

Quakers and peace

By Richard Hilken, Exeter Quaker Meeting

The religious persecutions by both Protestants and Catholics in the seventeenth century Thirty Years War led in England, in our Civil War, to the formation of a number of groups called 'Seekers' who tried to rediscover the teachings of Jesus within the different dogmas being imposed. As young man, George Fox recognised the value of this attempt to live in the spirit of Jesus without quibbling about words or doctrines and made it his life's work to share this understanding with others. Many joined him and thus formed our Religious Society of Friends or "Quakers".

Now, more than 350 years later, Quakers continue this approach to religion - and for convenience, we summarise our key 'guidelines' as Equality, Truth, Simplicity and Peace. Our concern for Peace is of long standing, having been first spelt out in detail when Quakers were accused of plotting against the Government in 1660 and reemphasized by our refusal to fight in the Crimean and Boer wars and more recently by our opposition to conscription in the First and Second World Wars for which many were imprisoned or (in the First World War) executed.

This week is one in which seven Quakers hope to share our understanding with you, since we believe that the world needs not uniformity, but justice, simplicity, honesty and (most of all) Peace.

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