

Advices and Queries for Humanist Quakers

1. Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your minds. Trust them as leadings that may show us the unknown side of our human nature and bring us to new experiences of life.
2. Let the teachings of the ancient philosophers or the great religions provide guidance for the whole of your life. Are you open to the healing power of compassion. Cherish the compassion within you so that it may grow in you and guide you. Let your contemplations and your daily life enrich each other. Treasure life however you experience it. Remember that personal growth and doing what you can, is not a notion but a life-stance.
3. Do you try to set aside times of quiet for inner stillness and an openness to new thoughts and feelings. All of us need to find a way into silence which allows us to deepen our awareness of our inner selves and to discover an understanding of our strengths and weaknesses. Seek to know an inward stillness, even among the activities of daily life. Do you encourage in yourself and others such a habit. Take time to remember yourself and others in your thoughts and reverie, knowing that all are worthy of compassion.
4. The Religious Society of Friends is rooted in Christianity and has always found inspiration in the life and teachings of Jesus. How do you interpret your beliefs in the light of this heritage? Does Jesus speak to you today? Are you following Jesus' example of love in action? Do you learn anything from his life story? Do his words and life challenge and inspire you? Do the words and lives of other great religious leaders and/or philosophers challenge and inspire you?
5. Take time to learn about other people's experiences of life. Remember the importance of ancient writings, the writing of Friends and all writings which reveal the ways of compassion, love and truth. As you learn from others, can you in turn give freely from what you have gained? While respecting the experiences and opinions of others, do not be afraid to say what you have found and what you value. Appreciate that doubt and questioning can also lead to personal growth and to a greater awareness of our common humanity.
6. Do you work gladly with other secular and religious groups in the pursuit of common goals? While remaining faithful to Quaker insights, try to enter imaginatively into the life and beliefs of other communities, creating together the bonds of friendship.
7. Be aware of the ongoing work of truth, love and compassion in the ordinary activities and experience of your daily life. We continue to learn throughout life, and often in unexpected ways. There is inspiration to be found all around us in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our work and friendships, in our sorrows as well as our joys. Are you open to new ideas, from whatever source they may come? Do you approach new ideas with discernment?

8. We are excited by the accelerating development of scientific knowledge and mindful of the benefits and the horrors this may bring. Let us remember that the universe shown to us by the sciences is of great value, and not turn away from our responsibility to consider the implications of scientific and technical discoveries.
9. Meeting together in silence is a special Quaker experience. We can sit alone, but when we join with others in silence we may discover a deeper sense of our relationship with each other and the universe. We seek a gathered stillness in our meetings so that all may feel drawn together with a common purpose.
10. Come to meeting with your mind prepared, so that all your outward concerns may be seen with a new and clearer perspective.
11. Come regularly to meeting, even when you are angry, depressed, tired or emotionally cold. In the silence accept the support of others gathered with you. Try to find a wholeness which encompasses suffering as well as thankfulness and joy. Let Quaker meetings nourish your whole life.
12. Be honest with yourself. What unpalatable truths may you be evading? When you recognise your shortcomings, do not let that discourage you. In meeting and talking together, we can find mutual understanding and reassurance and the strength to go on with renewed courage.
13. When you are preoccupied and distracted in meeting let wayward and disturbing thoughts give way quietly to your awareness of the common bonds among us in the world. Receive the words and thoughts of others in a tender and creative way. Reach for the meaning deep within them, recognising that even if the words are not for you, they may be so for others. Remember we all share responsibility for meeting whether our action is silence or through the spoken word.
14. Do not assume that speaking at meeting is never to be your part. Truthfulness and sincerity in speaking, even very briefly, may open the way to vocal communication from others. When you get the urge to speak, wait patiently to know that the time is right, but do not let a sense of your own unworthiness hold you back. Know that your thoughts may arise from deep experience, and trust that the words will come to you. Try to speak audibly and distinctly, and with sensitivity to the needs of others. Beware of speaking predictably or too often, and of making additions towards the end of the meeting when it was well left before.
15. Are your business meetings held with the same understanding as meetings in silence? Remember that we do not seek a majority decision, not even consensus. As we wait patiently, in an attitude of contemplation, hearing from others, our experience is that a right way will emerge and we will reach unity.

