

Advices and Queries

Introduction

A few years after its founding, The Religious Society of Friends realized that, to assess the health and progress of their Society, certain information was needed. Focused questions were formulated to gather that information. The first set of questions posed to each monthly meeting was as follows:

Which Friends in service to the Society, in their respective regions, departed this life since the last Yearly Meeting?

Which Friends, imprisoned on account of their testimony, died in prison since the last Yearly Meeting?

How, among Friends, did Truth advance since last Yearly Meeting and how do they fare in relation to peace and unity?

By 1700, Friends had begun the practice of preparing written responses to these questions. The focused questions, now called queries, were expanded and designed to ensure consistency of conduct among Friends as well as to obtain information about the state of the Society. The first general advices were adopted in 1791; periodic revisions were made thereafter by the various yearly meetings.

As Friends became more involved in the public and social life of the times, queries and advices were developed regarding discipline, evangelical soundness, moral and spiritual instruction, social responsibility, and ministry. Advices and queries have represented a continuing exploration of our common faith and practice and continue to serve as a reminder of the insights of the Society.

Advices and queries help us see if we are living our faith in Truth. We must be honest with ourselves. Do we actively seek to act out that faith in our lives? At times, we may become disheartened when the ideal of following the Light seems impossibly demanding. Advices, however, help us stay the path, and the queries help us assess the rightness of our direction. Spiritual knowledge serves as a framework for our lives; advices and queries help with building that framework. Together, they remind us of the faith and principles held to be essential to the life and witness of the Religious Society of Friends. As members of the Religious Society of Friends, we commit ourselves not just to words but also to a way of life.

Intended for use by individuals as well as by monthly meetings, the advices and queries may serve the needs of Friends in several ways. Many meetings read and consider one or several of the queries, along with the related advices or other material, once a month during business meetings or in other forums. Meeting committees may find certain queries to be especially helpful in evaluating their activities. Meetings often publish the queries regularly in their newsletters. The advices and queries can also be the basis for a monthly meeting's annual state of the Society report.

For convenience, the advices and queries are divided into categories. Friends are reminded that each section is but a part of the whole. It is for the comfort and discomfort of Friends that we offer these advices and queries.

Watch how we live and you'll know what we believe.

Deborah Fisch

Worship

One powerful way revelation occurs is in silent waiting, which can be described as the amazing fact of Quaker worship.

Elizabeth Bailey

Advices

1. The heart of the Religious Society of Friends is the meeting for worship. It calls us to offer ourselves, body, mind, and soul, to wait in active anticipation for the revelation of the Spirit.
2. It is in silence that we still our hearts and minds so that the Spirit of God may enter. This silencing, this waiting in expectancy, this listening for that which is deepest within—this is what Friends call worship. We seek a gathered stillness in our meetings for worship so that all may feel the power of God's love leading us and drawing us together.

3. Worship is our response to an awareness of God. We can worship alone, but when we join with others in expectant waiting, we discover a deeper sense of the Presence. When we worship together in awareness that each of us is expecting communication with the Spirit, the power of a meeting for worship is magnified.
4. When the meeting for worship has a central place in our lives, regular and punctual attendance occurs. When we arrive at meeting for worship on time, we help ourselves and others in the gathering wait upon the Spirit. Seeking the Spirit together, we may become aware of a willingness to give as well as to receive. Whether by speaking or by listening, each person contributes to and shares responsibility for the meeting's sense of worship. We thereby strengthen one another and refresh ourselves in the life of the Spirit.
5. It is in the rhythm of waiting and listening throughout the meeting for worship that we are enabled to sense the Inward Light and to discern its leadings. When we become preoccupied or distracted in meeting, we need to let such restless thoughts give way to our awareness of the Light among us. By so doing, we prepare ourselves to tenderly receive vocal ministry. As we reach for the meaning deep within a message, we need to recognize that even though it may not be God's word for us, it may be so for others.
6. Do not assume that vocal ministry is never to be your gift. Faithfulness and sincerity in speaking, even briefly, may open the way to fuller ministry from others. When prompted to speak, wait patiently to know that the leading and the time are right, but do not let a sense of your own unworthiness hold you back. Pray that your ministry may arise from the Spirit, and trust that words will be given to you. Speak clearly and simply, speaking neither predictably, at too great a length, nor too often. When children are present, bear in mind their understanding and experience. After a message has been given, Friends allow time to ponder and absorb its meaning before another speaks. It is important to maintain sensitivity to what is sacred.
7. We deepen our contribution to communal worship when we open ourselves to the Light in our daily lives. Our spirits are enriched when nourished by means of various spiritual practices, and we inevitably bring those benefits with us to the corporate meeting for worship.
8. From the very beginning, a fundamental practice of Friends has been to assemble publicly for the purpose of worship held in expectant waiting for divine guidance. By worshiping together, we continue to demonstrate our belief in and dependence upon the Holy Spirit. It is important, therefore, that we attend meetings for worship seeking that Spirit that enables us to be fully aware of the divine power of God within as we find our way through the disillusionments and disturbances of the world. It may be helpful to remember that the Religious Society of Friends originated during times of great disturbances. Our belief is in the power of God to lead us out of the confusions of outward violence, inner conflicts, and all forms of willfulness.

