The changing face of faith in Britain: How should Quakers respond?

Part 2: The spirituality of new Quakers

Francesca E. S. Montemaggi

QUAKERS

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Preface

The Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) is given the task of keeping Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) informed of the various movements towards cooperation within the Christian church and opportunities for interfaith dialogue, and responds on their behalf to other Churches and faith communities (*Quaker faith & practice* 9.13). In the rapidly changing world in which we live, the religious landscape in which we operate is also continuously on the move. Becoming aware of this, QCCIR began to ask questions, such as:

- How do Quakers fit into this changing religious landscape in Britain?
- What are the implications for British Quakers?
- What does it mean for the work of QCCIR now and in the future? Do we need to consider changing how we work, what we do or who we work with?

These are big, open questions and QCCIR agreed to commission a piece of work that would help us along our way. An application to use legacy funding was successful and we commissioned the work from the Centre for Research in Quaker Studies (CRQS) at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre. As can often be true of research projects, the answers we received are not necessarily those we expected. There is more work to be done, but the conversation has begun.

The brief given to CRQS was wide-ranging and complex. It encompassed an academic literature review, a survey of people new to Quakers to see what attracted them to the Society, a review of current contacts with religious or spiritual groups, and, finally, research on new faith and faith-based organisations in Britain with similar values to ours which QCCIR might wish to work with in the future. The timescale was tight, and further work may be commissioned to take parts of the brief further forward. The end result, entitled 'The changing face of faith in Britain: How should Quakers respond?', lends itself to division into various parts, each of which needs to be treated slightly differently.

The first part, *The changing face of faith in Britain*, is an academic paper which comprises an overview and commentary on religion in Britain today written by CRQS researcher Francesca Montemaggi. It is available from the publications team at Friends House.

This second part, titled *The spirituality of new Quakers*, comprises the results of a survey and interviews of 'new Quakers' – that is, those who have been attending Quaker meetings for less than three years. The purpose of the survey was to help QCCIR to understand more about the religious context of newcomers and whether they were coming from a background of formal religion or some of the new faith-based organisations. The survey, undertaken by Francesca Montemaggi, teased out what attracted newcomers to Quakerism and then looked in more detail at their spiritual and religious identities. A summary of the findings can be found on p. 4. The analysis of the results makes up the main body of the report, and the detailed findings can be found in Appendix 1.

QCCIR trusts that this paper will be of interest to many in BYM, and especially Quaker Life and the Vibrancy in Meetings Pilot Project.

Summary of findings

1. 'New Quakers' – those who have started attending meeting for worship within the last three years – come from Christian backgrounds, but have often disaffiliated before attending Quaker meetings. New Quakers are 'seekers' of a religious environment in which they can express their spirituality without adherence to a set of beliefs. They value theological openness.

2. New Quakers feel 'at home' because they feel accepted for who they are as individuals. Quaker liberalism means that many people who have suffered (and still may suffer) marginalisation in other contexts, such as LGBT and disabled people, feel they can be themselves.

3. Silent worship is found to be central to the identity of Quakers. It is experiential and reflects the testimony to simplicity. Quaker worship is intertwined with ethics. It supports the ethical formation of the person.

4. Quaker spirituality combines contemplative practice with social activism. However, Quaker activism takes place in external organisations and everyday life rather than within the Quaker community. Quakers are not party political, but seem to have a consistent and uniform ethical-political identity.

5. Quakers value the Christian roots of Quakerism and some would feel excluded if the Society became solely concerned with spirituality. Others are uncomfortable with Christian language and associate Christianity with a rigid theology. Informants would welcome the opportunity to learn more about the varieties of Quakerism and how others understand being a Quaker. This would allow better understanding of different perspectives on religious language and would prevent or resolve conflict.

6. New Quakers do not come from any particular new group or spiritual background.

Methodology

The research was completed in the 15-week period allocated to the project by QCCIR. Data collection included a qualitative questionnaire enquiring into the religious/spiritual background of new Quakers as they grew up, their religious/spiritual belonging just before they started attending Quaker meetings, and what they value most about being a Quaker/attender (see Appendix 1 for the survey questions and Appendix 2 for the full results).

The questionnaire was originally meant for Quakers who had been attending for less than three years; however, the way it was distributed led to long-standing Quakers, too, responding to the survey. The total number of respondents was 225, although some did not answer all the questions. The software did not allow further selective sampling. The survey gives a picture of Quaker members and attenders regardless of how long they have been attending meetings. However, the specific responses quoted in the report come only from those who have been attending for less than three years.

There was a tendency among respondents to ignore all the options listed in the survey and opt for 'other' so that they could provide context or give specific information. Although some of these comments were useful to the research and provided insights, the results were too skewed to 'other' to be worth reproducing. There were two 'open' questions that asked informants to say what they valued most in Quakerism and, at the end of the survey, to add any further comment. Respondents took the opportunity to talk about their own lives, often at length, which provided a larger and more nuanced picture of their spiritual and religious identity and experience. Some also commented that they appreciated the open questions and the opportunity to share their thoughts.

The dataset also included 19 interviews, which were conducted over the phone or on Skype. The lack of any face-to-face encounter with informants prevented the interviewer from building a relationship with them. Consequently, interviews were less natural than they might have been, and did not allow communication through body language. Moreover, interviews over the phone are tiring for both interviewer and interviewee, and some were affected by technical faults that made the conversation more difficult. However, interviewees spoke freely about their backgrounds and about their experiences of Quaker meetings. Some felt they could also share very personal experiences that illustrated their spiritual journey.

Respondents have been anonymised and given pseudonyms taken from Jane Austen's novels. With regard to terminology, the report uses the term 'New Quakers' to identify those who have been attending for less than three years, whether they are members or attenders. Local Quaker groups are referred to as 'Meetings' with a capital 'M' to avoid confusion from other meanings of the word. The 2013 British Quaker Survey (BQS) was taken into consideration when designing the survey. The BQS results for those involved for less than three years – or, rather, those tables to which this report refers – are included in Appendix 2.

The spirituality of new Quakers

1 Discovering Quakerism

Most members and attenders first came to Quakerism through a Quaker family member, friend or acquaintance. This is consistent with the findings of the BQS (Heron, 1994: p. 12). Quakers embody Quaker values and their lives are representative of Quakerism. Some respondents commented that they had been attracted to Quakerism by the way the Quakers they knew behaved. Some – 28 out of 224 – had come to Quakerism through the study of religion and general reading, while 19 had come into contact with Quakerism after seeing a meeting house. Initial findings show that most respondents had a Christian background; yet only just over half of those with a Christian upbringing identified as Christian before they began coming to Quaker meetings. Twice as many people said that they had no religion just before coming to Quakerism as said that they were brought up with no religion. Therefore, although most respondents came from a Christian background, many of them were 'lapsed' Christians. These would be counted among the 'nones', who are now growing in number in the UK. There were also respondents who, just before first coming to Meetings, had experience of other religions and who reported being spiritual seekers.

2 The religion/non-religion of new Quakers

Most respondents (147, or 71%) had a Christian background, yet only 87 identified as Christian before coming to Quakerism, which suggested an increase in 'lapsed' Christians. In addition, while only 35 said that they had not had a religious background growing up, 61 said that they had no religion before coming to Quakerism. Again, this shows an increase in the number of 'nones' among those who then came to Quakerism. Similarly, while only five said that they were brought up in a religion other than Christianity, around 30 reported having experience of other religions and being spiritual seekers (it is not possible to give an exact number as it is derived from the 'open' responses, under 'Other', which require interpretation. The data from the BQS (Hampton, 2014) also show that the majority of Quakers (66.7%) come from a Christian background, with a further 5.7% who are 'Christian mixed', which comprises people who had an upbringing that was Christian but mixed with other traditions. Those with no religious upbringing (including atheists) constituted 14.4% of respondents in Hampton's survey.
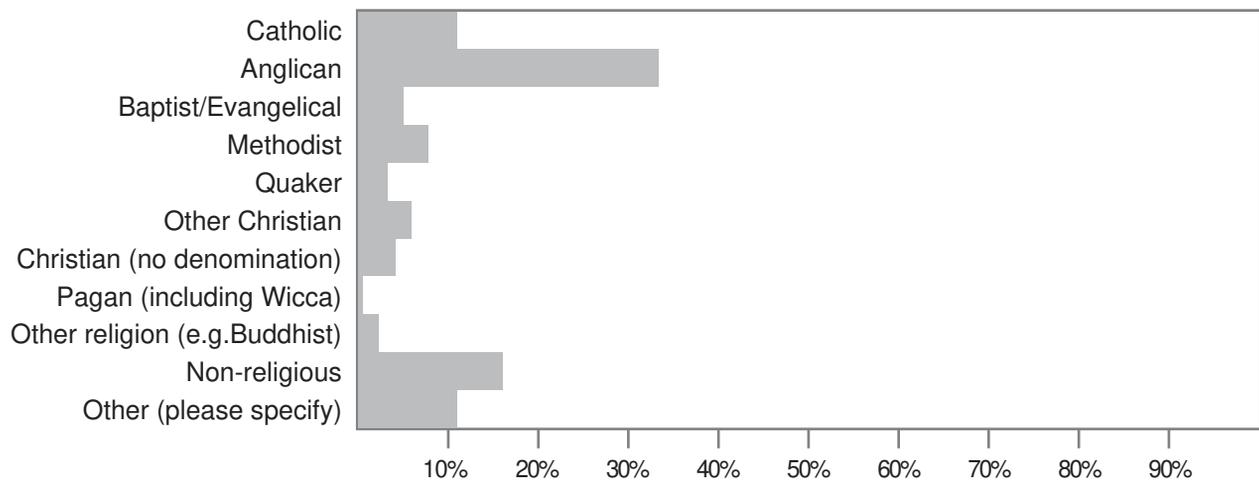

**Fig. 1** What was your religious/spiritual background when growing up?
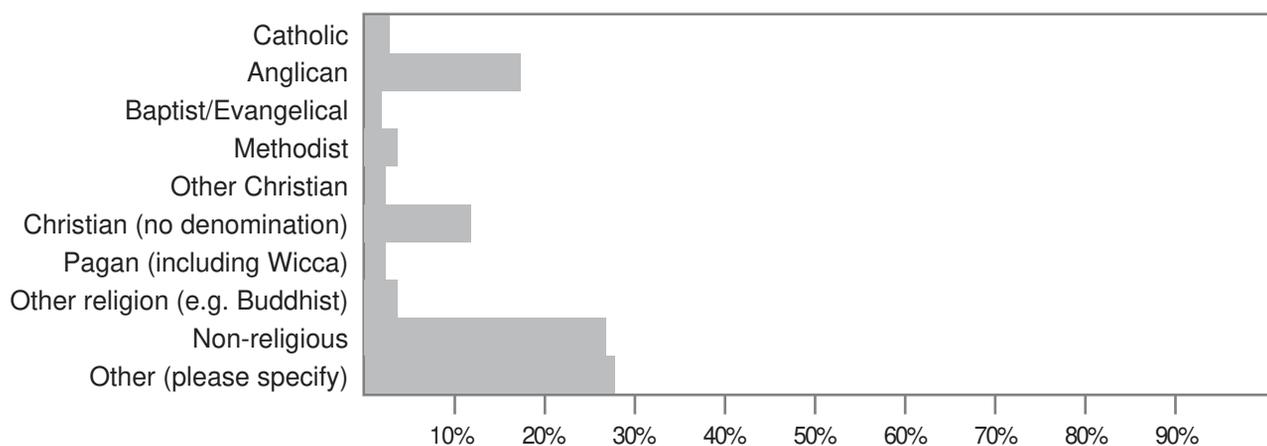
Fig. 2 How would you describe your religious/spiritual belonging just before coming to Quaker meetings?

The data from the above two questions show that there is no single grouping from which newcomers arrive, nor one single route to attendance, but that there is a significant

proportion of 'nones' or 'unchurched' coming to Quaker meetings, which is consistent with the finding of Alastair Heron's (1994) survey, that 40% of new members were 'unchurched' or 'lapsed' members who no longer belong to a faith group. The 2013 BQS (Hampton, 2014) posed a different question, asking whether respondents came to Quakerism directly from another group. It found that 63.8% did not. This does not mean that 63.8% would describe themselves as 'unchurched', or even as 'nones'; rather, it means that no specific faith group is likely to represent a pathway to Quakerism (see also chapter 5 on how this impacts Quaker relationships with 'new groups'). Of those who did say that they came directly from another group, the overwhelming majority (76.2%) had come from a Christian group, with 7.9% coming from a meditation group and 7.9% from Buddhism.

The data show that the majority of new Quakers have a Christian background and are therefore familiar, to some extent at least, with religious language and practices. The data also point to a dissatisfaction with past experience in Christian churches. This is supported by the comments made by both survey respondents and interviewees. Two key themes emerge from the narratives of respondents and interviewees: their experience of church and their search for spiritual expression. In the first case, new Quakers often report dissatisfaction with their experience of church. In the second case, they report seeking a religious/spiritual practice that is more 'authentic' and meaningful to them, which they have found in the theological openness and contemplative style of Quaker worship.

The next section explores how new Quakers relate to religion and, in particular, to Christianity, and how that colours their understanding of Quakerism.

3 Theological openness

Many new Quakers report that they left a church from which they found themselves theologically or culturally distant, or (especially if they have moved to a new location) tried a Quaker meeting in their search for a spiritual home. The most common complaint regarding their experience of church concerns doctrinal statements. Sometimes, this was just a matter of the words of hymns or of official church literature that respondents did not agree with; but sometimes an explicit commitment to a statement of faith was required – when joining a new church, for instance. New Quakers report that they did not feel they agreed with their church's statement of faith and so they left and later began attending Quaker meetings. Such integrity is central to Quaker identity – a point that I explore in section 7. For the moment, I will concentrate on the rejection of doctrine in favour of theological openness.

