

Who are Quakers?

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Australian Junior Young Friends 2018
and their Friends.



Dedication

To all Quaker Children and Junior Young Friends in Australia.

Contents

Front page	1
Dedication	2
Contents	3
Introduction	4
Meeting for worship	5
George Fox	6
Elizabeth Fry	7
John Woolman	8
Lucretia Mott	9
James Backhouse	10
Margaret Fell	11
Service	12
What are The Testimonies?	13
Simplicity	14
Peace	15
Integrity	16
Community	17
Equality	18
Sustainability	19
Epilogue	20
Acknowledgments:	21

Introduction

Quakers, sometimes called The Religious Society of Friends, believe that everyone has a direct connection with God, which some call the 'inner light' or 'Spirit' and we talk about everyone having 'that of God' within them.

Each Quaker or Friend, travels their own path, their own way, with the support of other Friends.

We try to be clear about our path by listening to the Spirit within us, listening to others and reading the wisdom of others.

Quakers began in England as a Christian group and now we are also open to many other ideas. We meet together for what we call Meeting for Worship and sit together in silence, until someone feels 'led' to 'Minister'.

We follow what we call testimonies: simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and sustainability.

In these pages we'll look a bit more at some of the earliest Quakers and hear what Quakers do today. We hope some of your questions are answered.

Wilma and Junior Young Friends (JYFs)



Meeting for Worship

Quakers is the popular name for the Religious Society of Friends. We are a community, that is, a group of people who worship together. When you walk into a Quaker meeting house you will be greeted by a Friend and directed to a Meeting Room. Often the chairs are in a circle and a table in the middle holds flowers and a few books.

Quakers sit in silence. This is called worship. Quakers believe they can talk directly to God and sometimes a Friend has something to share from God. They will stand up and share. We call this ministry. It's something God wants all Friends in the meeting to hear. We are silent again reflecting on what was said. Friends only minister once in a Meeting for Worship. The meeting ends when we shake hands. We listen to notices about things that are happening soon. We then have morning tea together. And then Friends talk a lot!



George Fox

George Fox was the first Quaker. He lived between 1624 and 1691 in England.

George believed we are all equal and in those days this was a very different way of seeing the world. He believed that we could talk directly to God and didn't need a pastor or a priest to talk to God for us.

George Fox believed there was that of God in everyone, and if we looked, we would find good, no matter who we looked at or where we looked.

George was married to Margaret Fell. We will talk about Margaret on another page. Other early Quakers we will talk about are:

Elizabeth Fry

John Woolman

Lucretia Mott

James Backhouse



Elizabeth Fry

Elizabeth Gurney Fry was born in Norwich England to a wealthy Quaker family in 1780, the third of 12 children. Her mother Catherine believed girls should be well educated as well as boys and this was unusual in those days.

She married Joseph Fry in 1780. She had 11 children. She died in 1845.

Following in her mother's footsteps, Elizabeth began to visit a workhouse for the poor to teach the children. She also became respected for her vocal ministry in worship, and was recorded as a minister in 1811.

She helped people in prison. She visited prisons that were dark, dirty and dangerous. She believed even prisoners should be treated with kindness. She was a brave *reformer*. She was the first woman to *campaign* for better prisons.

Few Quakers have inspired people in the larger society as much as Elizabeth Gurney Fry.

Alice Mannheim from Canberra Regional Meeting, wrote about Quaker quiet achievers, and wrote this about Elizabeth Fry:

In the 19th century a Quaker woman named Elizabeth Fry helped to make England's prisons more humane. Before this many prisoners died and starved. She helped to stop this. She was one of the first people to stand up for prisoners. She thought they deserved to be treated better. Few people know about her, but she was a hero, a Quaker, a quiet achiever.

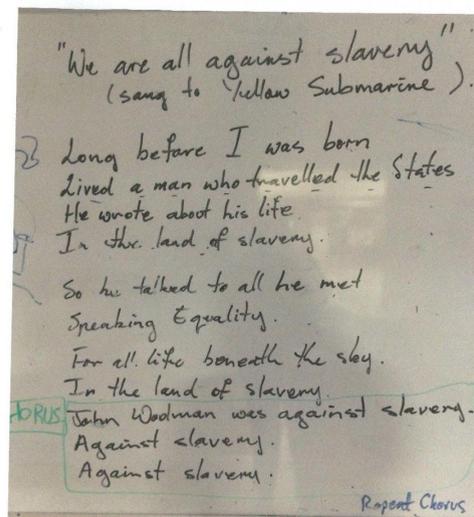


John Woolman

John Woolman (born in October 1720) was a North American merchant, tailor, journalist, and travelling Quaker preacher and an early abolitionist*. Based in Mount Holly, New Jersey, near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he traveled through frontier areas of British North America to preach Quaker beliefs, and advocate against slavery and the slave trade, cruelty to animals, economic injustices and oppression, and conscription. In 1772, Woolman travelled to England, where he urged Quakers to support abolition of slavery.

