



Quakers: A Quick Guide

Carl Abbott



FCNL
Education Fund



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A QUICK GUIDE

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Table of Contents

Preface	i
Foreword	iii
The Diversity of Quaker Beliefs	1
Quaker Worship	5
Quaker Decision-making	11
How Quakers Organize Themselves	17
Quaker Beliefs: The SPICES Rack	23
Quaker Vocabulary: A Decoder.....	29
Some Common Questions	35
About Carl Abbott.....	41

Preface: A Journey to the World We Seek



I wish I had Carl Abbott’s “Quakers: A Quick Guide” to help me as I figured out Quaker faith and practice when I first encountered Quakerism. Participating in Friends’ meetings and understanding how Friends seek to lead their lives centered in listening to Spirit, and practicing peace and justice convinced me this is a faith and practice I want.

Convincing people to become Quakers is, of course, not the purpose of this book. As the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) engages more and more young people and people of other faiths or of no particular faith, we realized the need for an overview of the faith and practice that undergirds the work of the FCNL.

There is no description here of the process people undertake to become a convinced Quaker. Each of us must find our own spiritual path to live a life with integrity, a life grounded in love. I grew up as a Lutheran, spiritually formed by the fierce love that Jesus’ life exemplified. In the 1980s, I began attending Quaker meetings, drawn by the peace testimony, the gathered silence of worship, and the integrity of Friends.

It was the public theology of Friends “to see what love might do” that helped me understand that I could be both politically engaged and spiritually grounded. And that is what we offer at FCNL: a way to be politically engaged—to work for peace, justice and an earth restored—that springs from compassion and hope.

We welcome seekers at FCNL—those who share the vision for the world we seek and those who are curious about Quakers and how faith leads to action. Our work together will help build the beloved community.

Diane R. Randall
General Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation

Foreword: A Handy Way

For more than 75 years, the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) has built a powerful reputation as a voice for international peacemaking and for economic and social justice. As a result, it attracts activists who want to further its goals, whether as employees in Washington, D.C., or as volunteers around the country. They come with widely different understandings of the Quaker beliefs and values that are the foundation of FCNL's work. Some have grown up in Quaker churches and meetings, while others don't know much more than the face on the cereal carton.

In the spring of 2020, my wife and I had the privilege of volunteering to assist FCNL's work as "Friends in Washington." In fact, we served as "Friends (not) in Washington" because of the global COVID-19 pandemic, but we were still able to work from a distance.



Carl Abbott and Margery Post Abbott. Photo by Kate Holt/FCNL

One of my contributions is this short guide to Quaker belief and practice. It is not a substitute for the many books about Quakerism (my wife and I are just finishing our own addition to that list!). It is meant to be a handy way for someone to learn some Quaker basics and get an idea of the topics that they'd like to learn more about.

The Religious Society of Friends is small but diverse, and every member and attender who participates understands it slightly differently. This publication represents the understanding of someone who belongs to the theologically liberal, unprogrammed tradition ("unprogrammed" is an example of some terminology that is explained here). At the same time, I recognize the deeply Christian origins of the Quaker movement. Readers will notice several references to the biblical passages that moved early Quakers and still inspire Friends today.

This "quick guide" is aimed first at the FCNL community of staff and volunteers. We also hope that it may also be useful for newcomers at Quaker meetings and churches and stimulate them to delve further into the world of Quaker faith, practice, and social action.

Carl Abbott
Portland, Oregon
July 2020

1 » The Diversity of Quaker Beliefs

As with many faiths, Quakerism has branched like a tree. At the core are a set of beliefs, like the presence of the divine in individuals (“that of God”). Quakerism has diversified as it has grown. These branches may look distinct, but they are connected. Today, there are some substantial differences in belief and practice in the Religious Society of Friends. Some of these differences arose in the religious ferment of the 19th century United States. Others stem from Quaker missionary work in Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. Still other differences are the result of evolving practices within contemporary meetings and churches.

No generalization holds for long when talking about Quakers, but here are some of the important patterns.

The Quaker Community: Meetings and Churches

Some groups of Quakers call themselves meetings and some use the term church. *Meeting* was the term used among early Quakers in England, who brought it to Pennsylvania and the other U.S. colonies. As members of the Society of Friends moved westward in the United States in the 19th century, they gradually absorbed some of the practices and theology of their neighbors.

Some began employing paid pastors and incorporating elements of Methodist worship into their Sunday services. Some of these congregations called themselves *churches* as a more accurate and understandable descriptor.

In the United States today, Friends meetings are found in all parts of the country, while the numerous Friends churches are predominantly found in the Midwest and West. Both churches and meetings are vital parts of the larger Quaker community.

The Unprogrammed Potpourri

Unprogrammed meetings seek to strike a careful theological balance between Quakerism's Christian roots and its attractiveness for many unchurched seekers. Some members and attenders come to Quakerism after negative experiences with Christian churches.

These participants may be sensitive or even hostile to messages that draw on the Bible or even the most liberal Christian theology. Some may consider themselves to be Jewish and Quaker, Buddhist and Quaker, or Muslim and Quaker. Other Quakers are deeply grounded in their faith in Jesus, particularly his teachings.

A few may consider themselves non-theists and are uncomfortable with references to God. Many are drawn to Quaker meetings for their peace testimony and social activism, and some find meeting for worship a distraction from what they think should be the real business of the meeting.

In contemporary unprogrammed meetings, anyone is believed to have the capacity to deliver a message of spiritual depth and power. Early Friends sometimes said that they eliminated the distinction between priest and congregation by abolishing the clergy and recognizing that everyone is a minister.

Unprogrammed meetings try to establish a climate in which a wide spectrum of beliefs and messages are accepted in the spirit in which they are offered. Some Friends think of themselves as *listening in tongues* (an analogy to the *speaking in tongues* described in Acts 2:4). To listen in tongues is to inwardly translate messages into language and concepts that speak to oneself, sometimes with unexpected results.

Programmed Friends Worship

Visitors who are familiar with a mainstream Protestant church will find much that is familiar about Sunday morning at a Friends Church. Programmed Friends in the United States may use a printed order of service for their worship and designate individuals to give readings, share music or messages, or take on other roles—hence *programmed* as differentiated from *unprogrammed* worship. The balance of programmed worship and unprogrammed open worship varies widely from church to church. If present, the pastor will usually have a prepared sermon while remaining open to setting it aside if the Spirit is moving in unexpected ways.