Pink Dandelion (1996) has identified different historical phases of Quakerism and argued that the current 'age' is one of prescriptive pluralism, where 'truth' can be known only "personally, partially, or provisionally" (Dandelion, 2008: p. 35). The encouragement 'to be open to new light', which originated in the 1931 Yearly Meeting (Punshon, 1989: p. 15), signalled a fundamental break from the past. It grounded Quakerism in a continual search for 'truth', which Dandelion (2008) calls "the absolute perhaps": "the prescription of seeking as the normative mode of belief, a rigorous conformist aspect of the otherwise liberal belief culture" (Dandelion, 2008: p. 34). Liberal Quakerism is thus "held together not by what it believes but by *how* it believes" (Dandelion, 2008: p. 34, emphasis in the original). Hence the centrality of individual experience, which allows diversity as long as it is framed in a continual spiritual search rather than any form of certainty.

Quakerism's theological openness allows a variety of views to coexist. That means that Quakerism can include Anglicans and other Christians seeking an emphasis on spiritual practice, as well as atheists. Emma remarks that Quakerism is "a complementary side of my faith journey alongside Anglicanism". Frank, in contrast, found in Quakerism a more authentic way to express Christianity: "For me it's about having a faith that is a spiritual practice rather than a set of rules, which is what I feel Christianity should be." Quakerism is also a home even for atheists, as Fredrick's comment suggests: "While a lifelong atheist I was looking for an outlet for my sense of the spiritual."

These observations show how people who have very different relationships with religion feel that Quakerism can accommodate such variety. Many respondents started going to Quaker meetings because they were looking for something that was not dogmatic. This includes people who do not want a precise theological position, as Jane explains:

> [Quakerism] released me from the pressure of being able to answer questions in black and white (e.g. do you believe in God?) and focus on more meaningful and helpful questions that have a larger impact on myself or others' lives.

Theological openness is often experienced as acceptance of different points of view. What is valued is the absence of judgemental attitudes and expectations of conformity.

The following response by Marianne, listing the things she most values in Quakerism, suggests that the lack of a set creed frees people from a need to conform while opening the door to an exploration of faith and spirituality with others:

> The chance to explore spirituality and God with Friends, without pressure to conform or hold back on offering thoughts and sharing experiences. True Friendship and

willingness to address the issues of life within a faith framework, without judgement or prejudice. Truth and openness and acceptance.

A long response from Mary makes several important points which highlight how Quakerism is interpreted and practised, its significant characteristics, and how these relate to both religion and wider society. It is worth citing in full below. Mary first describes her experience of Quakerism as "liberating" and suggests that it is "a more authentic way of practising [her] faith". Quakerism's authenticity, for her, lies not only in its theological openness and its contemplative worship, but also in its values. Specifically, she identifies Quaker meetings as inclusive and free from prejudice and discrimination with regard to sexual orientation and equality between men and women. Quakerism is peaceful, liberal and universalistic, allowing a spiritual expression that she feels is repressed not only in dogmatic churches but also in the secular environment, dominated as it is by a reductive scientific mentality:

> Being part of a Quaker meeting has been a very liberating and positive experience for me. Prior to attending, I spent many years searching for a more authentic way of practising my faith. I grew up in an Anglican tradition but struggled with more evangelical/dogmatic parts of this church movement and elements of prejudice and discrimination that I observed in the church organisation (e.g. opposition to female bishops; teachings on sexuality etc). Professionally I work within a scientific environment that is heavily dominated by atheist/darwinist views and leaves little room for spiritual discussion. It has been crucial to me to find a way of practising my faith that allowed for openness to individual experience and was non-dogmatic in its approach. My first experience of attending my Quaker meeting felt like it 'clicked'. I had some previous experience of meditation so was not daunted by the idea of sitting in silence for an hour. I was struck by how rich and inclusive the silence was. Since then, I've gradually found a place in the meeting. It has supported me tremendously through personally challenging times and gives me support and hope in politically turbulent times. I feel that Quakerism fills an important niche that is currently neglected in modern Christian religion where there are strong movements for conservatism, evangelism, traditionalism but much less for peaceful liberal and universalistic approaches. Being part of a Quaker meeting gives me a spiritual identity that I am proud of with values that I wholeheartedly support. My experience with Quakerism has also enabled me to feel more confident in exploring the views of others and entering into discussion with people that I meet with more fundamentalist (Christian or atheist) views. It has given me more confidence and hope for the continued role of peaceful religion in society.

Mary's comments capture perfectly what new Quakers value, according to the data from the survey and the interviews, but also their political and cultural identity (see section 7). She sought for many years for a more authentic way of practising her faith and found it with the Quakers. Starting to attend Quaker meetings is often the result of a search for a church that can cater for one's spiritual needs while being non-dogmatic. The lack of dogmatism in Quakerism instils a sense of acceptance and belonging among those who have started attending Quaker meetings in the last three years. In particular, a strong sense of 'finding home' emerges from the stories that new Quakers tell. This is similar to the narratives of finding home and one's true self of adherents of paganism (Johnston, 2013) and in stark contrast with the narratives of conversion and 'deconversion' that are so common among evangelicals (Fazzino, 2014; Bielo, 2012).

Some interviewees had been evangelicals or had some experience of conservative evangelical churches. For instance, Susan began attending Quaker meetings to avoid the militaristic and triumphant tone of Remembrance services every November in her Baptist church. She chose the Quakers because she was aware of their pacifism. She does not feel that moving from evangelicalism to Quakerism was a particularly big step. In line with the Quaker narrative of continuity, she explains:

> In terms of doctrine, personally what I believe, I have always been on the liberal edge of my churches and groups, so my views have become a little more liberal, but it's not been a massive step for me… Because I felt [that] gradually my understanding of my faith was evolving over several years, for instance issues of personal ethics and morality, things like gay people, things like divorce, for a long time I probably differed on the hard-line evangelical position that some people in my churches would have agreed to… and other issues, things like the role of women in church that was a big influence on my spiritual life, kind of struggling with that in the evangelical tradition I came from, and also an acceptance of other denominations.

Susan acknowledges that she has shifted her position in terms of doctrine, yet she feels that the step she has taken is not so significant because there has not been a change in her ethics. The continuity rests on her liberal ethics. This is important because Quaker identity has a strong ethical component. We have seen that theologically Quakers are liberal and open to a variety of positions, including atheism, and other religious traditions. Thus, theology does not constitute an identity boundary, while ethics do. The narratives of continuity are not meant to deny the changes that new Quakers experience as they begin to attend meetings regularly and become Quakers; rather, they emphasise the elements of self-realisation and acceptance.

Before we explore further the theme of 'finding home', it is worth noting that leaving one's church or religious community can come at a high cost, including conflict with family members, as Susan recounts:

> Both our families are quite conservative evangelical, both [of] our sets of parents have found it very difficult. They have been quite upset that we've been going to Quakers. They feel that we have strayed from the true path. So that's been quite a difficult thing and that's something a lot of Quakers don't understand what it is like being an evangelical Christian unless they are also with an evangelical background. They just don't get why anyone would view them with suspicion… We have three young children. The most important thing, especially for my husband's parents, the most important thing in terms of how they view our parenting is the extent to which we raise our children with an evangelical understanding of the world. Their view of whether we are good parents or not good parents is very much based on 'Are we bringing up our children as Christians?' – and by that they mean a specific kind of Christianity. So, to leave was a big deal, in terms of family pressure and in the church itself. The minister emailed my husband… and said, "You do know that Quakers are not Christians, they are heretics." So, to leave took a huge amount of certainty in our own hearts, but that was right for us.

At first, their move to Quakerism caused a deep split in the family. Susan told me that both her and her husband's parents gave her children Bibles and Bible story books, reflecting a deep concern that they would not be brought up as true Christians. The wounds have since healed and Susan's family seems to have come to accept her and her

husband's choice; yet it has been a difficult journey. Had her husband not made the same theological journey, Susan might have found herself alone. Her experience shows that preferring the Quakers' theological openness and acceptance should not be seen as 'the easy option'; sometimes it is a painful choice that requires resolve. For Susan, being a Quaker means that she is no longer 'the outside voice arguing for change' but 'the inside voice'. She and her husband have found home.

4 Finding home

Most interviewees and many survey respondents refer to coming to Quakerism as "finding home". New Quakers talk of seeking "something different", "something more authentic", or express a dissatisfaction with their experience of church or another religious or non-religious environment before they explored Quakerism. Quakerism might have been known to some, but in most cases it was a new way of practising spirituality; yet the narrative of 'finding home' in Quaker meetings comes out strongly. This can be contrasted with the narratives of evangelicals, for whom the move from non-religious or non-evangelical to evangelical is central to their identity. The evangelical narrative of conversion concerns a change of mindset, which sets their lives within a religious framework (Montemaggi, 2013).

New Quakers find a home in a Quaker meeting partly because of its theological openness, but also because of its contemplative worship and the shared ethical values. Interviewees talk of feeling at home, but also discovering that they were Quakers without knowing it even before they encountered Quakerism. Asked whether they feel in any way changed by being a Quaker, some of them report a degree of change in terms of behaviour and of being more mindful in their relationships with others; yet such change as there is is unintentional, the result of Quaker practice. This contrasts with the narrative of intentionality that can be found among evangelicals (Montemaggi, 2013). The overarching narrative of finding home thus stresses continuity rather than change. This is often reinforced with a contrast with previous religious experience, as in this comment from Elinor:

> In other churches, I felt more on the fringes, more like a spectator, watching something and not taking part, not wholeheartedly… You can't worship half-heartedly. Since I've been going to the Quaker meeting, I feel at home, I feel in the right place.

Elinor was brought up a Methodist, but later found that she did not want to subscribe to a set creed and the words of the hymns that were sung, although she did not find the Methodist church dogmatic. She realised that there were many Quakers in the peace and justice organisations she joined, such as Amnesty International and the Peace Council, and she felt that Quakers were "like-minded people", and yet she attended (and, at times, still attends) a Unitarian church. She appreciates the inclusiveness and open-mindedness of Quakers, and their continual quest for truth. Although she feels at home, she admits to not feeling "Quakerly enough". The boundary she draws, however, is related not to values or worship but to a state of mind:

> I don't feel Quakerly enough. I don't think I have what other Quakers have. I think it's because I got to it late in life. It's quite a big change. I'm happy with it, but I don't feel I have the right mindset yet. I'm just feeling my way, I think… I don't think I have the same serenity, calmness, moral strength.

She feels at home in Quaker meetings, she is "happy with it", yet she senses that a change of attitude is needed in order to be "Quakerly enough". Being a Quaker therefore involves a distinctive attitude. However, many interviewees report that that attitude is something they already had and it only needed a 'home', the right environment in which it could be expressed. That is why many Quakers declare that they have been Quaker all their lives without knowing it. This is similar to subculture narratives of being able to

realise one's authentic self within a particular subculture (Williams, 2003; Wood, 2003).

Lydia exemplifies the way that new Quakers find the 'home' in which they can be themselves:

> I realised that I had a lot of friends in my life who were Quakers and I really admired how they were in their lives. I had a friend who told me about Quakerism and I thought: "Actually I've been living this life all my life"… I really feel comfortable going to Quakers. I realised that I was a Quaker all of my life without knowing it… At Quakers I can just be me.

Lydia is a feminist from a Catholic family, who later joined the Methodist church but left it because she felt that it wanted to minimise the problem of sexual abuse. She practised Celtic and feminist spirituality and then, after moving to a new city, started going to Quaker meetings, where she feels she can 'marry' Celtic feminism with Quakerism. A disabled and retired woman, she is "very straightforward and honest", which, she told me, can get her "into problems sometimes because people don't understand when you're saying something without embroidering it".

She is also a lesbian, who finds that at Quakers she can just be herself. The acceptance of difference is something that interviewees find valuable. That they 'find home' among Quakers is thus also a result of Quakers' liberal politics and value of diversity. This is particularly so for people with disabilities and people who are LGBT or come from LGBT families. Diana recounts below how she chose to go to Quaker meetings because of their liberal views on LGBT. Her parents had experienced marginalisation by religious people and so she had felt she was doing 'something wrong' by being in a religious group.

> My parents are lesbians and we were not accepted by people in the area. We were treated as outsiders. People from the local church were particularly unfriendly towards my family. I found it quite difficult as a child because I think I really did believe in God then. I've always believed in God… So, for a while I was very much non-denominational, but had these kind of feelings about existence and about God. I guess I was a bit scared to admit them to my parents because my parents have always – I guess their experience of a church and kind of religion in general has always been one of ostracism. I didn't want to talk to them much about it 'cause I felt that maybe they thought I was doing a bad thing because I felt spiritual but I knew that, like, lots of religions wouldn't accept me or my parents and who they were.

