

# A Quaker Way

*Notes from a day of reflection presented by Andrew Norman for the local WCCM (World Community for Christian Meditation) group at St Nicolas' Community Centre, Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2018.*

## How Quakers began

The beginnings of the Quaker way are to be found in the period of the English Civil War, that's to say the 1640s. At that time there were a whole variety of movements all seeking in some way to engage with the disparities in English society: ecclesiastical, political, economic. There were those known as Diggers, the Levellers, Muggletonians, 5th Monarchists, and Seekers. Some were trying to seek reform within the Church (the Puritans for example, to begin with), but some had already given up on the Church as dead and lifeless, so they immediately set up their own chapels. Out of that somewhat chaotic social, political, religious time the Quaker way also emerged.



One of its key leaders was George Fox. He wasn't alone, but he is a major figure to look at if we are to understand the origins of what we now call the Quaker movement. Fox, too, had quickly become tired of what he saw as hypocrisy in the Church of his youth and at about the age of 19 he literally left conventional church-based life and started wandering about seeking some kind of authentic spiritual experience that, as he put it, 'spoke to his condition'. He didn't find that in any of the churchy outward forms, and the clergy of the time were not speaking to his condition in that way. Then in 1647 he had a life-changing personal experience. This was when he heard a voice telling him, "there is One, even Christ Jesus who can speak to thy condition." George Fox said later, "And when I heard it my heart did leap for joy." He came to understand that what he had been seeking outwardly he now found to be available within himself.

So this was the message he then started sharing: that what you're seeking outside of yourself is available inside of yourself, and you can turn to that inward teacher, that prophet, priest, redeemer, the Lord within, and so be led into salvation and truth.

That was the essential insight from which spread the Quaker movement, out of this great mix of all who were seeking reform in English church-life of those 1640's and 50's. Initially by word of mouth they enthusiastically shared the experience. So George Fox himself went about the countryside, telling all who would listen how he had found that 'Christ' would come to teach the people directly, could direct them inwardly to 'God', and so this personally accessible Christ was there to be their teacher and priest.

Sometimes he would speak to larger gatherings, but it wasn't until about 1652 that there were larger numbers of people who came to hear his message. Those first convinced then shared their discovery with others. By the time Fox died in 1691 there were some 50,000 Quakers from those 40 or 50 years during which it had been growing, and right out of that initial context of protest and the seeking of reform for spiritual renewal.

## Quaker Time Line

On one level the Religious Society of Friends is a social movement developing over the centuries of our history, Friends interacting with the needs and concerns of the day. There's a marvellous visual presentation of this timeline on the Quaker website. I recommend you to follow the link. Here is the movement I feel proud to belong to – and now want to play my own full part in it. [www.quaker.org.uk/times/In turbulent times](http://www.quaker.org.uk/times/In_turbulent_times)

## The Religious Society of Friends - a global overview

From those earliest days of the Quaker movement, Friends travelled widely to share their experience of this living faith, convincing others to join them. They took their message to distant parts of the world, 'Speaking Truth to Power' was the phrase coined, and they saw it as building the Kingdom of God on earth. Over the last 350 years, Quakerism has spread around the world - but in the process has evolved and changed. Early Friends in Britain proclaimed a faith which they knew 'experimentally' as they said, literally a faith that brought them direct, personal communion with the divine and with the spirit which they felt was what gave rise to the Scriptures. Experience of the spirit first. But they *were* Christians who knew their Bibles very well, and who wanted their lives to mirror all the best characteristics of an early Christian community.



However, now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *not* all Quakers in Britain would call themselves 'Christian'. *Our* approach to the Bible and to theology in general in the UK would have to be described as typically very liberal. Our worship is based on a silent waiting, seeking the divine in stillness – and we would often identify ourselves by how our lives are influenced and guided by some key practical 'testimonies' – for peace, equality, simplicity and truthfulness. Quakers tend to be fully involved in the wider society in which we find ourselves.

