

Quaker Earthcare Gathering 2025

24th to 27th October at The Hayes, Derbyshire

Epistle agreed as a minute in the concluding session on 27th October

We are 114 Friends of all ages from Britain and continental Europe, gathered to explore how our Quaker faith and communities can help us to meet the Earth crisis with hope, strength, and compassion. Our time together has been deeply rooted in worship, and has included a children's programme, a Quaker Quest session, workshops, discussions, practical activities, music, art and much more.

As we meet, Hurricane Melissa approaches Jamaica. Climate catastrophe is forecast to cause billions of human deaths this century amid ecological collapse and ongoing mass extinction.

Our residential is part of a year-long extended gathering process, braiding streams in our Quaker Earthcare engagement, especially the Living Witness worshipping community and the Quaker Support for Climate Action community. We have been blessed by the contributions of Quakers in Britain staff and committee members as organisers and participants. We have upheld Friends going through the courts for their Earthcare witness.

The extended gathering will continue to the end of 2025 and beyond, with online sessions and networks open to all Friends everywhere.

We are nourished by our deep-rooted corporate testimony on the Earth, by Yearly Meeting commitments over many years and the work of successive committees and groups.

This is our epistle in written form. But we are all epistles from the gathering, through the ministry of our lives, actions and relationships as well as words.

A thread through our gathering has been learning from the work of Vanessa Andreotti and the *Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures Collective*, on practices for “hospicing modernity”. The words of poet Deena Metzger resonate with us:

There are those who want to set fire to our world,
we are in danger,
there is only time to move slowly,
there is no time not to love. *

*These were the words shared in ministry in our meeting and agreed in the minute. Deena Metzger's poem [on her website](#) reads “There are those who are trying to set fire to the world”

In our Quaker Quest session we considered the question:

What has been your journey of relationship and entanglement, of seeking to answer that of God in the other, of being shown our darkness and led to new life? How has it changed you? How does it still challenge you?

The gathering heard ministry from Friends experiencing “intensive struggle” with the brokenness and cruelty of modernity and its culture of uncare. We are filled with admiration for those Friends’ capacity to sustain themselves and those they love, and still to bring their witness to the world.

We carry fragilities and we are at different stages of grappling with our grief. We need to listen, support and uphold each other.

We feel a strong sense of gratitude to our children, present and absent, and everything they give us. We have heard that for young people, climate change is not ‘change’. They have grown up with heatwaves and floods; “for us it feels normal but it should not be normal”. This is not how it is supposed to be, and it is frightening.

We joyfully celebrate the diversity of nature and are grateful for the time we have been able to spend in nature over the course of the gathering.

We have heard about the diversity of our experience and how our lives are entangled with the systems of modernity.

We all take different roles at different times. We can be mystics, activists, builders, upholders, artists, prophets and reconcilers. We are all of us a rainbow and the colours move around. The spirit shows us where we are led.

We must ask ourselves what is mine to do, and what is my capacity? We can recognise all forms of courage – physical, emotional and spiritual. We uphold all Friends’ contributions. We need all of it: those who are called to take nonviolent direct climate action; those who hold space for a shift in consciousness; those who lend practical support and spiritual presence to those undertaking climate action; those who show a path forwards through living out their witness through sustainable lifestyles; those who are working to strengthen community resilience; and those who work towards changing the policies and politics that maintain our broken system. We are more than the sum of our parts.

We have heard about the Palestinian concept of *sumud* or steadfastness: living every day nonviolent resistance in the face of violence. We are asked to consider how we are called to bring travelling minutes back to our local meetings and beyond, to witness to the power of love and truth in the face of the climate crisis.

How does Quakerism need to change in these turbulent and uncertain times? We must live with the bravery of not knowing, of not having answers, of not having safety. We are like a caravan

moving across the desert, with the vanguard leading the way, and the stragglers at the back who are grieving for what we are leaving behind. We need each other.

There are outliers here of all kinds, who may feel lonely. Polarisation happens in our community. Quaker unity is not about consensus. It is about recognizing the diversity as we are called to accompany each other on our spiritual leadings and journeys.

In small groups we have considered how we can walk the talk: in our homes, in our meeting houses, in our property portfolio. How can we reinvigorate and fully resource our 2011 Canterbury Commitment to becoming a low carbon sustainable community? And other Yearly Meeting commitments since? We have heard strong calls for our Yearly Meeting to drive its commitments forward with adequate funding and programmes.

How can we support each other to progress towards sustainable lifestyles? We know that many elements of modern life such as taking flights and eating meat are not compatible with the future we want to see. We need to challenge ourselves and our society with gentle compassion to go further.

We need to ask questions about our corporate structures to understand how our money is being used. Work has been done on this and there is more work to do. We have been challenged to consider our own attitudes to money. If we knew we would lose all our assets in six weeks' time, what would we do? What stops us from doing it now?

We trust that further action, meditation and reflections will flow out of this gathering. We have heard how we can make a difference. Not every hurricane has to make landfall if we can nudge the direction of travel.

Caro Humphries and Pennie Quinton, clerks