Diana captures how for the LGBT community the experience of churches and religious people is one of marginalisation, so much so that she felt she was wronging her parents by being religious. Such experiences of marginalisation are personally painful and colour people's views of religion in general and their relationship with it. However, attitudes towards LGBT people and same-sex marriage have changed dramatically in the past few decades. In 1983, 75% of Catholics, 80% of Anglicans and other Christians and 58% of people not affiliated to any faith group saw same-sex relationships as morally wrong. By 2013, this had fallen to 20% of Catholics, 33% of Anglicans and other Christians and 13% of the non-affiliated (Clements, 2017). Views on homosexuality, same-sex marriage, gender, and sexuality more broadly have become more liberal in the UK (Harding, 2017) – and yet that does not change the fact that it is still rare for religious communities openly to value diversity, especially in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity. Diana is not a lesbian, but she has suffered from the marginalisation that her lesbian

parents experienced. In her interview, she told me that she looked online for religious groups that would not "hate gays" and that Quakers came near the top. She started attending with her partner and found herself accepted and welcomed:

> We felt really welcome, everyone was so lovely and sweet. It just felt like a really safe environment… It's really a safe space for me, no one judges me for needing disability benefits, and no one judges me for having gay parents.

5 Members, attenders and community

Most respondents had found a home in Quakerism, even those who also attend services in other religious establishments. Most also found Quaker meetings overall friendly and welcoming. However, they say that more should be done to include newcomers. In response to question 7 of the survey, just over half of respondents (53%) thought that the first meeting had been good and could not have been better, but 26% would have liked a discussion after the meeting, 21% would have liked more explanation of the structure of the meeting and what to expect, just over 10% would have liked an explanatory leaflet, and 10% would have liked the meeting to be more friendly. Nearly 18% of respondents chose the option 'other', although the sentiments they expressed related for the most part to a lack of clarity about the structure of the meeting, the language used, the lack of discussion afterwards, and a degree of unfriendliness.

A leaflet could easily address the lack of information available about the structure of the meeting and what to expect. It could make newcomers feel more at ease by explaining, for instance, when the meeting starts and when it is over, and the nature of ministry. Welcoming newcomers should be seen as a task not just for clerks and greeters but for everyone. The tea and coffee time after the meeting provides an opportunity to make conversation with newcomers and make them feel welcome. Some respondents, including some who had been attending for years, describe their group as "cliquey". People who have been attending meetings for many years are familiar with Quaker culture, language, literature, and practices, and newcomers can feel excluded. The tendency for like-minded people and people who have known each other for a long time to cluster together is very human, but the effort should be made to ensure that everyone feels part of the group. Shared activities, be they learning, volunteering or worship, are key in building relationships within each local Meeting. That may also require mixing people so that they are not always in the same group.

Most respondents favour the idea of discussion after the meeting or in a separate meeting in the week. This would provide an opportunity to learn more about Quakerism as well as to build the community. Regular events and discussions already happen in larger, active local Meetings. Organising discussions and study time may sound burdensome, but it is important that local Meetings prioritise such activities. Augusta makes this observation:

> The system of funding is too rigid and the expectations placed on very small meetings onerous – people are overburdened by multiple 'jobs' in connection with running of the society.

One interviewee mentioned that a friend had been burdened with tasks soon after joining the Quakers and had left as a result. The organisational structure and duties for local Meetings are beyond the remit of this review; but a review might be helpful in identifying best practice in how to run Meetings.

The organisational structure of Meetings is not made easier by the distinction between members and attenders, which respondents found unclear. There is virtually no difference in practice between member and attenders, even at business meetings, and this creates a disincentive to become members. In the survey, 35% of respondents were members and another 21% were considering applying for membership. Of the other 44%, many who report no intention of joining cite not having enough time, not wanting to be more involved

in running the organisation, feeling that they do not belong to the Quaker movement, or belonging to another religious or spiritual group. Many also describe themselves as not being 'joiners'. Membership is often associated with organisational tasks; yet some respondents also cite not being ready to commit to the Society. Many also hesitate to join because they are not clear about what membership means. Academic research suggests that when a religious organisation demands a lower level of commitment, membership decreases (Torry, 2017). It is worth considering what membership should entail, whether there should be different types of membership, and how membership should be explained to attenders.

Respondents who are members feel that membership has added to their sense of belonging and their commitment to fellowship with other Quakers and to their spiritual journey. Oddly, none of the respondents or interviewees mention business meetings specifically. When talking about their experience of Quakerism, they mostly focus on the worship, the ethical way of life and community, but they have very little to say about business meetings. Overall, the 'democratic' nature of local Meetings is appreciated, as William's comment conveys:

> Its organisation, its forms of governance, its membership model – it's a society, it's based on equality and democracy. It conducts its business meetings [through] a form of consensus decision-making.

The lack of clarity over the difference between membership and attendance could be addressed at a discussion evening. Again, teaching might address some of the organisational issues that local Meetings face. The BQS found that Quakers learnt about Quakerism mostly from books (56.2%) and leaflets (53.3%) and by watching or listening to others (51.4%), followed by post-meeting discussion (32.4%), ministry (27.6%) and study groups (25.7%) (Hampton, 2014).

Respondents to the present survey who have attended courses at Woodbrooke comment that they have found them very useful. Indeed, some remark that people who have long been members do not seem to practise the same Quakerism as that taught at Woodbrooke or are not interested in learning and engaging with the tradition of Quakerism. This touches on a wider point, addressed in section 8, relating to the Christian roots of Quakerism and the relationship of Quakers with Christianity today. Theological openness runs the risk of becoming indifference or even antipathy, leading to self-censorship. There seems to be a lack of opportunity in local Meetings to discuss what it means to be a Quaker.

From the interviews, it emerged that many attend Quaker meetings as individuals rather than as a family. The survey did not ask respondents whether they were single or in a couple, so it is hard to assess whether a high proportion of new Quakers are single or whether (as was the case with quite a few of the interviewees) they attend meetings without their families. Some mentioned their partners and children attending church
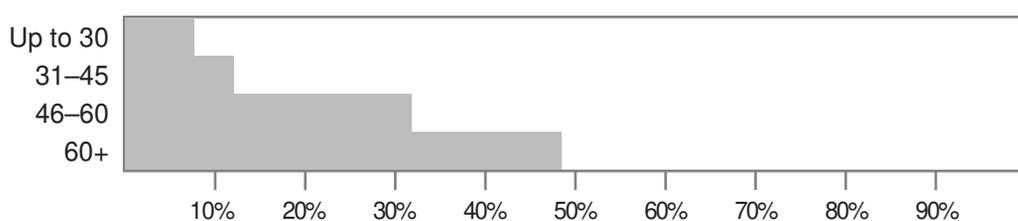

Fig. 3 Age of survey respondents

because churches tend to have children's groups. The structure of Quaker worship, of one-hour silence, can make accommodating children an issue, although some Meetings make efforts to include children. The demographics of the respondents to the survey, as shown in Fig. 3, indicate that nearly half (48%) were aged over 60, 32% were aged between 46 and 60, 12% were between 31 and 45, and just over 7% were aged 30 years or younger. Thus, young adults and young families are a small minority. This is likely to be even more marked in rural areas.

There is a wider point to be made about Quaker worship and religion. Being focused on individual experience, as section 4.6 explains, Quakerism runs the risk of being overly individualistic. Dandelion (2014) reports that the respect for privacy often leads to a lack of support from one's local Meeting:

> Friends facing personal difficulties often complain that they have felt unsupported, but it may be that we are now unsure where oversight ends and intrusion begins. When I told a fellow elder that my mother had died and I wouldn't be coming to the meeting, she mistook my attempt to let everyone know as a confidence… We enjoy this relative freedom of not being held accountable to and by our meetings any more. However it does mean we have lost the art of knowing each other very well, of our lives being interwoven as a community.

> (Dandelion, 2014: p. 30)

Quaker worship is centred on personal, inward experience, but it is not necessarily individualistic. Indeed, as the data in the next section suggest, there is an appreciation of the collective experience of worship and the feeling of being welcome. Building community is something that requires continual commitment – it is a challenge for all groups, religious or otherwise. From my own observation of a variety of religious groups, friendship and fellowship do not come naturally or easily. However, a welcoming and supportive community is more likely to attract and retain members. More importantly, close relationships of trust and friendship sustain people in their everyday lives and their spiritual development, as Thomas suggests:

> The first time I went to a meeting felt like home to me straight away. I really appreciate the silence. I liked the space and time to contemplate my spiritual journey… I'd always come out feeling refreshed like a weekly reset. I attributed that to the space for silence but also the people there. I was able to talk about my concerns.

6 The prominence of silent worship

Respondents identify with the Quaker spirituality of stillness and value the silence of worship. Some had tried forms of meditation or silence before attending Quaker meetings. Often, this was in Christian contexts. For instance, Lydia practised meditation with a group of nuns, while Harriet told me she had been "exposed to a deeper spirituality" at the Acorn Christian Healing Foundation, and had learnt listening skills through churches. She had encountered meditation and discovered that she really liked silence. Some, too, had explored other religions before joining the Quakers, such as William, who had practised Buddhism for 14 years. He was attracted to Quakerism for its simplicity:

> For reasons that I don't think I can actually explain, I have always held an interest in a kind of simple aesthetic, really, which is one of the reasons why I was attracted to [Zen] Buddhism, rather than other forms of Buddhism, and one of the reasons why I was attracted to Quakerism – the emphasis on a stripped-back spiritual practice, without adornment.

Simplicity is one of the testimonies that is mentioned most often. It is largely understood as not being acquisitive and not being wasteful in buying goods. It has, as William points out, an aesthetic dimension (Coleman and Collins, 2000). This is present in the look and demeanour of Quakers and the simple furnishing of meeting houses: Quakers dress simply and worship in surroundings without adornment. Among British Quakers, silent worship, too, is an expression of the testimony to simplicity. For William, the "essential" element of worship is the self-reflection, the going beyond the ego that puts life in perspective:

> The silent worship, meditation, that helps me gain a sense of perspective and self-knowledge as well as a general calming effect.

The contemplative nature of Quaker worship has for many a calming and centring effect, as it does Elizabeth:

> I'm quite an anxious person, I need to have silence to help with my thoughts, my feelings, and reboot. I'm reminded what my values are, my beliefs, what I aim for. I find it an anchor.

Respondents also appreciate the discipline that contemplative practice entails. Sitting in silence for one hour every week and practising meditation during the week are challenging but rewarding exercises, as 75-year-old Edmund told me. He had recently joined the Quakers and liked the simplicity of worship:

> It sounds very simple as a method of worship [but] I discovered… that it is in fact extremely challenging… I think you're thrown very much on your own resources to develop the spiritual side of your nature, and when you start to do that, then you begin to understand how other people operate and you learn with them and from them… I think most human beings have got a deep desire for their spiritual nature, but are prevented by all sorts of reasons. I think I was. It's almost like a lack of confidence in yourself. It does mean having to let go, to release a lot of emotions. If you are a cerebral kind of mind, [if] you're intellectually biased, as I am, that's even more difficult. You've got to give up something. You've got to release yourself in order to begin to explore the spirit.

Edmund highlights some key points of Quaker worship and spirituality. First, silent worship is challenging. This is not simply due to the requirement to sit in silence for one hour; rather, it is related to the way of losing oneself in the silence. Worship is an exercise in quieting the mind and becoming aware of oneself and of others. For Edmund, the contemplation allows one to be in touch with one's spiritual nature. Second, therefore, worship is an exercise in developing one's awareness of human spirituality. Third, as Edmund suggests, spirituality is experiential and involves releasing oneself from the mind as the sole source of knowledge. Spiritual experience is central to Quakerism (Dandelion, 2014; Johns, 2013).

Not unlike what Magliocco (2012) calls the "participatory consciousness" of Witchcraft and Paganism, Quaker spiritual experience is not solely individual and inward, but has a collective element. Catherine, who began attending Quaker meetings after her retirement, captures the 'authenticity' of Quaker worship and spirituality that lies in the connection with the collective:

> …the sense of being in silence in company, the sense of exploration, the sense of totally different depths you can achieve, or the filled room can achieve… It's quite different from a personal meditation… It has to do with what it is you're connecting with, what is in you and what is outside. From a collective, I find authenticity from what is within and from what is without.

Quakers do not simply sit in silence. People 'minister' by reading a text or sharing a reflection when moved by 'the Spirit'. Thus, the silence is interspersed with spoken word. Both the silence and the words are an expression of a shared spiritual experience. Dandelion states that Quaker worship gives "communal intentionality and internal space to feel together the life of the Spirit that is with us all the time" (Dandelion, 2014: p. 18). Some respondents comment that members' ministry does not always appear to be 'moved by the Spirit' but, rather, flows from a wish to tell the community about their lives. One survey respondent who had been attending for more than three years observes:

> The basic and important thing, meeting for worship, I sometimes find difficult because, it seems to me, people – usually members of some years' standing – don't seem to practise ministry in the way I understand it to be. Often they talk about holidays or the news, in a way which has not and does not intend any spiritual encouragement. It is just like a chat which we could have after meeting. There was a really good 'Woodbrooke on the Road' about meeting for worship and ministry, but I think this needs to be repeated constantly because some people who attended did not seem to take it on board. Perhaps those who have been members for some time just want to do things the way they always have. I am not the only attender who thinks this way and is disappointed.

This complaint poses some interesting questions about Quaker practices and the boundaries of Quakerism. First, the fact that some people relate what is happening in their lives or give their thoughts on world events as ministry points to the lack of opportunity for conversation. The after-meeting tea and coffee time is too short for building community. Social events and other activities are an essential way to form and consolidate relationships and perhaps should be given more prominence.

Second, the complaint points up the way boundaries are set by both the structure of worship and the way 'worship' is interpreted. Best (2010, pp. 54–55) points out that outside Britain Quakers use 'programmed worship' which allows speech, music, song, and other

activities. He thinks that Quakers should move away from the current rigid adherence to the silent form of worship and explore other forms, such as semi-programmed worship, to be more inclusive.

