

Peter and the other apostles didn't meet together to create the church

They didn't say that it is our job to start the church and create a plan to make it happen

Rather, just before Jesus ascended into heaven following his resurrection, Jesus said, "Wait!"

"...wait for the promise of the Father... you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit..." Acts 1:4-5

In Acts 2, we read the story of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came down and filled them all

This changed everything and brought a new power to the followers of Jesus

We begin to see real movement as they live in the power of God's Spirit

They follow leadings and do what comes next

Truth is—they figured it out as they went, following the Spirit's guidance

For example, there was no plan to take the message of Jesus to the Gentiles (non-Jews)

But God broke in upon them and made clear that he had come for Gentiles also

Again and again, throughout the early church, we see movement as they follow their Leadings

George Fox and the early Quakers encountered this same Spirit and also found it to be transformative

Fox heard the message that Christ Jesus could speak to his condition when others couldn't

Early Quakers believed the Spirit of Christ was leading them and speaking directly to each person

This was the same Spirit that the early church encountered at Pentecost

Again it changed everything and there was real movement among the Quakers

They follow leadings and do what comes next

They had no plan to start a denomination or even a movement

They were simply being faithful to the Spirit among them, following leadings

It was in this context that a peace testimony began to emerge

Earliest evidence I see of the peace testimony comes from George Fox in 1651

Elton Trueblood suggests that Fox has not thought into the complexities of war

Rather, it was a simple matter of his obedience to Christ in that situation

Fox had been in the Houses of Correction for nearly 6 months and was near the end of his time

The keeper of the House of Correction offered him freedom if he joined Cromwell's army

Fox replied, *"I told them I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars, and I knew from whence all wars did rise, from the lust according to James's doctrine."* (Reference to James 4:1-3)

They said they offered it in love and kindness,

to which Fox said such love and kindness he trampled under his feet

As a result, Fox was placed in the dungeon among rogues and felons for a half a year

After the death of Cromwell, Charles II was made King in the spring of 1660

King Charles II declaration at Breda promised religious toleration if it didn't disturb the peace

Due to the underground opposition, there was much emphasis on oaths of allegiance

For the next 25 years, the majority of Quakers were imprisoned for rejecting the oath

No matter the reason they refused to swear an oath

Their allegiance was to Christ alone

George Fox was taken from Swarthmore Hall and imprisoned in Lancaster castle

He was charged with plotting against the King

As a result, Quakers made public statements to set the King's mind at rest

Quakers did not ever plan to revolt against the King

It was Margaret Fell that wrote the first Quaker declaration against war and delivered it to Charles II
She wrote on many topics, including the peace testimony and women's right to speak
Margaret Fell's declaration was against war and violence for any purpose...

*"A Declaration and an Information from us the people of God called Quakers,
To the present Governors, the King and both Houses of Parliament,
and all whom it may concern."*

Written by Margaret Fell and subscribed to by 13 men including George Fox
She delivered it to King Charles II in person on June 22, 1660

It stated, *"We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love and
unity; it is our desire that others' feet may walk in the same, and [we] do deny
and bear our testimony against all strife and wars and contentions... Our
weapons are not carnal, but spiritual..."ⁱⁱ*

Another Declaration was given to the King in January 1661

*"A Declaration from the harmless and innocent people of God, called Quakers, against all
plotters and fighters in the world."ⁱⁱⁱ*

Authored by George Fox and Richard Hubberthorne, signed by 10 more

The heart of the document, intended to allay fears of a Quaker uprising, follows...

*"All bloody principles and practices, we, as to our own particulars, do utterly deny, with
all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under
any pretence whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world."*

What started as a solution of particular practical problems, ultimately became the peace testimony

The Morning Meeting in 1684 reissued the statement

along with the assertion that Friends as a body could not wage war with outward weapons

This belief is based on scripture which calls us...

To love our enemies—Matthew 5:43-44 at Luke 6:27-35

To love God and love our neighbors as ourselves—Matthew 22:36-40

To fight against the powers of this world that cannot be fought

with flesh and blood or physical weapons—Ephesians 6:11-12

Because of their belief that all people can hear and know God—John 1:9, 10:27, 15:12-17

They came to believe in the equality of all people before God—Galatians 3:28

And did not feel it their right to fight against others in ways that could take their lives

At North Seattle Friends Church, too have encountered the movement of the Spirit that came in Acts

We too must consider how God is speaking to us

As we face issues in our society—whether political, social, or religious

We must Listen for Leadings

Search scripture

Discern together how it is that God is leading us

With boldness we must follow

The Spirit is transformative and as we are faithful to live into the Leadings, God is at work

Every situation is different, making answers obsolete, and Listening for God more essential

ⁱ *The Journal of George Fox*, edited by John Nickalls, page 65.

ⁱⁱ *Margaret Fell: Mother of Quakerism*, by Isabel Ross, page 128.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Journal of George Fox*, edited by John Nickalls, page 398.