Queries

1. How do I prepare myself for worship? Do I set aside time during the week to strengthen my spirit? What is it that I bring to the meeting for worship?
2. When in meeting for worship, do I clear my mind so that the Spirit has a place to enter? Do I wait in great expectancy for the Spirit to speak—through me or through another? Do I put my trust in the still small voice that I may hear?
3. How do I discern the source of a leading? How do I know when to speak? Do I hold myself back when moved to speak, or do I trust in the Light to lead me? Am I careful not to speak at undue length or beyond my light? Am I aware of a sense of "rightness" after I speak?
4. Does attendance at meeting for worship strengthen my spirit for the week ahead? What brings me back to center—back to my inner wisdom, home to myself—and how can I make that a regular practice?
5. Are meetings for worship regularly held, and is each one of us faithful and punctual in attendance? How do we encourage attendance at meeting for worship? How do we greet newcomers so as to encourage their continued attendance?

6. Do our meetings for worship give evidence that Friends come with hearts and minds prepared and open to the experience of God? How does the meeting help individuals and the group become gathered?
7. Are we careful to ensure that we leave time between spoken messages so that they may be absorbed by those for whom they are intended? How do we encourage and foster the spiritual gifts of those who attend our meeting?
8. Are our meetings for worship held in expectant waiting for divine guidance and openness to the Inner Light? Is there a living silence in which we feel drawn together by the power of God in our midst? In what ways do our meetings for worship provide a source of strength and guidance to those present?

Monthly Meeting

I always go to monthly meetings because if I don't, they usually end up doing some darn thing or other.

Barney Aldrich, Mountain View Friends Meeting, as remembered by Phyllis Hoge, 2002

For it is the corporate Truth or Light for which Friends labor together, not the proof or justification of the rightness of any particular position.

Nancy Springer in North Pacific Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice, 1991, p.118

Advices

1. Friends' way of conducting business is of central importance to the very existence of the monthly meeting. It is the Quaker way of living and working together; it is the way that creates and preserves a sense of fellowship in the meeting community. Friends must be mindful to conduct the business meeting as a meeting for worship with a concern for business. Those present help the meeting by exercising a spirit of wisdom, forbearance, and love. The right conduct of business meetings, even in routine matters, is a vital part of the worship experience. Individuals' submitting themselves to the corporate revelation of Truth forms the basis of Friends' approach to unity.
2. All members are encouraged to attend meetings for business and to be faithful in the service of the meeting's affairs. Appointments of officers and committee members are most successful when made with careful consideration of the qualifications of the nominees and of the opportunities for growth that may be afforded. This is especially important when considering young Friends. In our meetings for business and in all the duties connected with them, we are charged to make conscientious use of our gifts.
3. In meetings for business, work and worship together with patience and warm affection for each other, aware of the peaceable spirit of the light of Truth. A majority decision or even consensus is not the goal. In waiting patiently for divine guidance, Friends' experience is that the way that leads to unity will open.
4. Those who speak in meetings for business are advised to feel free to express their views but to refrain from pressing them unduly, avoiding contentiousness, obstinacy, and the urge to control. Seek the leadings of the Light and admit the possibility of error. A "third way" may be needed in order for Truth to emerge and a sense of the meeting to be reached.
5. A deep and seeking silence can help reconcile seemingly opposing points of view. Be willing to wait upon God as long as may be necessary. By holding division and disruption in the Light, meetings may shift toward stronger and more creative solutions.

Queries

1. Are our monthly meetings held in the spirit of a meeting for worship in which we, in love and mutual respect, seek divine guidance?
2. How well do our meetings for business lead to a corporate search for and revelation of the Light?

3. How effectively do members of the meeting temper and strengthen individuals' leadings?
4. As difficult problems arise, are we careful to meet them in a spirit of love and humility with minds receptive to creative solutions? Do we avoid pressure of time, neither unnecessarily prolonging nor unduly curtailing full discussion?
5. Are we aware that we speak through inaction as well as action?
6. Are we prepared to let go of our individual desires and let the Holy Spirit lead us to unity? Do we accept with grace a decision of the meeting with which we are not entirely in agreement?

Participation in the Life of the Meeting

There are varieties of Gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. There are many forms of work, but all of them, in all men, are the work of the same God. In each of us the Spirit is manifested in one particular way, for some useful purpose. One man, through the Spirit, has the gift of wise speech, while another, by the power of the same Spirit, can put the deepest knowledge into words. Another, by the same Spirit, is granted faith; another, by the one Spirit, gifts of healing, and another miraculous powers; another has the gift of prophecy, and another the ability to distinguish true spirits from false; yet another has the gift of ecstatic utterance of different kinds, and another the ability to interpret it. But all these gifts are the work of one and the same Spirit, distributing them separately to each individual at will.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

We are the Monthly Meeting, the Regional Meeting, and Intermountain Yearly Meeting. Each functions best when each of us contributes what gifts we have...we cannot expect others to serve these to us.

Adapted from Ross Worley, 2003

Giving is not buying. God asks us to give because it is good for us, not because it is good for the person or cause to whom we give it.

