

Friends have the tradition of queries to help us discern the path for our lived faith. As we sit with the question of whether to divest from investments that benefit fossil fuel companies, we may consider the following:

1. Are we as Friends able to profit, in good conscience and in line with Quaker principles, from investments in an industry whose products are clearly destructive to ecosystems?
2. Do Friends understand that devastation from human-induced climate change will continue to occur, with increasing frequency and intensity, if greenhouse-gas emissions continue unabated?
3. Is it possible for Friends to have a serious conversation about climate change if we're not divested? What differences do Friends find between feeling captive to a system based on fossil fuels and willfully profiting from investments in the industries that produce and market them?

## Friends' History of Ethical Investing

Friends have a long and proud tradition of ethical investing. As Friends, we have consistently sought congruity with our principles when we consider what types of investments we should hold. We understand that how we use our money and what we choose to own is always a moral choice.

Stewardship is a coming together of our major testimonies. To be good stewards in God's world calls on us to examine and consider the ways in which our testimonies for peace, equality, and simplicity interact to guide our relationships with all life. Some examples:

- The Peace testimony has led Friends to exclude companies that produce weapons or weapon components or are military in nature. Examples

of stocks rejected by Friends Fiduciary since 2011 for military involvement include Motorola, IPG Photonics, SAIC, Kia Motors, Hewlett Packard, Caterpillar, and PerkinElmer.

- The Equality testimony has led most Friends' institutions to screen out for-profit prisons. In the 1970s, Friends Fiduciary Corporation and individual Friends divested to resist South Africa's policy of apartheid.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice provides an example of a testimony for the Stewardship of Economic Resources, which calls for divestment from alcohol, tobacco, and gambling investments. Additionally, the testimony of Environmental Stewardship has led Friends Fiduciary Corporation to screen out such companies as Halliburton, Ameren, National Fuel and Gas Co., and most recently, all coal companies and utilities that rely primarily on coal.



*O that we who declare against wars, and acknowledge our trust to be in God only, may walk in the light, and thereby examine our foundation and motives in holding great estates! May we look upon our treasures, the furniture in our houses, and our garments, and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions.* —John Woolman, c.1770

## The Moral Argument for Divestment

As we seek to live our faith, it becomes increasingly difficult to reconcile Friends' values with owning stock in fossil fuel companies. We see a growing incompatibility with our testimonies, particularly in the following areas:

- Respect for God's creation. Climate change threatens the basic elements of life for people around the world—access to water, food production, health, and adequate housing.
- Environmental stewardship. Current fossil fuel emissions, if unchecked, will contribute to mass extinction of animal and plant species and the general destruction climate change will bring.
- Peace. Violence and suffering are direct consequences of climate change. Competition for scarce arable land and other natural resources leads to increased conflict and wars over access to these resources.
- Honesty/Integrity. Fossil fuel companies are “polluting the public discourse” by their dishonesty about the effects of climate change and their funding of climate change deniers.
- Equality. Fossil fuel companies' very significant financial contributions to elected officials undermine our democracy and thus the equality of all citizens. Friends hold deep concern for the disproportionate impact climate change is having on children, the elderly, and those living in poverty. Those who suffer most are often least responsible for the emissions of greenhouse gases.

For more on divestment,  
visit [www.quakerearthcare.org](http://www.quakerearthcare.org)

## First Steps for Friends' Communities

As you open to more light about this issue in your Friends Meeting or group, we suggest the discernment process include opportunities to:

1. Become familiar with the most recent climate data and information regarding fossil fuel reserves to understand the urgency of action.
2. Consider your testimonies and review where your funds are invested.
3. Consider where to begin the conversation (Finance, Social Concerns, Earthcare, Business Meeting, etc.).
4. Ground your reflections and worship in testimonies and previous minutes.
5. Understand the financial need of the institution and seek a transition that will continue to meet its needs, while recognizing that principle can occasion the need for sacrifice.
6. Consider options for reinvestment.
7. Minute your concern and decision.
8. Share your minute and decision with the wider community, QEW, the relevant businesses, and your elected officials.
9. Follow up on the decision.
10. Consider other witness opportunities.

## Possible Queries for Worship Sharing

- In what ways do moral implications enter into the investments we make as Friends?
- How do Friends' testimonies and queries provide spiritual guidance in the ways we invest our money?
- In what ways is our money invested for purposes we really support?

- Does our Meeting serve social, economic and environmental justice in its investments?
- What, if any, instructions have we given to our fund managers regarding screens for the environment for our investments?
- What is our financial involvement in the fossil fuel industry? How are we led in regard to these investments?
- Is it immoral for Friends groups to invest in fossil fuel companies?
- Are we ready to minute our concern for the urgency of action on climate change?



### About Quaker Earthcare Witness

Quaker Earthcare Witness is a network of North American Friends (Quakers) and other like-minded people who are taking spirit-led action to address the ecological and social crises of the world, emphasizing Quaker process and testimonies, including continuing revelation.

QEW has grown over the last 30 years out of a deepening sense of spiritual connection with the natural world. Out of this has come an urgency to work on climate and related issues.

Each year we publish a quarterly journal, BeFriending Creation as well as numerous pamphlets on topical issues. All our publications are shared free of charge or at low cost in the hope that you will help spread the word and promote reverent care of the planet. Your donations are gratefully welcomed as we continue this mission. To find out more or make a donation, please visit [www.quakerearthcare.org](http://www.quakerearthcare.org).

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## Divestment as Lived Faith

Friends who are concerned about effects of climate change are seeking things they can do to make their lives reflect changes they see as crucial to the survival of life on the planet. Divestment from fossil fuels is one action we can take now, and it speaks to our principles, just as refusing to profit from the slave trade—or more recently, from tobacco, alcohol, weapons, prisons, or gambling—reflects our values.

Many Friends have begun to consider divestment as a statement that is consistent with Quaker values. Friends are not alone in this. Many denominations are exploring and acting on this issue, and students at colleges and universities across the country are helping to lead the way.

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