

For Quakers, faith is not a 'given' but a dynamic personal process. From direct experience, we seek what is most true and meaningful for ourselves. The understanding we develop from our experience is always provisional and open to change as our understanding deepens. Quakers find that silent listening to our inner world facilitates this better than sermons or ceremony.

A faith story is also a guide to how to live a purposeful life rather than a set of beliefs to hold fast to. For Quakers faith is not to be 'taught' but discovered and lived out.

Quakers try to be 'open to new light', wherever we find it – from each other's experiences and insights, from arts and culture, from other faiths, from new experiences and reflections.

Quakers come from a range of religious backgrounds and many from none at all, enriching everyone's faith journey with their diversity. Some use traditional words such as God, the Divine, the Christ, to describe their understandings while others use secular language to convey deeply held and meaningful concepts.

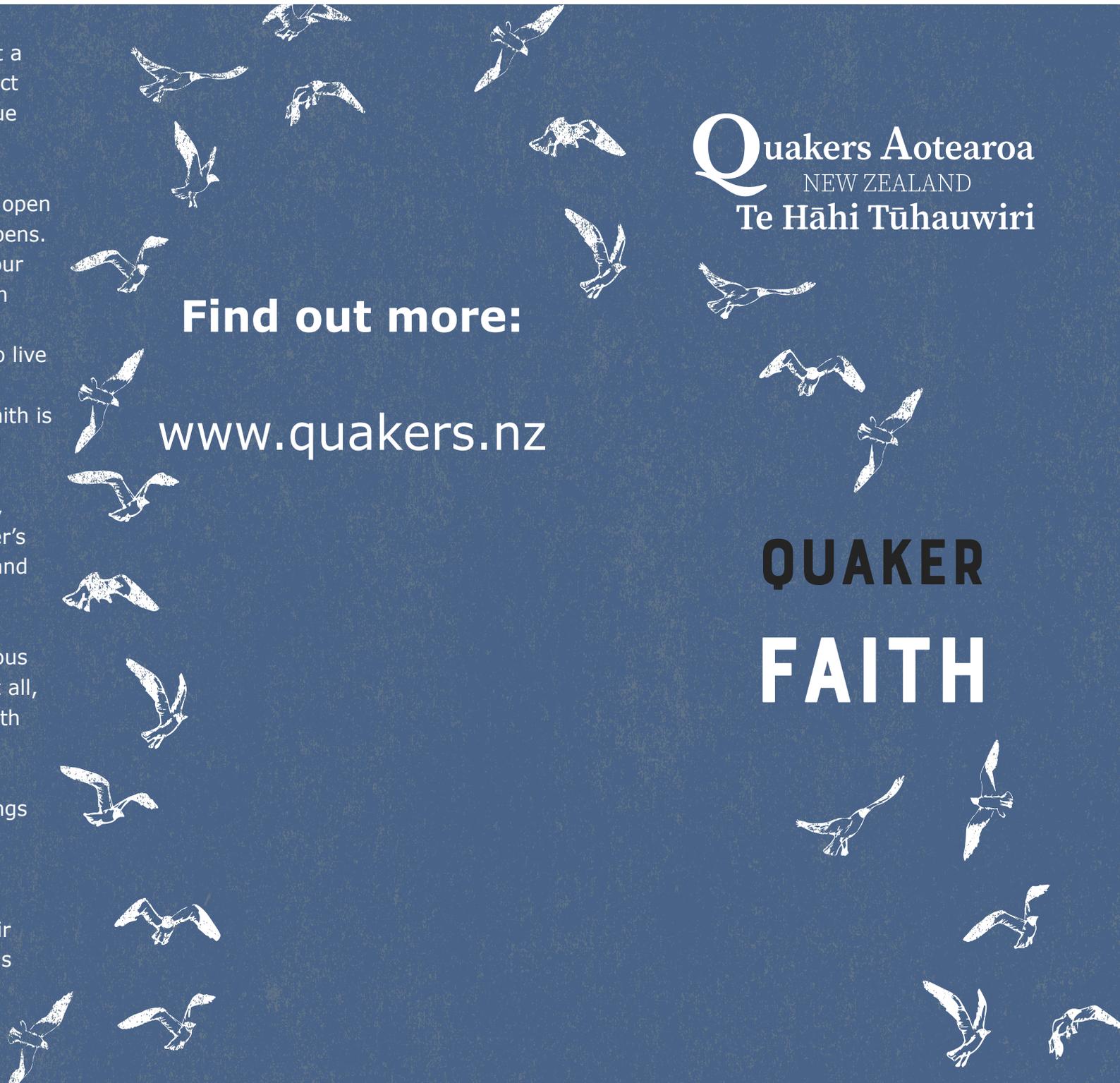
In this leaflet five Quakers share their faith stories. We asked them to tell us about their experience of Quaker community, living, faith and worship.

