

Newtown Meeting in an Acorn (nutshell)

Additional resources are on the NMM website, especially about the history of the building.

Quakers Religious Society of Friends of Truth. Friends. The term Quaker was initially ridicule.

Meeting founded in 1815 by Friends from meetings in Wrightstown and Middletown (Langhorne).

Most well known member Edward Hicks (1780-1849) In later years, lived in adjacent property, founder. Buried in the burial ground.

Peaceable Kingdom paintings reflected his thoughts on a vision of the kingdom of God on earth, and his reaction to the split that occurred in Quakerism (1827 Hicksite and Orthodox) which centered on where authority lay (the Bible or the Inner Light), the concept of continuing revelation (our understanding of Truth can change over time), and divisions between wealthy city Quakers and more humble farming Friends who valued community. Some meetings that split built new meetinghouses, even on the same grounds, others used one building at different times, and they came back together in 1955. Newtown maintained one meetinghouse and was Hicksite (Elias Hicks was a cousin to Edward).

He also painted pictures of local farms to thank the families for supporting him. Fine art painting, music and dance were seen as distractions from faith in his era, so he was not well known then. This is no longer true and his paintings sell for millions.

Quakerism was founded in 1654 by George Fox in the northwest of England, during a period following the English Civil War when several dissenting Christian groups emerged. Fox disagreed with the Church of England and believed that one could have a direct experience of Christ. He preached his belief that he was returning to a true pure faith. His refusal to take off his hat and use honorific terms indicated his belief in equality in a world divided by class.

Quakers established communities in West Jersey in 1676 and Pennsylvania in 1682, facilitated by land grants from King Charles II to William Penn. Many Quakers moved from Britain (as well as Massachusetts and Virginia) where they were persecuted, to the new colony which Penn established using Quaker principles. A key principle was freedom to worship for all faiths. He is said to have negotiated a treaty with the indigenous residents of this area, ensuring peaceful co-existence.

From the early days, women were included in the business of a meeting, pastoral care and ministry. Until 1892, women held a separate business meeting from the men, divided by a wall. Decisions were conveyed to the men's meeting. Business today is conducted by a Clerk and Assistant Clerk in a meeting for worship for business. A decision is reached when the meeting as a whole feels that the "way forward" has been discerned (also called "coming to unity"). It does not require consensus (when all agree), a vote, or the opinion of a single person, but reflects a deep spiritual sense of community discernment.

Currently you can find "liberal" non-pastoral, unprogrammed Quaker meetings in the Philadelphia area and throughout the country. There are also programmed pastoral and evangelical (orthodox and conservative) branches of Quakerism in the US, influenced by the 19th century revival movements with different beliefs and practices. Surprising to many, the largest community of Quakers is in Kenya, thanks to the early 20th century missionary activities.

Quakerism is generally considered a Christian protestant religion. There are no Quaker sacraments, symbols, or creeds. Core beliefs include that there is that of God in everyone (The Inner Light), continuing revelation (our understanding of Truth evolves), and putting faith into action. Some Friends call God by different names, some are nontheist. Some believe strongly in Jesus as Christ while others see him as an important prophet and teacher. Reading, attending workshops/lectures and sharing with each other deepen our spiritual journeys. Queries (questions) guide our individual and community reflection on how we live up to our values.

Testimonies are the ways we demonstrate in our daily lives our underlying values and beliefs. They are remembered with an acronym: SPICES, which include Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Stewardship. Simplicity- don't let material goods get in the way of your relationship with God (whatever word you use), Peace-resolving conflicts without aggression, Integrity-being true to your values, you will always speak Truth, honest in your business transactions. Community-care and respect for each other. Equality- now often called equity- treating people as equals, ensuring that they get what they need. We seek to create the kingdom of God on earth now, not in the afterlife.

Quakers have had long-standing concerns for education and care of aging adults. Quaker-founded institutions in Newtown include Newtown Friends School, George School, Pennswood Village, Friends Village and Chandler Hall. Early Friends established schools for children of color and local public schools. Friends are known for establishing settlement houses, abolition of slavery, women's suffrage, post-war relief, peace building, climate action, LGBTQ rights, and other social justice activities. Volunteering in these efforts is encouraged.

Worship here is in the non-pastoral tradition. We believe that God can speak directly to anyone, there is not a need for clergy interpretation. We gather in silence to seek guidance from the Spirit/God. Gathering together is different from meditating alone. People stand to share messages they feel are Spirit-led. Sometimes these follow a theme. Sometimes there are no messages. We have about 50 members and attenders on a typical Sunday.

Meeting responsibilities are shared through committees; there are no paid clergy. This contributes to a strong sense of community. Building & Grounds, Worship & Ministry, Care & Counsel, Religious Education, Peace & Justice, Finance.

Newtown (Monthly) Meeting is a part of Bucks Quarterly meeting (meets for business quarterly) with 13 other meetings in Bucks Co. region, and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, with over 100 meetings from PA, South Jersey, Maryland and Delaware. PYM is like a diocese, providing resources and guidance to local meetings. PYM is a part of the wider fellowship of unprogrammed Friends, Friends General Conference, with meetings from across the US and Canada. There are many other Quaker organizations including American Friends Service Committee, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Quaker UN Office, Pendle Hill study center, Earth Quaker Action Team, World Committee for Consultation, and many more. Quakers also collaborate with other faith communities on social justice issues. Roughly 80,000 in US.