16. Do you take part as often as you can in meetings for business. Are you familiar enough with how Quakers conduct business to contribute to its disciplined processes? Do you consider difficult questions with an informed mind as well as a generous and loving attitude? Are you prepared to let your insights and personal wishes take their place alongside those of others or to be set aside as the meeting seeks the right way forward? If you cannot attend, remember the meeting in your thoughts.
17. Do you welcome the diversity of culture, language and expressions of beliefs in our yearly meeting and in the world community of Friends? Seek to increase your understanding and gain from this rich heritage and wide range of insights. Remember your own and other yearly meetings in your thoughts.
18. For thousands of years before 1788, this country was lived in by various aboriginal peoples, at one with the land. Through colonisation, much of their land and culture has been lost to them and their children have been taken from them; they have suffered the injustice of racism, and material, psychological and spiritual deprivation. Can we acknowledge with sorrow the loss of life and the ongoing destruction of their languages, families and communities? Can we appreciate the depth and strength of aboriginal culture, beliefs and values and learn from that wisdom? Can we all as Australians work towards living together as equals, with mutual understanding and respect?
19. Do you respect our common humanity although it may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or be difficult to discern? Each of us is on a different journey through life and each of us 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 that other people's opinions may contain for you. Avoid hurtful criticisms 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.
20. How can we make the meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured, and strangers are welcome? Seek to know one another in the things that matter, bear the burdens of each other's failings and support and care for one another. As we enter with tender sympathy into the joys and sorrows of each other's lives, ready to give help and receive it, our meeting can be an experience of compassion, love and forgiveness.
21. Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognise the gifts they bring. Remember that the meeting as a whole shares a responsibility of every child in its care. Seek for them as for yourself a full development of the abilities and skills that can lead to an abundant life. How do you share your deepest beliefs with them, while leaving them free to develop, as they find their own path in life. Do you invite them to share their insights with you? Are you ready to learn from them and to accept your responsibilities towards them?

22. Do you give sufficient time to sharing with others in the meeting, both newcomers and long-time members, your understanding of Quaker ways, beliefs and actions? Do you give the right proportion of your money to support Quaker work?
23. Do you cherish your friendships, so that they grow in depth and understanding and mutual respect? In close relationships we may risk pain as well as finding joy. When experiencing great happiness or hurt we may be open to understanding ourselves more deeply.
24. Respect the wide diversity among us in our lives and relationships. Refrain from making prejudiced judgements about the life journeys of others. Do you foster the notion of mutual understanding and forgiveness which our Quaker ways asks of us. Remember that each one of us is a unique part of the universe.
25. Marriage has always been regarded by Quakers as a special and significant commitment rather than a merely civil contract. Both partners should offer an intention to cherish one another for life. Remember that happiness depends on understanding and steadfast love on both sides. In times of difficulty remind yourself of the value of self reflection, personal growth, perseverance and good humour.
26. Children and young people need love and stability. Are we doing all we can to encourage and sustain parents and others who carry the responsibility for providing this care?
27. A long-term relationship brings tensions as well as fulfilment. If your relationship with your partner is under strain, seek help in understanding the other's point of view and in exploring your own feelings, which may be powerful and destructive. Consider the wishes and feelings of any children involved, and remember their enduring need for love and security. Consider seeking professional assistance. If you undergo the distress of separation or divorce, try to maintain some compassionate communication so that arrangements can be made with the minimum of bitterness.
28. Do you recognise the needs and abilities of each member of your family and household, not forgetting your own? Try to make your home a place of friendship and enjoyment, where all who live or visit may find peace and refreshment.
29. Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your skills in the service of your local community and humanity generally? Let your life speak. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in silence and contemplation, both listening to and offering counsel to one another, as you seek clarity?
30. Every stage of our life offers fresh opportunities. Try to discern the right time to undertake or relinquish responsibilities without undue pride or guilt. Attend to what is required of you, which may not be great busyness.