Chris Viavant, January 28, 2005

Advices

1. The vitality of our meetings depends upon the many and varied gifts of those who take part in their activities. When each member and attender participates actively, the whole meeting is enriched. The Holy Spirit moves through us as we speak in meeting, care for one another, teach First Day school, work on committees, and testify to our lives in the Light. Each one of us has a responsibility for the financial support of the monthly meeting as well as for participation in the structure and function of its programs. When deciding whether to accept a service to which one is nominated, Friends are advised to understand the responsibilities required, to feel a leading to go forward, and to be willing to grow into the task. A meeting functions best when its members take their service to it seriously. Nominations are neither to be accepted, nor to be refused, casually.
2. Our capabilities and possessions are not held as ends in themselves but are God's gifts entrusted to us. They are ours to share with others and to be used with humility, courtesy, and affection.
3. In service to our meetings, we are to be careful to guard against contentiousness and the allure of power, and to be alert to the personalities and needs of others.
4. We encourage those who attend our meetings to become acquainted with Friends' ways. When it is evident that the meeting has become a spiritual home for an individual, we encourage him or her to apply for membership.
5. Those unable to attend meeting by reason of distance, infirmity, imprisonment, or other stresses are to be remembered and held in the Light. Visits to these Friends are encouraged.

6. Friends show a loving consideration for all living things, cherishing the beauty and wonder of God's creation.

Queries

1. What are we doing to recognize the varied skills and spiritual gifts of the members, attenders, and children among us? Are we tender and loving toward those with gifts different from the commonplace?
2. Does each of us take our right share of responsibility in work and service for the meeting? What gifts do we offer? What do we hold back from offering? What do we have tied up that God has need of?
3. How welcoming is our meeting to newcomers? When attenders request information about Quakerism, what resources do we share with them to increase their knowledge?
4. Are younger Friends, new members, and attenders encouraged to take part in committees and to attend meetings for business? Do we encourage their participation in the meeting's activities? Do we encourage them to pursue membership when they are ready?
5. What are we doing as individuals and as a meeting to encourage the use of members' and attenders' gifts?

Mutual Care

The spiritual welfare of a meeting is greatly helped if its social life is vigorous and its members take a warm personal interest in one another's welfare. . . . It is our duty and privilege to share in one another's joys and sorrows.

Faith and Practice, London, 1960

Advices

1. The Religious Society of Friends is a community of people that strive to care for one another. Friends are advised to maintain love and unity, to avoid tale-bearing and detraction, and to settle differences promptly in a manner free from resentment and inward violence. Live affectionately as friends, entering with sympathy into the joys and sorrows of one another's daily lives. Visit one another. Be ready to both give and receive help. Bear the burdens of one another's failings; delight in one another's strengths. Seek to know one another in the things that are eternal. Make the meeting a channel for God's love and forgiveness.
2. Cherished friendships grow in depth of understanding and mutual respect. In close relationships there is a risk of finding pain as well as joy. Open yourself to the workings of the Light within when experiencing or witnessing great happiness or great hurt.
3. Each of us has a particular experience of God, and each must find the way to be true to it. When another's words are strange or disturbing to you, seek to understand where they come from. Listen patiently and seek the truth that other people's thoughts may contain for you. Avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language. Be careful not to be too firm in your position; allow for the possibility that you may be mistaken.
4. Different ways of understanding the Divine are present in Intermountain Yearly Meeting. It is important that these differences not be ignored for the sake of superficial agreement. When they are recognized and understood, a deeper and more vital unity can be reached. From the wide diversity among us we can broaden our awareness of the spirit flowing through and among us. We are reminded to refrain from applying our prejudices to the life journeys of others. Our community is maintained through faith and fellowship with each other as we wait in the Light for the unity that draws us together.

Queries

1. Do we trust sufficiently the goodwill of our meeting members and attenders to make our needs and concerns known? Do we love one another as becomes the followers of the Light, even to the point of

sharing one another's burdens? Do we care for one another so deeply that each other's needs are recognized and addressed? As members of a spiritual community, do we actively work to maintain love and unity?

2. Is our meeting a loving, spirit-centered community in which each person is accepted and nurtured and strangers are welcome? In what ways do we incorporate people of different generations, members and attenders, and married and single adults into our community? On what occasions do we visit one another in our homes? How do we keep in touch with distant members?
3. To what extent does our meeting ignore differences merely to avoid possible conflicts? When conflicts exist, are they discussed calmly and patiently in an attempt to arrive at a creative resolution? Does our meeting, in appropriate ways, counsel any member whose conduct or manner of living give cause for concern? Are we charitable with each other, being careful not to sully the reputations of others?
4. How well do we respect that of God in every person, even though the Spirit may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or be difficult to discern? In what ways do we welcome diversity of culture, language, and expressions of faith in our monthly meeting, yearly meeting, and the world community of Friends? Do we seek to gain from the range of rich heritages and spiritual insights that diversity presents?

Family

The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's life.