Looking globally, you will find this style of Quaker worship in Europe, in Asia, southern Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and parts of the United States and Mexico. But actually it represents about just 11% of the *total* world membership. Other Quaker meetings have what's called 'programmed worship'. Just as earlier Quakers once appointed recorded ministers, so Friends in programmed meetings appoint pastors to minister to the community. Their form of worship may include hymns or songs, a sermon, Bible readings and prayers – though there would also be a time of free or open worship, with silence when Friends can 'minister', as we say, that is, say whatever is on their heart and that comes from the silent waiting. Programmed meetings represent about 49% of the total world membership. And something like 40% of Friends worldwide belong to evangelical Friends churches, who emphasise bringing the Christian message to unbelievers and the authority of the Bible. But all Friends, from all these diverse traditions, we all find common ground in the belief of 'that of God in everyone' as George Fox called it. And there are subtle nuances. Unprogrammed worship doesn't necessarily equal liberal theology and Christocentric theology with programmed worship. There are many combinations, within Local Meetings and, I guess, within each one of us. There are Quakers who describe themselves as conservative, whose theology, worship and way of life remain much closer to that of early Friends in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. These Friends (mostly in the USA) represent 0.03% of the membership, but they feel that they are true to the original guiding principles that George Fox proclaimed in terms of relationship to Jesus Christ

and the Bible. There are others – and perhaps a growing number in the UK – who would call themselves ‘nontheists’. Friends of a more liberal persuasion would see it as important to try to make the world a better place, by comparison to Friends of the evangelical persuasion who might be more concerned with saving souls and bringing them into membership, so that understanding one another is not always an *easy* process – and, of course, Friends come from very different cultural backgrounds and traditions, which influence the expression of their faith and practice in ways we may find unfamiliar or uncomfortable. Yet we would all need to remind ourselves that we have not necessarily found all the answers – “Are you open to new light’, as we are asked in *Advices & Queries* 7, from whatever source it may come?”

## Fox the young seeker

Let’s go back to focus on George Fox. He was born in July 1624, the son of a Leicestershire weaver, in the strongly Puritan village of Drayton-in-the-Clay, now known as Fenny Drayton. George was the eldest of four children to Christopher Fox, a successful weaver, called “Righteous Christer” by his neighbours, and his wife, Mary. Christopher Fox was a churchwarden and became fairly wealthy, so when he died in the late 1650’s he was able to leave his son a substantial legacy. From his childhood George was seen as serious and religious. There’s no record of any formal schooling, but he certainly learned to read and write. “When I came to eleven years of age”, he said, “I knew pureness and righteousness; for, while I was a child, I was taught how to walk to be kept pure. The Lord taught me to be faithful, in all things, and to act faithfully two ways; viz., inwardly to God, and outwardly to man.” Known as an honest person, he later stated: “The Lord taught me to be faithful in all things...and to keep to Yea and Nay in all things.”



As he grew up, his relatives “thought to have made me a priest” but he was instead apprenticed to a local shoemaker to look after his sheep. This suited his reflective personality and need for quiet space to think and he became well known for being literally a good shepherd to the wool traders who had dealings with his master. At this time in his life a constant preoccupation for Fox was the desire for ‘simplicity’ in lifestyle, so avoiding all that he felt was unnecessary luxury, and this short time he spent out in the fields was important for the formation of this views. Toward the end of his life he wrote a letter for general circulation pointing out that in the Bible Abel, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses and David were all at some stage the keepers of sheep or cattle - so therefore a learned education should not be seen as a necessary qualification for ministry.

Already by the age of nineteen his views were becoming clarified. Conventional followers of religion he called (mere) ‘professors’, and he rather looked down on their behaviour, in particular the drinking of alcohol. So he writes that, in prayer one night after leaving two acquaintances at a drinking session, he heard an inner voice saying, “Thou seest how young people go together into vanity, and old people into the earth; thou must forsake all, young and old, keep out of all, and be as a stranger unto all.”

## “There is one ... that can speak to thy condition ... and this I knew experimentally”

Driven by his ‘inner voice’, as he put it, the young George Fox left Fenny Drayton in September 1643 and moved towards London - in a state of mental torment and confusion. And these *were* times of great turmoil nationally. The English Civil War had begun and troops were stationed in many of the towns through which he passed. He tells that in Barnet (then a town near London) he was torn by depression. He alternately shut himself in his room for days at a time or went out alone into the countryside. So, after almost a year, he decided to return home – and there he engaged the local Anglican Minister, Nathaniel Stephens, in long discussions on religious matters. Stephens, it’s said, considered Fox a gifted young man but the two disagreed on so many issues that he later called Fox mad and spoke against him.