Quakerism's theological openness is but one boundary marker for British Quakers. The centrality of silence in Quaker worship in Britain shows that it, too, is a significant boundary marker. The fact that none of the interviewees mentioned business meetings suggests that silent worship is much more salient in defining Quaker identity. This emphasis on silence, compounded by the lack of theological discussion, can leave Quakers 'without a map'. However, some appreciate the absence of such a map because they find the inward search rewarding, as Edmund does:

> Of the nature societies I have explored, Quakerism is in a way the easiest and most difficult in which to achieve that… [It is more difficult] because of the lack of certainty that you're starting to achieve some spiritual insight into yourself… It's a way, I think, of trying to explore some of the mysteries of life, but without a particular map to guide you. You're giving yourself over to the Spirit and in the Light in the hope that it will lead you forward. That sounds rather romantic, but it's not meant to be. It's rather more prosaic than that.

Asked about the lack of a 'map', he explains that "the guidelines start to emerge from talking to other Quakers about lots of things." It is in sharing with others that one explores what it means to be a Quaker. Dandelion refers to this as "mutual discernment" (Dandelion, 2014: p. 19). He writes:

> Understanding ourselves as a spiritual community led by God means that the community experience provides our only way of checking what is authentically divine.
>
> (Dandelion, 2014: p. 19)

The contemplative aspect of Quakerism is central to Quaker identity and it is valued by members and attenders. Prominent in Quakerism is the combination of contemplative practice and inward experience with activism in the public sphere (Pilgrim, 2008: p. 28). Quaker activism, often referred to as 'faith in action', is not peripheral to Quaker experience; rather, it is a defining characteristic. The association of Quakers with peace, in particular, has a long-standing history and is still prevalent today.

7 An ethical way of life

Members and attenders alike identify with the values encapsulated in the testimonies. They appreciate that being a Quaker needs to be translated into ethical conduct in everyday life. Quaker spirituality is distinctive in fusing contemplative practice with activism. However, Quaker activism takes place with external organisations: Quakers volunteer in local and national organisations such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace which campaign for human rights, peace, environmental protection, and support for refugees. Respondents valued Quaker openness to the work of other organisations and saw their own involvement with them as part of being a Quaker. However, they did not necessarily share their experience of volunteering at Quaker meetings. The social activism of Quakers appears to be individualistic rather than communal. It consists in an individual's action within the framework of an organisation external to the Quaker community.

'Faith in action' is regarded as an integral part of being a Quaker, but is rarely initiated by Meetings. The action of Quakers in local and national organisations stems from the testimonies, which are ethical-political in nature. The values of equality and justice, peace, truth and integrity, and simplicity and sustainability emphasise ethical behaviour without necessarily being grounded in theology. The same values can be found in other religious movements, and yet, together with worship, they seem to be what defines British Quakerism today. Thus, Augusta describes what being a Quaker means to her:

> A way of life, a set of values that I lead my life by. I know I can find others who share these values at meeting.

This "way of life" can often entail behaviour that differs from what society expects. William, who is an academic, recounts how he refused to participate in a team-building exercise that involved 'shooting' people:

> At work we were asked to go on a team-building exercise day, where the activities for team building involved running around in a wood 'shooting' people. I said that I was not prepared to be 'shot at' and 'shoot' other people on the grounds of pacifism. It's a small incident, but actually took some courage 'cause the majority of the people on the team-building day do that kind of thing.

Elinor, the woman who feels she is "not Quakerly enough", finds that there is a "common basis" on ethical issues, such as same-sex marriage and the possession of nuclear weapons. She describes Quakers as "tolerant and open-minded", listening "to each other with respect". It is such ethical values, she believes, that bring Quakers together:

> The thing that unites them [is] these basic human values. That's such a strong basis, more than belief. The most important thing is how you live, how you treat people. That's what makes Quakers united.

Marianne, who has worked in the NHS and was for a long time part of the United Reform Church, came to Quakerism after her husband died. She found she needed to "reclaim" her "identity and sense of worth". She sees Quakerism as being about "people before property". She values the potential of spirituality to "heal a broken world", and especially one that is "outward-looking". Elizabeth, likewise, talks of the way "everything has got very materialistic and everybody is in competition, which leads to anger." She finds that

all the Quaker testimonies are meaningful to her, although simplicity and peace are those she values most. She associates them with the endeavour to be respectful of others and to love one another, rather than compete, be envious of others and angry. For Lydia, a lesbian who has always been politically active, Quakerism allows her to marry her feminism with Celtic spirituality.

Quakers are 'political'. They volunteer and campaign for a variety of 'left-leaning' organisations, such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace and refugee organisations. As mentioned in section 4.4, on finding home, Quakerism constitutes a home for many who have found themselves marginalised for being LGBT, but also for feminists and peace campaigners. Its ethics have a political side. Quakers are not party political but seem to have a consistent and uniform ethical-political identity. There may indeed be contentious issues – the present study was too short and limited to be able to explore how far political views are shared – but the testimonies seem to ground a common philosophy and behaviour. Some informants described Quakers as "like-minded people" – to the point, as Susan remarks, of running the risk of being an "echo chamber".

Susan chose to attend Quaker meetings with her husband after a long time in evangelical circles. She recalls that as vegetarians they were mocked in church, whereas at Quaker lunches there is always vegetarian and even vegan food. She finds it refreshing to share that "wider awareness" of both the environment and consumerism. She told me that issues surrounding excessive consumerism, environmental protection and immigration would be an issue for conversation in the churches she experienced, whereas they are "self-evident" to Quakers. Commenting on the stark difference between her experience of evangelical church and Quakerism, she states:

> We felt we were the voice outside arguing for change, then found we were the inside voice. Our views are the default views. That's very comfortable, although I'm kind of aware that it might make me too comfortable and just complacent; but in terms of ethical positions and moral – how I live my life, in terms of concern for the environment, concern for other people, concern for living in a sustainable and ethical way, it felt like coming home. Going to Quakers felt like coming home.

This emphasis on the ethical way of life spurs, at times, a discipline of living out the testimonies. As mentioned earlier, the idea of 'transformation' was absent from the narratives of the Quakers I interviewed. Instead, what was stressed was continuity with an ethical way of life. When change was mentioned, it was seen as subconscious and unintentional, as in this comment from Lydia:

> Since I've been going to Quaker meetings, people have been kinder to me. Something must have changed in me, but I haven't done anything deliberately to change myself.

Edmund remarks that he has changed a great deal and endeavours to progress spiritually and ethically. For him, the worship style, the 'stillness' spirituality, is transformational, as research by Collins confirms (2008, p. 336). However, Edmund's phrasing of his under-standing of Quakerism points to an appreciation of discipline aimed at improving as a person. This is reminiscent of ancient asceticism (*askesis*) intended as ethical training (Sheridan, 2013). The element of worship is not detached from ethical development or, for most Quakers, from social activism:

> I think I've changed as a person. My attitude to a lot of things… and my dealings with a

lot of people have changed. I think I've become a better person to be around, certainly much more careful and cautious in coming to judgements about people. I've always been reluctant to rush to judgements about people anyway. So, I think it has been both an uplifting and a calming experience.

His experience of Quakerism is echoed by that of Walter, a man who is very active in Amnesty and was attracted to Quakerism by its humanitarian concerns. He appreciates Quakers' theological openness and acceptance and, like Edmund, he values the discipline of silent worship and the personal ethical development. Walter works in mental health and he told me that too often there is little effort there to see the 'human' in the person. He refers to compassion as the "ability to see the human beyond their behaviours":

> We've talked recently [at Quaker meetings] a lot about compassion. I struggle a bit with… having compassionate thoughts for people you vehemently disagree with. I struggle with that. I have very strong opinions about certain things. I work in mental health… I see there's a lot of lack of compassion in mental health – the ability to see the human beyond their behaviours. I think that's in wider society as well… It's something I struggle with… I like the fact that there are other people struggling [to have] compassionate thoughts about people… I always try quite hard not to be judgemental. I'm really very judgemental. I think since I've been more involved with the Quakers I have worked on that quite a bit, a sense of power that I am able to actually change something. This acceptance of people, this is something that I try.

Walter consciously "worked on" not being judgemental as a result of being a Quaker. For him, as for Edmund, Quakerism entails 'ethical training'. He sees compassion in terms of acceptance of others and refraining from judgement. This echoes similar interpretations found among evangelicals and Catholic chaplains (Montemaggi, 2017c, 2017d). Compassion is something that requires patient practice. It means accepting even those who have caused harm, as Diana's experience shows. Diana, who is in her twenties, told me that she was assaulted while at university. Quakerism helped her to deal with that traumatic event:

> Quakerism gave me the tools to see that event not as necessarily evil, God's punishment, but a choice someone made. About forgiving myself for what happened and seeing that person as a person, not excusing. Making peace with the fact that it happened… Quakerism gives me more, it gives the tools to see things in a different way. I'm much less quick to be annoyed or angry than I used to be. I'm still learning. I'm definitely not perfect. I've got a lot to learn, a lot to get better at. I feel like I'm trying. I feel like I'm actively trying, which is something at least.

Quakerism, in the narratives of Edmund, Walter and Diana especially, is an ethical practice. The testimony to peace, for Diana, is not limited to going on anti-war marches; rather, it is the attempt at conflict resolution in daily life:

> In terms of just practising peace in your everyday life, so thinking really carefully about conflict resolution and even when you fall out with a friend, to try and search within yourself why you felt angry, why they might feel angry with you, think about why we create enemies and why they are my enemy, how can I bridge that gap? I feel like a lot of the time, these days, there's a lot of polarising going on in terms of Donald Trump, Brexit, UKIP and the anti-refugee, anti-immigration sentiment within the UK. I quite struggled with that for a while because I thought, you know: Why don't they care about

people? Why don't they like people? What's wrong with people coming to our country? I guess I would get quite angry, but the Quaker peace testimony really helped me in trying to see from the other side and try and come from a place of understanding rather than a place of blind dislike, try to come to compromise and to not just see people as good or bad. Actually, pretty much everyone has good in them and has God in them. You just have to find it, I guess. That's really helped me.

I would like to suggest that perhaps the most defining characteristic of being a Quaker is the ethical training or formation, which for some is intentional and for others is simply a result of Quaker worship and community. Quakers seem to have a common basis of shared values, encapsulated in the testimonies. These values lead Quakers to be active not only in local and national organisations but also in their relationships. Quaker identity markers are thus to be found in the style of worship, as explored in the previous section, and in the interpretation of Quakerism as an ethical way of life. As such, it requires continual effort to improve, which at times may seem out of reach. Elinor's observation that she is "not Quakerly enough" captures the centrality of the ethical state of mind and way of life to Quakerism – which can be daunting, as Diana suggests:

You're never really done… You can always be improving on yourself and in some ways that is really great, but in other ways it's overwhelming. I'm never going to be the perfect person. I'm never going to be good enough.

Quaker compassion needs to be framed within Quakers' association with peace and, more specifically, their approach to conflict. Non-Quakers often associate Quakers with peace, but this does not mean that Meetings are free from conflict (Robson, 2008: p. 143). However, Susan Robson observed a distinctive approach to conflict. In her study, Quakers not only sought to avoid conflict but failed to acknowledge it, "because they were afraid of living with it and ashamed of its existence" (Robson, 2008: p. 144). When faced with a situation of open conflict, she noted, her research participants did not seek to understand the issues involved. She calls this tendency "conflict aversion". She also noted that Quakers tend to favour relationships and community harmony over the right decision (Robson, 2008: p. 144). This further discourages overt disagreement.

One of my survey respondents, in the section inviting additional comments, remarks on this tendency to avoid conflict rather than making peace. However, this issue was not raised by any other informants. Indeed, rather oddly, none of them mentioned business meetings and their very distinctive type of decision-making that focuses on consent emerging from participants' comments and avoids disagreement and the casting of votes. It is arguable that the avoidance of conflict and a decision-making process that eschews disagreement would tend to promote conformity. Dandelion notes that Quakers' unity lies in "a conformist and conservative 'behavioural creed'" (Dandelion, 2008: p. 22).

The culture of harmony, which includes 'conflict aversion' and conflict resolution as well as peaceful relationships, is another defining characteristic marking Quaker identity. This culture may also mask differences of opinion. The research suggests that there is a common understanding of being a Quaker as an ethical way of life, yet this should not be taken to include a common understanding of politics, for instance. As we are living through difficult times in which huge political and cultural divisions have emerged, as in the case of Brexit in Britain and the Trump presidency in the US, more research is needed to ascertain political divisions among Quakers.

8 Quakers and Christianity

The data presented in section 4.1 suggests that most new Quakers have a Christian background but did not identify explicitly as Christian before they started attending Meetings. In the section of the survey inviting additional comments, some respondents noted a hesitancy among Quakers to use Christian language or cite the Christian Scriptures, while some expressed their dislike for terms such as 'God' and references to the Bible. One respondent observed that Quakers seemed reluctant to talk about their own spiritual journeys:

> Everyone seemed comfortable that I was from a secular background and just beginning my spiritual journey, but most seemed unwilling to go into detail about where they were at. I felt that this was an awkward subject that was avoided.

Most interviewees had no problems with the use of Christian language or other references to Christianity, even when they did not identify explicitly as Christians. Some reported a "tension" over the issue of Christianity, while others thought it was mostly confined to the written culture, such as *The Friend* or the Quakers' online presence. Harriet told me that, although she had been told at her Meeting that there were a couple of people who were "deliberately Christian" in their ministry and that some felt that the Meeting should be Christian, she did not think it was problematic:

> I wouldn't say there's tension. There's an understanding of difference. There's an understanding that there is difference… I feel at home with a broader understanding of spirituality than Christian… I'm far less certain so I'm open to any sort of language… In our meeting it's all very friendly.