Woolman published numerous essays, especially against slavery. He kept a journal throughout his life; it was published after he died, and called *The Journal of John Woolman* (1774). The *Journal* has been in print since 1774.

* *Someone who worked to free slaves and abolish slavery.*



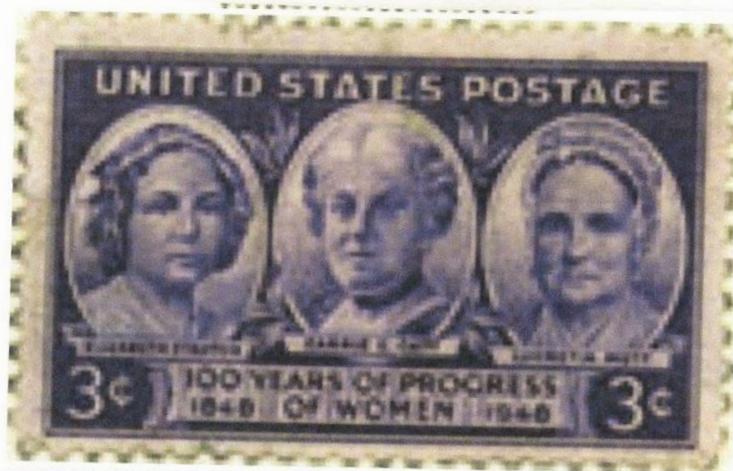
Written at a JYF Camp by Bea Farquar and David Albrecht
Chorus 'John Woolman was against Slavery
Against Slavery
Against Slavery' X2



Lucretia Mott

Lucretia Mott (1793 – 1880) was the child of Quaker parents, and grew up to become a leading social reformer. At the age of 13, she attended a Quaker boarding school in New York State. She stayed on and worked there as a teaching assistant. While at the school, Mott met her future husband James Mott. The couple married in 1811 and lived in Philadelphia.

Born Lucretia Coffin on 3 January 1793, in Nantucket, Massachusetts, Lucretia Mott was a women's rights activist, abolitionist, and religious reformer. Mott was strongly opposed to slavery and a supporter of the American Anti-Slavery Society. She was dedicated to women's rights, publishing her influential *Discourse on Woman* and founding Swarthmore College. Mott died in Pennsylvania in 1880.



U.S. postage stamp commemorating the Seneca Falls Convention titled *100 Years of Progress of Women: 1848–1948* (Elizabeth Cady Stanton on left, Carrie Chapman Catt in middle, Lucretia Mott on right.)

James Backhouse

James Backhouse (8 July 1794 – 20 January 1869) was a botanist and missionary for the Quaker church in Australia.

James Backhouse was born in 1794, the fourth child of James and Mary Backhouse a Quaker business family of Darlington, County Durham, England. His grandfather died as a Quaker prisoner and martyr at Lancaster Castle in 1697. His mother was Mary Dearman of Thorne, Yorkshire, also a devout Quaker.

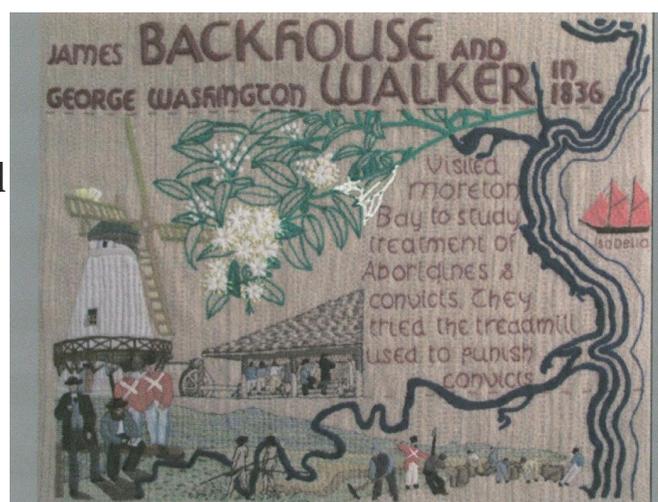
James then spent two years near Norwich learning the nursery trade, and where he first conceived of 'a gospel errand into Australia' believing strongly that this was the will of God.