31. Approach old-age with courage and hope. As far as possible, make arrangements for your care in good time, so that an undue burden does not fall on others. Although old-age may bring increasing disability and loneliness, it can also bring serenity, detachment and wisdom. In your final years you may be enabled to find new ways of receiving and reflecting the love and wisdom of others.
32. Are you able to contemplate your death and the death of those closest to you? Accepting the fact of death, we are freed to live more fully. In bereavement, give yourself time to grieve. When others mourn, let your love embrace them.
33. Friends have long sought to live, in the words of George Fox, "in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion for all wars." Do you maintain our testimony that war and the preparation for war are inconsistent with achieving peace. Search out whatever in your own life may contain the seeds of war. Stand firm in our testimony, even when others commit or prepare to commit acts of violence, yet always remember to look for the good in them also.
34. Consider those emotions, attitudes and prejudices in yourself that lie at the root of destructive conflict, acknowledging any need for forgiveness. In what ways are you involved in the work of reconciliation between individuals, groups and nations?
35. Within Australia and in neighbouring countries, people of goodwill seek to understand and to worship in many ways. Do we listen to their insights with open minds, recognising that we do not possess all knowledge, but only part of it? Do we think of these neighbours with acceptance? Do we seek knowledge and understanding of their beliefs?
36. Are you alert to practices here and throughout the world which discriminate against people on the basis of who or what they are because of their beliefs? Bear witness to the humanity of all people including those who break with society's conventions or its laws. Try to discern new growing points in social and economic life. Seek to understand the causes of injustice, social unrest and fear. Are you working to bring about a just and compassionate society which allows everyone to develop their capabilities and fosters the desire to be productive?
37. Remember your responsibilities as a citizen in the conduct of local, national, and international affairs. Do not shrink from the time and effort your involvement may demand.
38. Respect the laws of the state but let your first loyalty be to your own conscience and integrity. If you feel impelled by strong conviction to break the law, search your conscience deeply. Ask your meeting and friends for support, which will give you strength as a right way becomes clear.
39. Do you support those who are acting under concern, even if their way is not yours? Can you lay aside your own wishes and prejudices while seeking with others the right way for them?

40. Are you honest and truthful in all you say and do? Do you maintain strict integrity in business transactions and your dealings with individuals and organisations? Do you use money and information entrusted to you with discretion and responsibility? Taking oaths implies a double standard of truth; in choosing to affirm instead, be aware of the claim to integrity that you are making.
41. If pressure is brought upon you to lower your standards of integrity, are you prepared to resist it? Our responsibilities to our testimonies 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.
42. Consider which of the ways to happiness offered by society are truly fulfilling and which are potentially corrupting and destructive. Be discriminating when choosing means of entertainment and information. Resist the desire to acquire possessions or income through an unethical investment, speculation or games of chance. Seek out inspiration from artistic creativity and literature, music and the visual and performing arts that can assist your personal development and your understanding of the world.
43. In view of the harm that can be done by the irresponsible use of alcohol, tobacco and other habit-forming drugs, consider whether you should limit your use of them or refrain from using them altogether. Remember that any use of alcohol or drugs may impair judgement and put the user and others in danger.
44. All life is interrelated. Each individual plant and animal has its own needs, and is important to others. Many Australian species, and other species worldwide, are now extinct, and countless more are endangered. Do you treat all life with respect, recognising a particular obligation to those animals we breed and maintain for our own use and enjoyment? In order to secure the survival of all, including ourselves, are you prepared to change your ideas about who you are in relation to your environment and every living thing in it?
45. 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?
46. The land of Australia is not our possession. We are no more than temporary guardians of it; neither the first nor, probably, the last. In the brief time of European settlement, vast areas of this country have been damaged. Do you try to live in harmony with the land, knowing that you are part of it? Do you conserve its water and other resources? Do you look with respect on the claims and rights of others to share in the wealth and freedoms of Australians?
47. We live in a land of unique grandeur and beauty, harsh and majestic, but at the same time fragile. Have you discovered its wonder and mystery, and has this awareness developed your insight and helped you rejoice in the splendour of the world's continuing evolution.

Historically, Quakers come from a Christian tradition but today members and attenders have many beliefs, some theist, some non-theist and some atheist. Our practice is to be still and silent and listen. Deep inner stillness, silence and listening, unity in decision-making and living the testimonies can lead members and attenders to both social action and a fulfilled life.