

Watford Quaker Meeting's commitment to sustainable stewardship

Our vision

As individuals, as a local Meeting, and as members of a national and international Quaker community we are guided by our testimonies of simplicity, stewardship, truth, equality and peace. We strive to 'maintain the beauty and variety of the world' and to ensure that 'our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life' (A&Q 42).

Our approach

Our care and stewardship of the natural world and our commitment to living simply and sustainably arises from a sense of joy - 'a simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of strength (A&Q 41).

The scale of the climate and nature crisis can feel overwhelming. There is much that we don't know about the future impacts of climate change, but we do know that without deep and radical change the world will continue to experience significant and growing damage. We can feel powerless, and tempted to look away. Our testimony of truth means that we face these realities together and approach the actions we take with honesty and humility.

Quakers believe in the equality of all - that there is 'that of God in everyone'. The climate crisis impacts poorest and most marginalised communities first and worst, and leaves problems for future generations. The choice of how we respond must be underpinned by equality, justice and a love for our neighbours, near and far, now and in the future.

Floods, droughts and other climate change impacts can spark or worsen pre-existing conflicts, and conflict itself damages the natural world. If we are serious in 'searching out the seeds of war' (A&Q 31), we need to address our responsibility to 'conserve the earth's resources and share them more equitably' ([Canterbury Commitment](#), 2011).

Our commitment

We choose to take part in the Eco Church scheme as it gives us the opportunity to 'work gladly with other religious groups in the pursuit of common goals' (A&Q 6), as well as to be 'patterns and examples' to those around us. It provides a 'framework in which individual friends and local meetings can share their successes' ([Canterbury Commitment](#), 2011). Every group and individual within the Meeting should be enabled and encouraged to contribute to this commitment as they are able.

Journeying together to become an Eco Church means that we commit to reducing our carbon emissions year on year; making changes as a community and as individuals; and celebrating and learning from the progress we make.

While many Eco Church policies make a commitment to achieving net zero, we have chosen not to include this as a specific goal, echoing the concerns expressed in [this reflection from Quakers in Britain](#), as it has 'come to represent a way of taking action without addressing the

injustices that created climate breakdown'. Instead, we draw on a long tradition of 'speaking truth to power' to challenge such injustices on a local, national and global level, as well as making changes to our own lives to live more sustainably.

Our action plan

Following the five areas set out by the Eco Church scheme, we identify actions we can take to live more sustainably, cut carbon emissions and speak out for climate justice as individuals and as a community. These actions build on work which has already taken place within Watford Meeting over many years.

We will review and report on these actions to business meeting each year - celebrating successes and encouraging each other to reach further. This reporting will be coordinated by the Eco Church group, alongside others in the Meeting.

1 Worship, teaching and spirituality: Elders and those supporting Children's Meeting

We recognise that Quaker insights and testimonies can inform, inspire and challenge us in our response to the climate and nature crisis. Engagement with each other and the natural world deepens and enriches our faith.

- We will hold Meeting for Worship outside in different seasons during the year and encourage others to join us.
- We will include concerns relating to the climate and nature crisis in Upholding Group.
- When planning themes and activities for All Age Worship, we will consider how these can deepen our connection to and care for the natural world and will use recycled or reused materials where possible.
- We will encourage members and attenders to deepen their understanding of the spiritual resources we have to respond to the climate and nature crisis, and the spirituality of nature, for example through books chosen for Spiritual Reading Group, recommending resources (including relevant Woodbrooke and other courses) in the newsletter, accessing and promoting relevant materials for the library, and inviting speakers from different faith / cultural traditions.

2 Buildings and energy: Premises and Finance Committee

We recognise that we need to reduce carbon emissions from our building and from our energy use and to use our spaces better in a changing climate.

- Premises Committee will develop a plan to reduce our carbon emissions year on year, and will report our progress to Business Meeting.
- We will ensure that all proposed changes to our building meet high environmental standards and take our Eco Church commitment into account, in particular as we discern our response to the major changes laid out in the 'Appraisal of Options for Reducing Carbon Emissions of the Watford Meeting House' report.
- We will review rental agreements and communications with groups who use our buildings to encourage them in ways that they can use the building more sustainably.
- We will continue to welcome conversations about climate change by hosting local green groups.
- Watford Quakers will follow sustainable practices such as 'refuse, reduce, reuse, repair, recycle', buy products which are ethically sourced and use ethical banking and investment as well as utility providers that use renewables.

3 Land and nature:

We recognise that managing our garden for nature increases access to nature for human wellbeing, builds climate resilience and enables other species to thrive.

- We will set up a Gardening group to help with garden management and ideas, with a focus on managing the garden as a place where a diversity of plants, insects and other creatures can flourish.
- We will encourage Friends to help manage land in our wider community, eg. through litter pickings or conservation efforts.
- We will encourage Friends to engage with the garden, for example through shared lunches and coffee outside in the warmer months.

4 Community and global engagement

We recognise that the climate and nature crises are profoundly unjust. It is our responsibility to demonstrate love for people and nature by advocating alongside others for a more just world.

- We will support friends who participate in local, national and global activities that raise awareness of climate justice, promote peace, and challenge policies which harm our planet.
- We have an eco-group that supports and coordinates actions, events and communicates eco initiatives from other groups through posters, newsletters, etc to share ideas, raise awareness and encourage others to engage.
- Our events will encourage sustainably produced, vegan and vegetarian where there is food, Fairtrade, and we will run events and opportunities to grow our appreciation of nature.
- We will work together with other groups to develop our local community's climate resilience and prepare for climate crises.

5. Lifestyle

We recognise that there are many changes we can make on a personal level to cut carbon emissions and live more sustainably. As a Meeting, we can encourage, empower and inform each other, providing information, ideas and inspiration to live more simply.

- We will create engaging and non-pressurised opportunities to discover ways in which friends are already making personal changes and identify where more information and support is needed.
- We will encourage friends to consider/ research environmental factors when making food or any other purchases.
- We will encourage friends to try to calculate their carbon footprint, using a tool such as found at www.climatestewards.org and together find strategies to reduce our carbon footprints.
- We will encourage friends to make financial choices that are positive for climate and nature.