Then, over the next few years Fox continued to travel around the country as his particular religious beliefs took shape. At times he actively sought the company of clergy, but he found no comfort from them as they seemed, he said, unable to help with the matters troubling him. For example, we hear that one (whom he met in Warwickshire) advised him to take tobacco - which Fox had already tried and coughed and spluttered over – and also to sing psalms! Another (in Coventry) just lost his temper when Fox accidentally stood on a flower in his garden! And then a third suggested bloodletting – so we can see how George Fox was going to be a bit unconvinced by the prevailing wisdom. He turned to the bible, and studied it assiduously. He looked to other so-called Dissenters around at that time, hoping to find among them a spiritual understanding he felt to be absent from the established church. But they sometimes had what he felt were funny ideas, one group, for example, maintaining that women did not have souls like men. “So as I had forsaken the priests, so I left the separate preachers also”, he writes, “and those esteemed the most experienced people; for I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition.”

But at this time his great turning point arrived.

“And ... when God doth work, who shall let (*i.e. prevent*) it? And this I knew experimentally.”

### The legacy of George Fox

It was the year 1647 when Fox began his public ministry. Out he went, into market-places, fields, addressing meetings of various kinds, and sometimes speaking in the parish church after the service – those ‘steeple-houses’. His preaching was felt to be powerful, and he began to attract a small following. It is not clear when the Society of Friends was actually formed as such, but certainly there was from this point a group of people who often travelled together. At first they called themselves ‘Children of the Light’, or ‘Friends of the Truth’, and later simply ‘Friends’ – as, of course, we still do. Initially Fox seems to have had no desire to found a new movement, but just to proclaim what he saw as the pure and genuine principles of Christianity in their original simplicity – though he did come to show himself to be a very able and effective pioneer of the movement that emerged.



By 1651 he had gathered other talented preachers around him and continued to roam the country despite a harsh reception from some listeners, who would whip and beat them to drive them away. Not all loud words though – for there's signs that the worship of Friends in the form of silent waiting punctuated by individuals speaking as the Spirit moved them was already well-established now.

This was a personally costly time for George Fox. He was imprisoned several times. In 1652 there was a key moment when he climbed Pendle Hill in Yorkshire where he had a vision of many souls coming to Christ. He then went to stay at Swarthmoor Hall the home of Thomas Fell, vice-chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and his wife, Margaret. Margaret became a Quaker and, although Thomas did not convert, his familiarity with the Friends proved influential when Fox was arrested for blasphemy in October. Fell was one of three presiding judges, and had the charges dismissed on a technicality.

In early 1655 he was arrested and taken to London under armed guard. Brought before the Protector, Oliver Cromwell, he assured him that he had no intention of taking up arms and then spoke with Cromwell for a whole morning about Friends advising Cromwell to listen to God's voice and obey it so that, as Fox left, Cromwell "with tears in his eyes said, 'Come again to my house; for if thou and I were but an hour of a day together, we should be nearer one to the other'; adding that he wished [Fox] no more ill than he did to his own soul." Later this episode was recalled as an example of 'speaking truth to power'.

The persecutions of these years hardened Fox's attitudes towards traditional religious and social practices. He often emphasized the Quaker rejection of the necessity of baptism by water, looking instead to an inward transformation rather than the performance of outward ritual. Then when a judge challenged him to remove his hat, Fox replied asking where in the Bible it said he should. Yet this confrontational period was a formative time for the Religious Society of Friends. During the Commonwealth Fox had hoped that the movement would become the major church in England. But with the restoration of the monarch this was clearly not to be. Yet King Charles listened to Fox. Some hundreds of Quakers were released. In 1661 Fox and eleven other Quakers issued a broadside proclaiming what became known among Friends in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the peace testimony – committing themselves to oppose all outward wars and strife as contrary to the will of God.

Thomas Fell died in 1658 and Fox married Margaret. She was herself very active in the movement, campaigning for equality and the acceptance of women as preachers. Shortly after the marriage, Margaret was imprisoned at Lancaster, George remaining in the south-east of England, but becoming so ill and depressed that for a time he lost his sight.

Later he recovered, travelling around the various American colonies and seeing the Quaker movement firmly established there.