Understanding the differences and commonalities in worship styles among programmed and unprogrammed Friends is crucial for FCNL's approach to advocacy with its emphasis on relationship building. The organization engages Quakers from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences of worship. It is a strength that FCNL's ministry and work speak to so many Friends, although it does not speak for all Quakers in the United States.

Quakers Around the World

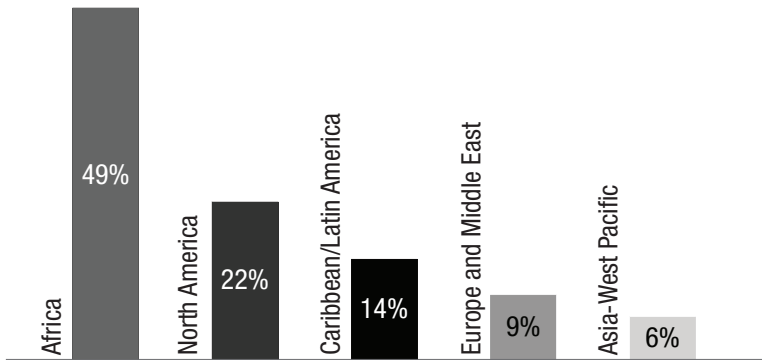
According to 2017 data from the Friends World Committee on Consultation, Quakers who worship in unprogrammed meetings are a minority among the 400,000 Quakers worldwide. Kenya (120,000) counts more Quakers than the United States (85,000), and Bolivia (30,000) counts more than Britain (20,000). Many Quakers in Latin America and Africa share an evangelical theology and worship style with similarities to Friends churches in the middle and western United States.

Attendance at a Friends church in Guatemala or Kenya is quite different from an unprogrammed Friends meeting in the United States or Britain. Quaker missionaries from evangelical Friends churches in the early 20th century often brought with them a style of church service that follows an order of worship common to non-liturgical Protestant denominations like Methodists and Baptists with hymn singing, prayers, and messages from a paid pastor or lay minister.

The informal messages and formal preaching in Friends churches in Africa and Latin America will be Christian. The exuberant Sunday service is likely to last much longer than an hour, and quite possibly be more fun.

QUAKERS AROUND THE WORLD

Source: Friends World Committee for Consultation (2017)



Selected Resources:

- For more about Quakers worldwide, visit Friends World Committee for Consultation at www.fwcc.world
- Cherice Bock, “What Is a Friends Church?” (2017; Philadelphia: Quaker Speak). www.quakerspeak.com/what-is-a-friends-church/
- Naveed Moed, “Why I Am a Quaker and a Muslim,” (2016; Philadelphia: Quaker Speak). www.quakerspeak.com/why-i-am-a-quaker-and-a-muslim/

2 » Quaker Worship

Isaac Pennington (1616-79) was one of the earliest Quakers, a contemporary of early Friends like George Fox (1624-91) and Margaret Fell (1614-1702). This passage, an often cited description of Quaker worship, is as relevant today as it was in the 1661:

“So then, there is the sweet communion ... the sweet joy and refreshment in the Lord our righteousness, who causeth righteousness to drop down from heaven, and truth to spring up out of the earth

“Give over thine own willing, give over thy own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything and sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in thee and be in thee and breathe in thee and act in thee; and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of Life”

The first Quakers in the 1650s and 1660s developed a style of worship based on spontaneous ministry and preaching rather than ritual and liturgy. As the Society of Friends grew and evolved, different branches have continued and incorporated this tradition in different ways.

Many Quakers describe their communal gatherings for worship as *silent meetings* to distinguish them from services that involve music, readings, sermons, and rituals like communion. While some Quaker worship is comparatively quiet, the shorthand of *silent* worship is misleading, and some Quaker meetings have very little silence at all.

A better term for this form of worship is *unprogrammed*, meaning that there is no predetermined sequence of actions. Instead, what

happens during a meeting for worship emerges spontaneously. Quakers gather quietly in *expectant waiting* or *stillness*, trying to turn away from their own thoughts and hoping to open themselves to the experience of the divine.

Some Quaker meetings worship entirely in this unprogrammed manner, while others incorporate times of silent expectant waiting into a service based on programmed elements such as Bible readings, music, and a prepared message by the pastor or other Friends.

In the 1600s, early Friends were clear that a meeting began in silence, which Robert Barclay describes as “watching in holy dependence on the Lord and meeting not only outwardly in one place, but inwardly in the one Spirit.” This inward focus sometimes leads Friends to share a message or prayer aloud with the group, but these words are understood to be inspired by a Spirit beyond oneself. This is not God capturing a person’s tongue and turning them into an oracle, but their own words as shaped and motivated by divine presence.

What Goes on in Unprogrammed Worship?

When Friends enter worship, they may think of the process as *settling* or *centering*. If someone says, “Let’s settle” to a Quaker group, they are saying settle into a worshipful state of mind (not “Settle down, you rowdy people!”).

To center is to try to turn one’s mind away from everyday concerns, like the coming work week, and focus on openness to someone larger than oneself. It is easier said than done, as Quakers have known since the 17th century.

People with an experience of Buddhism often find unprogrammed meetings attractive because of the apparent similarity with group

contemplation. The intent of a meeting for worship, however, is quite different from individual meditation.

It is a community or corporate activity in which silent waiting is itself a ministry to the group. The purpose of waiting in worship is not to empty one's mind, but to open it to a larger presence that may lead to a sense of wholeness with the group and sometimes to spoken ministry.

Some Friends prepare for worship by meditating or reading, but in unprogrammed traditions Friends try not to enter worship with the assumption they have a message to share. When a person feels the impulse to speak, they ask themselves these kinds of questions:

- Are these simply my own thoughts that are best saved for a conversation outside of worship? No matter how worked up you are about the issues of the day, meeting for worship is rarely the time to rehash the Sunday *Washington Post* or discuss the details of FCNL legislative priorities.
- If the words come from outside myself, is the message meant for me alone?
- If it is a message meant for the group, is *now* the time when it must be shared?
- If I am clear it is for everyone, then rise to speak.

Committees in Quaker meetings and organizations may start and/or end with a moment of silence or centering. This is ideally a moment of worship for stilling the mind and centering on the tasks with a sense that a divine spirit may also be at work. It may seem perfunctory when folks are eager to get on with the business at hand, but it can be a powerful tool to make the meeting more open and productive. The Executive Committee of FCNL has been known to begin with 30 or 45 minutes of worship before tackling a big issue.

Listening to the Spirit

The God of the Bible speaks in many voices—to Job out of a whirlwind, to Moses from a burning bush, to Elijah with a still, small voice. Most Friends are more likely to hear the still, small voice than the whirlwind, but in worship we open ourselves to all possibilities.