In September 1831, Backhouse sailed for Australia on a mission to the convicts and settlers. The initial journey took five months. His Quaker ministry was assisted by his companion and secretary, George Washington Walker. The missionaries arrived at Hobart in February 1832, and they spent the next six years journeying all over the then settled districts of Tasmania, New South Wales, and as far north as the site of Brisbane. They visited Port Phillip in 1837, and the states of South Australia and Western Australia just before they left.

They visited penal settlements working for and interceding for prisoners, and deeply concerned by the cruelty and rigours they found. They wrote to Elizabeth Fry about the condition of women prisoners on ships and to the Governor of Van Diemen's Land on the prisons. Death of prisoners was often by murder from other prisoners in appalling conditions. They also looked at the policy towards First Nations people 'this injured race of our fellow men'.

Alongside their work with prisons they set up and visited Quaker meeting houses.

Backhouse and Walker then went to Mauritius and South Africa and continued their missionary work.

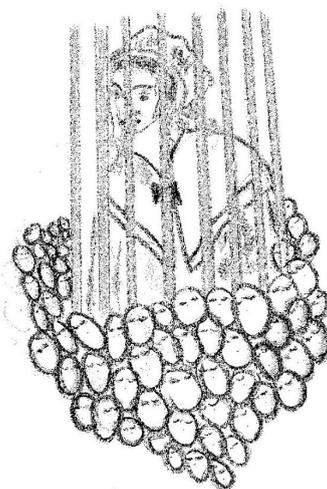


Margaret Fell

Margaret Fell or **Margaret Fox** (1614 – 23 April 1702), a founder of the Religious Society of Friends, was known as the ‘mother of Quakerism’.

She was born Margaret Askew in Kirkby-in-Furness (Cumbria). She married Thomas Fell, a barrister, in 1632, and became the lady of Swarthmoor Hall.

In late June 1652, George Fox visited Swarthmoor Hall. Margaret Fell met him, and later wrote that he ‘opened us a book that we had never read in, nor indeed had never heard that it was our duty to read in it (to wit) the Light of Christ in our consciences, our minds never being turned towards it before’.



Over the next six years, Swarthmoor Hall became a centre of Quaker activity. After her husband's death in 1658, she retained control of Swarthmoor Hall, which remained a meeting place and haven from persecution, though sometimes, in the 1660s, raided by government forces.

In 1664 Margaret Fell was arrested for failing to take an oath and for allowing Quaker Meetings to be held in her home. She spent six months in Lancaster Gaol, and was then sentenced to life imprisonment and the taking away of her property. She remained in prison until 1668, during which time she wrote religious pamphlets including *Women's Speaking Justified*, a scripture-based argument for women's ministry, and one of the major texts on women's religious leadership in the 17th century.

Having been released by order of the King and council, she married George Fox in 1669. She was again imprisoned for about a year in Lancaster. After this, they spent about a year together at Swarthmoor. Margaret Fox and George Fox spent most of the rest of his life either abroad or in London until his death in 1691. She then spent most of the rest of her life at Swarthmoor, and died aged 87.

Service

When Quakers offer service, we mean serving others, and caring for the planet.

Service can happen within the Quaker community, doing things for all the Quaker community, like hosting a meeting for worship, or serving on a committee, or washing the tea towels, or doing something that benefits all. For instance, the children at one meeting went out into the parks around the Meeting House and collected litter.

Some Quakers work for different services that look after the disadvantaged like refugees and the homeless. The most important thing about service is about doing it to serve and not for recognition or profit. That is doing something because it needs to be done to make the world a better place.



What are The Testimonies?

Quakers don't follow a creed (a statement of the shared beliefs of a religious community) or have a liturgy (that is, a way of worshipping together, all reading the same thing together).

We do have what are called testimonies. Testimonies guide us on how we live from day to day. And we all will have our own way to follow the testimonies.

Each Quaker searches for how the testimonies can best be expressed in their own life. How I live with a particular testimony may be different from how you live with the testimony. The important thing is that it's right for me.

