



For Quakers, faith is about their direct and inward experience of what is most real and true for them. It is also about how this experience transforms the way they live. They believe that the deepest experience is best found through stillness and waiting rather than liturgy or ceremony; that it is something to be lived out rather than described or defined by creeds.

Quakers try to be 'open to new light', from wherever it may come. This means that Quakers are open to the new opportunities and possibilities offered to them by their own experience. It also means they are open to the insights and understandings of others. People come to Quakers from a wide variety of faith traditions, and many come with little or no religious background at all. The Quaker community is enriched and enlivened by this breadth of views and experiences. Each Quaker describes their own experience in the words that are most helpful and meaningful to them. Some use the language of God, Spirit and prayer; others describe and understand their experience very differently. Most would use the language of wondering, seeking and curiosity.

We asked four Quakers to share their story with us and to tell us about their experience of Quaker community, living, faith and worship.

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QUAKER FAITH



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“ **Jenn**

I've always had an interest in faith – in stories, communities – but have tended to think about them in the abstract. I perhaps idealise them; it can actually be really difficult to live them out. It was about the stories we tell that help us to understand the world, stories that help us to cope and to make sense of our lives.

As I explored different faiths and spiritual paths I felt that their truths can look beautiful but I didn't want to muck them up with real life! With Quakers I discovered that the messiness of living doesn't muck it up at all, but makes sense of it, that roots it and makes it real. Yes, it's about the head but it's about the heart too and about our experience.

I'm still searching out how things make sense, still wondering what we might mean by truth, and with Quakers I relish the chance to wonder together. It is a faith that for me nourishes both head and heart.

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“ **Kevin**

My family are 'Caribbean Catholic', though not really practising. I had a very difficult and challenging childhood, and I was always interested in understanding why life could be so difficult and how we might cope; I was searching for something hopeful. I looked to my faith in God to help me understand this. I went to a very mixed north London school and had lots of opportunities to talk to different people about their faith and how it helped them to live. The idea of an all-loving, protective God spoke to me deeply: a loving God calling us to a life of compassion and kindness. The belief that there is that of God in everyone is the core of my faith.

I explored different faiths and traditions, finding so much that was hopeful and helpful – especially in Buddhism and meditation. With all the things that happened in my childhood, and the challenges I have had to face, I feel that being a Quaker helps me to live well, to be accepting, to do the best with what I have.

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“ **Jon**

As a Quaker, the spiritual isn't just about worship; it's about all of life and every day. My Quaker journey has, in some ways, been about reconciling my Christian heritage, learning a new language and a new way to live it. Quakers talk about being Spirit-led, and I find this really helpful. It's about being guided by something within and yet beyond at the same time. And it's about being guided together, too. It isn't

about rules or instructions but about seeking and inspiration, and the Spirit can speak anywhere, at any moment. Being a Quaker leads me down that path, but it also lights the way. It's about the whole of life and it constantly surprises me.

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“ **Abi**

When I joined Quakers I was a fairly conventional liberal Christian, happy to recite the creed, but I felt my belief weakening. Now I am rationally an atheist and emotionally a Christian: I have a strong personal relationship with the God I do not believe in. Quakers accommodate a wide range of beliefs about God, as it is our experience that is primary. There is something in the meeting for worship I call "holy". Everyone is welcome, and, if you can find love and truth there, it doesn't matter whether you call that "God" or not.

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See our four Quaker journeys in full at
www.quaker.org.uk/Journeys