



Sustainability  
Advices & Queries  
for Quakers

Produced by Bristol Quakers



These advices and queries have been produced to help Bristol Quakers act on our:

## **2020 Bristol Quaker Declaration of Commitment in response to the climate and ecological crisis**

Bristol Area Quaker Meeting recognises the urgency of the climate and ecological crises facing the planet. These are not new or isolated concerns, they are entangled in wider issues of justice and equality. We are called to respond to uphold our spiritual testimonies.

We commit to working for a future in which we have transformed our relationship with the planet, its resources and each other. We see this as a continuing journey of transition towards a different and better future for the planet and its communities.

As a first step, we commit our Area Meeting to ensure every collective decision is done with due consideration of the impact we make on the environment. Bristol Area Meeting commits to aim for net zero by 2030, and to using its resources to help achieve a just transition. We ask our Trustees to consult widely and bring forward an action plan to achieve that commitment.

We commit to supporting individuals and Local Meetings to discern and take radical action. We ask all Friends to think carefully about their impacts and what they can do. We recognise that not all Friends will be led or able to take the same action, each will find different challenges and inspirations. We commit to love and support each other on what will be, at times, difficult and uncertain journeys.

We will collaborate with individuals, organisations and other Faith communities to work towards a sustainable future and strengthen our witness and action in the world; upholding and moving beyond 'Our Canterbury Commitment'. We celebrate the rich diversity of responses that are already visible and continue to emerge in the face of these crises.

We set off joyfully, following the leadings of the Spirit and working with others as we reimagine and work towards a better future. We aim to learn, to relish the challenges and create opportunities. We do not know how fast we can travel or the destination, but we are committed to act in hope and truth.

*True Godliness does not turn people out of the world but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavours to mend it: not hide their candle under a bushel, but to set it upon a table in a candlestick*

William Penn 1682, Quaker Faith and Practice 21.17

The purpose of these Advices and Queries is to challenge, to inspire, to help us keep these issues in focus and to maintain the urgency of the need for each of us to respond.

We will all be affected personally in different ways. These Advices and Queries offer signposts for each of us to discover where our own service lies.

## **Our individual response**

1. Minute 36 from Yearly Meeting 2011, known as “Our Canterbury Commitment” is the Quaker response to the crisis of climate change. Are you familiar with the demands and challenges this declaration could bring to how you witness to your faith?
2. We share the DNA structure of all life on Earth. The atoms in our bodies have circulated throughout the network of living and non-living forms making up the universe. Much of what we do, directly or indirectly, leaves the natural world damaged. Do you accept your responsibility for minimising this damage?
3. We are called upon to recognise that we face a crisis of climate change and environmental destruction and we need to create a more sustainable future for our planet. In responding to this challenge through our actions, we are able to restate our individual and corporate concern for the unity of all creation. Whatever form your response takes, are you led by an awareness of the sacred duty placed on every one of us to care for the Earth and all living things?
4. Do not be discouraged by your own shortcomings or daunted by the task as a whole. Engage prayerfully and seek to discern where your service lies.

5. Do you take time to inform yourself of the impacts of your lifestyle on the world as a whole? Are you willing to make lifestyle changes? Do you seek support and guidance to make choices that reflect our concern for the Earth and all of its peoples?
6. Are you willing to support Quakers in your community to make changes? In doing so, seek opportunities for spiritual growth.
7. Do you revisit your lifestyle choices regularly to see whether you are led to make further changes. Sustainability is a journey, not a simple commitment.
8. Are you able to keep a balance between your care for the future of the planet and your care for yourself?
9. Do you recognise the needs and gifts of each of us, not forgetting your own? "Attend to what love requires of you, which may not be great busyness" *Advices and Queries, 1994, No.28.*
10. Are you ready to join Friends and others as we discern paths to transform the deepening conflicts resulting from human over-consumption of Earth's gifts?
11. Do not measure your level of activity against that of others. Ensure your journey is led by the spirit.

## **Our worshipping community**

12. Minute 36 encourages local meetings to speak truth to power within their local communities. How does your local meeting strive to meet this challenge?
13. Consider your role in helping your meetings move towards a low-carbon sustainable community.
14. Are we able to listen to the experience of others, both positive and negative, in a caring way that seeks to uphold, help and encourage them in discerning their own way forward?
15. What would you feel comfortable sharing about yourself and your sustainability journey with others in your meeting? What would you be uncomfortable to share?

16. Being part of a worshipping community involves all of us in creating that sense of community. Consider your own responsibilities in fostering that community.