Meanwhile, back in England, various tensions within the Quaker movement had to be worked out. Fox himself was later again imprisoned for refusing to swear oaths after being arrested. His mother died shortly after that and his own health began to suffer. But recuperating at Swarthmore he began dictating his journal.

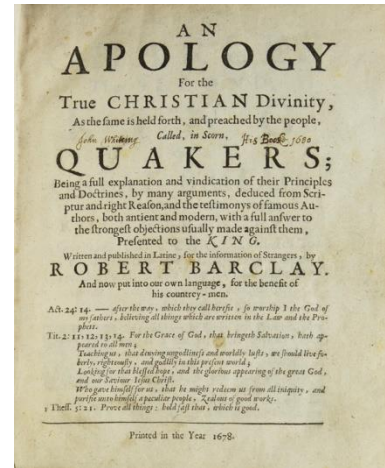
In the last years of his life Fox witnessed the Act of Toleration being passed in 1689 which finally put an end to the uniformity laws under which Quakers had been persecuted, so permitting us to assemble freely. Two days after preaching, at Gracechurch Street Meeting House in London, George Fox died on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1691.

“Be valiant for Truth upon the earth”, he tells us, “and tread upon deceit,” so to “keep on the mountain of holiness.”

## Roots

George Fox valued a living experience of God at work in all people and if anything rather distrusted theology. But the early Quaker movement produced one man who was able to articulate its theological roots. This was Robert Barclay.

Barclay was a Scot, born in 1648. A member of the Barclay Clan, his father Colonel David Barclay had played a part in the Civil War. His mother was the daughter of the 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet of Gordonstoun and Robert was the eldest of their five children. Robert was sent to finish his education at the Scots College in Paris where his uncle was Rector. He did so well there that his uncle offered to make Robert his heir if he would remain in France and join the Roman Catholic Church. Instead Robert followed the example of his father and in 1667 joined the recently formed Religious Society of Friends, then returning to Scotland. Soon afterwards he began to write in defence of the movement. He married another Quaker and they had seven children.



Barclay’s essential view was that there is an Inward Light of Christ that is accessible to all people – “which is the author of the Scriptures and will lead them into all truth”. His works have been continuously reprinted ever since their first publication and we revere him as the pioneering systematic theologian for the Quaker way, a man of warm feelings and considerable intellectual powers.

## Living God

“Worship is at the heart of Quaker experience. For God is met in the gathered meeting and through the Spirit leads us into ways of life and understandings of truth which we recognise as Quaker.”

“There is a living God at the centre of all, who is available to each of us as a present teacher at the very heart of our lives.” *Young Friends in Carolina, 1995*

“In the Religious Society of Friends we commit ourselves not to words but to a way.”

*Introduction to Quaker Faith & Practice 2013*

## Meeting for Worship

Worship is the source of our inspiration and the root of action in the world. It is also a shared experience that is probably different from what is normally associated with the word ‘worship’.

Rather than the hymns, set prayers and sermons we might expect in other churches, Quaker worship begins as people come together in silence. It is a stillness that helps to settle those who are there, to calm thoughts and open hearts; it is a way to find inspiration and insight and to communicate directly with what some call God or the Divine. Worship is a way to connect profoundly with the deepest reality and with each other.



Do you make a place in your daily life for reading, meditation, and waiting upon God in prayer, that you may know more of the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit? Do you remember the need to pray for others, holding them in the presence of God? *Quaker Faith & Practice 1.03*

## Mindfulness

What we call 'mindfulness' is now in our 21<sup>st</sup> century valued by many, with any number of books avidly read about it. We have a monthly mindfulness session here at St Nicolas' on a Monday evening and it's a large group, drawing people of all sorts and conditions.

Although the practice is rooted in the Buddhist tradition its scope is universal. Whether as a Christian or as a Muslim to pray you first have to begin to manage the perpetual distractedness of your mind. Just as human beings we all know that we live better when we can achieve a certain degree of self-possession.

The simple insights and ways to practice mindfulness are a wonderful resource, accessible to us all – and I find them to be well in tune with the Quaker way of experiencing the mystery of God as the spirit of all that is.