People may share messages inspired by Bible passages or by Sufi poetry; they might comment on the problems of the world and share stories of personal pain and struggles as well as more clearly “religious” or spiritual messages. An hour may pass with no spoken messages, a handful, or several. When ministry after ministry follows in quick succession, Quakers may comment on the *popcorn meeting* because so many people are popping up to speak (the spiritual popcorn can sometimes be quite nourishing).

In any Friends meeting or church, some individuals have a gift of ministry and others never speak. Rufus Jones (1863-1948), perhaps the most influential U.S. Quaker theologian, taught at Haverford College from 1893 to 1934. Students reportedly took wagers on the highly predictable moment when he would rise to speak at campus meeting for worship. Historically, Friends have recognized those with special gifts with a formal acknowledgement or *recording*. Friends churches still designate *recorded ministers*, who may not necessary be paid church pastors. Unprogrammed meetings have less formal ways to offer the same recognition.

Protocols and Practicalities

Unprogrammed Quaker worship may not follow a set sequence of events, but participants usually have expectations about what will happen. Here are some of the things that are common across many unprogrammed meetings, based on experience at dozens of meetings in the United States, England, and Australia.

- The largest gathering for worship is held on Sunday morning. It is usually a two-hour process—arrival, meeting for worship, introductions, announcements, and socializing.
- People arrive, gab a bit, and move quietly into the meeting room. Latecomers may wait to enter at a specific time or filter in unobtrusively as they arrive.
- Newer meetinghouses tend to have seating arranged in a circle or square, depending on the shape of the room. Older meetinghouses may have fixed benches, often arranged in three sets that form an inward facing T or U.
- Children’s programming tends to occur at the same time as worship, but children typically join the main worship for some time, either at the beginning or end.

A meeting for worship is usually scheduled for an hour, but it may go longer if there is a lot of vocal ministry. A designated person will signal the end of meeting by greeting their neighbors. Everyone follows suit, and conversational buzz stills for announcements and an opportunity for visitors to introduce themselves (“I’m Joe, I was just curious,” “I’m Jane from Big Older Meeting, glad to be here,” “Good morning, I’m Diane from FCNL, here to lead a workshop this afternoon”).

Quakers talk about *rise of meeting* to refer both to the end of the expectant silence and to the physical rising after announcements are over.

- Folks then drift to a social hall where there are refreshments (or perhaps a shared meal). They chat, catch up on committee business, and engage with visitors.
- Social time may be followed by committee meetings, speakers, or workshops for those who are interested.

Individual and Community

Unprogrammed Quaker worship is simultaneously individual and communal. Sitting in expectant silence is intensely personal, but depth comes from the presence of others. The whole experience is greater than the sum of its individual parts. Sometimes a message shared by one person powerfully speaks to another's challenges or questions. When Friends talk about a *gathered meeting*, they are referring to the powerful sense that the Divine Spirit is present and accessible to everyone in the room. There is both individual openness to God and a practice of community.

Selected Resources:

- Kenyatta James, Amy Kietzman, et.al., "Frequently Asked Questions about Meeting for Worship," (2018; Philadelphia: Quaker Speak). www.quakerspeak.com/frequently-asked-questions-about-quaker-meeting-for-worship
- Lloyd Lee Wilson, "Why Do Quakers Worship in Silence?" (2018; Philadelphia: Quaker Speak). www.quakerspeak.com/why-do-quakers-worship-in-silence



Quaker meetings and churches are unique in their simple design, like Sidwell Friends School Meetinghouse, pictured. Photo by Matthew Paul D'Agostino.

3 » Quaker Decision-making

Quakers have developed a distinctive approach to group decisions. It can look slow to someone accustomed to quick executive action, and even Friends sometimes wonder how they manage to get things done. Nevertheless, Quaker decision-making at its best is a powerful Spirit-led process in which a community discerns way forward that can be more than a simple summation of individual preferences.

Quaker meetings and churches in North America typically meet monthly to conduct the business of the community. This business occurs as part of a meeting for worship; therefore, the gathering is formally called a *meeting for worship with concern for business*, or shortened to *meeting for business*.

A first-time visitor to a meeting for business may think that they are in the familiar territory of a nonprofit board or membership meeting. The group may number dozens or hundreds and will work from an agenda that includes committee reports on budgets, property, maintenance, and social service projects. Designated people will be taking notes and managing the discussion. Participants make comments and sometimes raise competing positions.

But the visitor will also notice that something—several things—are missing. Decisions are not made by consensus. Nobody seconds a motion because nobody makes a motion to start discussion. Decisions happen without a count of ayes and nays but still with clear agreement from the group. Reliance on *Robert's Rules of Order* is quite out of order.

The “Sense of the Meeting”

The Quaker decision-making process is distinctive. It is neither a consensus nor a majority rule. Friends approach important

questions in the expectation that shared worshipful seeking will enable the group to reach a divinely guided understanding that is often called the *sense of the meeting*. It is grounded in spiritual practice and results in the group uniting on the way forward.

Sense of the meeting ideally reflects unanimous understanding by all present as to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Arriving at that understanding can take weeks, months, or even years in the case of substantive, controversial decisions.

The process may involve informational sessions and open discussions or *threshing sessions* where multiple voices are heard, but with no attempt to reach a decision. Only then is the community ready to decide important questions like whether to remodel the current building or look for new property, how to deal with a large and unexpected financial windfall, or how to welcome people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

Sometimes the decision coalesces unexpectedly, as if a kaleidoscope has been twirled and the pieces have fallen into a clear pattern. In some cases, an individual who continues to disagree with a decision may ask to be formally noted as *standing aside* from the decision—in effect abstaining publicly. If someone continues to look through the kaleidoscope and is unable to see the pattern, the group may reluctantly move ahead anyway—unity does not always require unanimity.

“Business meetings reflect the faith that the primary authority is that of God; as the God whose will is sought; as Christ who presides; and as the Holy Spirit who inspires and empowers. Thus the task of the meeting is to listen in worship under that authority, to discern the right way forward on any piece of business.” – Janet Scott, Homerton College, Cambridge University

Who Is this Person Called a “Clerk”?

A clerk might at first seem like a presiding officer or chairperson. However, the term *clerk* reflects a particular Quaker understanding that decisions come through the assembled group. The clerk’s job is to articulate and test the group’s sense of the meeting.

The clerk is the servant of the meeting or church. As with similar roles in other organizations, the clerk sets agendas for business meetings and manages discussions. The clerk’s essential task, however, is to pay attention to emerging agreement and to help crystalize the discussion.