Richard Bach, Illusions

Advices

1. Ideally, a family is held together by emotional and spiritual ties. It is a precious and sometimes tenuous bonding of people that may arouse anguish as well as joy. A family unit is usually thought of as consisting of parents and children. But a family may include aging parents in need of care or persons not related by blood who are intimately connected with one's household. Families also include single parents and their children, couples without children, and couples (heterosexual or homosexual) living in committed relationships. For individuals living alone, including those who are single as a result of the death of, or divorce or separation from, a partner, the meeting may provide a sense of family.
2. In our homes, we have the opportunity to practice living in a way that expresses the Quaker way of life. Irrespective of the type of family unit, the same opportunity exists—to nurture and cherish the seed of God. In the family setting, individuals can become aware of the Spirit living in them and in the world. It is important that adults and children share the experiences they find precious—of people, books, art, music, drama, dance, poetry, and the Divine.
3. The meeting can nurture, but cannot replace, the family unit. Every member of a meeting is responsible in some measure for the care of families, both adults and children. In this environment of common concern, our families may gain a sense of belonging and commitment to the expanded family of Quakers and to our Quaker heritage.

Queries

1. Do we uphold Friends in their efforts to develop stable, loving relationships? Do we acknowledge and support all relationships that are based on love and commitment? Do we offer strength and comfort to the aging, the widowed, the separated or divorced, and others—including children—in families that have been affected by disruption or sorrow?
2. Does our home life nourish the need both for a sense of personal identity and for fully shared living? Are our homes places of friendliness, peace, and renewal, where the Light is real for those who live there and those who visit? Do we take care that our commitments outside the home do not encroach upon the time and loving attention the family needs for its health and well-being?

3. Is there a climate of trust in our meeting that invites all members and attenders to be open about individual and family lifestyles, including their satisfactions and problems? Does there exist in our meeting a sense of spiritual kinship for those who participate in it?
4. Are religious education offerings adequate to family members' needs? Do families support the First Day school through their children's regular attendance? Do adults in meeting help lead First Day school classes so that parents may attend meeting for worship?

Aging, Death, and Bereavement

Life, then, is a gift of time. For each of us the days are numbered. I am grateful for each day I have to walk this beautiful earth. And I do not fear the return to the earth, for I know . . . that it is part of myself.

Elizabeth Watson, Guests of My Life, Celo Press, 1979

Advices

1. New opportunities present themselves at every stage of life. Approach the aging process with courage and hope. Honor that which you have been, welcoming new possibilities for wisdom, objectivity, and greater knowledge of the Spirit. Realize that as time passes, new ways of receiving and reflecting God's love will open.
2. Inspect your finances while you are in good health, making whatever provisions are needed for the settlement of your affairs. Consider the value of a living will and other documents that express your wishes for your end of life. Make sure that those dear to you are well informed, so that you and they are freed to live more fully. Friends are advised to review these documents annually.
3. Aging may bring increased disability and loneliness, so care for yourself tenderly, being aware that exercise, nutrition, and medical care are important. Determine who will help you should a need arise, and make arrangements for your care such that undue burdens do not fall on any one person.
4. Tragedies can occur at any time in our lives; death does not always announce itself. Friends of any age can prepare themselves for the loss of a dear one. It is as important to prepare for the end of our life as it is to prepare for other important events. Bookstores are filled with books that describe stages of life, death, and dying. It is helpful to know what lies ahead and to be ready for it.
5. Children's grief is frequently unseen. We need to be mindful that their sorrow is as real as adults' sorrow and needs to be equally expressed and accepted. Other losses, such as that of a beloved pet, impart sorrow as well. Friends must be careful not to minimize the extent of heartache that such losses cause. The meeting can be especially helpful to children when their parents are also grieving.
6. Meetings need to let members and attenders know whom to contact in time of serious illness or death. It is useful for Meetings to have information available on the laws of their state regarding burials and cremation as well as which funeral homes and cemeteries are sympathetic to Friends' wishes for simplicity.

Queries

1. Are we aware of those in our meeting who endure tragedy or loss? Do we seek to understand their needs and to comfort them? Do we, in loving concern, extend assistance to those who require it?
2. Have I prepared for my own death and for the deaths of those I love with the same care as for other events in my life? Have I learned what I can about the aging and dying process? If not, what prevents me from learning about these topics? Do I fully discuss and share this information within my family?
3. Are my personal papers and finances up to date and in good order? Have documents been prepared that will help those I love in the event of my serious illness or death: a will, a living will, powers of attorney, and a description of the type of care I desire in the case of a serious, debilitating event or illness? Have I discussed these matters with those close to me?

4. Should my vision, hearing, balance, or thought processes deteriorate, what steps will I take to prevent having an accident? When will I be willing to relinquish my car keys?
5. How can the meeting help me find clearness about the difficult questions surrounding aging and dying? Do I know whom to contact when I am in need of spiritual support or material assistance? What am I willing to ask of the meeting? Am I willing to accept what the meeting has to give?

Religious Education

When we find ourselves teaching . . . can we draw upon that respect for one another and faith in one another's potential that will enable the other to feel taller and more capable? At Rufus Jones's memorial meeting, one of his students simply said: "He lit my candle." That is a high aim for us all to aspire to in educating ourselves and our young people.

