

Exercise on Advices and Queries: Responses from local meetings

Frandle reflections (29.6.25)

Advices and Queries is a valuable resource. It is short and covers many pertinent areas of Quakerism. It is helpful for both newcomers and people with longer involvement with Quakers.

We see it as a tool for making sense of spiritual experience and also for encouraging us in our personal responsibility. We also think it is valuable to keep the corporate discipline of regular reading in Meetings for Worship.

Format/Presentation

We want to keep a small pocket-sized format.

Keep the expanded and language rich version but have other formats to include:

Illustrated version with simple language

Version for young adults

Version for children

It would be useful to have a “graphic” version – both printed and on line. (The latter to include video and audio). These forms could be interactive so that there could be links to more depth elaboration. There could be an App version with links to daily / weekly updateable reflections.

The “other” versions may be both more accessible to a diverse range of people and more engaging to a wider demographic.

The children created some examples of graphics. (See below)

Approach

We would like to keep the tone and the generally simple language.

Does the current title speak to all audiences?

Keep the framing at the beginning and end with quotations from the Elders of Balby and George Fox

Keep the principle of sections: eg Inspiration, Worship, personal responsibilities, attitudes and practices. In order to be accessible, especially to newcomers, would clearer groupings be helpful?

Keep an emphasis on our personal responsibilities (not just Quaker corporate responsibility as is covered in other parts of QFP). But note that some people experience the current version as like rules and imperatives, and hope for language that encourages people to consider and reflect.

Update language to speak to our times, e.g. ‘cherish’

Some find traditional religious and Christian language full of meaning, for others this is off-putting. This is acknowledged helpfully in the introduction to the current version. But is this balance reflected in the main text? It seems as though in the current version traditional language is then used throughout. Maybe in the revision an approach can be taken that is consistent with how this balance is tackled in the overall revision of chapters of QFP. ie flexible and welcoming for those who don’t relate to the term “God, Worship, evil etc.” ; possibly also terms such as “the light within us”, “Love”, “Universal Spirit”.

We consider it important that we are the ‘Religious Society of Friends’: also that we are ‘rooted in Christianity, open to new light’.

Specific Content

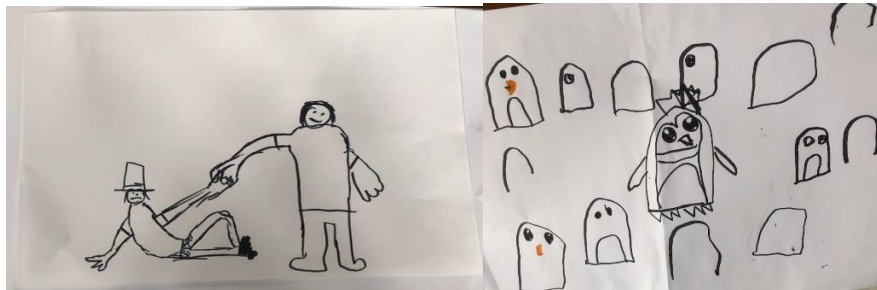
Expansion of/additions to sections in the light of contemporary life:

- Responsible use of the internet (40?) and our personal responsibility for use of resources (41),
- More reference to our personal role in fighting climate change, protecting global and extra-terrestrial environments,
- Care for displaced people (33) and our responsibility to be aware of power imbalances and exploitation,

- (29/30) The importance of managing death in our society, and living with long-term disability or illness. (particularly in the context of the Assisted Dying Bill?)
- Recognition of different ways of being in the world including neuro-divergency
- Our role in supporting members of our family, friends and our communities, and awareness of suffering or deprivation.
- Personal integrity and use of AI. Responsibility to the best of one's ability to be well informed and able to discern truth (34 to 39).
- No 23 – “Marriage” is singled out. Could this imply that other forms of long-term relationships are not as important? Better to have “Long term relationships” as per 25
- No 26 “Do you recognise the needs and gifts of each member of your family and household”. Many people live by themselves and many don't have “family” or have a community sense of “family”. It is hurtful to those in such a position to have this question. Maybe substitute with “Do you to recognise the needs and gifts of others, in your community(s)”

Omissions:

- “The Universe, instead of The World” (Contribution from the Children)



Give a helping hand



Marple Meeting Worship Sharing and Discussion (18 May 2025)

We held a time of worship sharing to reflect on “What do the Advices and Queries mean to you?” Friends spoke of them being a long-term companion and also identified some specific paragraphs that they valued especially, and explained why. One Friend felt that they “taught her how to love God and love people”.