Another designated person, known as a *recording clerk*, assists and helps to put emerging agreement into words. The clerk is not a gavel-wielding chairperson, but a listener who makes sure that all ideas and responses are heard and that no few individuals dominate.

As a meeting progresses, the clerk may try to articulate what seems to be the common ground or agreement and let the gathering test that against their own sense. A clerk who wants to contribute directly to a discussion literally *stands aside* by stepping away from the clerking table to speak as an individual.

After some trial and error, the clerking team crafts a minute, or summary statement with which the group concurs. Important decisions are often considered at one meeting and held over to the next, a process sometimes called *seasoning*, an analogy to newly cut wood that is seasoned for a time before it is ready for the fireplace or the fine piece of furniture.

Much of Quaker work—whether in a meeting or church—happens in committees. Committees are not only a convenient way to delegate tasks; they also appeal to Quakers because they place responsibility and authority for the care of the group on its individual members.

Many Quaker organizations have the word *Committee* in their title—including the Friends Committee for National Legislation (FCNL), the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), and Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC). The use of the word affirms the bubble-up process of Quaker decision-making that values the potential contributions of all participants.

Quaker Process and FCNL

FCNL is a Quaker organization the governing decisions of which are made in the tradition of the Religious Society of Friends. As in an individual meeting or church, authority in FCNL comes from *below*. FCNL's General Committee, currently at 180 members, represent various Quaker bodies in the United States and Friends at large. It meets annually to conduct the business of FCNL, in a business process that follows Quaker practice.

A smaller Executive Committee acts for the General Committee in between annual gatherings. The Executive Committee draws its membership from clerks of standing committees (like Finance or Policy) or members at large. The breadth of the General Committee assures that FCNL reflects and responds to the concerns of Quakers nationwide.

When the General Committee meets, the clerk facilitates decision-making, seeking a sense of the gathered group on key decisions. FCNL regularly seeks input from Friends at the local level by asking Quaker meetings and churches to share their sense of the broad positions FCNL should take and the issues it should prioritize in its lobbying.

FCNL's policy statement and its legislative priorities arise from the concerns of Friends across the United States. The way FCNL consults with many Quaker meetings and churches makes it unique among faith groups.

These structures show how FCNL works for a broad community of Quakers in the United States, serving them in the same way that a meeting's clerk is servant of the meeting. Energy and *authority* ultimately come from the community and guide staff and volunteers as they labor day to day to carry out the organization's work.

Selected Resources:

- Eden Grace, "How Quakers Make Decisions," (2014; Philadelphia: Quaker Speak). www.quakerspeak.com/quaker-decision-making-consensus/
- Barry Morley, "Beyond Consensus: Salvaging the Sense of the Meeting," Pendle Hill Pamphlet #307, (1993, Wallingford, PA).

THE WORLD WE SEEK

We seek a world
free of war and the threat of war.

We seek a society
with equity and justice for all.

We seek a community
where every person's potential may be fulfilled.

We seek an earth restored.

4 » How Quakers Organize Themselves

Quakers may value simplicity, but they can certainly make things confusing to newcomers. Perhaps the most common baffler is the term *monthly meeting* for the worshipping congregation. Someone who passes a building with a tasteful sign for “River City Monthly Meeting” but then reads “worship every Sunday 10 a.m.” has a right to be puzzled. Only when they call the phone number and ask the right question will they learn that *monthly* refers to a regular once-a-month meeting to conduct business. By extension, *quarterly meetings* are groups of local meetings whose members get together every three months. *Yearly meetings* are still more inclusive groupings that hold a larger regional gathering—you guessed it—once a year for fellowship and organizational business.

The Local Congregation

The Society of Friends has historically emphasized the primacy of the local worshipping community as the source of religious experience and as the decision-making body controlling its own membership and affairs. On the spectrum of church governance, Quakers fall on the congregational side with Baptists and Disciples of Christ rather than with hierarchical churches such as Anglicans. The key building block is the community of Quakers who convene once a month to transact organizational business.

Typically, people formally affiliate with Quakerism by becoming a member of a monthly meeting or church. There is also growing recognition that some people with a commitment to the Religious Society of Friends may have a stronger relationship with a regional or national Quaker organization. There is an active conversation among Friends about how to address formal affiliation with bodies other than monthly meetings or churches.

A monthly meeting may be an umbrella for one or more *worship groups*, smaller clusters of Quakers and seekers who meet separately and perhaps at a distance from the main meeting. *Preparative meetings* are newly formed groups that are being mentored toward independent status (the term has a different meaning in Britain). A large city may have several monthly meetings serving different parts of the city, each developing its distinct character.

Regional Groupings

Yearly Meetings are voluntary associations of individual meetings. As Australians put it, “the term yearly meeting is used by Quakers around the world to refer to a group of Quaker meetings which come together on an annual basis for business and spiritual purposes.” Because there is no overarching authoritative body for Quakers, yearly meetings constitute themselves and traditionally recognize each other by the exchange of annual epistles or summary statements about their activities.

Yearly meetings in the United States embrace meetings and/or churches in a distinct region. The Baltimore Yearly Meeting, for example, covers the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and western Pennsylvania. A geographic region may have multiple yearly meetings for different flavors of Quakers. For example, the North Pacific Yearly Meeting brings together unprogrammed meetings in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana; the Northwest Yearly Meeting does the same for many evangelical Friends churches in the same area; and the Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends is a group of more theologically open, Christ-centered Friends churches.

The United States in 2020 had 32 yearly meetings and several regional groupings calling themselves a conference, association, or fellowship but having similar functions.

A touchy point about Quaker governance involves the authority of yearly meetings. Some yearly meetings are loose federations of local meetings that offer fellowship, resources, and the opportunity to take joint positions on important issues through the adoption of *minutes* or statements of policy and belief.

Other yearly meetings, especially among evangelical Friends in the United States, are more tightly structured with an expectation that individual churches will follow central direction and adhere to doctrine and policy adopted by the yearly meeting. The leaders in such yearly meetings may claim the prerogative to determine how the Bible is interpreted and how biblical authority is implemented.

In the 2010s, that tension led to schisms over issues of gender and sexuality. The North Carolina, Indiana, and Northwest Yearly Meetings divided over issues of inclusion and the authority of individual meetings to define themselves as welcoming congregations.

This resulted in the more inclusive meetings and churches organizing as new bodies—the North Carolina Fellowship of Friends, the New Association of Friends in the Midwest, and the Sierra-Cascade Yearly Meeting of Friends in the Pacific Northwest.

