.¹⁰⁸
- c. When dealing with issues of conscience, Scripture reminds us that our motivation should not be rooted in permissibility, but in what is beneficial and constructive in building ourselves, and others, into Christ-likeness.¹⁰⁹ While we have received freedom in Christ, we should not use that freedom as a license to enter into actions and activities that may trap us in sin and addiction.¹¹⁰ As we exercise freedom of conscience, we must also be careful that doing so does not lead a brother or sister in Christ, whose conscience may yet be weak, to stumble or fall.¹¹¹ This caution is especially true for those who are recognized as leaders within the local congregation.

¹⁰⁴ Ephesians 4:11-16

¹⁰⁵ Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18; Romans 13:13; 1 Peter 4:3

¹⁰⁶ 1 Corinthians 10:23-24; 1 Thessalonians 5:22

¹⁰⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. 8:9; Romans 14:13

¹⁰⁸ Romans 14:5

¹⁰⁹ 1 Corinthians 10:23-24

¹¹⁰ Romans 6:1-2

¹¹¹ 1 Corinthians 8:9