Barbara Windle, 1988 in Quaker Faith & Practice of Britain Yearly Meeting, 1993

Advices

1. The Bible and other religious literature is the rightful heritage of us all. The study of sacred books expands and deepens our awareness of our own spiritual heritage and that of others. What we read means little unless it helps us understand our own personal religious experience, the work of the Spirit behind the words. It helps to know that our search for truth can include a multitude of experiences.
2. It is essential that children be taught the meaning of silence and vocal ministry in meeting, and the history of the Religious Society of Friends. Knowledge of our testimonies and their evolution is equally important to their religious education. Work camps, community activities, and opportunities to serve others enhance their experience. We must be gentle and respectful as our children seek their own spiritual truths, appreciating whatever insights they bring to us.
3. All adults in meeting can benefit from religious education in the form of Quaker Studies programs, spiritual formation groups, prayer groups, worship-sharing groups, or adult First Day school classes. Like a garden, the spirit within must be tended and nurtured. The meeting is enriched when all those participating care for their own spirits.

Queries

1. In what ways does our meeting help develop the spiritual lives of our children and adult members and attenders? Do we provide our children and young adults with a framework for active, ongoing participation in meeting? Do we welcome their presence among us?
2. How does our meeting educate its members of all ages about the Bible, other sacred writings, our Christian heritage, and the history and principles of Friends?
3. Do we encourage our children to participate actively in meetings for worship and meetings for business? Are they aware of the meaning of membership in the meeting and the importance of service to the community?
4. How do we share our deepest beliefs with our children and with one another? What inspires us to develop our spiritual and religious life?

Integrity

The Inner Light does not lead men to do that which is right in their own eyes, but that which is right in God's eyes.

Ellen S. Bosanquet, 1927, in Quaker Faith & Practice of Britain Yearly Meeting, 1995

Advices

1. Our witness to the world comes from our perception of the Divine Spirit moving through us. The reliability of our words, essential to all communication between one person and another and between

one person and God, has always been important to Friends. Friends profess a genuineness of life and speech that leaves no room for deceit or artificiality. Throughout our history, therefore, we have borne witness against judicial oaths as suggesting a double standard of truth. Devotion to what is true and eternal requires openness, honesty, and careful speech in social, business, and family relationships. As early Friends took care to avoid flattering titles and phrases, modern Friends need to discourage the insincerities and extravagances prevalent in our society. It is also advisable to avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language. With courtesy and kindness, Friends are called to speak the truth, in love.

2. As Friends, we must not waver in making our faith evident, in words or deeds. Recognizing the oneness of humanity in God, we affirm fellowship with all people. The various experiences of those whose circumstances differ from our own can help us discover what is true in our lives and can lead us into a more honest kinship. In our dealings with others, humility and a willingness to learn help us transcend differences. When in discussion with others, we must not allow the strength of our convictions to betray us into making misleading or contentious statements.
3. Our witness is most effective when we are in touch with the Spirit within. Each of us has a particular experience of God; each must find the ways to be true to it. There are times when we may need to remember that the truth is greater than the knowledge any one of us has of it. God did not put all the fruit on one tree.
4. Bear witness to the humanity of all people, including those who break society's conventions or laws. Seek to understand the causes of injustice, social unrest, and fear. As members of the Religious Society of Friends, we commit ourselves not to words, but to a way of life.
5. Friends keep to the simplicity of truth, discerning its manifestations through prayer, reading, the arts, and all experiences of daily life. In accepting guidance as to what is true and eternal, we are required to be open, honest, and careful of speech and actions in all situations.

Queries

1. What are we doing individually and corporately to share the experience of our faith? Do we let others know about the source of our convictions? What are we doing to make the larger community aware of our Friends meeting?
2. In what ways do we cooperate with persons and groups who share our beliefs and concerns? What are we doing, individually and corporately, to share the experiences of our faith? How does our connection to the Spirit inspire and challenge us?
3. Do we search diligently for ways to assure the right of every individual to be loved, cared for, educated appropriately; to obtain useful employment; and to live in dignity?
4. When the meeting receives multiple requests for funds or action, how do we determine which are most pressing?
5. How are we prepared, both as individuals and as a meeting, to resist pressure to lower our standard of integrity?

Peace

A good end cannot sanctify evil means; nor must we ever do evil, that good may come of it. . . . It is as great presumption to send our passion upon God's errands, as it is to palliate them with God's name. . . . We are too ready to retaliate, rather than forgive, or gain by love and information. And yet we could hurt no man that we believe loves us. Let us then try what Love will do: for if men did once see we love them, we should soon find they would not harm us. Force may subdue, but Love gains: and he that forgives first, wins the laurel.