The Testimonies are:

Simplicity

Peace

Integrity

Community

Equality

Sustainability



Simplicity

A simple life can be how we live, how we express ourselves, how we dress, and even how we eat. In the past Quaker men dressed in black with big hats and Quaker women dressed in grey, with grey bonnets. We no longer do this, however we still try not to be flamboyant in how we dress or how we live.

I asked Friends to share an example of simplicity in their lives. Please read some of what they shared below.

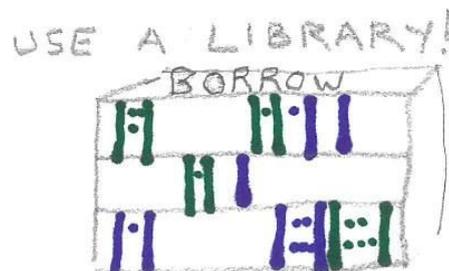
How can you follow the simplicity testimony?

- *I ride a bike to school, walk or catch the bus.*
- *I get clothes from the op shop, no brand shopping.*
- *I eat seasonally and food grown locally, and food that grows naturally without chemicals.*
- *We live in community together, sharing as much as we can..*
- *Before buying something I like to meditate (at least briefly) on whether I want whatever-it-is because I am moved by its usefulness and/or beauty, or whether I wish to purchase it to show to others?*
- *When shopping: buy food and basic toiletries/ cleaning products for your household, treat the rest as window-shopping or like a visit to a museum. Admire the creativity that went into the design or production of the item, but remind yourself that you have no reason whatsoever to purchase anything you see as you go about your day. Once a year, decide on a few items of clothes you need and see if you can find them second hand.*



- Tell all your loved ones that you will not be giving Xmas or birthday presents, except a home made card listing which of their qualities or actions you admire. Donate a good proportion of the money you save to an organisation that works to assist people to live with dignity.
- Always spend your time on activities that nourish and energise you. Rest often and well.
- Be with children. They teach us about simplicity.
- I have learned to say 'no'. I know I can't do everything.
- We got rid of our TV, that was awesome. It has made space for talking as a family and things like cards and board games. We also decided not to give our kids their own screens, at least till high school.
- Being in nature; camping in the bush or at a beach or even a park. Connecting with nature helps us slow down and appreciate the simplicity of existence

THROW OUT or GIVE AWAY
what you no longer USE or NEED

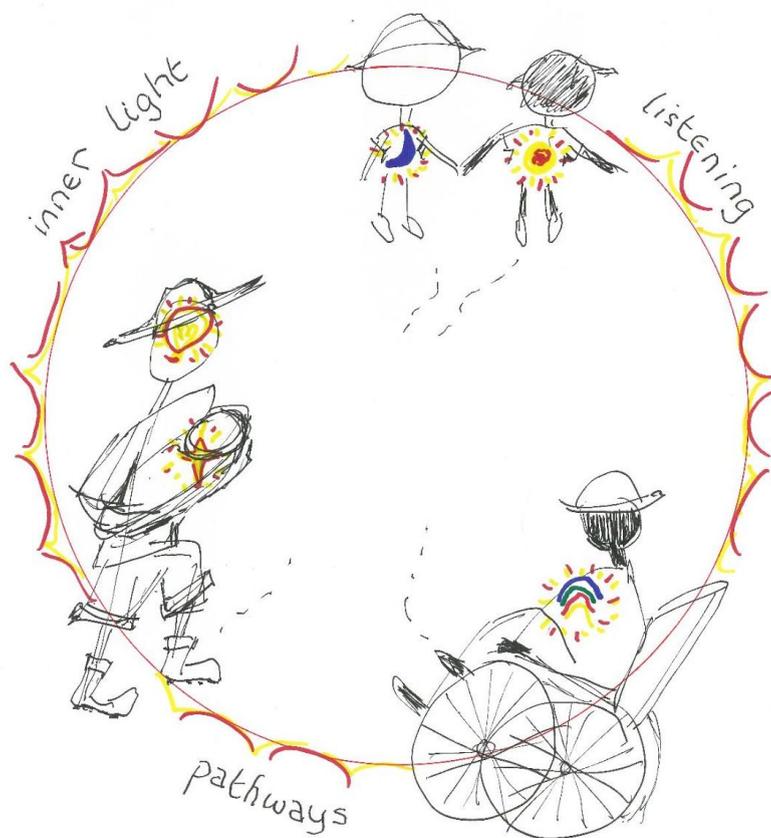


Peace

Quakers are best known as people who want to solve problems without fighting and killing. Many Quakers will not fight in wars. In 1947 Quakers won the Nobel Peace Prize, a very important peace prize, for their work in looking after people hurt and wounded by war.

