

QUAKER HERITAGE

In 1837, Guilford opened its doors as New Garden Boarding School. Founded by the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), the school was organized by North Carolina Yearly Meeting, the statewide association of Quakers as a way to provide their young people with a strong moral education rooted in the convictions of the Quaker tradition.

The Quaker tradition began in England in the mid-1600s as a challenge to institutional, imperial Christianity of the day. Early Friends sought to bring about what they called “primitive Christianity revived,” a radical return to the roots and teachings of Jesus. Today, Quakerism is known for being a simple spirituality rooted in listening in silence to the Inward Teacher, placing great importance on how one lives out their spiritual convictions, often referred to as “testimony” among Friends, practicing communal discernment, and nurturing the life of the Spirit through meeting together for worship. There has always been an emphasis on seeking and apprehending truth together through experience, queries, discernment, and practice.

The Friends tradition harmonizes well with the College’s atmosphere of free inquiry. Liberal education requires an atmosphere of academic and personal freedom, founded on intellectual and moral responsibility, and a commitment to ethical values and human beings. Regardless of whether staff, students, and faculty are identify as Quakers at Guilford today the combination of these qualities contributes to Guilford’s character and one’s experience while here.

Through the years Guilford has remained true to the vision of its Quaker founders. It has continually sought new methods of challenging students, bringing them into contact with vital ideas and experiences, and helping them to arrive at their fullest potential as individuals and as members of society.

Friends Center at Guilford College

Friends Center at Guilford College was established by the Board of Trustees in 1982 to strengthen the bonds of the College with the Religious Society of Friends. The center provides opportunities for education and information about Quakerism on campus. Along with the College’s Quaker Archives, Friends Center serves as a Quaker resource center for the southeastern United States. In addition to being an educational resource for Quakers on and off campus, Friends Center oversees the interfaith campus ministry and the Quaker Leadership Scholars Program, which works with current Guilford students who want to grow deeper in their spiritual lives and leadership capacity. The Center also brings nationally and internationally known Friends to campus through Distinguished Quaker Visitor programs. Friends Center programs are supported by the generous contributions of North Carolina’s yearly meetings and their members along with other concerned Quakers and the College.

Interfaith Campus Ministry

Consistent with the College’s Quaker heritage, the Interfaith Ministry Office works to facilitate campus religious organizations of all faiths, encourage dialogue among different religious groups and aid community members in the process of spiritual discernment. Ongoing programs include small-group discussions and panels, worship opportunities, service work trips, meditation, and more.

The Quaker Leadership Scholars Program

The Quaker Leadership Scholars Program (QLSP) seeks to apprentice students to the Quaker tradition, for the purpose of living spiritually-rooted, racially just, theologically robust, and experientially prepared lives as leaders within and outside the Quaker world. The goal is to strengthen student’s relationships with the Global community of Quakers. Participants commit to a four-year program involving mentoring, small-group discussions, spiritual direction, leadership development, Quaker studies and internships. Financial assistance for College costs and participation in a wide variety of Quaker activities is provided. QLSP is a cooperative program of the Guilford Initiative on Faith and Practice, the Office of Student Financial Services, and the Office of Admission, with assistance from Friends Center.