William Penn, 1693, in Quaker Faith & Practice of Britain Yearly Meeting, 24.03

Advices

1. We affirm that our first allegiance is to our experience of the Divine. If this conflicts with any compulsion of the state, our country is served best when we remain true to our higher loyalty. Over the centuries, Friends have valued their part in shaping the laws of our country so as to achieve a more just and evenly balanced social order. The peace testimony of the Religious Society of Friends is a positive expression of goodwill in human relationships, not just a negative statement calling us to abstain from all that leads to war.
2. As Friends, we are urged to identify the seeds of war within ourselves individually and in our way of life. Any element of fear, restlessness, discontent, unhappiness, and poverty of spirit can lead to violence and war. We are cautioned not to bury these feelings, but to acknowledge their presence, pinpoint their sources, and transform pain and anger into the power of positive action. Thus, we heal ourselves and become free and able stewards in the healing of others.
3. When working toward peace in the broader community and wider world, we look to change the conditions that spark violence in others—poverty, despair, fear, hopelessness, dehumanization, and hunger, among others. We return to our roots in the truth to establish secure conditions where cooperation, equality, justice, and freedom can flourish. We work toward improving the environment and toward right sharing of the world's resources.
4. We refuse to join in actions that denigrate others or lead to their victimization. Friends are also advised not to join in actions that lead to destruction and death. We actively seek ways to strengthen the bonds of unity, refusing to participate in conduct that makes for war. We teach our children that it is possible to overcome evil with good, to love the persecutor, and to find alternative ways to resolve conflict.
5. Friends actively support movements that substitute teamwork and justice for coercion and dishonesty, encouraging all efforts to overcome prejudices based on race, nationality, class, and other characteristics. Friends are encouraged to use and teach nonviolent communication.
6. Our responsibilities to God and our neighbor may lead us to take unpopular stands. In carrying out principled decisions and actions, we may struggle against the desire to be sociable, the fear of seeming different or peculiar, or the fear of possible consequences.
7. If, by divine leading, we focus on a law contrary to our perception of divine law, we proceed with care. It is important to seek clearness before taking action. Consultation with other Friends helps us consider the views of those who might be affected by our decision and see more clearly what actions are needed. When clarity is reached, we act with conviction. If our decision involves disobedience of the law, we make the grounds for our action clear to *all* concerned. If there are penalties, we face them without evasion. When a meeting supports a member's leading to engage in civil disobedience, the meeting has an obligation to assist the member in dealing with the consequences.
8. When we are in accord with God and centered in ourselves, the earth, and all others, we move toward peace. True peace is obtainable only through unity in the life of the Spirit. Lasting peace requires determination, watchfulness, and ongoing work on every level—as individuals and in our families, society, nation, and world.

Queries

1. Do we live in the awareness of the presence of God? How do we center ourselves and practice living in unity with the Spirit? Does our meeting help individuals find such unity?
2. To what extent is our personal life in accord with Friends' principles? Do we "live in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars"? How would others recognize that? Where there is animosity, division, and conflict, do we facilitate healing and reconciliation? Do we care for our own health so that we are more able to help others care for theirs? Does the meeting support us in this work?
3. When those among us disclose opinions that differ greatly from our own, are we able to listen to them without judgment or derision? Are we able to support tenderly those whose views differ from

our own, knowing that the Light shines in them also? When unpopular or even illegal stands are taken by Friends, are these held in the Light for discernment by the meeting?

Equality

Then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

Sojourner Truth

Until we as a Religious Society begin to question our assumptions, until we look at the prejudices, often very deeply hidden, within our own society, how are we going to be able to confront the inequalities within the wider society?

Susan Rooke-Matthews, 1993, in Quaker Faith & Practice of Britain Yearly Meeting, 1993

Advices

1. Since the time of George Fox, Friends have believed that all people are spiritually equal before God. Believing that, it is important that Friends everywhere question the prejudices (often deeply hidden) within the Religious Society of Friends and challenge the assumptions we make about others. In the past, Quakers helped foment vast societal changes by challenging the oppression they saw. Today our voices do not ring as loudly nor are they as unified when we confront oppression and inequality. For example, we are deeply divided among ourselves regarding same-gender marriage.

Guided by the Light of God within us and recognizing that of God in others, we can all learn to value our differences in age, gender, physique, sexual orientation, race and culture. This enables mutual respect and self-respect to develop, and it becomes possible for everyone to love one another as God loves us. Throughout our lives, we see ourselves reflected in the facial expressions, verbal comments and body-language of others. We have a responsibility to protect each other's self-respect.

Because of their commitment to social concerns, some Quakers may find it inconceivable that they may lack understanding of issues involving racism. Jesus stressed the unique nature and worth of each individual. It is unreasonable to expect assimilation or to ignore difference, claiming to treat everyone the same. This denies the value of variety, which presents not a problem, but a creative challenge to live adventurously. Personality, gender, race, culture and experience are God's gifts. We need one another, and differences shared become enrichments, not reasons to be afraid, to dominate or condemn. The media have increased our knowledge of the world, but we need greater self-awareness if our actions are to be changed in relation to the information we receive. We need to consider our behavior carefully, heeding the command of Jesus that we should love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

Meg Maslin, 1990, in Quaker Faith & Practice of Britain Yearly Meeting, 23.33

Queries

1. Do we believe that God speaks to us through others? Do we look for and recognize "that of God" in all others? Do we love our neighbor as ourselves? Do we value diversity and acknowledge the enrichment that comes from sharing differences? How do we encourage those we know to consider people as individuals rather than as stereotypes?
2. Do we work individually and as a meeting to bring about a just and compassionate society that allows everyone to develop their capacities and fosters their desire to serve? Are we alert to practices in our own country and throughout the world that discriminate against people on the basis of who or what they are or what they believe? What are we doing as individuals and as a meeting to promote equal social and economic opportunity for those who suffer discrimination for any reason whatsoever?
3. Do we take the risks that right action demands?