National Associations

The pattern of Quaker organizations coalescing from the bottom up continues at the national level. Several umbrella organizations bring together Quakers with similar styles of worship or approach to their faith. They include

- **Friends General Conference (FGC).** Philadelphia-based FGC is an umbrella for most meetings in the eastern third of the United States and for other unprogrammed meetings across the country. It was established in 1900.

- **Friends United Meeting (FUM).** Founded in 1963 but evolving from a much older organization, FUM is based in Richmond, Indiana. It is strongest in the Midwest but has affiliates in both East Africa and across the United States. A few yearly meetings are affiliated with both FGC and FUM. FUM includes both unprogrammed Quaker meetings and programmed Friends churches.
- **Evangelical Friends Church International (EFCI).** This group of Quakers is found mostly in the western half of the United States, Latin America, and the Great Lakes region of Central Africa. They came together as EFCI in 1989, again evolving from an earlier organization. While there are important variations from congregation to congregation, EFCI churches tend to be more explicitly Christian than other Quaker groups. They tend to be more theologically conservative than FUM and FGC meetings and churches.

Two specialized organizations also claim to speak broadly for American Quakers—the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL).

Together with the British Friends Service Council, AFSC was awarded the 1947 Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of all Quakers for its relief work during World War II. Established in 1917, AFSC has a long track record of operating direct social change programs in the United States and the world.

It has played important roles in working against war and economic exploitation and advancing the rights of Native Americans, African Americans, and immigrants.

The Friends Committee on National Legislation, established in 1943 in Richmond, Indiana, seeks to influence the U.S. Congress and administration. Together with its nationwide network of advocates,

it has played a critical role in the passage of the Civil Rights Act, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act, and in establishing the Peace Corps.

A Global Voice

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) is a worldwide forum for cooperation and communication among Friends. Its head office is in London, with offices for the regional Africa Section in Nairobi, the Asia-West Pacific Section in Canberra, and the Section of the Americas in Philadelphia.

As the name implies, it facilitates communication among different branches of Quakers and holds periodic gatherings at different sites around the world. Among the important work of the Philadelphia office is to nurture connections between English-speaking Quakers in the United States, and Spanish-speaking Quakers in the United States, Central America, and South America.

By *representing* the very small Society of Friends on the World Council of Churches, the executive secretary at the London office sometimes gets to hobnob with folks like the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope as their nearest Quaker equivalent.

Friends frequently draw on and participate in the work of several Quaker publications and retreat centers. *Friends Journal* is a monthly magazine that speaks in particular to unprogrammed Quakers. *Quaker Life* is published by Friends United Meeting. *Western Friend* is the publication of Quakers in the Pacific, North Pacific, and Intermountain Yearly Meetings. Pendle Hill in suburban Philadelphia is the most prominent of several Quaker study and retreat centers. Woolman Hill in Massachusetts is another East Coast retreat center. Ben Lomond Quaker Center is on the West Coast.

Selected Resources:

- American Friends Service Committee, www.afsc.org
- Ben Lomond Center, www.quakercenter.org
- Friends Committee on National Legislation, www.fcnl.org
- Friends Journal, www.friendsjournal.org
- Friends World Committee for Consultation, www.fwcc.world
- Friends World Committee for Consultation – Americas Section, www.fwccamericas.org
- Pendle Hill, www.pendlehill.org
- Quaker Hill, www.qhcc.org
- Quaker Life, www.friendsunitedmeeting.org/resources/quaker-life
- Western Friend, www.westernfriend.org
- Woolman Hill, www.woolmanhill.org/



Young advocates gather annually to learn lobbying during FCNL's Spring Lobby Weekend. Photo credit: FCNL

5 » Quaker Beliefs: The SPICES Rack

For many Quakers, SPICES tops the list of their favorite acronyms. It stands for **S**implicity, **P**eace, **I**ntegrity, **C**ommunity, **E**quality, and **S**tewardship.

It's a convenient reply for liberal Friends when they are asked "What do Quakers believe?" It focuses on individual behavior and the public expression of inner convictions. SPICES is about ways that Quakers walk their talk. It also skims over the inner spiritual life and sidesteps the sometimes inconvenient question of Quakerism's Christian roots.

SPICES is an Americanism, coined in the 1950s by Quaker educator Howard Brinton. George Fox, John Woolman, and Lucretia Mott would all be quite baffled if a time traveler from the 21st century arrived in their meeting house and engaged them in a conversation peppered with SPICES, although they would have understood the concepts it summarizes. In recent decades the acronym has become hard to avoid in unprogrammed meetings.

"How to live in the world" is central to Friends' faith. They often use the term *testimonies* to refer to the ways that their public lives bear witness to their inner convictions. Early Quakers would have seen their testimonies as both political statements, positioning themselves within the turmoil of 17th century England, and as expressions of their faith. Evangelical Friends continue to understand testimonies as evidence of the work of Christ in their hearts. Liberal Friends are likely to say the same thing in less religious language.

Three of the SPICES—simplicity, community, and equality—speak directly to the ways in which virtually all Quakers and Quaker organizations try to live their lives and conduct their business.

The other three—peace, equality, and stewardship—sound very much like FCNL’s mission statement, sometimes called the *We Seek* for its naming of the world it seeks to bring into being through its advocacy.

Simplicity

Quakers like physical light as well as spiritual Light. And they like it plain and simple, unfiltered by stained glass. The spacious remodeled meeting room in Friends House, London, centers under a high skylight.

Artist James Turrell has designed *light spaces* for the Live Oak Meeting in Houston and the Chestnut Hill Meeting in Philadelphia that bathe the meeting rooms in light from above. At FCNL, the rooftop scoops bring light to the center of its green offices. These spaces are simple but not austere.

Quakers value plainness and simplicity to avoid being distracted by things of the world. In early days that included frivolous art and music as well as fancy clothes, houses, and furniture. Modern Quakers are more relaxed.

Peace

During World War II, Friends established FCNL (in 1943) to support conscientious objectors, promote war relief work, and lay the groundwork for a peaceful postwar future. Its sister organization, the American Friends Service Committee, had been founded to provide service opportunities for conscientious objectors to World War I.

When Quakers in 1661 told King Charles II that “we utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fighting with outward weapons,” they were disclaiming any involvement in the violence that marked 17th century English politics.

Over the centuries, the testimony for peace has grown to encompass both support for individuals who are conscientiously opposed to participation in war and active efforts to reduce national dependence on military solutions, remove the causes of war, and build institutions for a peaceful world.

