

## **HANDOUT: QUAKER FACT SHEET**

**Full Name:** Religious Society of Friends

**Founded:** Great Britain, 1647

**Founder:** George Fox

**Derivation of Full Name:** Jesus said, "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (Christian scripture, John 15:14).

**Derivation of Common Name (Quakers):** Intended as an insult to George Fox by a judge during one of his blasphemy trials, it was gladly accepted by Fox and other Friends, who reminded people to, "tremble at the word of the Lord."

**Adherents:** 300,000 worldwide, concentrated in the United States, United Kingdom, and Kenya

**Ranking:** About 22nd

**Texts:** Bible-based; also recognizes wisdom in sacred literature of all faiths

**Clergy:** None; however, an individual congregation may choose to have paid religious leadership

**Symbols:** None

**Imagery:** In the 19th-century and earlier, Quaker plain dress served as an image of the Quaker faith (see this style worn by the man depicted on the Quaker Oats (TM) oatmeal boxes).

### **Terms and Fundamental Precepts:**

- Balance — work to create harmony between their inner journey and their outward (physical) one
- Equality — unequivocally, Quakers value all people equally
- Meeting — a group of Quakers gathered in community or worship, e.g., New England Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Worship (not a service), Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business
- Peace — unwavering commitment to nonviolence and peaceful resolutions

- Peace Testimony — statement of belief and intent to live without violence
- Plainness — plain dress, plain speech, plain truth; an expression of a consistent effort to live simply and honestly.

**Shared with Unitarian Universalism:**

- Value peace and nonviolence
- Quakers: no hierarchy in Meeting; UUs: congregational polity
- Wisdom from sacred literature of all faiths is recognized
- Belief in individual revelation; that is, "Truth" is within each person
- Equality of all people
- Commitment to social justice and social service
- Religious diversity is actively valued, as a path to and means of refining truth

## **HANDOUT: QUAKER PEACE TESTIMONIES**

### **I. George Fox, in Declaration to King Charles II, 1660**

All bloody principles and practices 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. That spirit of Christ by which we are guided is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the spirit of Christ, which leads us into all Truth, will never move us to fight any war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world.

### **II. Religious Society of Friends, (Quakers) in America, 1917 (World War I)**

#### **(Excerpted)**

To Our Fellow Citizens:

In this time of crisis when our country's highest good is the common aim of all, we voice this deep conviction of patriotic duty.

We rejoice that even at this time, when the world is crazed by war, so many men are judging war by moral and, spiritual standards, and by ideals of sacrifice. The causes for which men fight—liberty, justice and peace—are noble and Christian causes. But the method of war is unchristian and immoral. War itself violates law, justice, liberty and peace, the very ends for which alone its tragic cost might be justified.

Further, the method of war is ineffective to these ends. Might does not decide the right, ideals cannot be maintained by force, nor can evil overcome evil. True national honor is a nation's own integrity and unselfish service. Only unswerving honesty and self-control maintain it. Rights, the rights of all, are securely defended between nations as between individuals by mutual confidence, not suspicion; by universal cooperation and law, not by private armed force. The alternative to war is not inactivity and cowardice. It is the irresistible and constructive power of good-will. True patriotism at this time calls not for a resort to the futile methods of war, but for the invention and practice on a gigantic scale of new methods of conciliation and altruistic service. The present intolerable situation among nations demands an unprecedented expression of organized national good-will.

Unpractical though such ideals may seem, experience has taught that ideals can be realized if we have faith to practice now what all men hope for in the future,

**III. Some Particular Advices for Friends and A Statement of Loyalty for Others;**  
*used with permission.*

*Being the Views of Some Members of the Society of Friends regarding Its Attitude toward the Present Crisis, Third Month, 1918 (World War I)*

*(Excerpted)*

There are certain fundamental principles of right and humanity which every man must feel called upon to defend, even to the extent of forcible resistance if long continued intolerable conditions caused by morally defunct people are to be ended before the world is enslaved. For more than two centuries the Society of Friends has stood steadfastly and consistently for peace to the limit of toleration. It is in matters of individual conflict, however, rather than in national wrongs that these principles have proved effective. Many distinguished Friends in the past have realized that in cases of great collective oppression mere submission only renders the objects of the oppressor more easily attained. ...

We believe that the majority of Friends are as earnestly opposed as anyone to the enthrallment of the world by a military caste, to the human slavery and slaughter imposed upon Belgium, Poland, Armenia and other countries, to the wholesale destruction of innocent, non-combatant women and children, to unparalleled atrocities and to the spread of organized barbarism. We think that a decent respect for the opinions of mankind makes it incumbent upon the Society of Friends to make such a statement... .