Find out more:

www.quakers.nz

Quakers Aotearoa
NEW ZEALAND
Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri

**QUAKER
FAITH**



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Vincent

We seem to yearn for a spiritual dimension to our lives. Growing up in a multicultural society, I had access to many religions. I gradually came to understand that a spiritual tradition was useful if it led me to develop as a person, discern the Truth, care for my fellow living beings, steward the earth's resources, and live joyfully. Other traditions address some of these ideas, but Quakerism incorporates them at its core. They promote a spirituality where one is able, in the Buddha's words, to 'work out your own salvation with diligence'. The Quaker community is a welcoming space where each person's experience is honoured.

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Eleanor

I don't consider myself a religious person in the traditional sense. Certainly, I'm very hesitant about talking about a relationship with - or faith in - God. My faith is open to possibility. I believe there is an essential core in each of us that should be nurtured: a unique potential, goodness, capacity to love, creative energy. Some Quakers may describe this as 'that of God' or a connection with the divine. For me it is the spiritual dimension of our existence.

I have been attending Quaker Meetings since childhood. Being with Quakers, and worshiping with Quakers, provides the best framework for tapping into that spiritual dimension that I know.

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Maia

As somebody who isn't quite sure if I believe in a God, the Quaker faith has been a safe harbour in which to open my mind and explore my thoughts and feelings on the matter. I find inspiration in the ministry of Friends at Meeting which usually takes the form of very accessible personal stories or reflections from day to day life.

We don't all believe the same things and we don't pretend to. But Quakers do have shared values - equality, justice, sustainability, simplicity, truth and peace - which resonate with me and shine a light on my path ahead, inspiring me to uphold these values in my everyday choices. Since joining the community of Friends who live by these values, my personal resolve to live by these principles is much stronger and at the same time I feel lighter with it. And so, I have found a home in Quakerism.

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Moira

My Quaker faith is centred on a spiritual Presence, personal and infinite, awe-inspiring and intimate. A compassionate guide. Somehow always present and accessible even when I feel distant and in a dark place. It is in trusting this Presence that I come to recognise what I do not know. I accept this 'not knowing' as part of the mystery of the Divine. I can only speak for myself. I acknowledge that each person is a unique spiritual being on a human path.

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Lucas

My spiritual journey has taken me from literalist Catholicism, to liberal Catholicism, to a confused agnosticism, to Quakers. I have always felt the reality of God in my life - in the beauty of nature, in the kindness of people, and through the prodding of conscience in my own heart. But I have long struggled with who and what God is. Since I was about 12 or so, I have not been happy simply to accept the answers in the Christian Bible. The Bible is full of stories that challenge us to think more about ethics, justice, wisdom, and beauty. But so also do the Qur'an, the Bhagavad Gita, the Dialogues of Plato, and the Legends of Maui.

Within Quakers, I have deepened my confidence that God exists, and I have equally deepened my confidence that I know very little about God. The Quaker community has been a safe place for me to admit my doubts, and for me to keep reaching for God in my own way.

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