

Why Did I Become a Quaker?

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I can answer that question in one word! “Integrity.” “Quakers share a common faith based on experience that every human being can commune with God directly without the need for any mediating persons or rituals, and that the worshipping community can commune directly with God as well.” While taking a University course on “Eighteenth Century Colonial Women” I was impressed by this description, and soon noticed that Quaker women were quite different from their peers of the time. I expressed my surprise and my wonderful professor gave me the task of researching the Religious Society of Friends and giving the class a presentation on my findings. Pendle Hill was my source of information and history and I am still grateful for their accommodation.

Not having had the opportunity to further my education after graduating from Catholic high school, I took advantage, at age forty-two and married with seven children, to apply to Empire State College, one of the first online higher education schools in the country, and part of the New York State SUNY system. It was an exciting experience and I obtained my degree four years later.

Twenty busy and fulfilling years passed, and in fulfillment of our dream, my husband and I retired on Cape Cod and built a home in Harwich. At this point I was looking for a faith and in a short time I dropped in one Sunday morning at Quaker worship in the village of South Yarmouth. I opened the door to a simple wooden building and observed a silent group of men and women with downcast eyes sitting side by side on facing benches in an unadorned welcoming room with crackling fireplace. I noticed there was no altar or pulpit. But what stays vividly in my mind to this day was the sudden recalling of that college course and the “Inner Light” belief held by the Friends. God!not in a tabernacle or in a chalice in the hands of a priest. These Quakers were actually doing what they believed! Having communion and listening to the Divine. Integrity! That was the powerful word that moved me and still does today.

I joined happily in the gathered quiet and recall when suddenly the silence was broken and someone spoke saying, “Good morning, Friends.” A woman in front of me turned around, smiled, and held out her hand. Emotion prevented my replying but she quickly said, “I know, I understand—I had the same reaction at ‘my’ first Quaker worship!”

I became a member of the Religious Society of Friends a year later and am an active and grateful Friend. I have come to understand how important the Friends’ testimonies of simplicity, peace, community, equality, but most especially ‘integrity’ mean to me. This faith that I love informs my entire life.