We do not agree with those who would utter sentimental platitudes while a mad dog is running amuck biting women and children, with those who would stand idly by quoting some isolated passage of Scripture while an insane man murdered him, ravished his wife, bayoneted his babies or crucified his friends, with any person who would discuss with some well and contented stranger the merits of various fire extinguishers while his wife and children are calling to him from the flames of his burning house.

We believe that wrong is relative and has degrees, that there are greater things than human life and worse things than war. There is a difference between peace as an end and peace as a means to an end. We do not want peace with dishonor or a temporary

peace with evil. ... We therefore deem it consistent with our Quaker faith to act according to the dictates of our own consciences and proclaim a unity with teachings of Jesus Christ and the messages of the President of our country. [To enter the war]

#### **IV. After the Shock Has Passed: Quaker Commitments to Work for Healing, Justice, and Peace**

*A Statement from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, the American Friends Service Committee, Friends General Conference, and Friends World Committee for Consultation (a week after September 11, 2001; used with permission of Arthur Larrabee and [Philadelphia Yearly Meeting](http://www.pym.org/) (at [www.pym.org/](http://www.pym.org/))).*

Now that the initial shock of the terrorist attacks of last week has passed, deep grief and profound anger has set in for many of us. Now the critical questions that confront us all are several: How can we best comfort those who mourn? How can we begin to heal some of the wounds to all of our souls as well as our bodies? How can we see that justice is really done? How can we build bridges of understanding and reconciliation among all people so that there is no more harm done and no more hatred sown? How can we begin anew the work of creating a world where there can really be peace, addressing the injustice and despair which are so often the seeds of violence, so there will be no more victims?

These are the tasks to which a God of love calls all members of the human family. How will we respond?

As organizations of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and people of faith we find ourselves challenged to continue to respond to the tragic and horrific events of September 11. Indeed, we feel called—and believe all people of good will are called now—to respond to these events and the hurts they have caused in ways that are deeper and more sustained than our initial shock and grief may have allowed. In particular, we believe the work of building a different and better world, one in which all persons are seen as sacred because we are all children of God, one where this kind of act would not happen again, is the calling of all of us who worship a God of truth, grace and mercy.

To our dismay, we have heard people in the highest levels of our government calling for retribution rather than justice. To our astonishment we hear the talk of war and plans for war in which our nation in turn would cause the death of innocents—the sin which so appalled us—asserting this will somehow put things right. To our sorrow, we have seen

people from many walks of life in our own communities striking out in their anger against other people in our communities just because of the faith they profess, the color of their skin or the country of their origin.

We say with certainty that these statements, plans and actions will not lead us to healing, justice or peace; and we pray they will cease.

In contrast, we commit ourselves, to reach out to all who have been injured in any way by the events of the past week; and to offering comfort, solace, and practical support in any way we can. We commit ourselves to reach out to those whose backgrounds, cultures and faith may be different than our own; and to listen and learn, in hopes of building the foundations of understanding and respect on which peace can be built. We support the prosecution of those who perpetrated this horrendous crime; and commit ourselves to the achievement of justice under law and due process, including international law.

Finally we commit ourselves to praying and working for righteousness and reconciliation, as the God of Abraham, Jesus, and Mohammed has taught us, so that there may be no more victims of hate and terror anywhere.

Mary Ellen McNish, American Friends Service Committee

Thomas Jeavons, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Bruce Birchard, Friends General Conference

Cilde Grover, Friends World Committee on Consultation

## **HANDOUT: WHAT TO EXPECT IN QUAKER MEETING**

From the [Friends General Conference website](#). Accessed July 18, 2011. Used by permission.

### **WELCOME**

**Everyone is always welcome at a Quaker meeting for worship.**

**In worship Friends gather into silent, expectant waiting.** We hold ourselves open to the Light and reach for the divine center of our being. We know the center to be a place of peace, love, and balance, where we are at one with the universe and with each other.

**We know from experience that revelation is continuing** and that a divine power is at work in the world today, healing, guiding, gathering, and transforming. We call this power God, the Light, Christ, the Seed, the Inward Teacher. By whatever name it is known, its nature is love. It draws us toward a life of integrity, simplicity, equality, community, and peace.

**Our meetings strive to be loving, nurturing communities.** We celebrate diversity and encourage each person to find his or her true voice grounded in experience. We listen deeply to the Spirit and to each other as we seek to discern and embrace God's will for us individually and as a community.

**We warmly invite you to join us.** In most meetings, worship is held on Sunday mornings and usually lasts about one hour. "Unprogrammed" meetings are grounded in silent, expectant waiting and are spontaneous and open. When someone feels led to share a message, it is received in the gathered silence. "Pastoral" meetings have programmed or semi-programmed worship services culminating in a period of gathered silence. We generally close our worship by shaking hands and exchanging greetings. Programs for children and infant care are usually provided. Children are also welcome to join meeting for worship.