The peace testimony resonates with Friends around the world. American Quakers working through FCNL played a crucial role in securing the 1982 International Law of the Sea treaty, an agreement governing the world's maritime environment.

Quaker Marian Hobbs served as the minister for disarmament and arms control for Aotearoa/New Zealand; South African Quaker Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge unexpectedly found herself in the role of that country's deputy defense minister and shifted its approach to international peacekeeping from policing to community reconstruction.

Ordinary Quakers in Rwanda and Burundi have led reconciliation initiatives following genocidal civil strife. Ordinary Americans work tirelessly as FCNL volunteers and citizen lobbyists to promote arms control and limit reliance on military solutions to conflicts.

Integrity

Most court systems allow Quakers to *affirm* that they will be truthful in their testimony as an alternative to swearing on a sacred book. This custom carries over from the earliest days, when they took seriously Jesus' admonitions to "Swear not at all" (Matthew 5:34) and "Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'" (Matthew 5:37).

They understood these words, delivered as part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, as a call to reject a double standard between honesty in everyday interactions and honesty compelled

by oath. In the same vein, Quaker merchants gained the reputation for charging a fixed and honest price and were often successful in business.

Integrity for Friends is about aligning one's inner beliefs and one's outer actions. This ingredient is critical to the legislative changes FCNL works on and in the manner in which it lobbies.

Community

Community as a Quaker value focuses inward within meetings, as with many religious congregations, as well as outward. From 2016 through 2018, the Albuquerque Meeting and Mountain View Meeting in Denver offered their meetinghouses as sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants.

Their actions affirmed the Quaker belief that it is not possible to separate one set of people from another. Earlier Quakers were leaders in building coalitions around issues such as women's equality and civil rights, just as FCNL is a leader in building similar coalitions today.

Equality

In May and June 1968, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference brought thousands of civil rights advocates in Washington in the Poor Peoples Campaign. As the activists camped in Resurrection City on the National Mall, William Penn House on Capitol Hill became a support center that offered meals, laundry facilities, phones, typewriters, bathrooms, and a place for quiet meetings with congressional staff.

In June 2020, FCNL similarly opened the Quaker Welcome Center to provide support for people participating in demonstrations for racial equality, criminal justice reform, and undocumented immigrants.

The Poor People’s Campaign was an effort to realize the goals of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Justice—which had showcased Martin Luther King Jr., but the organizing genius of which was Quaker Bayard Rustin. Quaker work for equal treatment of all people reaches back to Lucretia Mott and the Seneca Falls Convention, to Anthony Benezet and early abolitionism, and to William Penn’s flawed but sincere efforts to deal fairly with the non-English peoples of Pennsylvania.

Stewardship

The 18th century Quaker John Woolman is best known for his tireless efforts to end human slavery (although there were also Quaker slave owners), but he was also a pioneer of stewardship in a broad sense. His essay “A Plea for the Poor” was a pathbreaking effort to understand the roots of poverty. He refused to wear brightly colored clothing after he learned that dye workers were often harmed by noxious chemicals. Late in life, he gave up riding in stagecoaches because of the cruel treatment of the horses.

It’s hard to live up to the example of John Woolman (driving a Prius doesn’t quite do it), but Quakers have continued to engage with issues of stewardship or care in conserving and using resources wisely, especially on the environment. FCNL, Quaker Earthcare Witness, and local meetings and churches are all active on this issue.

The 2012 World Conference of Friends in Kenya issued a Statement on Peace and Ecojustice that began, “In past times God’s Creation restored itself. Now humanity dominates, our growing population consuming more resources than nature can replace. We must change, we must become careful stewards of all life. Earthcare unites traditional Quaker testimonies: peace, equality, simplicity, love, integrity, and justice.”

FCNL and the SPICES

These values and testimonies that Quakers summarize with a perky acronym are fundamental to the goals and operation of FCNL—so basic that they may not be explicitly cited. At the same time, the term offers an accessible way to explain and connect FCNL to Quakers and to non-Quaker activists around the country.

Selected Resources:

- Ruth Flower, “A Lobbyist on Capitol Hill,” (2015; Philadelphia: Quaker Speak). www.quakerspeak.com/a-quaker-lobbyist-on-capitol-hill/
- Margery Post Abbott and Noah Baker Merrill “Why Do Quakers Care about Politics?,” (2016; Philadelphia: Quaker Speak). www.quakerspeak.com/why-do-quakers-care-about-politics/

6 » Quaker Vocabulary: A Decoder

Members of the Society of Friends use a number of specialized terms in sometimes peculiar ways. Here are some of the terms, concepts, and practices you might hear among Friends. Early Quakers were steeped in the Bible, and many of them were rooted in understanding of the scriptures. In the 21st century they have lost some of that resonance among unprogrammed Friends, but the roots remain.

Inner Light

Friends initially called themselves *Children of the Light*, referring to the Light of Christ that they believed to be available to every person. In early decades, they spoke of the *Inward Light* or the *Inward Light of Christ* as the divine presence that Jesus promises in John 14:16 (the Greek word is translated variously as *counselor*, *advocate*, *helper*, and *comforter*). The Light is both a guide and a transforming presence.

Contemporary Quakers refer to the *inner light*; they also speak of *that of God in everyone*, a phrase from George Fox that became popular in the 20th century. The terms retain their original meaning for some Quakers, but have taken on a more general spiritual connotation for others.

Plain speech

Visit a Quaker meeting, and you will often discover that the children attend *First Day school* classes rather than Sunday school. This custom is a remnant of a much larger use of plain language among early Quakers.

Early Friends refused to use the *world's names* for days or the week and months of the year because many derived from pagan gods or even honored individuals (like July for Julius Caesar). Sunday became *first day*, January became *first month*, and so on through the calendar.

They also refused to use titles when addressing a superior, using plain Charles Stuart for King Charles II, holding that terms like *Your Grace* and *Lord* should be reserved for Jesus Christ.

Speakers of 17th century English used *you* when addressing equals and superiors and *thee/thou* when speaking to a subordinate. Friends instead used *thee* and *thou* in all circumstances to recognize the equality of all people, emphasizing humility before God. They also thought that the use of *you* as both plural and singular was confusing and thus violated the testimony of integrity. This was another reason to prefer singular *thee/thou*.

Inward Sacraments

One of the ways that early Quakers simplified their faith was to eliminate the practice of *outward* sacraments like baptism and communion. Because the outward sacraments are symbolic of inward spiritual experience, early Friends saw the baptismal water and communion bread and wine as unnecessary and even misleading external rituals.