Simplicity

The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone with everything is to succumb to violence. More than that, it is cooperation with violence. The frenzy of the activist neutralizes his or her work for peace. It destroys her or his capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of the work because it kills the root of inner wisdom, which makes the work fruitful.

Thomas Merton, in Letter to a Young Activist

Advices

1. Ever-expanding knowledge, communication, and technology have made the world far more complex than it was for early Friends. What may be simple for one is problematic for another. We believe in the wholeness of the Spirit, a Spirit that knows and comprehends all things, simple and complex. As we wrestle with the demands of society, we would do well to be aware that expressions of simplicity vary considerably and not to judge those whose expressions differ from ours.
2. It is important to ensure that our lives are not so full that we lose sight of the Light within. By consulting the Light, we are able to discern whether to take up or turn down responsibilities without indulging our pride or our guilt. We are advised to consider our capabilities and possessions not as ends in themselves but as God's gifts entrusted to us. We are to share them with others, using them with humility, courtesy, and affection.
3. Friends are advised to distinguish between ways to happiness offered by society that are truly fulfilling and those that are potentially corrupting and destructive. We are responsible for the manner in which we acquire, use, and dispose of our possessions. This does not mean our lives are to be poor and bare, destitute of joy and beauty. Do not be persuaded into buying what you do not need or cannot afford. All that promotes fullness of life and aids in service for God is to be accepted with thanksgiving. A simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of strength. Each person must determine, based on the Light given to them, what promotes and what hinders their search for truth.
4. From early days, Friends have deplored and avoided the gambling spirit that permeates our society—in finance and commerce, sports and recreation, for example. It is best to refrain from hazardous speculation and from engaging in business that may be questionable. Such indulgence has caused the material ruin of many, as well as dwarfing their moral and spiritual lives. It is advised that our recreations not become occasions for self-centeredness and that we avoid amusements that debase the emotions by playing upon them.
5. We are advised to be aware of and to take a stand against the great waste of human and economic resources resulting from all forms of addiction, knowing that they lead to self-absorption and to forgetfulness that each person's humanity is shared by all persons. It is the experience of Friends that engaging in additive behaviors such as gambling and the abuse of drugs and intoxicants can lead to feelings of emptiness and an inability to listen for the voice of God. In addition to self-destructive behavior such as drunk driving, addiction is commonly associated with outwardly destructive acts such as domestic violence and child abuse. Friends are reminded that being a Quaker is no absolute defense against having these problems. We must be ready as a community to intervene when necessary. When our lives are filled with the Spirit, there is no need to indulge in excessive and addictive use of tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs, or to engage in gambling and other addictive behaviors. Let us remember to live and work in the spirit of a true follower of the Light.
6. In our daily work, let us avoid involvements and entanglements that separate us from each other and from God. In the context of our complex lives, let us strive to maintain our ideals of sincerity and simplicity, to keep before us the essential truths, and to measure our lives by those truths. Be diligent in seeking the faith that is the foundation for the inner peace that holds firm in the face of outward confusion.

Queries

1. Is the life of our meeting ordered so as to help us simplify our personal lives? Does the meeting help us center ourselves in the awareness of the presence of God so that all things take their rightful place?
2. Do we structure our days so as to provide space to nourish our spiritual growth? Do we center our lives in the awareness of the presence of God so that all things take their rightful place? Does our way of life nourish our spiritual growth and that of our families? In our daily lives, are we aware of pressures that separate us from each other and from the Divine?
3. Do we avoid commitments beyond our strength and Light as well as a clutter of multiple activities? Are we careful how we choose to use our time and energy?
4. Do we choose recreations that strengthen our physical, mental, and spiritual lives and avoid those that may prove harmful to ourselves and others?
5. In our relations with those who have problems with addiction to a substance or a behavior, are we careful to be guided by compassion for the individual rather than by others' opinions or attitudes?
6. Do we keep to a single standard of truth, free from the use of judicial and other oaths? Are we punctual in keeping promises, prompt in the payment of debts, and just and honorable in all our dealings? Do we exercise moderation and honesty in our speech, our manner of living, and our daily work?

Stewardship

Quakers often talk about being led.... We are all led. The question is not whether we are led, but what leads us.

Robert Griswold, 2005

Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works.

Matthew 5:15-16 (RSV)

Advices

1. We must be grateful for all that we have, neither reveling in our own gifts nor coveting those of others.
2. The principle of stewardship applies to all that we are given and who we are as individuals, members of groups, and inhabitants of the earth. We are each obliged to use our time, abilities, strength, money, material possessions, and other resources in a spirit of love, aware that we hold these gifts in trust and that we are responsible for using them wisely. We need to be aware of pollution, overpopulation, and all forms of wastefulness.
3. As Friends, and as members of other groups, we seek to apply the same spirit to the use and contribution of our corporate resources. We are obliged to cherish the earth and to walk gently upon it, recognizing that it is not ours to own or to dispose of at will. We are to protect all its resources in a spirit of humble stewardship, committed to the right sharing of these resources among all peoples and creatures of the world.
4. Show loving consideration for all creatures and seek to understand how all living things depend upon one another; cherish the beauty and wonder of God's creation.

