

**I am sometimes asked how I, as an Anglican priest, can now also be a Quaker.**

It seems to me that the Quaker way is an implicit form of spirituality while the Anglican is explicit. The Anglican way explicitly accepts definite Christian beliefs. These come from the Bible and are expressed in the Creeds. It values the use of human intelligence to think through these beliefs and relate them to life today. These beliefs are also expressed in worship, both set liturgies and more informally. The Quaker way has implicitly Christian roots, but is open to other ways of thinking and religious traditions. So it is consciously inclusive. It takes an intuitive approach, encouraging each person to experience ‘that of God’, as George Fox put it. Especially valued is meeting regularly together for worship, and this is simply a time of quiet waiting, people speaking only when they are moved to do so. Then the light may dawn on us, hopefulness in the darkness of threatening despair. So the Quaker way, I would say, is to have ‘faith in the world’, stressing the priorities of peace-making, equality and sustainable living.



In my own curious personal evolution I have been drawn over the years within Christianity to both Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, and also to the Buddhist tradition. Finally I have found spiritual stability and balance, nurturing and a deep joy, in the Quaker way. Yet with Quaker simplicity, and its stress also on the need for integrity, I hope and trust no less to keep faith with my lifelong commitment as an Anglican.

So my daily pattern of prayer is Anglican in format, but Quaker in spirit, letting the psalms, readings and prayers of Morning and Evening Prayer frame two times of silence. ‘Holy Communion’ is exactly what we may experience in a Quaker Meeting for Worship, just as more explicitly in the outwardness of the Mass. Listening is at the heart of the Quaker way. Good listening has come to seem so important. Listening for ‘God’ is my prayer. Listening to myself is what I need. Just listening to others can be so good, and is what I feel called to now, training for professional qualification as a counsellor.

It reassures me to feel that I can move from an explicit form of spirituality to an implicit without any sense of conflict – and back from the implicit to the explicit equally freely. For now, I have my role as the Incumbent at St Nicolas', representing its catholic ethos and doing all I can to further its development, until retirement in the summer of 2020. At the same time I am fully committed as a member of Guildford Quaker Meeting, and I do my best to be actively involved. I am able to attend the monthly weekday Meeting for Worship with business meetings and other events. The time before retirement feels like my opportunity to be more deeply nurtured according to these two spiritual ways, and then in the years to come to live, as Quakers say, adventurously, as I feel prompted!

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