

9 Core Quaker Beliefs – Quakers Speak

July 19, 2018

Transcript:

About 9 years ago I began to give voice to a lifelong frustration of mine. The frustration was that I cannot answer the question “What do Quakers believe?” I would always answer the questions somewhat defensively. I would say, “it’s kind of hard to know what Quakers believe, but let me tell you what I believe.” Or I would say, “well, it’s hard to know what Quakers believe today but let me tell you what Quakers believed at the beginning.” Or I would say what I thought Quakers believed and I would hope that no one else was listening because I did not want to be overcalled.

And so I had all of those experiences as a lifelong Quaker and I said, “this is for the birds!” We can do better than this.

9 Core Quaker Beliefs

My name is Arthur Larrabee. I’m a member of Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting. I live near West Chester, Pennsylvania, very close to Westtown School. My work in the world is the work of teaching and consulting about Quaker decision making.

In attempting to name what I believe are core principles, or core beliefs of the Religious Society of Friends as understood by unprogrammed Quakers, I’m hoping that we would move in the direction of strengthening our faith practice, and strengthening our faith practice with each other and be more clear and affirming of what we’re able to say to the world, what we’re able to carry out into the world.

1. There is a living, dynamic, spiritual presence at work in the world which is both within us and outside of us.

Quakers use many names to describe this spiritual presence. Among the names we use are God, spirit, the light, the inward light, the inner light, Christ, truth, love.

2. There is that of God in everyone.

This statement of belief is similar to the first statement, and Quakers will talk about there being that of God in everyone, and it is the belief that the creator has endowed each person with a measure of the divine essence, and that as a consequence, all of life is sacred and interconnected.

3. Each person is capable of the direct and unmediated experience of God.

Our belief leads us into a form of worship that does not rely on clergy or liturgy or creed. Rather, we come together in the silence. We sometimes refer to our worship as “waiting worship.” Waiting to hear—listen for—the still, small voice within, and listening for that of God—the still, small voice—speaking to us.

4. Our understanding and experience of God is nurtured and enlarged in community.

When we come together in community, each of us brings our own manifestation of the divine energy. When we come together in community, we experience and embrace our diversity; we experience a much larger understanding and vision of God.

5. The Bible is an important spiritual resource, and the life and teachings of Jesus are relevant for us today.

For many of us, the Bible is an inspired record of humankind's interaction with God through the ages. Quakers find that the truth and the teachings found in the Bible are an inspiration for daily living and also an inspiration for our worship together.

6. The revelation of God's truth is continuing and ongoing.

Quakers are very clear that the revelation of God's truth did not end with the writing of the Bible. We believe that God has continued to reveal God's truth and make God's will and energy, truth—known to humankind down through the ages, down to the present day.

7. We welcome truth from whatever source it may come.

We find that our experience of worship and our experience of the Divine is enriched by welcoming truth from different sources. We welcome spiritual truth from different sources.

8. Our inward experience of God transforms us and leads us into outward expressions of faithful living, witness, and action.

Individually and collectively, we witness to God's presence in our lives by the way we live our lives and the way we model God's truth in the world. One of the consequences of listening for the inward voice and being led into outward expressions of faithful living and witness and action are Quaker testimonies. Testimonies that are well known today are testimonies of simplicity and peace and integrity, community, equality and stewardship.

9. Modeling God's presence in our lives is more important than espousing beliefs.

Quakers believe that the way we live our lives is of much more importance than what we say. There's an old Quaker expression, "Let your life speak" and that's very much a part of Quakerism: the understanding that the way we model God's truth in our lives is to let our lives speak it