

Practices

The Quakers have made significant contributions in the promotion of tolerance, peace and justice than any other Christian denomination during the colonial period in North America. They have been influential beyond what their numbers would suggest in many areas: promotion of world peace, abolition of slavery, fair treatment of Native Americans, universal suffrage, prison reform, improvement in mental hospitals, etc.

Some of the Yearly Meetings publish a Book of Discipline or a book on Faith and Practice. These are not sets of strict rules. They are general guidelines for living and include Quaker history, excerpts from the journals of old and weighty Friends and poetry. Also included are monthly queries, which the individual member and meetings can use to explore what they are doing to make a positive impact on the world. The New York Yearly Meeting's Faith & Practice document can be seen at: http://www.nyym.org/index.php?q=faith_and_practice

Women obtained equal status to men throughout most of the Quaker movement early in its history - centuries earlier than in most other denominations.

In England and some areas of the US, meetings are held in silence. Attendees speak when moved to do so. Elsewhere in North America, services have programmed orders of worship, usually led by a pastor.

They usually arrange the congregation in a square or circle, so that each person is aware of everyone else, yet no one person appears raised above another in status.

Business meetings seek to reach a consensus; no voting is used.

Throughout their history, Quakers have refused to take oaths. Because they believe in the truth at all times, oaths are not necessary. Taking an oath implies that there are two types of truthfulness: one for ordinary life and another for special occasions.