*The Mindful Quaker* Pendle Hill pamphlet 2006 sets this out: 'The Quaker belief of that of God in every person has long opened Friends to worship with other faiths. Prayer strives in part for inner concentration and self-reflection. Self-reflection and self-discipline are desirable assets in any religion, and recognising this commonality provides a meeting-ground. The Buddhism practice of *metta* or loving-kindness meditation, in which we extend friendship, goodwill, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity for ourselves and all living beings, touches very closely on ideas of Christian prayer, in which we cultivate receptivity and capacity for forgiveness, kindness and love for ourselves and others.'

In 'Quaker silent meeting for worship ... waiting with silent expectation on God, opening to the loving presence of God, which is always available, is similar to the creating of a spacious and receptive mind in meditation that is fertile ground for peace, equanimity, openness and balance'. Likewise, 'the Quaker peace testimony (which we'll be thinking about this afternoon) grounded partly in the conviction that there is that of God in each person, roughly equates with the Buddha's teaching on love ... that in this world hate never dispels hate. Only love dispels hate.'

'Knowing that the nature of all things is change, we accept the fragility and brevity of life, of this passing moment, cherishing it as a gift.'

In Anglican ordained ministry I got deeply into the rhythm of Morning and Evening Prayer, which now helps me to keep a gentle prayerful, mindful rhythm to each day. First thing in the morning when the world is quiet I might start by standing at a big window in the room where we spend most of our time at home, looking out onto the garden, maybe wondering at the stars or at the shapes of clouds going over. This can be a good time to consciously connect with my body, and become aware of the thoughts that are pre-occupying me – and, most importantly, together with the feelings that colour those body and mind states. I try to be just gently curious and accepting of how I am – by way of feeling myself to be at one with all that is. In Quaker terminology this is to stand in the light. Often I'll then sit and read a poem before going off to make breakfast - except on holiday when I like to start the day with a pre-breakfast walk. Nothing too strenuous, but taking in and savouring the environment – and that's best walking along the river where we're lucky enough to live, or even better, if away, then by the sea. Sitting down for breakfast, which I always look forward to, I deliberately

pause for a Quaker time of grace, just to eat mindfully, not gobbling it down and not forgetful of the hungry in the world, or of the great blessing of daily nourishment. All meals taste better that way!

My last bit of prayerful mindfulness, at least in theory, comes at bedtime. Lying in bed, ready to sleep, I just think back over the day and sense what three things I might be grateful for. Unfortunately I often realise the next morning that I fell asleep even before number one!

'Mindfulness brings our full awareness to ordinary, everyday activities. This practice can enliven and deepen our capacity to open to the Light within by stabilising our awareness and concentration, leading to clarity of mind.' *The Mindful Quaker*

## **No need for an instruction manual – just be present to the flow of life**

One of the great gifts that the Religious Society of Friends holds in trust for the whole of Christianity, I would say, is the insight that we don't have to be too self-consciously 'religious'. We just need to be real – as deeply real as possible. All the outwardness of religiosity can so easily become a substitute for that reality.

I've been very influenced by the work of a man called Don Cupitt – who's a very radical thinker about God and philosophy, and whose discoveries have turned his own Anglican priestly life inside out. He's often passed by now, but I find his wisdom a great inspiration – even though I rest in a Quaker openness 'to all that is', forever wondering at the mystery of God and trusting to unconditional love as the divine principle. Cupitt, by contrast, seems sadly to me to have become closed-down to any faith in God. Yet I find his approach speaks to my condition, as, for example, he once said in an interview on Australian radio: "For me mostly prayer becomes meditation. One way I pray is simply by attending to natural movements and trying to sense the forthcoming of the world in time. I watch the clouds move, I watch the plants move in the wind. I watch insects. I watch simple natural movements and try to become sensitive to time. I contemplate works of art a lot. I practice meditation." [March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2003 ABC's 'Compass' programme with Geraldine Doogue.]

Quakers carefully do not teach any form of 'meditation'. There are no methods or techniques to learn. We just need to be open – personally, but together – to the mystery whom some of us might call 'God', but which is the deepest truth for all and accessible to all.

For me, often the most 'real' form of prayer is what I'd call natural prayer. In a way it's difficult to explain, though it seems absolutely simple. It's just what I think Don Cupitt describes, trying to be sensitive to what *is*. So special times and places are not necessary. It's just *awareness* of the mystery, of the spirit of life, and staying with it for a moment or so, *dwelling in that* so that it somehow nurtures and deepens and can be a gathering up of all concerns and worries. And then making sure that those moments are allowed for in the course of each day, looked for and given full value.