Ephesians 4:5 names the “one baptism which is the baptism by the Spirit” that purifies the soul. Friends therefore declared that the inward and spiritual nature of the sacraments removed the need for water baptism, ordained clergy, and other forms so central to the Church of England.

Leadings and Discernment

A *leading* is a movement of the Spirit guiding an individual to particular words or actions. A person may be led to speak during unprogrammed worship or led to act on a concern such as care for the homeless or witness against war. The word emphasizes the role of the divine spirit in moving someone to action.

Quakerism may emphasize individual access to the divine, but Quakers also believe that leadings should be tested with the larger community. Someone may ask for a clearness committee to help them work through their sense of calling. Quakers may also talk about discerning rather than deciding a way forward. The practice of *discernment* is not simply checking in with the church authorities to get a green light. It is a consultation with and willingness to consider the wisdom of others and guidance of the Spirit.

Jay O'Hara, co-founder of the Climate Disobedience Center, says that Friends need a community to help separate truth from empty rhetoric (he uses a more colorful term) and to support their calling. In other words, what looks superficially like a “do-it-yourself” religion is more accurately a “do-it-ourselves” religion—a community of seekers and believers working together under the guidance of a higher Spirit.

Faith and Practice

Quakers do not have compact creeds or catechisms. Instead, they have books of Faith and Practice. Published by individual Yearly Meetings, these volumes include statements about Quaker beliefs and outline procedures for the everyday operations. They are sometimes subtitled “a book of Christian discipline,” with *discipline* referring to the standards and expectations of action.

As the title implies, they offer both practical and spiritual guidance. On the practical side, they define the process for yearly meeting decisions; summarize the duties of yearly meeting committees; describe typical committees for the local meeting or church; and outline procedures for dealing with membership, marriages, and memorial services.

Advices and Queries

Most Faith and Practice books include a set of *queries*. Queries originated as a practical expedient in 17th century England where Friends were separated by distance and poor communication.

Local groups shared written answers to common questions: What was the current membership? Was anyone in jail for their faith, and were they and their families cared for? Modern queries are designed to be open ended in order to encourage deeper reflection on the spiritual life of individuals and the community.

Queries are sometimes paired with *advices*, which are suggestions for right action. A modern faith and practice for a unprogrammed yearly meeting is likely to offer a set of quotations from Quakers and other spiritual writers in place of specific admonitions. “Faith and Practice of Britain Yearly Meeting” is a treasure trove of such excerpts.

Membership

Friends hold membership in individual meetings or churches, not the Religious Society of Friends at large. Some people participate actively in a meeting for years before deciding to apply for membership. When they do, they meet with a committee or the church pastor to explore their beliefs and their understanding of the meeting and perhaps attend a class with other prospective church members.

Applications for membership are seldom rejected, but they may occasionally be delayed or require multiple committee sessions. That said, most meetings are welcoming and encouraging to prospective members. A decision to join a meeting or church is a type of leading.

Today, many meetings and churches recognize that many young or more transient people may not have a strong connection to a monthly meeting or church. Yearly meetings and Quaker bodies are exploring whether Quaker membership might be offered at a yearly meeting or Quaker organizational level.

Early Quakers worshipped wherever they could safely gather—barns, kitchens, open fields. Today many older meetinghouses are well loved, but they are not considered sanctified or sacred spaces. Contemporary Quakers meetinghouses included a converted swimwear factory (Portland, Oregon), a converted auto repair shop (Christchurch, Aotearoa/New Zealand), and adapted office and retail buildings (San Francisco, California, and Melbourne, Australia, among others).

Minutes

Like most organizations, a Friends meeting keeps a record the decisions that it reaches through Quaker business process. Friends use *minute* as a verb, saying that *we are 'minuting' a decision*, meaning we have agreed to something and are recording it, and will say that something *was minuted*.

Most minutes relate to everyday meeting operations, like appointing a committee or buying more comfortable chairs. Some are policy decisions that may have required long consideration and guide future actions.

Others, however, are intended as public statements on social and political issues, so that a meeting might have a minute in general opposition to capital punishment or in support of specific legislation to eliminate the death penalty. Minutes can be a valuable lobbying tool when shared with elected officials and FCNL.

Selected Resources:

- Thomas Hamm, “History of Plain Speech,” (2019; Philadelphia: Quaker Speak). www.quakerspeak.com/history-quaker-plain-speech
- Thomas Hamm, “What Is a Book of Quaker Faith and Practice?” (2019; Philadelphia: Quaker Speak). www.quakerspeak.com/what-is-a-quaker-book-of-faith-and-practice
- Christopher Sammond, Niyonu Spann, et. al., “The Quaker Practice of Discernment” (2016; Philadelphia: Quaker Speak). www.quakerspeak.com/quaker-practice-discernment/

7 » Some Common Questions

Are Quakers Christians?

The simple answer is “yes” for their first 250 years, and “it gets complicated” for the last century. Quakers originated in England as radical Christians who wanted to cast off the rituals and hierarchies that had encrusted 1,500 years of Christianity and recover something like the pure Christianity of the New Testament.

George Fox (1624-1691) knew the Bible backward and forward, and Biblical references filled his writing. Robert Barclay (1648-1690) published a massive treatise (in Latin and then English) to demonstrate that Quaker beliefs and practices were fully Christian.

In the 21st century, most Quakers around the world are explicitly Christian. This is true of Quakers in East and Central Africa, in Latin America, and in many Friends Churches in the United States. The situation is different with meetings in Britain; Western Europe; Australia; Aotearoa (New Zealand); Canada; and many U.S. unprogrammed meetings, where you will encounter a very wide range of theology and belief.

A large number of unprogrammed meetings may have members who are strongly Christocentric, drawing their spiritual language from the Bible. They may also have people who practice Buddhism, people who identify as Jews as well as Quakers, people who understand Spirit outside any formal religious context, and non-theists who do not recognize God in any form.

Everyone in such meetings is challenged to be actively tolerant of views and language that may seem meaningless or even grating and offensive. Such meetings are experiments in love.

Are All Quakers Friends with Each Other?

Quakers are formally known as the Religious Society of Friends, adapted from Friends of the Truth or Friends of the Light. They took the term from the Gospel of John 15:15, where Jesus tells the disciples “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

Early Friends didn’t like the term Quaker because it was meant to ridicule their behavior in meeting for worship, and they sometimes referred to themselves as “those in scorn called Quakers.” However, the term stuck, lost its original negative implication, and became the way that the rest of the world referred to them—hence “the Quaker state” as an unofficial nickname for the Keystone State of Pennsylvania.