We followed this with a discussion session (7 Friends present).

- Is the title off-putting? Especially the word ‘queries’ which sounds old-fashioned. It has the spirit of guidance and advice.
- Many of us are very literate and share the same educational background – the language might be less accessible for some – there are simplified versions of the bible using modern English – we often give it to new enquirers, but maybe simpler leaflets explain better – could the first para be something to introduce people to Quakerism?
- How do we feel about ‘old fashioned’ language and ‘Quaker Speak’? Also explicitly Christian language? We should cherish our Christian roots, and for some, what we find or don’t find accessible may change over time.
- Why would we go back to QFP or A&Q rather than the original source document i.e. the Bible? They can both be viewed as ‘secondary documents’ – a filtered version, and also filtered through our British culture – other Yearly meetings around the world have different documents.
- 41 and 42 about sustainability and the environment need to be given much more weight – could be moved to the front of the book; we hope more vigorous coverage about racism and transphobia will be in QFP
- More about our individual peace building, in our inner lives – challenge to understand how we interact with each other in every setting – our homes, our Quaker community and neighbourhood. Peace building and education.
- Young Friends “Living our Beliefs” – dramatically abbreviated! Shorter paras? Graphic version – pictures and images or all sorts; the Australian QFP is beautifully illustrated. ‘Easy Read’ version.
- The introduction is too weighty – make a simpler one, introducing Quakers for a new reader.
- Must look fabulous online!

Stockport Meeting Reflecting on Advices and Queries (March 2025)

What we particularly value

The postscript to an epistle to the brethren in the north issued by a meeting of Elders at Balby

The children's version of advices and queries is well laid out and illustrated

Numbers 1, 28, 29, 30

These are our words, They are not handed down from "above"

They are revised at intervals and so are more to be relevant to us

They are what connects us

The small size of the book means it is easy to carry about

It can serve as a memory aid to fuller entries in Quaker Faith and Practice

Changes Friends thought were needed

Many could be much shorter and direct, less pedantic and cumbersome

The number could be reduced

For example:

Come to Meeting even when feeling down and discouraged

Spoken ministry may not speak to you but could speak to others

Meeting for Worship is not a discussion

Listen and learn from children

Be realistic about what you really need in material terms

Do you go to business meetings prepared to be guided?

Do you listen to those who disagree with you?

Areas that are not represented

Non theists views need inclusion but many Friends want to retain references to God, Christianity, Jesus and discipleship. There needs to be a balance

More is needed on global warming and climate change

What is the essence of our Quaker belonging?

Some of our ideas for Advices and Queries

Be aware that yours is not the only life view.

Be aware of the importance of stillness in our lives

Maybe your current way of life is restricting you

Don't feel guilty about saying no. Take care of yourself so you can better help others

Are you sensitive to those with disabilities?

Your Meeting is a community of the Spirit; take your full part in it, support it. When you need help and nurture, trust it

Remember that Light overcomes darkness

Sustenance resources are prayer, healing, joy, discernment, resilience

Community needs are boundaries, trust, honesty, relationships, links, connections

Nurture that of goodness, compassion and love of life

How do you live and do no harm?

Wilmslow Meeting Advices and Queries Listening circle points (March 2025)

- Hard to jettison any
- They're always fresh
- Question and Discomfort
- No 29 - ? "serenity", prefer 28
- No 9 uncomfortable with "evil"
- No 23 -?depth or marriages that are difficult
- Some As and Qs are more popular than others to read out
- Some could be more brief – preferred the previous *Questions and Counsel* in this
- Make more simple – less "academic" – could be gentler
- Make more appealing to younger people
- Would regret it if all the "God language" was lost
- Be more disciplined about the length
- May need to add something about caring for our children and young people and their mental health
- Like that Quakerism is rooted in Christianity remains
- We can't please everyone in considering these *
- Danger of losing too much with attempting to be flexible and welcoming *
- Space for more of a mixture of length of advice/query e.g. No 40 could be a single sentence
- No 22 covers LGBTQ choices
- Prioritisation – order of As & Qs; should 41 and 42 to come earlier; they are basic?
- No 17 – doubt that uncertainty is important
- Is a guide to how we live – "bed rock"
- Can we make As & Qs and QF&P suitable for all needs and groups?
- The old "yellow cards" used for outreach were good; could we incorporate the bullet points into QF&P?

i.e. **What do Quakers say?**

There is something sacred in everyone.

Equality is fundamental to everything we do

We find deep spiritual nourishment in stillness

Faith reaches to every corner of life. It inspires us to work for peace, truth and justice for all life on earth.