The Nobel Peace Prize 1947

The Nobel Peace Prize 1947 was awarded jointly to Friends Service Council (The British Quakers) and American Friends Service Committee (The American Quakers)



Integrity

Integrity means being honest and sincere. , to tell the truth and to try to understand people who think differently from you. The word Integrity means whole and complete.

Friends tell me for them integrity means:

Standing as a Green candidate in the State election

Saying what you mean, and meaning what you say.

Being the same person on the outside as you are on the inside.

Living with integrity is about facing up to who I am and taking responsibility for the impact of my behaviour on self, others and environment.

It's about being as deeply honest as I can be with myself, which informs my capacity to be honest with others.

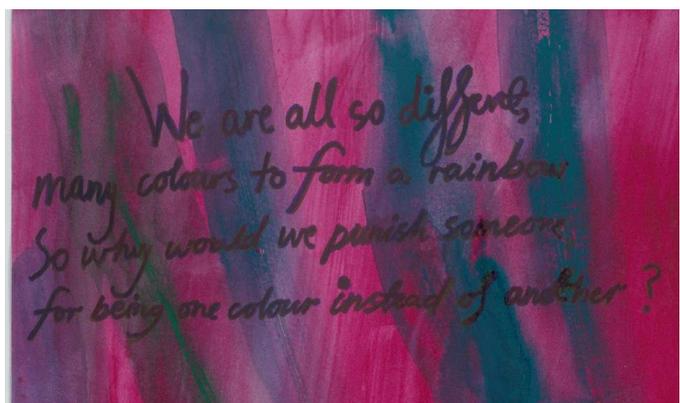
Not pretending - about anything.

Integrity to me means 'walking my talk' and keeping my word.

I see integrity as being closely linked to trust and being trustworthy, that is making promises and keeping them.

When situations change it is not always possible to keep an agreement, but one can do that and still have integrity.

How do we live together in ways that make it easier for us all to behave with integrity?



Community

Community can mean many things, we can talk about our school community and sporting community and our faith community and look wider and talk about for example, the Australian community as a whole.

However, Quakers, to live with the testimony of community, look at the *sense* of community, and what we can do to be active and helpful within the community around us.

I feel this sense of community being part of my Quaker meeting and also at Yearly Meeting when Friends meet together to make decisions and to share and to enjoy being part of the Australian Quaker Community.

When I travel to other Quaker Meetings I feel welcomed as a member of the broader Quaker community.

Who do you see as your community? What makes this a community?



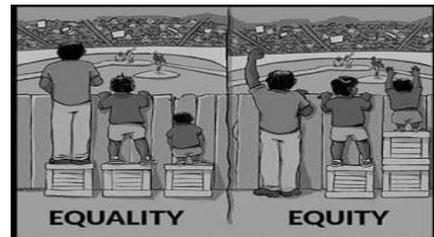
Equality

Equality is about making sure we all have the same opportunities no matter our age, gender, sexual preference or race.

Equality aims to promote fairness and justice, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs *the same things*.

This picture shows us how hard it is for people to be equal, because we may not start the same. To move things around to help make things more equal for all is called **Equity**, and involves trying to understand and give people *what they need* to enjoy full, healthy lives.

Equality is giving people the same right or opportunity. Equity is being fair and impartial.



What happens in your community to help people be more equal?



Sustainability

Sustainability and caring for the earth is very important. Care can mean growing food and fibre in ways that look after the earth and our fellow creatures. It can also mean avoiding things that damage the earth, like single-use plastic, or fossil fuels that require the earth to be mined and that pollute the air when burned.

Caring for the earth means living in a way that can continue forever such as, using the sun and the wind to supply energy and using fresh water wisely.

What other things help care for the earth?



Epilogue

As you can see, there are many different aspects of Quakers, some you might agree with, whilst others you may disagree with.

Once you have read this book, we suggest you find a quiet or relaxing place to be still and reflect on **what is important to you**. Here are some questions you could think about:

How do you live in your life? Are there many similarities to Quakers?

What will you do now? What will you change? What will stay the same?

What things do you agree with? What things do you disagree with?

We are privileged to choose the way we live, so how will you choose to live your life in the future?

Miriam Hope & Josh Crane

Acknowledgments:

Thank you to all children, JYF's and Friends young and old, far and wide, who have contributed to this work.

