

Quotations Concerning:

Money and The Quaker Meeting

Just a little more than a hundred years ago, Quaker meetings were full of business people, and for a long time, Friends were one of the wealthiest communities in England. Many of us did pretty well here in the colonies, too. We really understood money then – we knew how to make it, we knew how to use it, and we were not ashamed of it, at least not in a way that made us weird about it, like we are now.

Today, at least in the liberal Quaker meetings I'm familiar with in the US, we are almost notoriously dysfunctional when it comes to money. Meetings often have a "faith-based" rather than reality-based attitude toward their budgets. Meeting finances are often anything but transparent. Meetings are often reticent to ask for money, or even to talk about it. Quaker institutions and Quaker meetings at all levels of organization are struggling for their lives financially. And Friends who own their own businesses or who work in or for corporations often find themselves being harassed, even though they often are very generous with their talents and treasure – liberal Quakers often have a prejudice against business people.

– Steven Davison, "Quakers and Money," May 28, 2016
throughtheflamingsword.wordpress.com/category/quakers-and-money/

How do Quakers collect money and how is it spent?

There is no offering or passing of a tray during worship. Quakers believe that attending to the Inner Light will direct each individual to appropriately share resources with the Meeting. This principle relies on the moving of the Spirit of God and not the promptings of other persons.

About once a month, or as they are able, attenders and members privately give money to the Meeting treasurer. Funds contributed to the Wooster Meeting are automatically added to the general operating fund. Any special distributions for non-budgeted purposes are discussed and decided at Meeting for Business.

Each month the treasurer reports to the meeting about how money is being dispensed. Once a year the budget is agreed upon at Meeting for Business.

Currently our meeting supports a variety of projects both in our local community and abroad. Individuals also support activities with which they are especially concerned. We do not value expending money on ornate buildings or fixtures; simplicity is our guide. No member receives any money for services rendered.

– Wooster Friends Meeting, Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, (retrieved Oct 2016)
woosterfriends.org/faq, 2016

Excerpts compiled by *Western Friend Online* (2016)

Quakers are often viewed by others (and themselves) as having an uncomfortable relationship with money. While certainly true for many Friends, I believe a more accurate assessment is that Quakers, as a group, often view money from a slightly different cultural perspective grounded in our faith tradition and history. . . [There] is a deeply embedded belief among Friends that we live in a society that places far too much emphasis on money as an end in itself and a measure of the value of the person who has it. In contrast, Friends tend to embrace the concept that money is a useful tool rather than a measurement of a person's intrinsic worth.

Several points are worth noting: While many people in the United States strive to convey that they have money, a Friend is more likely to understate his or her wealth both verbally and in his or her actions. (Obviously there are many exceptions to this rule but a high proportion of Friends hold this belief about both themselves and others within their faith community.) Being good stewards of money is valued among Friends. Impressing people with how much money one has is not.

– Henry B. Freeman, “A Quaker Perspective on Money and Fundraising,” 2013
<https://www.pym.org/monthly-meeting-administration/wp-content/uploads/sites/38/2016/01/Quakers-and-Fundraising2013.pdf>

Friends should know their income and live within it; they should beware incurring debts and avoid entangling themselves in heavy commitments by the unwise obtainment of goods on the hire purchase system. Anxiety for the future, however, should not lead to withholding what should rightly be expended for the needs of the family or devoted to the service of others. That they may be well acquainted with their annual income and expenditure, Friends are advised to keep clear and correct accounts.

– London Yearly Meeting Committee on Social Questions, 1925

. . . Christ, when he sent forth his apostles, said, “Freely ye have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8), and yet they had liberty to receive meat and drink from such as offered them to supply their need. Which shows that they were not to seek or require anything by force, or to stint, or make a bargain beforehand, as the preachers . . . who will not preach to any until they be first sure of so much a year; but on the contrary, these were to do their duty and freely to communicate (as the Lord should order them) what they had received, without seeking or expecting a reward. . . [Similarly,] though there be an obligation upon Christians to minister of outward things to their ministers, yet there can be no definition of the quantity, but the giver's on consent, and a little from one may more truly fulfill the obligation than a great deal from another. And therefore as acts of charity and hospitality can neither be limited nor forced, so neither can this.

– Robert Barclay, *An Apology*, 1678

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As Christians, all we possess are the gifts of God. Now in distributing it to others we act as his steward, and it becomes our station to act agreeable to that divined wisdom which he graciously gives to his servants. . . Here we have a prospect of one common interest from which our own is inseparable, that to turn all the treasures we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives.

– John Woolman, *A Plea for the Poor*, 1763

So you that the Lord hath blessed in outward things for his truth, keep over them and out of them, serving the Lord who hath blessed you, lest you be entangled. So keep above them in the righteous life and conversation, that righteousness may flow to all men in all things, honesty and truth, and that which doth justice.

– George Fox, *Epistle 232*, 1664

In all husbandry speak truth, act truth, doing justly and uprightly in all your actions; in all your practice, in all your words, in all your dealings, buyings, sellings, changings and commerce with people, let truth be the head and practice it.

– George Fox, *Epistle 200*, 1661

After that riches increase take heed of setting your hearts upon them, lest they become a curse and a plague to you. For when ye were faithful at the first, they would refrain from you and not have commerce with you; but after, when they saw ye were faithful and just in things, and righteous and honest in your tradings and dealings, then they came to have commerce and trade with you the more, because they know ye will not cozen them, not cheat them; then ye came to have greater trading, double than ever ye had, and more than the world. But there is the danger and temptation to you of drawing your minds into your business and clogging them with it; so that ye can hardly do anything to the service of Got, but thee will be crying, my business, my business, and your minds will go into the things and not over the things. . . . Then that mind that is cumbered will fret, being out of the power of God.

– George Fox, *Epistle 231*, 1656

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

– Genesis 1: 26-28