



## Quakers - the Religious Society of Friends

Quaker meeting at Gracechurch Street

Quakers are members of a group with Christian roots that began in England in the 1650s. The formal title of the movement is the Society of Friends or the Religious Society of Friends.

There are about 210,000 Quakers across the world. In Britain there are 17,000 Quakers, and 400 Quaker meetings for worship each week. 9,000 people in Britain regularly take part in Quaker worship without being members of the Religious Society of Friends.

### What Quakers believe

1. God is love
2. the light of God is in every single person
3. a person who lets their life be guided by that light will achieve a full relationship with God
4. everyone can have a direct, personal relationship with God without involving a priest or minister
5. redemption and the Kingdom of Heaven are to be experienced now, in this world

### Holy Books

Quakers do not regard any book as being the actual 'word of God'.

Most Quakers regard the Bible as a very great inspirational book but they don't see it as the only one, and so they read other books that can guide their lives.

### Holy Days

Quakers do not celebrate Christian festivals such as Easter and Christmas.

### Where the names come from

One story says that the founder, George Fox, once told a magistrate to tremble (quake) at the name of God and the name 'Quakers' stuck.

Other people suggest that the name derives from the physical shaking that sometimes went with Quaker religious experiences.

The name 'Friends' comes from Jesus' remark "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:14).

### Distinguishing Quaker ideas

Quakers believe that there is a direct relationship between God and each believer, every human being contains something of God - this is often called "the light of God". So:

- Quakers think that all human beings are equal and equally worthy of respect
- Quakers accept that all human beings contain goodness and truth
- Quakers welcome diversity
- Quakers do not have a written list of beliefs; they feel people should follow their own 'inner light' rather than external rules. They believe that God grows and changes with

his creation and believe that God continues to tell human beings what they should do.

Quakers don't believe in a clergy, they feel that all believers can minister to one another. They emphasise the importance of leading your own life well as an example to others (what a person does can be much clearer than what they say). They also practice worship in silence.

### **Quakers and sacraments**

Quakers do not practise baptism or celebrate the Eucharist.

They don't believe that any particular ritual is needed to get in touch with God, so they do not believe in the sacraments practised in mainstream Christian churches.

### **Quaker worship**



Quaker meeting for worship

Quaker worship is designed to let God teach and transform the worshippers. Quakers call worship events *meetings for worship* rather than services.

### **No liturgy**

Quakers do without a liturgy because they believe that worship happens when two or three people come together to worship - nothing more is needed. This belief comes from Jesus' statement that "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).



### **Meeting for worship**

Meeting for worship in Lincoln

Quaker meetings for worship take place in *meeting houses*, not churches. These are simple buildings or rooms.

They usually sit facing each other in a square or a circle. This helps them to be aware that they are a group together for worship, and puts everybody in a place of equal status.

Everyone waits in shared silence until someone is *moved by the Spirit* (i.e. has a strong religious feeling) to do something as part of their worship.

A person will only speak if they are convinced that they have something that must be shared, and it is rare for a person to speak more than once.

The words spoken are usually brief and may include readings (from the Bible or other books), praying, or speaking from personal experience. Each speaking is followed by a period of silence.

Quakers believe that God speaks through the contributions made at the meeting. Some people say that there is often a feeling that a divine presence has settled over the group. The meeting ends when the elders shake hands.