

While there are many diverse kinds of Quakers today—we all have the same heritage, same beginning
Quakerism is a movement that began in England in the mid-1600s
It was a time of huge political, social and religious unrest
The religious argument centered around religious authority
Catholics and the Church of England—center of worship was in the sacraments
Puritans focused on Scripture alone and the center of worship is the sermon
George Fox was a young man who was not satisfied with any religious expression
None spoke to his condition
He sought answers everywhere—both inside and outside the church
Finally, he came to the end of his search and there had an encounter with Jesus
When all my hope in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, Oh then, I heard a voice which said, 'there is one, even Christ Jesus that can speak to thy condition,' and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy.¹
He knew that the only thing that mattered was this direct encounter with the Living God
While George Fox didn't intend to start a new denomination, he knew this truth must be shared
He began telling it everywhere—even correcting sermons in established churches
Ultimately he had an encounter on Pendle Hill in 1652
...there atop of the hill I was moved to sound the day of the Lord; and the Lord let me see a-top of the hill in what places he had a great people to be gathered.²
This initiated an explosion that led to the formation of The Religious Society of Friends
In the early days we were called Friends of Jesus
They settled on the name Friends, taking it from Scripture in John 15:12-17
The nickname Quaker was a pejorative term given to Friends
Early Friends understood that God wants to speak to people so they gathered in silence to Listen
They didn't need a priest, clergy, buildings, liturgy, or external sacraments
Ministry rose up among them from the Listening in silence
God spoke in powerful ways and they were faithful to share what they heard in silence

Today Quakers are all over the world

We worship in very diverse ways—some cultural, some preference—all God centered
Some gather in silence, as they did in the days of early Quakers, without pastor
Others, like us, have a pastor, singing, and a message
But we differ from most other churches...
In that we see the center of worship as our time of Listening together
We do that in two ways...
God stories where we invite people to share the God movement
Open worship where we Listen for God's direct message to us
If so Led, we share that message out of the silence
The prepared messages I bring—come out of my Leadings and experience
But they are always held up for immediate redirection by God

The thing that set apart early Quakers from other religious groups, is still true today
As a people, we all gather to Listen for the direct message from God
This is true whether we are programmed or unprogrammed

¹ Journal of George Fox, edited by John L Nickalls, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1995, page 11

² Journal of George Fox, edited by John L Nickalls, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1995, page 104

True whether a pastor has a message or not
True whether we sing or not
 We gather to Listen to God!
Nothing is more important to us than hearing what God is saying in our midst
 Therefore we make space for this Listening

The thing that drew me to this church was recognition that God is here and people know God
God desires nothing more than to communicate directly with people
 The amazing thing is that this communication is about all of life
 God loves to show us spiritual truths, yes...
 But God also loves to show us how to do very practical things—they matter too
 Whether it be how to organize finances or do a home repair
 We can simply ask God to show us way forward about anything in life
 It is as simple as following the nudges as they come
 And as wow as seeing the angels surround us
The power of God's presence in this present moment of the eternal Now speaking to us is huge
 George Fox's most common phrase: "The Power of the Lord is over all!"
It is both personal and individual
 And directed at the community as we are gathered
As we Listen—we hear—and we follow the Leadings boldly!