

Quaker Earthcare Gathering 2026

Epistle: A Call To Action

The Earthcare Gathering was held from 25-27 September 2026 at Lancaster Meeting House, bringing together Quakers of all ages from across the country with a shared concern for the Earth and our role in it, and applying experimental simple, radical, spiritual approaches to the interconnected and catastrophic challenges of our time. Orienting ourselves around spirit-led Meeting for Worship for Business, we found ourselves gathered under a shared concern for the Earth, for ourselves and, through a sense of mycelial interconnectivity, for all life forms.

We reflected on the Canterbury Commitment,¹ BYM's commitment in 2011 toward becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community, and welcomed positive actions that have been taken since. But the intervening years have shown that, as Quakers and as society as a whole, not enough has been done to prevent the rapid acceleration of climate and ecological breakdown. It is too late for greening and tweaking the system to be sufficient to prevent collapse. We have a testimony to truth and must not be tempted to shy away from it for the short-term comforts of ignorance and numbness.

Our instinct is to hold onto hope, but we must not use hope for the future as a reason to shrink from necessary action. Hope alone will not save us. Business as usual is an option only if we are willing to accept climate collapse, global temperature rises of three degrees or more, and the consequences that come with that: the predicted death of four billion of our species and countless other living beings.²

We are not in the business of prophesying. But we can look at the science and work out what we need to do with it.

We have heard the words of Wolf Mendl, from 1974, in Quaker Faith & Practice 24.60:

... What matters is living our lives in the power of love and not worrying too much about the results. In doing this, the means become part of the end. Hence we lose the sense of helplessness and futility in the face of the world's crushing problems. We also lose the craving for success, always focusing on the goal to the exclusion of the way of getting there. We must literally not take too much thought for the morrow but throw ourselves whole-heartedly into the present. That is the beauty of the way of love; it cannot be planned and its end cannot be foretold.³

To throw ourselves whole-heartedly into the present means making a political, systemic choice. Either we will end the fossil fuel era, or the fossil fuel era will end us.

It is already too late to wholly avert the catastrophes we are facing.⁴ We face an existential risk and, if we continue on our current course, a near certainty that we are facing societal collapse.⁵

¹ Britain Yearly Meeting 2011, Minute 36 <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/minute-36-leaflet>

² Trust, Sandy, Lucy Saye, Oliver Bettis, et al., Planetary Solvency – Finding Our Balance with Nature: Global Risk Management for Human Prosperity, Appendix 1, Institute and Faculty of Actuaries (IFoA) January 2025, <https://actuaries.org.uk/media/ni4erlna/planetary-solvency.pdf>

³ Quaker Faith & Practice 24.60 <https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/passage/24-60/>

⁴ IPCC (2023), Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr>

⁵ Kemp et al. (2022), "Climate Endgame: Exploring catastrophic climate change scenarios," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 119(34), e2108146119. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9407216>

Such a collapse includes our environment, but also our economic, societal and technological systems.⁶ It includes everything that we rely on and have come to trust in.

Our current reality is that we must adapt, but also, that we are called to find radical ways to understand and overturn extractive capitalism. Enclosures enforced by violence serve to keep the systems of destructive power in place: systems currently concentrated in the hands of an unrepresentative and disproportionately powerful minority of our global population.

What we can do now is work to avert the worst outcomes; to mitigate, to build resilience locally, and to be patterns. As Quakers we build what we can, hoping that it can be a model for ourselves and for others.

So, what next? We are challenged to **ask what we might do – what all Friends might do – to live in light of this reality.**

Protecting what we love is an adventure, where the stakes are high, the odds are tough and the outcome uncertain. We will nudge this uncertainty towards life-protective actions that love requires of us. As people of integrity, people who care deeply for one another and for all our beautiful environments, we have no choice but to be in peaceful resistance to injustice, corruption, cruelty, ecocide, genocide.

Within our tradition, we have demonstrated at key points in history that we can be leaders in social change. Now is one of those moments. To be the change we want to see, we must first imagine it, and resist technologies that seek to capture and monetise this force of imagination. Alongside the privatisation of public spaces, services and access to knowledge, the imagination itself is also part of the contemporary version of historical enclosures.

We ask what is ours to do to bring about a new system that allows human flourishing, that restores, repairs, and shares fairly the earth's riches. *We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will.* (A&Q 42)⁷

We are called to continue our transformation by:

- Ensuring that our lives, wherever possible, our diets, lifestyles and investments do not contribute to the suffering of all life on our precious earth, acting both individually and as a Quaker community.
- Choosing to direct our attention and care to positive, life-affirming activities, and to refuse their co-option to monetised extractivist consumption.
- Exploring and enacting ways to build more resilience in Quaker and geographical communities, at every opportunity.
- Recognising and uniting around the leadings that arise from our shared concerns, which includes for us present a commitment against factory farming, supporting a law against ecocide, and building local resilience through travelling ministry and shared Green Feasts.

We may not wish to emulate the fashion statements of early plain Quakers, but we may have much to learn from their disciplined refusal of the ostentatious consumption of their time. We are

⁶ Sillmann, J., Christensen, I., Hochrainer-Stigler, S., et al. (2022). Briefing Note on Systemic Risk. International Science Council, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. <https://doi.org/10.24948/2022.01>

⁷ Quaker Faith & Practice 1.02, Advices & Queries 42 <https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/passage/1-02/>

continually discovering that there is joy and freedom to be found in realising that we already have, and are, enough.

We will be guided by our faith and collective practices of solidarity and support for one another to navigate through existential risks even amidst our deep grief, fear and uncertainty. We will hold these feelings and be open to possibilities for the future, as love requires of us.

A weekend is not enough to answer these questions, for ourselves or for all Quakers. To all Friends everywhere, we call on you to join us in engaging with these questions and these actions.