## Considering how we live

17. Do we recognise that we may all be in different places on our journey and encountering different issues? These may arise from variations in our life history, affluence, age and health. Hold each other tenderly in the light and support friends in their journey.
18. "If pressure is brought upon you to lower your standard of integrity, are you prepared to resist it? Our responsibilities to God and our neighbour may involve us in taking unpopular stands. Do not let the desire to be sociable, or the fear of seeming peculiar, determine your decisions." *Advices and Queries, 1994, No.38.*
19. We are subject to all the persuasive powers of commerce and are influenced by family, friends and neighbours. Take time to understand yourself, your real needs and your true potential. Try to bring all your actions in line with this understanding and your knowledge of the world around you.
20. "Try to live simply. A simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of strength. Do not be persuaded into buying what you do not need or cannot afford. Do you keep yourself informed about the effects your style of living is having on the global economy and environment?" *Advices and Queries, 1994, No.41.*
21. Consumerism is an insidious cultural disease, which will still affect you even if you are trying your best to live simply. Reusing, recycling and repairing will all reduce your footprint on the Earth. However, doing without unnecessary goods and tackling the privileges of consumption are the most powerful actions. How are you tackling the challenges of consumption?
22. "We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. Show a loving consideration for all creatures and seek to maintain the beauty and variety of the world. Work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used

responsibly, with reverence for life. Rejoice in the splendour of God's continuing creation." *Advices and Queries, 1994, No.42.*

23. The drive to market cheap food has resulted in pollution of air, soil and water, destruction of wildlife and waste of raw materials. Try to buy local, fair-traded and organically produced food and eat fresh food in season. Consider whether you could grow some of your own.
24. Have you considered the impact of eating meat upon the planet? Intensive animal farming is usually cruel and increases the risk of pandemics. Eating animals is an extravagant use of land, water and edible grains. Can you reduce or eliminate the consumption of animal products as one of the biggest contributions to your carbon footprint?
25. Composting food and garden waste will enrich the soil and reduce the need for manufactured fertilisers and chemical controls. Healthy food and richer wildlife will be the reward.
26. How can you reduce the carbon footprint of your home? For example, warmer clothing when needed, room temperature, the area and timings of your heating, devices kept on standby, levels of insulation?
27. Cars and aeroplanes contribute to global warming, pollute the air and use irreplaceable resources. Think carefully before you fly, drive or use fossil fuel to travel. Consider this especially when planning holidays or a change of home or occupation. Remember the carbon footprint when you order goods on-line or buy goods that have to be shipped across the world – these also add to your personal carbon use.
28. Waste disposal is a major problem causing soil, water and air pollution and taking up valuable land space. Do you make every effort to reduce the amount of rubbish you put out for collection and disposal?
29. Do not despair about your capacity to achieve change. We cannot transform the world on our own, but we are not alone when we make our contribution.
30. If we have money or pension funds, do we ensure it is being used wisely to invest in creating the future we want?

## **Local, National and International Issues**

31. "Remember your responsibilities as a citizen for the conduct of local, national, and international affairs. Do not shrink from the time and effort your involvement may demand." *Advices and Queries, 1994, No.34.*
32. Consider supporting groups in your local area which are taking practical or political action in response to the climate crisis.
33. Do you seek to make your insights known to those in power in government and global companies, both locally and nationally, through meetings, letter writing, on-line and other avenues?
34. Our society currently is far from equal, with home ownership increasingly expensive, and secure, affordable tenancies rare. Some choices, such as the often more expensive fossil-free fuel, home insulation, etc are only available for more affluent citizens. Yet the ill-effects of climate change often impact most severely the poorest people in any country. How can we work towards social justice in response to climate change so that all are equally empowered? What does climate justice require you to do?
35. "Do you respect that of God in everyone though it may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or be difficult to discern? Each of us has a particular experience of God and each must find the way to be true to it. When words are strange or disturbing to you, try to sense where they come from and what has nourished the lives of others. Listen patiently and seek the truth which other people's opinions may contain for you. Avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language. Do not allow the strength of your convictions to betray you into making statements or allegations that are unfair or untrue. Think it possible that you may be mistaken." *Advices and Queries, 1994, No.17*

We have drawn heavily on those Quakers who have trodden this path before us.

Friends are particularly advised to look at the '**Canterbury Commitment**' a minute from Yearly Meeting at Canterbury in 2011 which challenges us: <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/sustainability/our-faith-and-sustainability>

We are grateful to resources in Advices and Queries; Earth: Our Creative Responsibility Group, a sub-group of Quaker Peace & Social Witness (2002); Carlisle Area Meeting; BYM and the Living Witness project.