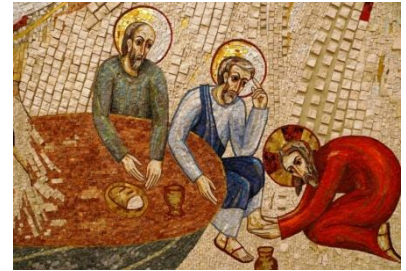


“All of these suggestions make it sound as if we are doing something, as if it all depends on us. While a few of these techniques may be helpful to some people, especially in their early years of attending Quaker meetings, most people eventually come to realise that, as we learn to relax our anxiety to do the right thing, and as we learn what it feels like just to be present, then technique becomes far less important than our desire to be fully present. For some experienced Friends ... they simply sit down, allow body and mind to be both relaxed and alert, close or relax their eyes; and they are soon there because they have been there so many times already, and because their desire to be there again is so great.”

Bill Taber 'Four Doors to Meeting for Worship'

## The Spirit of Christ

John Lampen asks 1985 *QF&P* 27.03 Can we settle the question, 'Is the Society of Friends Christian or not?' In the historical sense the answer is Yes: but that does not preclude the possibility that we may now be called to a new and wider perception of the Truth. We have the witness of the Society itself, as well as the example of Jesus, against turning yesterday's inspiration into today's dogma. Today's world-wide knowledge of people and their religions does present a challenge which our universalists are right to try to meet – just as our Christians are right to remind us that the insights of the past must not lightly be thrown away. It may be valuable to live for a while in the tension between the universal and the specific; and if so, there may be a special vocation here through which our Society (with its tradition of respect for the divine Seed in everyone) can minister to the church at large. Or it may be that a synthesis is possible, once we can agree on what is essential to being a Christian.



## The Journey of faith

Obviously it puzzles people that after a lifetime as an Anglican, and Anglican with a 'catholic' emphasis too – and as a 'priest' – that now I've become a Quaker. Why? 'tis a fair question! The best way I can put it is simply that's what I found I had become. Fowler's model of how faith often does develop for us through our lives helps me to make sense of this.

James Fowler was an American theologian who became Professor of Theology and Human Development at Emory University and then Director of the Centre for Research on Faith and he was himself a Minister in the United Methodist Church.

**Stage 0** – he calls "*Primal or Undifferentiated*" faith, and this is often from birth until about the age of two. Fowler refers to an early learning of the safety of our environment, i.e. warm, safe and secure vs. hurt, neglect and abuse. With good, consistent nurture we develop a sense of trust and safety about the universe and the divine. Conversely, negative experiences might cause us to develop a distrust both with the universe and the divine.

**Stage 1** – is that of "*Intuitive-Projective*" faith, from roughly something like three to seven. Now we might be learning about religion mainly through experiences, stories, images, and certain key people we come into contact with.

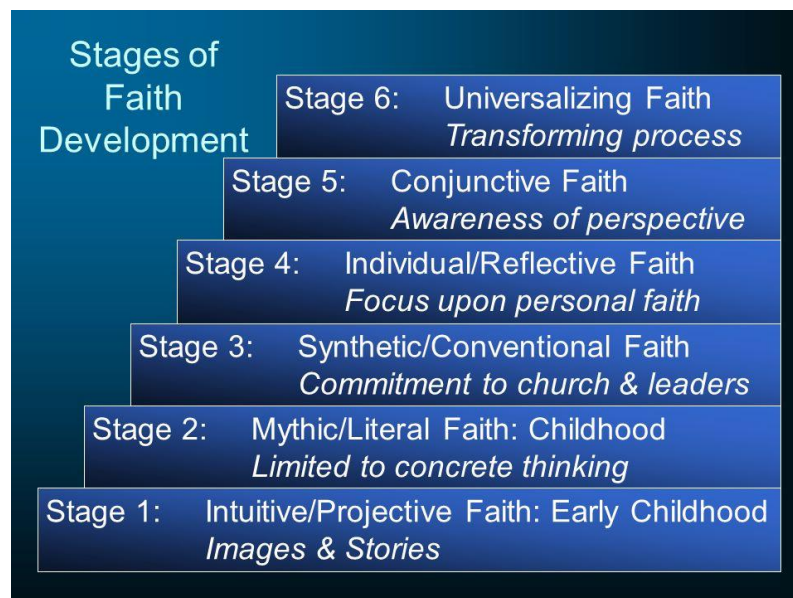
**Stage 2** – "*Mythic-Literal*" faith, schooldays, when we tend to be picturing God in human, anthropomorphic terms, but which we might later come to see as really metaphors and symbols not just to be taken literally.