Queries

1. Do we regard our time, talents, energy, money, material possessions, and other resources as gifts from God, to be held in trust and shared according to the Light we are given? How do we witness to this conviction in our lives? Do we investigate the companies in which our money is invested, avoiding investing in those whose practices undermine Quaker testimonies and values?

2. Do we practice and encourage thoughtful family planning? What are we doing to ensure adequate water, food, shelter, education, and respect for those who do not have ready access to these blessings? Are we informed about the effects of our lifestyle on the global economy and the environment?

Harmony with Nature (Environment)

The environmental crisis is at root a spiritual and religious crisis; we are called to look again at the real purpose of being on this earth.

London Yearly Meeting, 1988, in Quaker Faith & Practice of Britain Yearly Meeting, 1993, 25.02

Advices

1. *Our concern for peace and the environment arises from the recognition of the sacredness of all creation and the presence of the Divine in each person. We are called to embrace, cherish, and protect all of creation.*

Genie Durland, 2006

2. Implicit in our testimony on simplicity is an understanding that we will not take more than we need—particularly if it means depriving others, including future generations, of their basic needs. The earth is not in bondage to us nor are its riches ours to dispose of at will. We recognize that we are part of the natural world. Humankind is not a species to which all of creation is subservient. Rather, it is one of many interrelated and interdependent facets of a creation more vast than human understanding can grasp.
3. *The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.*
John Woolman, 1772, in Quaker Faith & Practice of Britain Yearly Meeting, 25.01
4. Part of understanding one's place in the world is forming "right" relationships with things. Such relationships are as much a consequence of observation as they are the product of activity. Let us exercise our power over nature responsibly, with due reverence for life. Let us strive to show loving consideration for all creation and seek to enhance the beauty and variety that surrounds us.
5. Truth is revealed in diversity if we give way for its expression. Rejoice in the splendor of the earth's continuing creation, for it is that of God speaking.

Queries

1. How do we inform ourselves about how our style of living affects the global economy and the environment?
2. How do we exercise our respect for the balance of nature? Are we careful to avoid poisoning the earth, the air, and the water? Do we use the world's resources with care and consideration for future generations and with respect for all life? Do we recycle all that we can?
3. How do we encourage environmental responsibility within our community?
4. How do we live in accord with our sense of God in all creation?

Service

Is this not what I require of you as a fast:

to loose the fetters of injustice,

to untie the knots of the yoke,

to snap every yoke and set free those that have been crushed?

Is it not share your food with the hungry,

taking the homeless into your house,

clothing the naked when you meet them,

and never evading a duty to your kinfolk?

Then shall your light break forth like the dawn

*and soon you will grow healthy like a wound newly healed; your own righteousness shall be your vanguard,
and the glory of the Lord your rear guard.
Then if you call, the Lord will answer.
If you call to him, he will say, "Here I am."*

Isaiah 58:6–9 (NEB)

We recognize a variety of ministries. In our worship these include those who speak under the guidance of the Spirit and those who receive and uphold the work of the Spirit in silence and prayer. We also recognise as ministry service on our many committees, hospitality and childcare, the care of finance and premises, and many other tasks. We value those whose ministry is not in an appointed task but is in teaching, counseling, listening, prayer, enabling the service of others, or other service in the meeting or the world. The purpose of all our ministry is to lead us and other people into closer communion with God and to enable us to carry out those tasks which the Spirit lays upon us.

London Yearly Meeting, 1986, in Faith & Practice of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Advices

1. The Religious Society of Friends challenges each of us to live a life reflective of our beliefs. We take our faith into the broader community in many ways. Some are led to do acts in full view of society; others are led to work where their service is less visible but no less valuable. Each of us holds a part of the whole. None of us could consistently do what we do, no matter how little, without drawing from the well of our faith. Among us all, we make a greater impact than we may realize as individuals.
2. Quaker service springs from our deepest convictions and is the natural expression of our beliefs in justice, equality, and community. Our service may lead us to practice a profession in which we serve others; numerous opportunities exist for those of us whose professions are not directly service related. We can work with integrity on school boards and in community associations; we may influence our families and friends to examine their consumption of natural resources and to find various ways to recycle more fully; we may help rebuild devastated homes or lives; we may soothe and comfort those with wounded souls. It is important to discern whether our service is inspired and led by the Spirit so that we do not take on tasks beyond our strength or capabilities. By ever returning to the Light within, we can trust we will find ways in which we can...

Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone.

George Fox, Journal, 1656

Queries

1. In what ways does your life reflect your faith? In what ways does your faith illuminate your life?
2. How do you distinguish between the leadings of the Divine and the pressures of the needy?
3. Do you give sufficient time to sharing with others in the meeting, both newcomers and long-time members, your understanding of service and commitment to Quaker witness?

Mindful that the light leads us in different ways, how do you demonstrate your respect for others' modes of service?