

may also run study groups and hold shared lunches where you can get to know other Quakers and find out about their experience of Quakerism.

Who can be a Quaker?

Quaker meetings are open to everyone and no pressure will be put on you if you want to come and find out about us. You may also wish to write to us for an information pack or to attend one of our weekends for enquirers where you will meet other people like yourself who want to see if Quakerism might be right for them. You can also visit our website: www.quaker.org.uk.

For free information about Quakers contact:

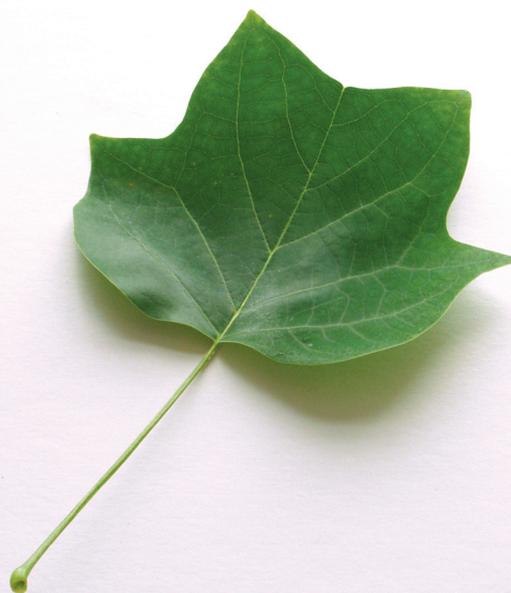
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Quakers Today



Photograph: Peter Daniels

Who are the Quakers?

The Religious Society of Friends – more commonly known as Quakers – is a small group of some 25,000 worshippers in the UK. Quakers believe that it is possible for every person to have a real and direct experience of God, without the need for priests and rituals. If you are used to a priest-led service, you will find a Quaker meeting for worship quite different.

Quaker Meetings

Quaker Meetings are usually held on Sundays and last for about an hour. If you walk into a Quaker meeting, you will find a group of people sitting facing each other in a circle or a square. There will not be an altar or hymnbooks, although you will find copies of the Bible and *Quaker Faith and Practice*, which is an anthology of our own Quaker experience of God.

Our meetings are based on silent waiting, and the silence can be very moving. Sometimes, someone will feel inspired to stand and speak briefly in their own words, or to read from the Bible, or to pray. We can learn a lot from other people's experience of God, which may be very different from our own.

Quakers, God and Jesus

Every Quaker will have their own interpretation of the word "God", but in fact we all have a great deal in common and try

not to spend too much time on definitions. For example, you will find some Quakers who have a strong belief in Jesus Christ as their saviour, while others recognise that Jesus was a good man whose example is worth following, but aren't too concerned about the theology. All this makes for a rich and diverse company of Quakers.

Faith and practice

Quakers feel that it is no good having a faith if you don't put it into practice. Because we believe that there is something of God in everyone – however difficult that may be find at times – we try to respond to all people in a way that lives out that belief. It means treating everyone with respect, whatever their beliefs, race, age or gender.

It also means working towards making this world a better place. Quakers have always been involved in helping slaves, prisoners, the mentally ill, refugees and war casualties, to name but a few. Responding to that of God in everyone means that we will never resort to war or violence to solve a problem. Instead we work for peaceful solutions and reconciliation.

The Quaker community

As we don't have priests or other paid clergy, it is up to us to run our own Quaker meetings. We take it in turn to serve in roles such as the clerk (the person responsible for our business meetings) or on the coffee rota or on the premises committee. Meetings