

# The Quakers: A Society of Friends [A2]

La comunità, che si è dissociata dalla Chiesa anglicana, pratica uno stile di vita austero. Il suo nome in inglese deriva dal verbo 'quake', un riferimento all'insegnamento del suo fondatore di "tremare davanti a Dio".

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Also called the Religious Society of Friends, the Quakers are a religious community with a history dating back to the 17th century. The movement originated in England and was founded by George Fox, who intended to go back to the [roots](#) of Christianity and to Jesus' teachings of non-violence, simple living and [concern](#) for those in need. Quakers gained a considerable following, which quickly [spread](#) to American colonies and to various parts of the world. Members of this movement (called "The Friends") played a significant role in the abolition of slavery and were among the earliest [advocates](#) of women's rights. They are also known for their humanitarian work, [addressing](#) issues such as poverty, public education and healthcare.

## QUAKERS TODAY

Today there are an estimated 370,000 society members worldwide, in over eighty different countries. The majority however are in Africa and the Americas, with almost a hundred thousand members in the United States. Kenya has the largest number of Quakers in a single nation.

## CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS

Central to Quakers' [beliefs](#) is the presence of an [inner light](#) within each individual, a direct connection to God that guides them in their spiritual journey. Quaker [worship](#) is simple and takes place in silence: no one speaks [unless moved to by](#) God, then they may share their thoughts with others. When this happens, Quakers believe that the spirit of God is speaking through the speaker. Decisions are made collectively without a designated leader and everyone has an equal voice. Quakers have peace-oriented values, are active in civil rights movements and reject participation in wars.

They emphasise simplicity and equality, extending these principles to their lifestyle choices as well.

## QUAKER JOKE

More than just a set of [beliefs](#), Quakerism is a way of life. Quakers today don't look any different from other people, even though they tend to avoid excess and have a reflective, meditative and peaceful conduct. These [traits](#) have [endured](#) for 370 years and, inevitably, have inspired plenty of jokes, like Woody Allen's line in *Sleeper* (1973): "I'm telling you. You got the wrong man. I'm not the heroic type. Really. I was [beaten up](#) by Quakers."

## FAMOUS FRIENDS

Famous Quakers or people who were raised as Quakers include Richard Nixon, who married in a Quaker ceremony in California; Joan Baez, who grew up in a Quaker family (her father, a physicist, refused to work on the atomic bomb project in Los Alamos); the Cadbury family, who believing that alcohol would only [worsen](#) society's problems, decided to focus their business on chocolate as a welcome alternative; James Dean, who was raised a Quaker and is today buried in a Quaker cemetery; and actress Judi Dench, who converted to Quakerism after attending a Friends school, [reportedly](#) because she loved the school uniforms.

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# Glossary

- **roots** = radici
- **worsen** = peggiorare
- **beliefs** = credenze, convinzioni
- **endured** = perdurare
- **reportedly** = a quanto si dice
- **unless** = a meno che non
- **beaten up** = picchiare, menare
- **concern** = interesse, preoccupazione
- **advocates** = sostenitori
- **addressing** = affrontare
- **moved to by** = spronato da
- **traits** = caratteristiche
- **spread** = diffondersi
- **inner light** = luce interiore
- **worship** = culto