



OPEN INVITATION: Quakers outside Penrith Meeting House.

“Simple, radical, spiritual” the theme of Quaker Week

THE theme of this year's Quaker Week, which runs from 23rd September to 1st October is “Simple, radical, spiritual”.

“Quakers have been active in this area for more than 350 years, since the very early days of Quakerism,” said Christine Sutherland, clerk of Cumberland Area Quaker Meeting, which is the umbrella body for most local Quaker meetings.

“During all that time Quakers have played a significant role in their local communities. These days local Quakers worship in Quaker meeting houses in Penrith, Mosedale, Alston and Kirkby Stephen. Some of these are very old; the Penrith Quaker Meeting House on Meeting House Lane has been in use continuously since 1699 and the Mosedale and Alston buildings date from the early 1700s.”

Quakerism grew out of Christianity, although today Quakers say they also find meaning and value in other faiths and traditions.

“We believe that there's something transcendent and precious in every person, which our founder George Fox described as ‘That of God’,” said Christine. “Different Quakers use different words to describe this, but we all believe we can contact and encounter something beyond our individual selves. We don't offer neat creeds or doctrine. Instead, we try to help each other work out how we should live

with all people being welcomed and accepted at a Quaker meeting.”

Quakers don't use traditional religious structures or have paid ministers and Quaker meetings for worship can be held anywhere, at any time. “We share responsibility for what we do because everyone has a valuable contribution to make,” said Christine. “Every meeting is based on silence and we use this stillness to open ourselves to the wisdom that comes out of listening. It enriches us and shapes us, individually and collectively.”

Quakers believe that faith is expressed through action and they are particularly known for their work in the areas of peace, climate and social justice, and their international work.

“We face interconnected challenges of extreme inequality and environmental destruction,” said Christine. “Both are caused by an economic system founded on exploitation of people and of the earth. Quakers in Britain are working to challenge this system and advocate for economic values rooted in equality, justice and sustainability.”

Internationally, Quakers manage the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). This brings people from around the world to the West Bank to offer protective presence to vulnerable communities and to moni-

tor and report human rights abuses. The accompaniers join Palestinians and Israelis who work in non-violent ways for peace. Quakers also have a long history of quiet assistance in peace processes overseas in areas as diverse as Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland, and in South and East Africa.

“Quaker Week is often when people come along to a Quaker meeting for the first time,” said Christine. “We'd like to offer an open invitation to anyone who'd like to come and find out more – during Quaker Week or at any other time.”

Quakers meet in Penrith and Kirkby Stephen every Sunday morning and at Mosedale on the first and third Sunday of each month. The Quaker Meeting in Alston is held on the fourth Sunday of each month throughout the year and from May to September on the second Wednesday of each month. All these meetings start at 10-30am.

For more information contact Christine Sutherland on 077860 73584 or christinepsutherland@gmail.com.

Alternatively, visit cumberlandquakers.org.uk where you can find out more about the individual meetings and how to find them, how to get in touch and more information about Quakerism. For Kirkby Stephen Meeting, visit www.ksaqm.org.uk/local-meetings/kirkby-stephen