Some were brought up as Christians and had moved away from Christianity, in some cases feeling uncomfortable with Christian language. In the following comment, the 'God' Catherine first refers to seems to be that of Christianity, seen as 'other' and, specifically, as 'Christ'. She is uncomfortable with God as Christ, as opposed to a more broadly theistic understanding of God:

> I was brought up with the Christian terminology and I consciously moved away from. I'm not happy with the notion of God, the sense of otherness, something beyond myself that I can give weight to… My relationship is with God, not Christ.

Some interviewees had had a difficult experience of Christianity. Anne, who is 84, experienced marginalisation when a brother with Down's syndrome died. She got involved with a Christian Union at university, but was never as fervent as the other people. Her husband was a nonconformist, and family life led them to church. She later joined the group Struggling Christians, which reflected on prayer, spirituality and the church. Its meetings would start and finish with 10 minutes of silence, which she valued. She was politically active, going on CND marches and joining the Greenham Common protests. She later became aware of the group Sea of Faith, in which she felt really comfortable. Subsequently, she came to Quakerism after a friend of hers became a Quaker. She likes the fact that Quaker Meetings are "so unchurchy". Her experience shows how rigid thinking and unfriendliness in a church community drive people away. Her profile, like that of all my interviewees, is of a person who was always critical of the received in

matters of faith, politically aware and drawn to spiritual expression.

Walter found his intellectual curiosity frustrated in the Church of England. He was always fascinated by questions regarding time and the universe. When he talked to the minister of his church about his notion of time and how it related to Christianity, he was told not to worry about such things, he just needed to have faith. He searched for a religious environment that could accommodate his intellectual awareness as well as his spirituality:

> This [episode] really questioned my belief… I questioned the whole Christian teaching. That didn't help, because I wasn't taken seriously… I sat there one day and thought, "I really don't believe this. I don't accept this. It doesn't make sense." The fear of being struck down and stuff, the wrath of God, that was a bit frightening, really… I still had this need, the spiritual component of my life. At 16, I decided to visit every religious denomination in the area… from the Spiritualist church through to the local Quaker Meeting… I became very interested in Eastern beliefs – Buddhism, Hinduism. I became very interested in some of the Hindu parables… For many years, I had no religious beliefs whatsoever. I thought of myself as agnostic and that lasted for many years.

He chose Quakerism for its spiritual component, political activism and theological openness. He found the practice of meditation a discipline through which he could work through his thoughts. The Quakers' peace activism and other humanitarian concerns made them "the obvious choice" for him. Ultimately, it was the freedom from theological ideas that induced him to attend meetings:

> There's meditation… That period of quiet, which I enjoyed when I went as a youngster, that may be the place to have the discipline to actually let your thoughts run freely… [On why he chose Quakerism:] It's the acceptance, there's no requirement for me to conform to any particular type belief. I welcome that… I really struggle with – even some of the Eastern philosophies, I struggle with some of the intellectual constructs that people have built and developed to try and explain the unexplainable. They are just intellectual constructs. They become rigid and fixed and oppressive. That's not the case with the Quakers.

Susan, as mentioned earlier, is a former evangelical who, with her husband, has gone through conflict with her family for choosing Quakerism. She identifies as a Christian and would not feel included if Quakerism became a spiritual society. She told me that she noticed the tension over Christianity straight away, but that it seems to be an issue confined to written and official discussions rather than everyday conversations at local Meetings:

> Very quickly after becoming involved with Quakers I've became aware of that tension… It's evident in *The Friend*, which is the weekly magazine that we get, that lots of Meetings get; it's evident on the Facebook posts sometimes. I wouldn't say it's that evident in my conversations with other Quakers. In terms of my Meeting and the way in which people engage with each other, my experience has been [that] people receive other people's spiritual experiences with a huge level of respect and consideration. I've never heard anyone be upset that someone has, for example, given ministry that was based on the Bible or someone has given ministry based on something completely different, or has used God language or has not used God language. I've never seen it in my Meeting, but there is a tension that comes out all the time in the written

conversations that we have. It's something I feel a little bit worried about, because if Quakers weren't rooted in Christianity, if we didn't have that Christian tradition, I don't think I would have become part of Quakerism. I'm a Quaker because it is for me a form of being a Christian that I feel happy with. I still identify as a Christian and if I felt that there wasn't – if the Society became just a sort of spiritual organisation rather than a Christian organisation, I would struggle a bit with that. That's probably a step too far because for me… The first Quaker writing I've read was *Advices & queries* and right at the beginning it talks about God. I think the second or third query is about the life of Jesus, and all the way through there's God language. If that were stripped out, I don't know if it would very much reflect any more the way I see the world or who I am. I see there being space for non-theists or other faiths within Quakerism, but I would become anxious if that became… the defining thing about Quakerism. For me, the Christian roots are important… I have lots of conversations with Friends in Meetings I go to who don't believe in God, but I've never met anyone who has a problem with me believing in God or doesn't like the way I talk about God. I think perhaps there's more tolerance within the way we actually live our faith than you might pick up from the way we write it down.

William, who had a Christian upbringing although he subsequently followed Buddhism, encountered this tension at his local Meeting. He heard derogatory comments about Christianity and suggested that the Meeting had a series of opportunities for discussion and learning. As an academic he values and enjoys learning, and he finds it frustrating that some people lack intellectual curiosity about the varieties of Christianity and the traditions of Quakerism and its unique aspects. Quakerism had been, for him, a way to reconnect with his own Western culture:

At university, I studied religion, comparative religion. I was mainly interested in Asian religions, Buddhism in particular. I did a Master's in Buddhist studies. I was practising Zen Buddhism for a number of years. On a couple of occasions I went to a couple of Quaker meetings, 'cause I stopped practising Buddhism at that point but I was still interested in contemplative, meditative practices. So, I went along [to] Quaker meetings at times, but never did anything about it, really, until more recently… I went back to reading about Buddhism and doing meditation, but felt like I needed to connect with something more culturally, more my own culture rather than Asian/Eastern cultural practices. I remembered about Quakerism, so I went along [to] Quaker meetings where I live.

He had been attracted to Buddhism at university, at least in part, because he wanted to avoid studying Western cultural tradition. Twenty years later, he felt he wanted to learn more about Western culture and religious cultural history. He told me that "Quakerism was a way of practising religion primarily through meditation or contemplation, but also as a way to engage with Western Christian tradition, with its art, with its poetry, with its philosophy and theology." He values the emphasis on the inward spiritual experience in Quakerism, shared with Zen Buddhism and other forms of mysticism:

The emphasis on individual experience – and I suppose it resonates as well with some of what I learnt when I studied Asian religion and Buddhism, the emptying of the self, trying to overcome the ego, I suppose. I think I've come to learn about in the Christian tradition the 'negative theology', which seems to me… to equate to a more mystical tradition… I found the reading around mysticism and gnostic Christians… a useful way to understand the meaning behind Christian words. I'm actually quite excited about it,

> but I suppose I come at it on the premise that it's all to be interpreted, it's not literal, and so I have no understanding [of] or real interest in any kind of literalism, neither evangelicalism.

Many Quakers have had a difficult experience of Christianity. They have sought other paths and have then found in Quakerism a way to work out their spiritual yearning, theological questioning and political activism. Comments from survey respondents and interviewees point to an uneasy relationship between Quakerism and Christianity.

There are those who acknowledge and value the Christian roots of Quakerism, those who cherish a deep engagement with the varieties of Christianity, especially its mystical forms, and of Quakerism, and those who are uncomfortable with Christian language at meetings and find reference to Christianity inappropriate. The 'Christian question' is connected to the theological openness of today's Quakerism, which is characterised by a pluralism of theological views and a stress on individual spiritual seeking (Dandelion, 1996, 2004; Plüss, 1998).

Sociological studies of Quakerism have considered its relationship with Christianity. Since the 1990s, there seems to have been a move away from beliefs that are specifically Christian, such as the importance of the figure of Jesus (Dandelion, 1996). Mellor (2008) took a more complex and nuanced approach by drafting a qualitative survey and found that 80% of respondents identified as Christians and 90% believed in God (2008, p. 81). She distinguished between 'explicit Christians' (80%), 'implicit Christians' (15%), and 'non-Christians' (4.5%). Explicit Christians are those who answered 'Yes' to the question 'Do you consider yourself to be Christian?'; implicit Christians are those who did not subscribe to a credal statement, but who followed the teachings of Jesus; non-Christians are those who either identified as other than Christian (for instance, "spiritual atheist") or did not provide sufficiently explicit answers (Mellor, 2008: p. 84).

More recently, Hampton (2014, p. 36) found that there had been a drop in the number of people attending meeting for worship who considered themselves Christians, from 52% in 1990 to 37% in 2013. Over the same period, there was also a decrease in the number of people who considered themselves universalists, from 23% to 16% (p. 36). In contrast, the proportion of those who reported not believing in God had gone up from 3% in 1990 to 15% in 2013 (p. 37). The idea of Jesus as 'God made human' or 'containing that of God' was accepted by only 14% and 50% of respondents respectively in 2013, against 19% and 64% in 1990, whereas there had been an increase in the proportion who saw Jesus as an ethical teacher from 47% in 1990 (via a drop to 42% in 2003) to 54% in 2013 (p. 37).

These two studies might appear incompatible, but this is only if one adheres to the old Protestant Christian model of religion, which was critiqued in chapter 2. The changing identity of Quakers needs to be inserted into the contemporary tapestry of religious change. Quakers are not 'post-Christian' in the sense that they are no longer Christian; rather, they are post-Christian in the sense that they have internalised the shift from a recent past in which Christianity not only dominated everyday life but was integral to how people viewed religion and the world (Brown, 2001; Field, 2014). As mentioned in chapter 2, the Protestant Christian model of belief-centred religion is still prevalent in how religion is construed in the public debate. As long as religion, and, specifically, Christianity, is understood as a belief system, Quakers will not fit the description.

My own research (Montemaggi, 2013, 2017b, 2017c) shows that belief is secondary even in defining the religiosity of evangelicals, yet that does not mean that Christian language and symbols are less relevant. Jesus is central to evangelical identity and religiosity, whereas this is not the case for many Quakers. I suggest that it is more fruitful to consider

how religious actors relate to the various strands of religious tradition and how they interpret them, including any forms of syncretism. A longer study might be able to explore how Quakers think of themselves, but, crucially, also investigate their sources of religious identity. An analysis of discussions and learning events, including sessions at Woodbrooke and at the yearly meeting, would reveal the cultural framework of Quakers, the texts they refer to (whether specifically Quaker, Christian, of other religions or non-religious) and the narratives they employ. It is true that Quaker 'discernment' places the search for 'truth' within the individual; but, as Edmund implied when asked how he gets his 'map' to navigate his religious and spiritual life, the individual is always within a web of relationships.

Conclusions

This study has provided a glimpse of the most salient narratives among new Quakers today. Their patterns of affiliation are part of the wider restructuring of religious consciousness in contemporary Britain. Some have moved away from a rigid theology or a church context that did not encourage free thinking in matters of faith. A more critical approach to religion reflects contemporary liberal society, in which Christian discourse is far less prevalent and influential than in the past. Indeed, the critique of religion in public debates often constructs it in negative terms, mostly as a set of unprovable beliefs. Informants were critical of rigid forms of religion, but sought the opportunity to express their spirituality. They appreciate the continual open search for a deeper understanding of spiritual life that Quakerism provides.

Quakers show a high degree of uniformity in ethical-political identity. They value the Quaker testimonies and are engaged in social activism, which usually takes place in external organisations, whether local or national. New Quakers feel that they belong, but this does not necessarily translate into membership. There is a distinct lack of clarity over the meaning of membership. Many of them associate membership solely with tasks to be done in the running of the organisation. There is virtually no distinction between members and attenders in terms of their involvement and role in local Meetings; and so there is no incentive to join.

Informants found Meetings welcoming overall, although the lack of opportunities to develop relationships outside the meeting for worship can weaken the community and result in cliques. Further research could shed light on how membership is understood by members and attenders, as well as on the obstacles people face in attending Meetings, e.g. difficulties in accommodating families with children. It could also suggest ways to improve inclusivity and growth in local Meetings.

The informants often mentioned Woodbrooke courses, which they enjoyed and found useful. They would like the opportunity to learn more about Quakerism and how other Quakers understand being a Quaker. There are, according to the respondents, few if any opportunities locally for people to discuss their spiritual journeys.

Relationships are fundamental to the wellbeing of any community, but they require continual effort and commitment. Future research could look into best practice in reinvigorating local groups and sustaining fellowship. The significant drop in the number of Quaker members and attenders should prompt a reflection on the organisational structure and the activities of local Meetings. An analysis of the make-up of the members and attenders, including geographical location, and the activities carried out by local Meetings might inform future action on recruitment and retention of members.

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Appendix 1: Survey results

Question 1: How long have you been attending Quaker meetings?
Answered: 224   Skipped: 1

Answer choices	Responses	
Less than six months	8.04%	18
Six months–one year	12.5%	28
One–three years	37.05%	83
Over three years	42.41%	95
Total		**224**

Less than six months		
Six months–one year		
One–three years		
Over three years		
	10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90%	
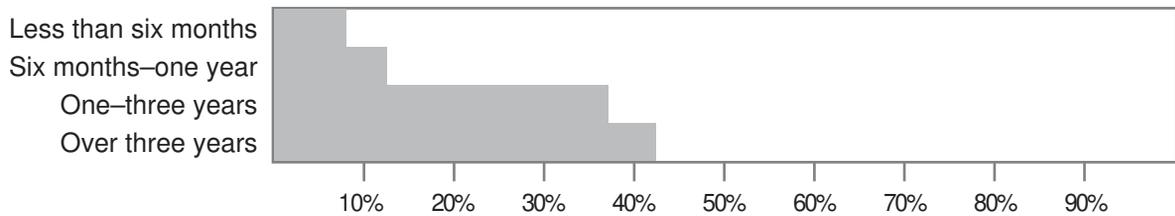
Question 2: How did you first come into contact with the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)?

