



Getting to know Chester Quaker Meeting – July 2024

What do Quakers stand for?

The Religious Society of Friends began as a renewal movement in English Christianity at around 1650. We use the words Quakers and Friends interchangeably. It still maintains a Christian basis but includes both Christians and those who count themselves as Quaker but not Christian. Present-day Quakers cover a broad spectrum of belief, reflecting the spiritual searching of today, and share a lively exchange of thought and experience.

Our worship belongs to everybody. We take part by being present, by learning to be still, and by opening ourselves to the creative principle of truth and love which some of us call God. There is no priest or minister, just quiet openness from all present. We sit in a circle of expectant silence, letting the Meeting gather, allowing each participant to find their own still centre and ponder on what is most important to them. Out of this silence, anyone who feels moved to do so may speak, perhaps including a reading from our anthology of writings and guidance, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, or from the Bible or other spiritual book. Sometimes there is silence for most or all of the hour; at other times there are several spoken contributions.

True worship may be experienced at any time; in any place – alone on the hills or in our busy daily lives. Believing that we should always be open to fresh insights, Friends do not have a defined set of doctrines or obligations. We try to reflect Quaker experience in a number of areas of faith and action that we call testimonies:

- **Equality**: The principle that each person is of equal value before God. We do not discriminate between men and women, and we have no clergy. We all join in on a basis of equality, whatever our background or gender. The activities of the Society are carried out by all of its members as far as they are free and able. We try to deal openly and equally with people of other faiths and cultures.
- **Peace**: Everyone is of value before God and so violence and the exertion of undue power over others is not the right basis for relationships at any level. We try to practise a constructive non-violence in our lives, including the upbringing of children. Quakers are often involved in peace activities, including conflict resolution and mediation, and many Quakers oppose military action, seeking to reduce or eliminate military spending.
- **Simplicity**: This includes honesty in all our relationships and business activities.. Since there is only one standard of truth, we do not take oaths, but in legal situations make an affirmation instead.
- **Sustainability**: Quakers try to live in a way which minimises demands on the environment and on other people's labour. Many are involved in climate change issues.
- **Truth**: Speaking truth to power is a traditional expression for taking a stand against unjust or oppressive behaviour by governments or other bodies.

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Chester Local Meeting

Union Walk, Frodsham Street, Chester CH1 3LF

Part of Wirral and Chester Area Meeting – registered charity number 1134210

<https://chesterquakers.org.uk/>

What do Chester Quakers do?

The most important activity for Chester Quakers is participating in the regular Meeting for Worship at our Meeting House. There is also an online meeting for those who are unable to be at a meeting in person.

Elders and Pastoral Friends help the life and welfare of the Meeting. Elders help to guide our approach to meetings for worship (including business meetings, weddings, and funerals) and to nurture the spiritual and community life of the Meeting. Pastoral Friends offer pastoral support and advice to Friends, both collectively and individually.

Discussion and study groups meet from time to time for all Chester Friends, helping them to get to know other Friends and to raise questions which interest them. Discussions and bring-and-share lunches are sometimes arranged after the meeting for worship on Sunday or at other times, to look in more detail at a topic or to get to know each other better. Further afield, we join from time to time with Quakers from other parts of the country.

Friends support the Meeting according to their means and other commitments. Some can give little, while others can afford more. Some give financial support monthly by standing order, while others give once a year.

You can truly belong to the Meeting without becoming a member of the Religious Society of Friends. Coming into membership is a mutual commitment between you and other Quakers – a commitment that you will play what part you can in Quaker life and that the Society of Friends welcomes and supports you. Not everybody feels this need, but if in due course you do, we shall be glad to help you.

Our way of worship doesn't suit everyone and if your exploration takes you in another direction, we hope you will feel that you move on with our good wishes. It may be helpful to get to know Quakers in other places because each of our Meetings is distinctive and different. If you find you feel at home in Quaker worship, and it matters to you that Quakers live up to their ideals, we hope you will stay with us and try to make it come true.

Where do Chester Quakers meet?

In Chester, our Meeting for Worship takes place in the Quaker Meeting House in Frodsham Street each Sunday at 10.30 am. The meeting lasts about an hour. There are then notices and a chat over coffee. Children and young people have their own groups, usually held on the fourth Sunday of the month. The Meeting House is also used at other times for the activities of Chester Quakers.

There has been a Quaker Meeting House on the same site in Chester since before 1701.

How can I find out more?

The Meeting House has a stock of leaflets and our library has a collection of books you can borrow. A good beginning is the booklet *Advices and Queries* (ask for a free copy) which is the nearest Friends get to a creed! The standard work is *Quaker Faith and Practice*, which covers all aspects of Quaker life, and there are plenty of copies in the library.

Above all, please accept our invitation to come to a meeting for worship. You will be most welcome and no one will ask you to commit unless you decide that you want to.