Quaker and *Friend* with a capital letter can be used interchangeably among Quakers/Friends. Caution is advised when using *Friend* beyond the Quaker community because of the rich opportunities for confusion.

There is also the problem that an individual Friend may not be all that friendly with some other Friends. One sometimes encounters F(f)riends or (F)friends but these workarounds are especially exclusive, not inclusive, for some groups.

Do Quakers Drive Buggies like the Amish?

No. A quick answer is that Quakers ride bicycles and drive hybrid cars, not buggies. To be more serious, the two groups are fundamentally different. People confuse Quakers and Amish because they were both historically concentrated in Pennsylvania. Also the Amish wear old-fashioned clothing with some similarities to early Quaker dress, but that’s about it.

The Amish originated in Germany in the 1500s as part of the Anabaptist revolt from the Roman Catholic Church. Quakers separated from the Church of England, a Protestant denomination, in the 1600s. The Amish try to separate and isolate themselves from the sinful world and retain the social conservatism of their origins, including the subordination of women to men.

Quakers engage the world of business and politics with the goal of building a better world. They have been leaders in recognizing the spiritual and practical gifts of women. The bottom line is that there is very little to connect the two groups and much that sets them apart.

Are Quakers Pacifists?

As a religious group, the Society of Friends is one of three historic *peace churches*, along with the Mennonites and the Church of the Brethren. As early as the 1660s, Quakers in England assured the government that they had no intention of getting involved in any civil wars or rebellions. That decision to stay out of the way of war has evolved into powerful advocacy for international peace.

Quakers have been active in relieving the suffering caused by war and have been a strong voice in support of disarmament and institutions for the peaceful resolution of international disputes.

As individuals, many Quakers have been drawn to the Society of Friends by its peace testimony, and participation in a Quaker church or meeting has provided a strong basis for claiming conscientious objector status during times of military conscription.

However, choices about whether and how to participate in the military are individual decisions. Wars in which one side is more evil than the other, such as the American Civil War (1861-1865) and World War II (1939-1945), create special dilemmas.

Many American Quakers did fight during wars against the evils of slavery and Nazism. Many also chose to abstain, as depicted in the documentary *The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It* (2002). In the film *Friendly Persuasion* (1956), set during the Civil War, Indiana Quakers played by Gary Cooper (father) and Anthony Perkins (son) must decide how to respond to a Confederate raiding party.

What Is the Peace Testimony?

In 1661, George Fox (1624-91) and other leading Quakers stated, “We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretence whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world.” Instead, they believed that all people could live in peace as they overcame the own greed and pride that were the roots of conflict. This *testimony* to peace involved pacifism, or the refusal to fight, but expanded to encompass active peacemaking, reconciliation, and relief work.

In addition to working through their own meetings, churches, and organizations like FCNL, Friends played key roles in creating the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and the Alternatives to Violence Project.

Didn’t the Quakers All Die Out?

Quakers are alive and well. The number of people recorded as members of Quaker meetings and churches in the United States is small, fewer than 100,000, but there are Quakers in every state. Many more people encounter Quakers and their beliefs through the many schools and colleges that have formal or historic Quaker affiliation. Two American presidents were from Quaker families—Herbert Hoover and Richard Nixon.

Most Americans learn about Quakers through history classes, where there may be a section on the founding of Pennsylvania and perhaps mention of their involvement in reform efforts before the Civil War, but not much else. It is easy to jump to the conclusion that Quakers are no longer around.

Sometimes Quakers are confused with the Shakers, a small American religious group that has died out. Shakers are formally known as the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing. They were established in 1747 by a small group of early English Quakers and French Protestants. There is the confusion between Quakers and Shakers because of the similar sounding names and from the fact that Shakers were known for very simple buildings and furniture. The Shakers, however, practiced celibacy, which was a drawback for recruiting and for long-term survival.

Is Quaker Oats a Quaker Company?

No. According to the official history of Quaker Oats, it was registered as the first breakfast cereal in 1877. Its trademark is "a figure of a man in 'Quaker garb.'" The former owners, Henry Seymour and William Heston, claimed to have selected the Quaker name as a symbol of good quality and honest value.

The term, Quaker, is used widely in commercial products which do not have any links to the Religious Society of Friends. Many Quakers are, however, engaged in business and many businesses, including Cadbury's Chocolates, were started by Friends and remained in their families for generations.

Carl Abbott

Carl Abbott is a member of Multnomah Meeting in Portland, Oregon. He joined the Society of Friends at the 57th Street Meeting in Chicago in 1969—after growing up in a mildly progressive United Methodist church but finding that Quaker worship spoke directly to his spirit. He has filled many different roles in his home meeting and in the North Pacific Yearly Meeting, and he has worshipped with Friends in seven countries.



Photo by Kate Holt/FCNL

He is a historian and city planning specialist who taught urban studies and planning at Portland State University in five decades—but not fifty years! He has also filled endowed professorships at the George Washington University and the University of Oregon.

He has published several books on the history of cities, city planning, and the social context of science fiction. His books include *Political Terrain: Washington, D.C., from Tidewater Town to Global Metropolis* (University of North Carolina Press, 1999), *How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America* (University of New Mexico Press, 2008), and *Frontiers Past and Future: Science Fiction and the American West* (University Press of Kansas, 2006).

His most recent books are *Imagining Urban Futures: Cities in Science Fiction and What We Might Learn from Them* (Wesleyan University Press, 2016), also available in Chinese, and *City Planning: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

With his wife Margery Post Abbott, he has written *Quakerism: The Basics,* to be published by Routledge in 2021. He also contributes to online publications such as CityLab, Los Angeles Review of Books, Public Books, and the Washington Post.



FCNL Education Fund



The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) Education Fund promotes civic engagement to achieve a peaceful, just, and sustainable world. It works closely with the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), which lobbies Congress, and William Penn House, which promotes Quaker advocacy from a learning and hospitality center on Capitol Hill.

All three are national, nonpartisan, and nonprofit Quaker organizations working collectively to advance peace, justice, and environmental stewardship.

To learn how to lobby, visit fcnl.org/virtuallobbying

To support FCNL, visit fcnl.org/donate

 [quakerlobby](https://www.facebook.com/quakerlobby)  [quaker_lobby](https://www.instagram.com/quaker_lobby)  [fcni](https://twitter.com/fcni)

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Back Cover

Ramallah Friends Meetinghouse in Ramallah, Palestine. Photo credit: FCNL



Tandem Friends School students gather on the Capitol steps to lobby their representative, Denver Riggleman (VA-5) on climate. Photo credit: FCNL