Answered: 224   Skipped: 1

Answer choices	Responses	
A poster	1.34%	3
Peace activities	4.02%	9
Meeting a Quaker/attender	23.21%	52
Family	8.48%	19
Seeing a Quaker meeting house	8.48%	19
Advertisement	2.23%	5
Study of religious beliefs	6.25%	14
Interfaith event	0.89%	2
Other spiritual activity	2.23%	5
As pupil/staff in Quaker school	0.89%	2
Radio or TV programme	2.23%	5
General reading	6.25%	14
Can't remember	2.23%	5
Other (please specify)	31.25%	70
Total		**224**
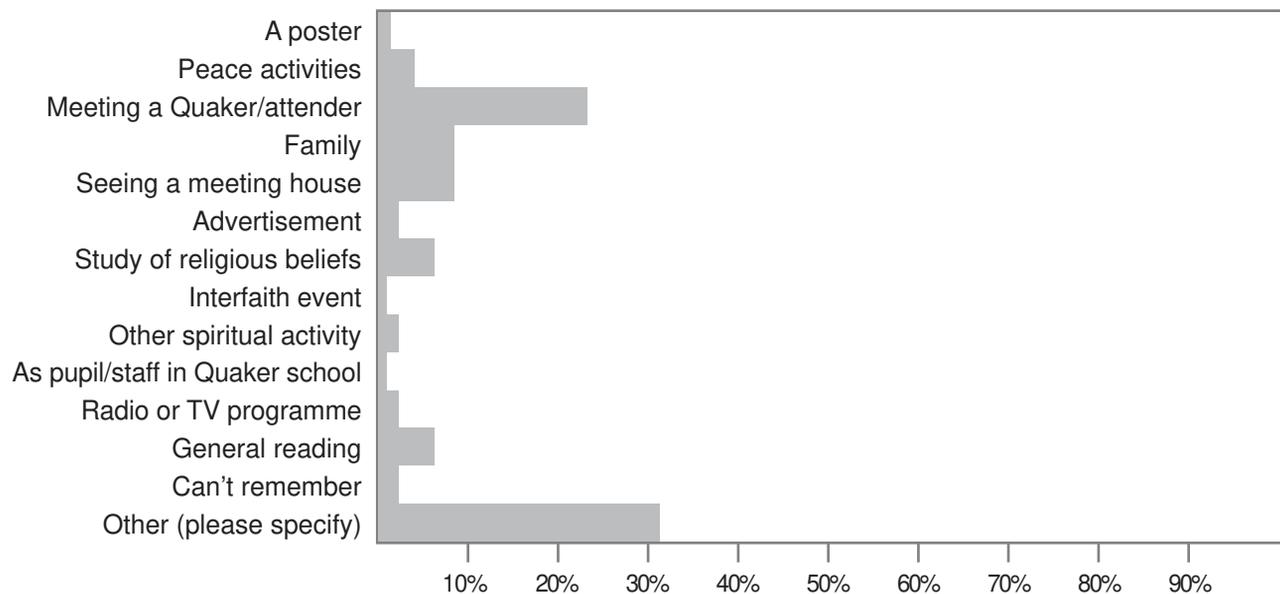
Question 3: What was your religious/spiritual background when growing up?

Answered: 219   Skipped: 6

Answer choices	Responses	
Catholic	10.96%	24
Anglican	33.33%	73
Baptist/Evangelical	5.02%	11
Methodist	7.76%	17
Quaker	3.20%	7
Other Christian denomination	5.94%	13
Christian (non-denominational)	4.11%	9
Pagan (including Wicca)	0.46%	1
Other religion (Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Baha'i, etc.)	2.28%	5
Non-religious	15.98%	35
Other (please specify)	10.96%	24
Total		**219**
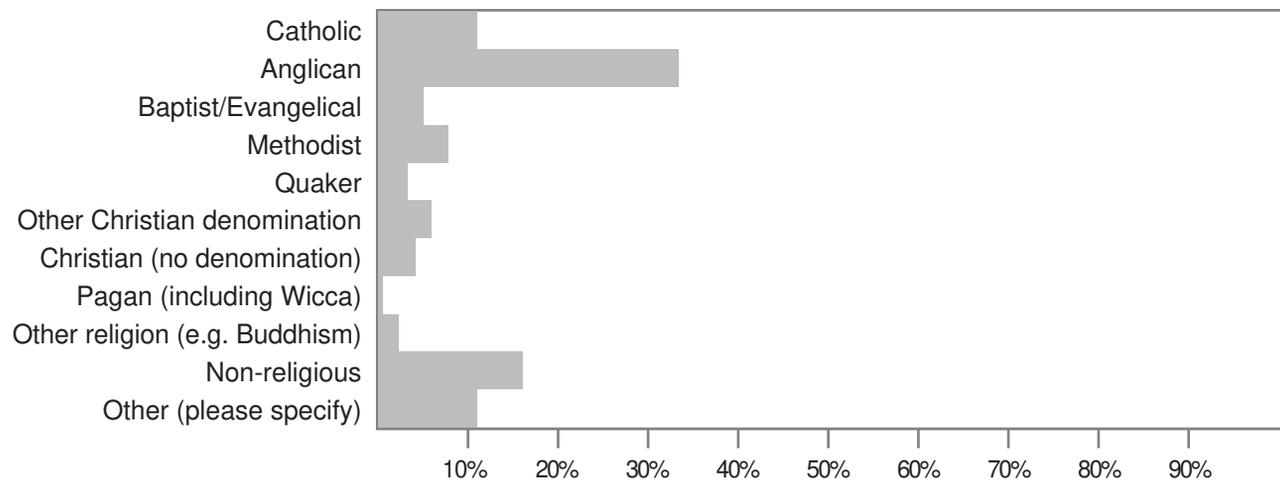
Question 4: How would you describe your religious/spiritual belonging just before coming to Quaker meetings?

Answered: 220   Skipped: 5

Answer choices		Responses
Catholic	2.73%	6
Anglican	17.27%	38
Baptist/Evangelical	1.82%	4
Methodist	3.64%	8
Other Christian denomination	2.27%	5
Christian (non-denominational)	11.82%	26
Pagan (including Wicca)	2.27%	5
Other religion (Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Baha'i, etc.)	3.64%	8
Non-religious	26.82%	59
Other (please specify)	27.73%	61
Total		**220**
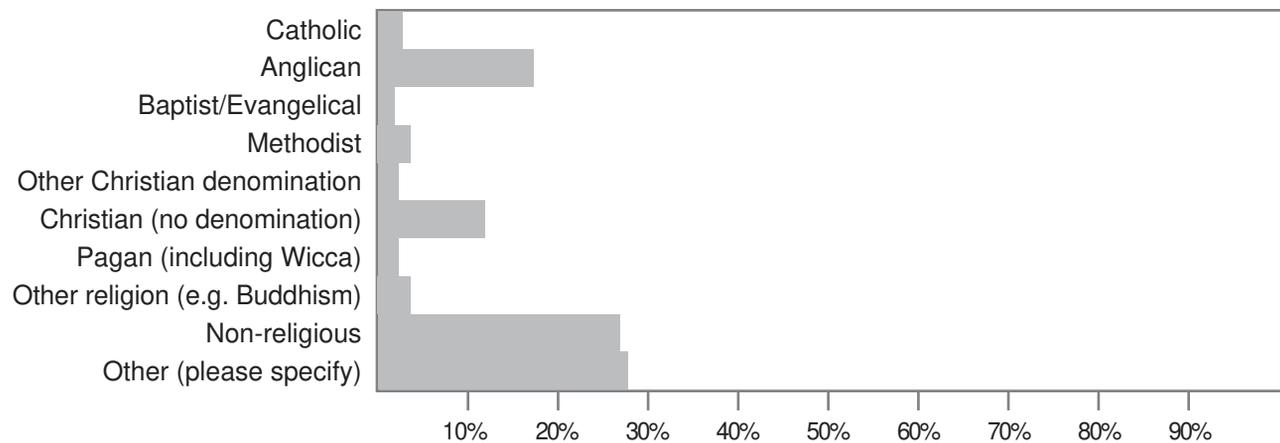
Question 5: Before coming to Quaker meetings, with what did you associate Quakers? (max. three choices)

Answered: 221   Skipped: 4

Answer choices	Responses	
Peace	68.78%	152
Equality and social justice	52.94%	117
Meditation	21.27%	47
Christian minority	26.24%	58
Other (please specify)	33.03%	73
Total		**221**
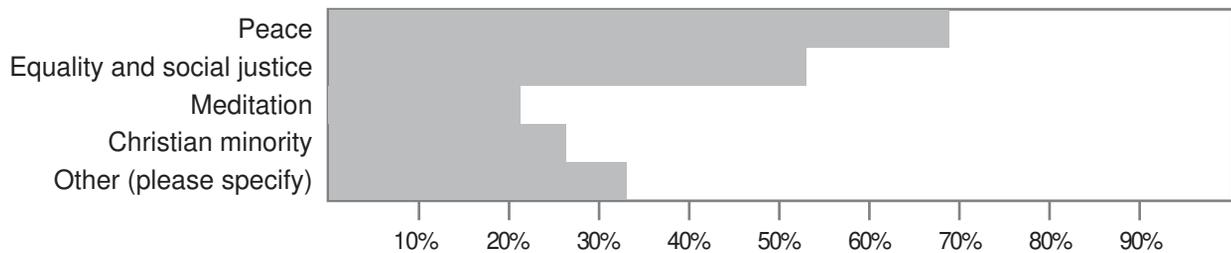
Question 6: What helped you first attend a Quaker meeting? (max. three choices)

Answered: 219   Skipped: 6

Answer choices	Responses	
Peace testimony	18.72%	41
Equality and social justice	25.57%	56
Quaker spiritual writing	16.89%	37
Meditation	26.48%	58
Other (please specify)	57.08%	125
Total		**219**
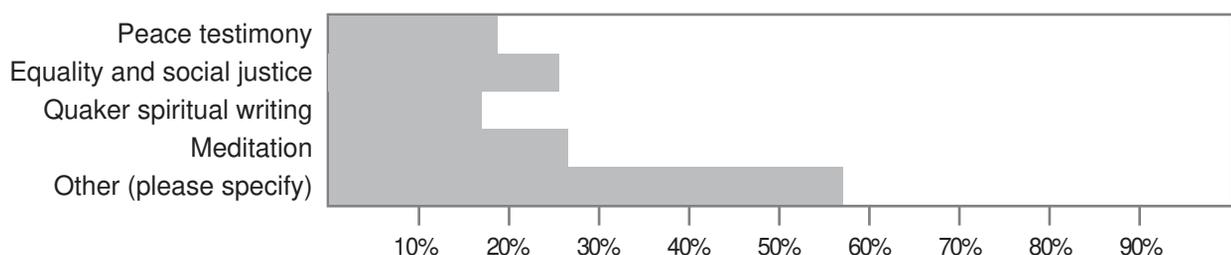
Question 7: What did you think of your first meeting? (Please rate.)

