

Quaker Meeting for Worship is a shared activity, with all participants, whether silent or speaking, equal; rather than having one Minister or Pastor. We gather in silence to open ourselves to the strength, support and guidance we need to live in the world.

We seek a sense of connection with our inner selves, with each other and with all that connects us, seen and unseen. We each bring our whole lives and the world around us into this time, hoping to experience a new clarity.

This may lead to vocal ministry (when some take turns to stand and speak if moved) or it may lead to a silent Meeting for Worship. In this place, we seek an experience beyond words or thoughts, where hearts may be open, challenged and inspired.

We asked five Quakers to share their stories with us and to tell us about their experiences in Quaker Meetings for Worship.

See our five Quaker journeys in full at
www.quakers.nz/Journeys

Find out more:

www.quakers.nz

Quakers Aotearoa
NEW ZEALAND
Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri

QUAKER WORSHIP

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Moira

I cherish the time I spend in Quaker worship. I come to help create a place of stillness and safety. For many years, meditation has been part of my life. I think of Quaker worship as a place of expectant waiting and deep listening. The group energy holds me in silence, providing a safe place to go deeper. At times I experience a feeling of connectedness with others and all beings.

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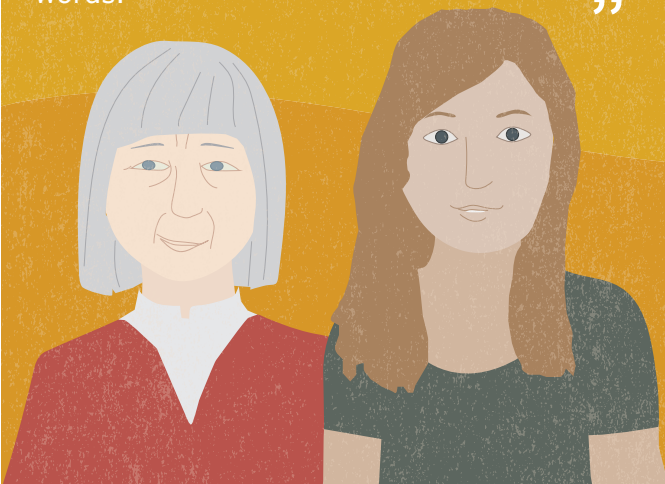
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Eleanor

I love the simplicity of a Quaker Meeting for Worship. We gather in silence, with no priest to guide us. It can be a very personal experience. I find my own way to let go of outward distractions and focus on the Light within. In the silence I find we become more connected as we sit together.

If the silence is broken when someone feels moved to speak, I listen to what the person says and try to recognise the truth in their words.

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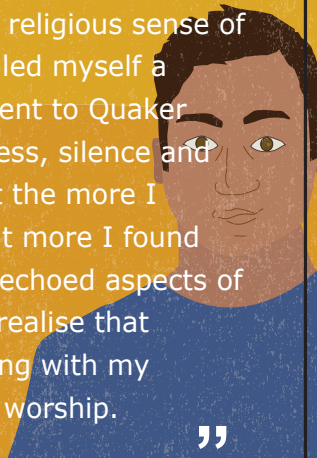
Maia

Coming to Quaker meeting gives me a setting to find stillness and to quiet my mind. The whirl of modern life urges us to be always moving on to the next thing. I don't think of it as worship so much as an opening up, letting my soul settle.

Listening, deep attentive listening, isn't a skill that most of us use often in everyday life. I value the chance to practice it in the stillness of Quaker meeting. I feel it has given me a greater capability for active, engaged listening in my daily life as a doctor and in my personal relationships. Being mindfully present in a meeting for worship, hearing the sounds in the room, the birds outside, feeling the mood of the meeting, listening to the words shared among friends grounds me to my present experience and is good exercise for my mind. I miss it when I don't come to meeting the way I miss running as exercise for my body if I'm cooped up inside.

For several months I attended meeting for worship but was sure what I was doing was not worship in the traditional religious sense of the word. I wouldn't have called myself a Quaker, just someone who went to Quaker meeting to soak up the stillness, silence and peace that I found there. But the more I learned about Quakerism that more I found things that spoke to me and echoed aspects of my own life. I have come to realise that finding stillness and connecting with my deepest self is my version of worship.

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Vincent

While many traditions incorporate silence into their worship, for Quakers silence is worship. It flows from and back into my conviction that something of god exists in everyone. Silent worship allows me to block out the noise of daily life and truly listen for what's most important. Out of the silence comes insight, creativity, and love for others, for me the most important outputs of a well-lived life.

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Lucas

Quaker Meetings for Worship are radically egalitarian - this fact, more than anything else, appealed to me when I first encountered Quakers. I have asked many Quakers what it is they usually do during the silence of Meeting, and I have heard many answers. Some Quakers use the time to pray to God. Some use the time to think or meditate. I have spent many Meetings mostly reading a spiritual book from the library at my Meeting House.

What is important to me is that I have never been told what to do in Meeting. I have never been told to direct a certain prayer to God, or to put down the book I am reading.

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