

What is the Pendle Hill Quaker Institute?

The Pendle Hill Quaker Institute is an experiential learning platform for the Religious Society of Friends in which participants can worship, study, reflect, share, and explore the many gifts, challenges, and testimonies as we live our faith.

The Quaker Institute is organized following a dynamic and participatory learning style that promotes and celebrates the various traditions within the Religious Society of Friends. It is articulated as an experimental learning opportunity for people that want to deepen their faith and practice as individuals and as members of a community that seeks to be open and obedient to the Truth.

What do we mean when we say, “Practicing our Quaker Heritage”?

When we say Quaker Heritage, we refer to the spirit that opened the heart of early Friends, the energy that ignited their personal and communal transformation as they lived the testimony of being in the service of the Truth, and how the same energy moves us today.

To practice our Quaker Heritage is an invitation to all Friends to examine and renew our own experience of the Light as we explore our history and its many blessings and challenges. It is an invitation to recognize the ‘Seed of God’ within us and around us, and to embrace it with love, faithfulness, passion, gratitude, and hope.

What do we mean by “mysticism”?

Mysticism in the context of this program is understood as Rufus Jones says, as the “immediate awareness of relation with God”ⁱ -- awareness that is practiced among Friends as we wait upon the Light and answer to it with and in love.

As Friends, we seek unity with the ultimate Reality, which for many of us is identified as the Divine. We do this both in our individual practices and as a community when we meet in worship together. Our grounding in the experience of the Divine personally and communally sustains our lives. Our mysticism represents a non-dualistic experience that is very practical and ethical in which our spirituality incarnates in every single aspect of our life’s journey.

What do we mean by “resistance” in the context of the Quaker Institute?

Friends seek to answer to “that of God” in their lives. This is one of the most essential characteristics within the varying traditions in our Religious Society. We experience the Light within us, which transforms our lives in a testimony of what love can do. With this in mind, we resist situations that prevent us from living with integrity, peace, justice, equality, respect and care for nature, etc.

At the Quaker Institute, we recognize, as beautifully said by Thomas Kelly, that “social concern is the dynamic Life of God at work in the world”,ⁱⁱ and we constantly ask ourselves how to be faithful to our deepest truth, how to respond with love to the many challenges that we face, both as individuals and as communities.

As we live our faith, we realize that we cannot be indifferent to the many manifestations of injustice. As Friends, we are called to exercise resistance to everything that distances us from love, and such resistance is a personal and social process that requires discernment, creativity, and constant openness to the Divine. Such resistance evolves as an answer to the Truth rather than as a mere ideology. It is love in action -- action that evolves and is nurtured by our prayers and worship.

ⁱ Cited in Brinton, H. (1967): Ethical Mysticism in the Society of Friends. Pendle Hill Pamphlet No.156

ⁱⁱ Kelly, Thomas (1996): A Testament of Devotion. HarperCollins: New York, p. 85.