Answered: 214   Skipped: 11

	Not at all	A little	Fairly	Very	Total
Boring	78.24% 151	16.58% 32	3.11% 6	2.07% 4	193
Engaging	3.94% 8	19.21% 39	49.26% 100	27.59% 56	203
Uncomfortable	56.63% 111	36.73% 72	6.12% 12	0.51% 1	196
Relaxing	8.37% 17	20.20% 41	43.35% 88	28.08% 57	203
Welcoming	1.44% 3	7.18% 15	23.92% 50	67.46% 141	209
Detached	67.89% 129	25.26% 48	5.79% 11	1.05% 2	190
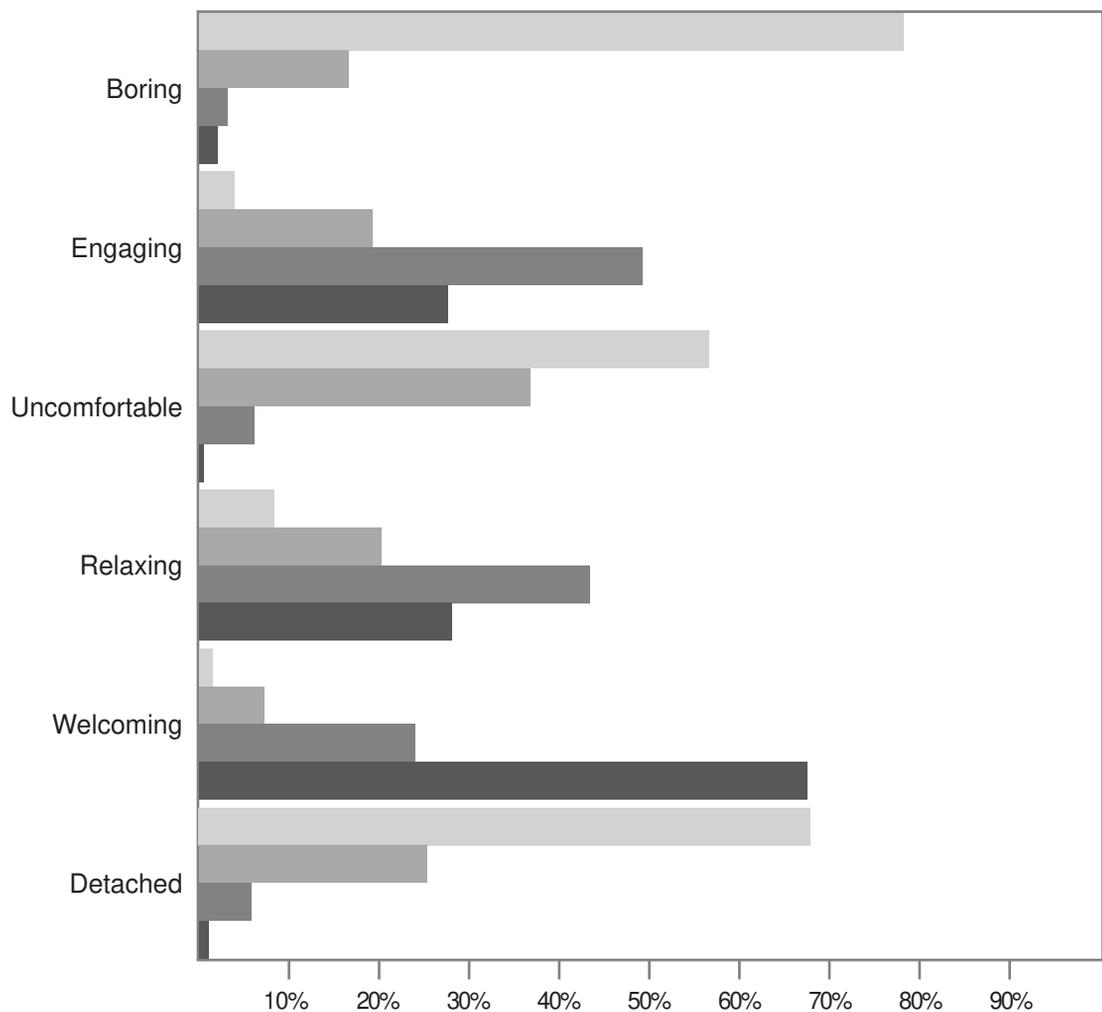
Question 8: How could your experience of your first few meetings have been better? (max. three choices)

Answered: 220   Skipped: 5

Answer choices	Responses	
More welcoming	9.55%	21
More explanation of what to expect	20.45%	45
Discussion after the meeting	25.45%	56
An introductory leaflet	10.00%	22
It was good, could not have been better	53.64%	118
Other (please specify)	17.27%	38
Total		**220**
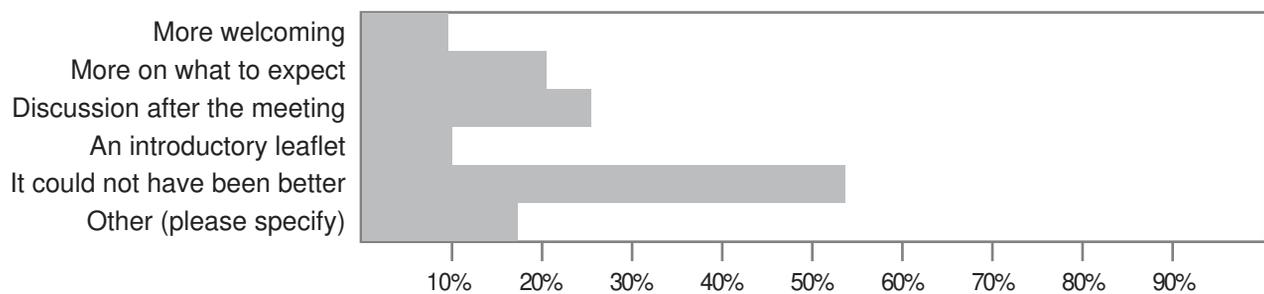
Question 9: What do you value most about being a Quaker/attender? (max. three choices)

Answered: 223   Skipped: 2

Answer choices	Responses	
Experiential spirituality	48.88%	109
Testimony to peace	16.14%	36
Testimonies to justice, equality, simplicity, integrity, the environment	48.88%	109
Diversity (of opinion, demographics, etc.)	18.39%	41
Lack of dogmatism	56.05%	125
Lack of priest/religious authority	30.94%	69
Equality between men and women	13.45%	30
Sense of belonging	40.36%	90
Opportunity to discuss Quaker values and practices	12.56%	28
Distinctive ethical/religious identity	14.35%	32
Other (please specify)	8.97%	20
Total		**223**
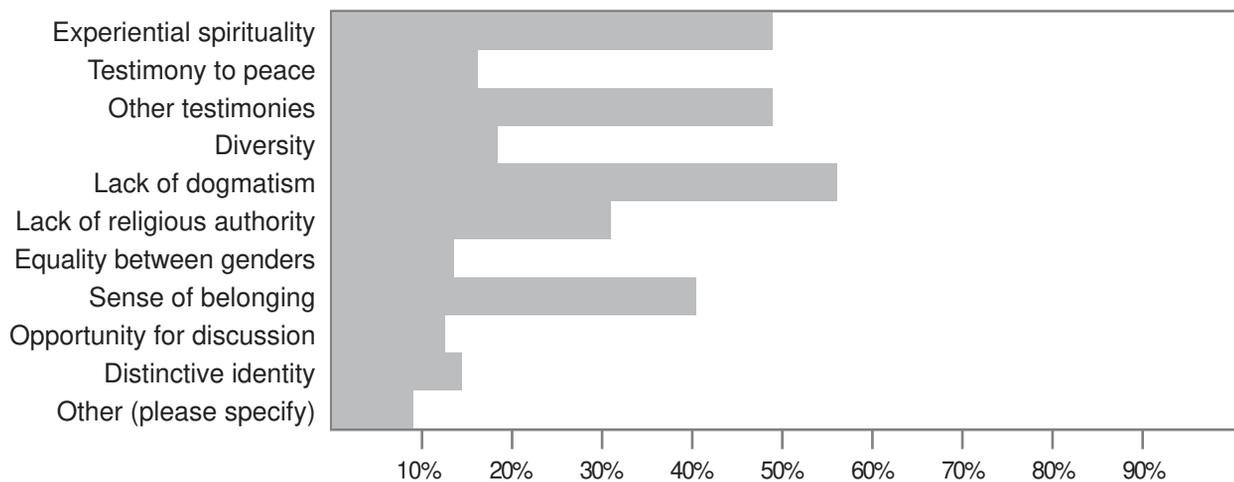
Question 10: What do you find uncomfortable or irrelevant to you about being a Quaker/attender? (max. three choices)

Answered: 178   Skipped: 47

Answer choices	Responses	
Experiential spirituality	7.30%	13
Testimony to peace	5.62%	10
Testimonies to justice, equality, simplicity, integrity, the environment	2.25%	4
Lack of diversity (of opinion, demographics, etc.)	17.42%	31
Lack of clear doctrinal ideas	4.49%	8
Lack of priest/religious authority	3.37%	6
Lack of equality between men and women	1.69%	3
Little or no sense of belonging	4.49%	8
Lack of opportunity to discuss Quaker values and practices	19.10%	34
Unclear ethical/religious identity	11.80%	21
Other (please specify)	57.87%	103
Total		**178**
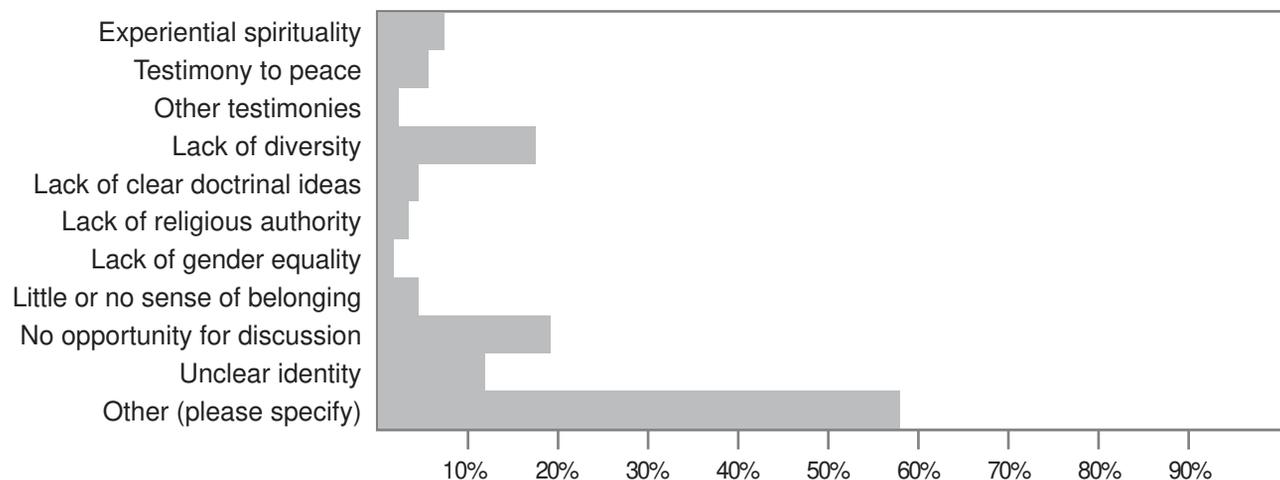
Question 11: What do you like most about Quaker meetings? (max. three choices)

Answered: 224   Skipped: 1

Answer choices	Responses	
Type of worship	68.30%	153
Friendship/fellowship	45.98%	103
No facilitator/Elder guiding discussion	14.73%	33
No set ways of learning about Quakerism	17.41%	39
Emphasis on peace and justice	33.93%	76
Other (please specify)	15.18%	34
Total		**224**
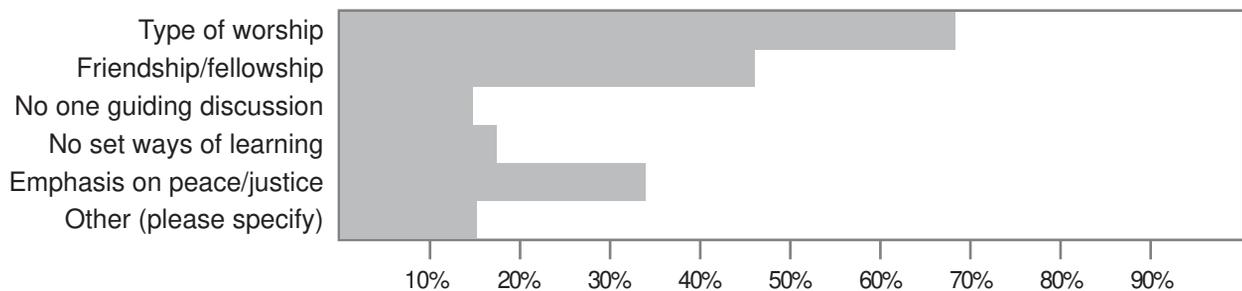
Question 12: What do you dislike most about Quaker meetings? (max. three choices)

Answered: 160   Skipped: 65

Answer choices	Responses	
Type of worship	1.25%	2
Lack of friendship/fellowship (e.g. being cliquey)	13.13%	21
No facilitator/Elder guiding discussion	6.25%	10
No set ways of learning about Quakerism	25.62%	41
Emphasis on peace and justice	3.13%	5
Other (please specify)	67.50%	108
Total		**160**
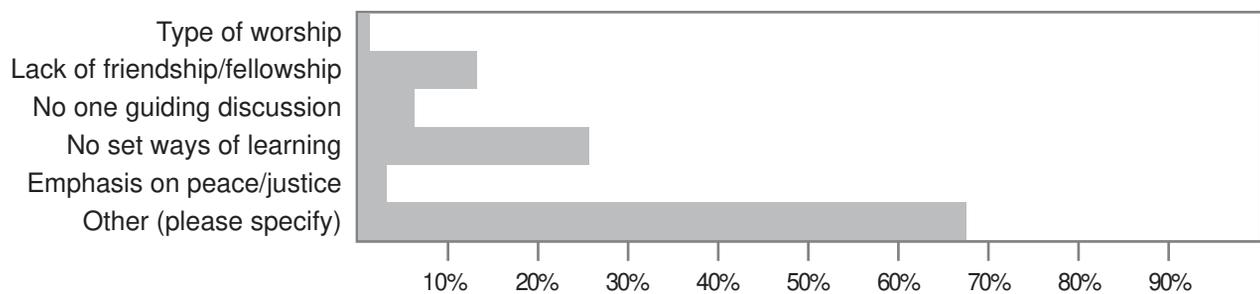
Question 13: If you have ever been invited to contribute to the organisation of meetings and events, when was that?