**Stage 3** – is "*Synthetic-Conventional*" faith, from adolescence into adulthood) when we want to develop our own sense of personal identity. Conflicts with beliefs and the threat of inconsistencies have to be managed somehow.

**Stage 4** – is "*Individuative-Reflective*" faith, say from mid-twenties to late thirties, and often a time of some angst and struggle as we learn maybe to take personal responsibility for our beliefs and feelings. We might now start to have an openness to the complexity of faith, but this also increases the awareness of conflicts in one's belief.

**Stage 5** – is "*Conjunctive*" faith, otherwise sometimes known as the possible time for a mid-life crisis. Fowler talks about how we have to work out what is true through paradox, relating to a reality behind the symbols of inherited systems. We may come to a more subtle understanding of a multidimensional, interdependent truthfulness that cannot be explained by any particular statement.

**Stage 6** – Fowler identifies this possible phase of our lives as "*Universalizing*" faith, as learn to relate to others with more compassion developing a sense of the universal community of humankind, with love and justice recognised to be universal principles .



## Quaker by conviction

"We may feel that it is not so much that Quakerism has helped to fashion us, but that at some point we looked at what we already were, or aspired to become, and noticed that 'Quaker' appeared to fit it." E Nesbitt *Swarthmore Lecture*

So for myself I must say that I simply feel most completely at home in the Society of Friends. Yet I am mindful of my life-long commitment as an Anglican. There is, however, no conflict in this for me. I see the Quaker way as a commitment to unprogrammed worship (even programmed Quaker worship being open with some silence) and as taking an inclusive approach to belief (so as Christian-based but allowing for, say, either Muslims and non-theists to be members) while the Anglican way is of programmed (liturgical) worship and credal (definite, doctrinal) beliefs. I see the Quaker way as an implicit spirituality while the Anglican way is explicit. This understanding allows me to move from one to the other, and as a Quaker continuing in stipendiary Anglican ordained ministry.

So although I am now fully committed to a Quaker way of life myself I try to conscientiously maintain what's expected of me as an Anglican priest in a church with a catholic ethos like St

Nicolas'. But I do also trust that it is possible to gently share some of the riches of the Quaker way in our church life here. One modest way to do that is in including a five minute window of silence during each of our daily services. For me it feels like the formal outward words of the service itself – perhaps of Morning or Evening Prayer with the Eucharist, which is what we often have during the week – then becomes a beautiful frame for the silence, and which for me is where I feel the mystery of God. We say psalms in our Anglican worship, of course, and the great Quaker theologian, Robert Barclay, he said the psalms are: 'very sweet and refreshful when (they/ it) proceeds from a true sense of God's love in the heart, and arises from the divine influence of the Spirit'. *Prop 11.26*

The Eucharist itself, very much the heart of catholic worship, now expresses explicitly for me the implicit Quaker appreciation of the universal presence of God. Although for Quakers it is not thought necessary to celebrate the Eucharist as such, it may be seen to deepen a sense of the mystery of God in everything and in every person which is essential – thus, how every meal that we share can be truly and deeply eucharistic if we have a sharing, hospitable approach.

## **How to be church?**

from *'The Nature and Mission of the Church'*, 2009

- Quakers do not reject outward forms, but we do emphasise the pre-eminence of the inward truth over the outward order in which it is embodied and expressed.
- Quakers recognise the goodness of God in everything. "In our experience ... the inward reality of ... the sacramental life is the work, gift and call of the Holy Spirit and requires from us no outward rites, but only the response of a willing heart.'
- The Society of Friends certainly affirms that the Holy Spirit works through other churches, and through their ordained ministry. Preaching and sacraments may indeed witness to the activity of the Spirit but it is not dependent on them.

<p><b>Gospel Order is the guiding, challenging and testing of us concerning our faithfulness to God's truth, which depends on the dwelling in us of the same Spirit that the apostles received, and our obedience to its guidance.</b></p>
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