



Quaker Peace  
& Social Witness

## How to set up a new economy reading group – a guide

QPSW (Quaker Peace and Social Witness) support Quakers with establishing reading groups that explore the topics raised in the new economy booklet series. Friends set these groups up within their meeting, or with others outside of it; either way, they are supported in guiding the meet-ups with session plans provided by QPSW.

The reading groups create a space where Friends discuss and gain clarity on the ideas raised in the new economy booklet series. By the end of the course, Friends tend to feel clearer about the nature of our current economic system, are more confident critiquing economic policies, and are familiar with alternative economic approaches and examples.

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*“We need to continue to learn more about how we are influenced and constrained by the economic system. We need to ask the question whether this system is so broken that we must urgently work with others of faith and good will to put in its place a different system in which our testimonies can flourish.*

*As individuals, and in our Meetings, we must return to the place from which testimony comes, to open ourselves to the Spirit and to wait humbly in the light. Together, we can help one another to overcome our inertia.”*

***Minute 23, Britain Yearly Meeting 2011***

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### How do reading groups work?

- Friends set up reading groups in meeting, or agree to join the programme with a pre-existing group at their meeting (see guidance below).
- Groups can be 3 people or more. An ideal size is 6 – 12. If there are a larger number of sign-ups than one person can facilitate, then see if anyone would like to try leading a second reading group.

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QPSW - Part of Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

- One nominated person from the reading group sources the group's programme materials, published here: [www.quaker.org.uk/new-economy-reading-groups](http://www.quaker.org.uk/new-economy-reading-groups)
- Groups meet across 8 sessions. Groups can access these session plans at any time after their release, and work through them more slowly.
- The programme involves reading the new economy booklets at home, followed by group discussion and activities in the sessions.
- Apart from an introductory session, each reading group session will be focused on the issues raised in each new economy booklet. The series of seven new economy booklets explore the following topics:
  - *Economic policy – what's it for and how should we measure economic success?*
  - *Good work and business structures that bring social benefit*
  - *Creating a just, sustainable energy system*
  - *How to reform banking and money creation*
  - *The role of public services, markets and privatisation in the new economy*
  - *A fair way to share the earth's resources, such as land, air and water*
  - *Building the new economy – what we can do*
- Session plans are flexible. Adapt them to the size of your group, the time you have available to meet, and your group's particular interests.

## **How to set up a new economy reading group in your area**

### **1. Find people in your local or area meeting to create a group**

You may want to sign up to the reading programme with a pre-existing group, like your meeting's sustainability group.

If you want to create a new group, you can do this through word of mouth, by putting up posters to advertise that a group is forming, or by adding an item to newsletters and announcements in your meeting. One reading group advertised in their local paper to attract new members.

It can be useful to arrange a short initial meeting for anyone interested to explain or agree how the group will work and organise logistics like time, place and roles and responsibilities (see below).

## **2. Think about how to make your group welcoming for everyone**

Consider how to make the group welcoming for people who don't feel confident reading (perhaps because of their eyesight, educational history, or learning disabilities), haven't had much experience of discussing subjects like economics or have a disability. There will be more guidance about this in the session plans. It's worth being clear with everyone at the first meeting: no economic knowledge is required, just an interest in exploring the topic.

## **3. Agree a time and place for the group to meet regularly**

Your meeting may have space you can use. A room not much bigger than the size of your group, with chairs you can put in a circle, is ideal. It is also a good idea to have access to a kettle so you can make tea and coffee. Think about whether it will be accessible to any members of your group with disabilities.

In terms of how often to meet, you may wish to meet once a month or less frequently.

## **4. Roles and responsibilities**

It's useful to agree who will take responsibility for leading each session, and other tasks associated with running the programme. These include accessing session plans and new economy booklets and distributing these to other group members, organising the room bookings and providing tea and coffee if you want it. You don't have to decide all this straight away – it can be organised as sessions progress. There may be one or two people who lead on setting up the group initially, but at an introductory meeting or the first session you may wish to offer others a chance to get more involved. Sharing responsibility around helps everyone feel more ownership of the group.

With this in mind, it can be a good idea to change facilitators for each session, so that everyone has a chance to host a particular topic. You may also decide to have two facilitators for each meeting, who plan the session together, rather than just one. Session plans are designed so that facilitators don't need any specialist knowledge about the topic of discussion.

Having said all this, if your group decides to have one single, constant facilitator the whole way through – that is completely fine, as long as it's something the group has decided on together and everybody involved feels happy with how things are organised.

## **5. Get the reading group session plans**

These downloadable session plans provide activities and questions for discussions. Each plan is a facilitator's script that you can use to support your group as you explore the economic issues. Find them at [www.quaker.org.uk/new-economy-reading-groups](http://www.quaker.org.uk/new-economy-reading-groups)

## **6. Order paper copies of the new economy booklets if you need them**

When your contact person signs up to the reading group programme (see above), there is an option to order paper copies of the booklets.

Please note that we have limited copies of the booklets, so please only order the amount you need. The booklets and postage are free.

## **7. Let your clerk know**

You don't necessarily need agreement from your meeting (eg. at Meeting for Worship for Business) to set up a Reading Group. However, tell your clerk or others in the meeting about the group, so they can help let other Friends know about it (eg. during notices) or provide any other support you need.

## **8. If you need further support...**

...on setting up a group, accessing session plans or facilitating the meetings, you can contact us at [neueconomy@quaker.org.uk](mailto:neueconomy@quaker.org.uk) or 020 7663 1035.

## **FAQS**

### **I'm not the group's 'contact person' but I'm going to facilitate a session and I'd like support with facilitation from QPSW. Is that possible?**

That's completely fine. If you've read the session plan for the session you are going to facilitate and still have questions or want any other support you can email [neueconomy@quaker.org.uk](mailto:neueconomy@quaker.org.uk) or call her on 020 7663 1035.

### **We've signed up to the reading group programme online but forgot to order copies of booklets. How can we order them?**

Just email [neueconomy@quaker.org.uk](mailto:neueconomy@quaker.org.uk) to place your order.

### **I'm not sure if a reading group programme has already started in my Meeting. How can I find out?**

Ask your clerk – they should be able to tell you if a reading group has already been set up and who to contact for more information. If your clerk isn't sure, you can also email us

([neweconomy@quaker.org.uk](mailto:neweconomy@quaker.org.uk)) and we'll let you know if a group has been set up in your area.

**Can non-Quakers join our reading group?**

Of course! There will be some Quaker references and terms in the new economy booklets and session plans, so just make sure you explain these to any non-Quakers present. For some meetings, new economy reading groups have been set up as an outreach project. By advertising the group, they've attracted new people to the discussions.

**How long are reading group sessions supposed to be?**

We recommend that the groups meet for around 2 hours for each session. However, for some Meetings this will not be possible and we have designed the session plans so they can be adapted for sessions of different lengths.

**I can't find anyone else in my area to start a reading group. Can I participate in the programme as an individual?**

Reading group session plans are designed for groups of at least 3 people. However, you can still read the booklets on your own and consider the questions raised in the booklets (in the blue boxes) or in the session plans.

You can also join our new economy email newsletter, where we share occasional updates and resources that relate to the project. Here's the link to the email sign-up page:

[eepurl.com/ceqAvj](http://eepurl.com/ceqAvj)

**Happy reading!**