Answered: 214   Skipped: 11

	In first month	Month 2–6	Month 7–12	Year 2	Year 3+	Not yet asked	Total
Meetings	5.00% 10	19.00% 38	19.50% 39	15.50% 31	17.00% 34	24.00% 48	200
Events	7.77% 15	18.65% 36	22.28% 43	17.62% 34	11.40% 22	22.28% 43	193
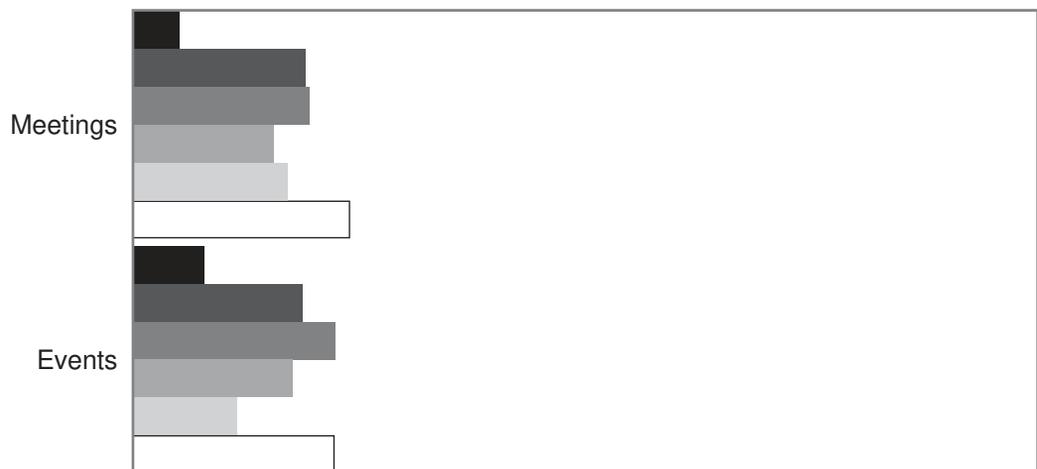
Question 14: Have you applied for Quaker membership?

Answered: 222   Skipped: 3

Answer choices	Responses	
Yes	34.68%	77
No	43.24%	96
I am considering it	22.07%	49
Total		**222**
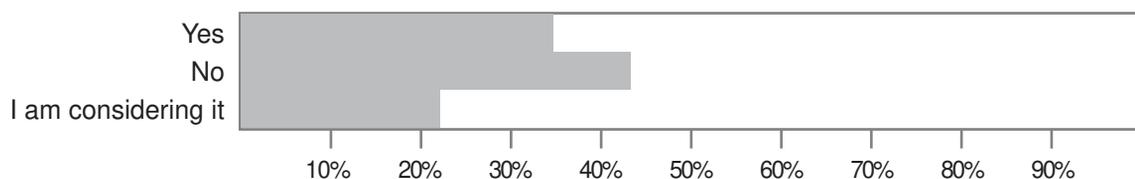
Question 15: If No, what has stopped you from applying? (max. three choices)

Answered: 117   Skipped: 108

Answer choices	Responses	
Time constraints	13.68%	16
Distance from the Friends' meeting house (commuting)	7.69%	9
I don't wish to be more involved	18.80%	22
The local group is cliquey	3.42%	4
I don't feel I belong to the wider Quaker movement	10.26%	12
I belong to another religious/ spiritual group	9.40%	11
Other (please specify)	70.09%	82
Total		**117**
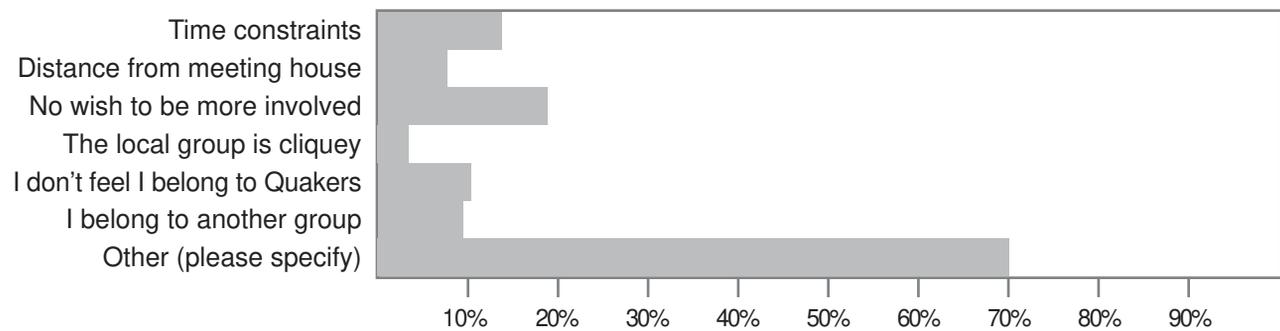
Question 16: If Yes, what has membership added to your experience? (max. three choices)

Answered: 87   Skipped: 138

Answer choices	Responses	
Sense of belonging	77.01%	67
Personal spiritual development/ spiritual journey	47.13%	41
Commitment to the fellowship of Quakers	71.26%	62
Involvement in social justice/ equality/peace campaigns	16.09%	14
Distinctive ethical and religious identity	33.33%	29
It has not added anything	1.15%	1
Other (please specify)	9.20%	8
Total		**87**
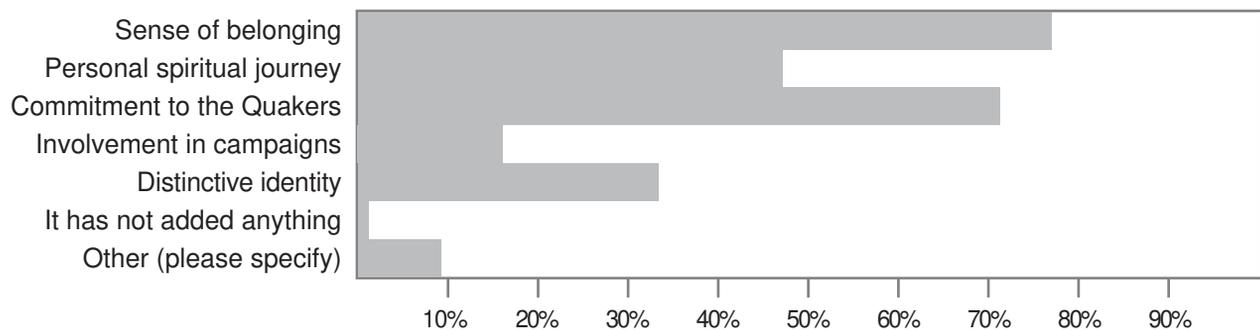
Question 18: What is your age?

Answered: 223　　Skipped: 2

Answer choices	Responses	
15–20	1.35%	3
21–25	4.04%	9
26–30	2.24%	5
31–35	3.14%	7
36–40	4.93%	11
41–45	4.04%	9
46–50	8.07%	18
51–55	12.56%	28
56–60	11.21%	25
61–65	13.90%	31
66–70	15.70%	35
71–75	9.87%	22
76–80	5.83%	13
81+	3.14%	7
Total		**223**
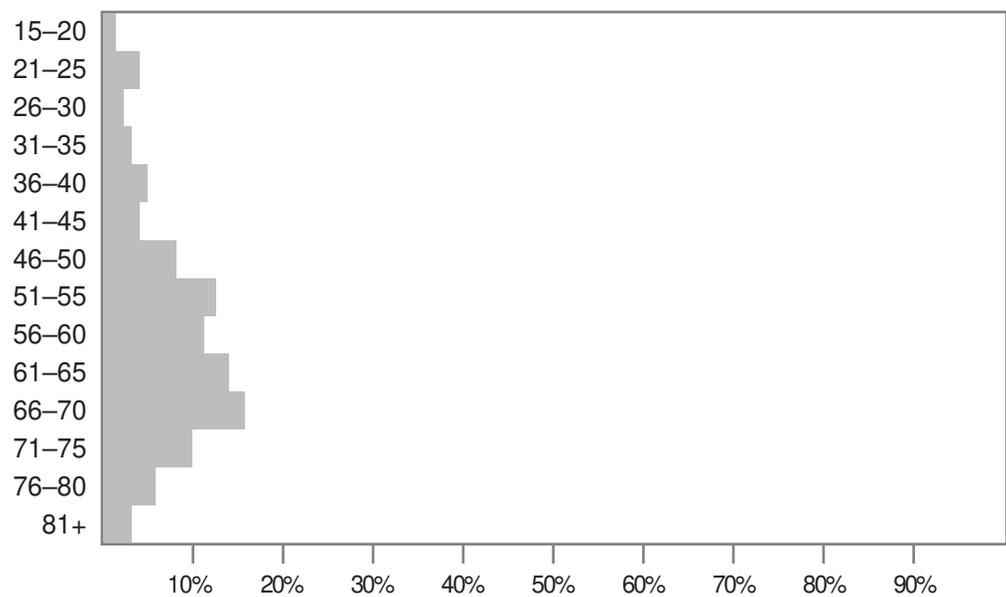
Question 19: Are you female or male?

Answered: 222   Skipped: 3

Answer choices	Responses	
Female	63.51%	141
Male	34.68%	77
I prefer not to say	1.80%	4
Total		**222**
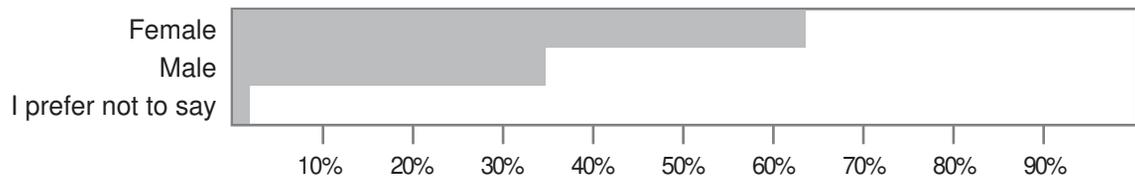
Appendix 2: British Quaker Survey 2013 results for those involved for less than three years

Religious upbringing?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	atheist	4	3.8	3.8	3.8
	none	11	10.5	10.6	14.4
	Christian	3	2.9	2.9	17.3
	Quaker	7	6.7	6.7	24.0
	Catholic	11	10.5	10.6	34.6
	Church of England/ Church in Wales	31	29.5	29.8	64.4
	Anglican	5	4.8	4.8	69.2
	Baptist	1	1.0	1.0	70.2
	Methodist	9	8.6	8.7	78.8
	Evangelical	1	1.0	1.0	79.8
	Congregational	2	1.9	1.9	81.7
	Presbyterian	1	1.0	1.0	82.7
	Unitarian	1	1.0	1.0	83.7
	Pentecostal	1	1.0	1.0	84.6
	Church of Scotland	1	1.0	1.0	85.6
	nonconformist	1	1.0	1.0	86.5
	United Reform Church	1	1.0	1.0	87.5
	Jewish	2	1.9	1.9	89.4
	Christian and Buddhist	2	1.9	1.9	91.3
	Christian mix	2	1.9	1.9	93.3
	Christian and atheist/ agnostic	2	1.9	1.9	95.2
	Quaker and other Christian	1	1.0	1.0	96.2
	Jewish and atheist	1	1.0	1.0	97.1
	spiritualist	1	1.0	1.0	98.1
	Jehovah's Witness	1	1.0	1.0	99.0
	Open Brethren	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	104	99.0	100.0	
Missing	99	1	1.0		
Total		105	100.0		

To Quakers directly?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	no	67	63.8	63.8	63.8
	yes	38	36.2	36.2	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Which group come from?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Catholic	3	2.9	7.9	7.9
	Church of England/ Church in Wales	7	6.7	18.4	26.3
	Anglican	6	5.7	15.8	42.1
	Baptist	1	1.0	2.6	44.7
	Methodist	7	6.7	18.4	63.2
	Presbyterian	1	1.0	2.6	65.8
	Unitarian	1	1.0	2.6	68.4
	Church of Scotland	1	1.0	2.6	71.1
	United Reform Church	2	1.9	5.3	76.3
	Buddhist	3	2.9	7.9	84.2
	meditation community/ group (including yoga)	3	2.9	7.9	92.1
	Christian mix	1	1.0	2.6	94.7
	spiritualist	1	1.0	2.6	97.4
	privately run/open worship	1	1.0	2.6	100.0
	Total	38	36.2	100.0	
Missing					
	98	66	62.9		
	99	1	1.0		
	Total	67	63.8		
Total		105	100.0		

Learnt about Quakerism: leaflets

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	49	46.7	46.7	46.7
	ticked	56	53.3	53.3	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Learnt about Quakerism: books

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	46	43.8	43.8	43.8
	ticked	59	56.2	56.2	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Learnt about Quakerism: family discussion

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	99	94.3	94.3	94.3
	ticked	6	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Learnt about Quakerism: children's meeting

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	101	96.2	96.2	96.2
	ticked	4	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Learnt about Quakerism: discussions after meeting

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	71	67.6	67.6	67.6
	ticked	34	32.4	32.4	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Learnt about Quakerism: study groups

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	78	74.3	74.3	74.3
	ticked	27	25.7	25.7	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Learnt about Quakerism: Friends' homes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	87	82.9	82.9	82.9
	ticked	18	17.1	17.1	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Learnt about Quakerism: Quaker Quest

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	92	87.6	87.6	87.6
	ticked	13	12.4	12.4	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Learnt about Quakerism: enquirers' gathering

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	95	90.5	90.5	90.5
	ticked	10	9.5	9.5	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Learnt about Quakerism: Friends House

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	99	94.3	94.3	94.3
	ticked	6	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Learnt about Quakerism: ministry

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	76	72.4	72.4	72.4
	ticked	29	27.6	27.6	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Learnt about Quakerism: *The Friend*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	95	90.5	90.5	90.5
	ticked	10	9.5	9.5	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Learnt about Quakerism: business meeting

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	88	83.8	83.8	83.8
	ticked	17	16.2	16.2	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Learnt about Quakerism: watching and listening to others

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	51	48.6	48.6	48.6
	ticked	54	51.4	51.4	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Learnt about Quakerism: social event

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	100	95.2	95.2	95.2
	ticked	5	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Learnt about Quakerism: course

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	91	89.5	89.5	89.5
	ticked	11	10.5	10.5	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Learnt about Quakerism: other

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	not ticked	74	70.5	70.5	70.5
	ticked	31	29.5	29.5	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	