

Early Quakers believed they had discovered and were bringing alive
the essential witness of 1st century Christians

William Penn claimed Quakerism was “primitive Christianity revived”—writing the following...

“Primitive Christianity Revived in the faith and practice of the people called Quakers”

He said that Quakers had rediscovered Christianity as it had been established by Jesus

George Fox claimed that the church had been apostate and in the wilderness since Constantine

He regarded it as his mission to reclaim the true church of Jesus Christ

Early Quakers didn’t set out to create a new denomination

Or even a new movement within Christianity as they knew and experienced it in 1600s

They sought to recover the basic faith and practice of the apostles found in the New Testament

They sought to restore the days of the early church—reviving primitive, apostolic Christianity

Before Christianity became the official religion—which they saw as “apostasy”

For many denominations, the emphasis is on apostolic succession

Apostolic lineage is physical—tracing the lineage of apostolic authority back to the 12 apostles

It is passed down from one to another through the laying on of hands

This is a hierarchical approach to apostolic succession

Friends, on the other hand, saw apostolic succession as a spiritual reality given by the Holy Spirit

It was not passed down from the bishop or priest to their successor

It was a direct apostolic power given through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon everyone

Just as the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the early apostles—so it is on all people

The Spirit is not constrained to a direct lineage or to geography or tradition—it blows freely!

The Spirit moves unconstrained and unpredicted to all people everywhere

Early Friends saw apostolic vitality as recovering this direct encounter with the Holy Spirit

They put a direct encounter and response to the Living Christ as Present Teacher at the center

Christ was at the center of their lives, their actions, their teachings—everything!

In a very real sense, this means that we are all apostles

Early Friends sought to recover the essence of the apostolic Jesus movement

Christ has come to teach his people himself in the 1600s just as he had in the New Testament

And Christ has come to teach his people himself in 2018 and beyond!

Christ led the early church—Christ led the early Quakers—Christ leads us today

If the essence of Christianity is a transformative life-changing encounter with the Living Christ

Then we are partners with Christ in furthering Christ’s mission in the world

Bottom line—we all directly inherit the apostolic succession in the same way the early apostles did

... through the Holy Spirit

The power of the Holy Spirit has not been diminished over 2000 years

We are no less empowered to live out the Pentecost power than the apostles of the early church

After Jesus’ resurrection, he came to the disciples one evening

Jesus said, *“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”*

When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

John 20:21-22

Jesus—the Living Christ who is our Present Teacher says to us,

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit.”