
Earlham College Community Principles and Practices

Mission Statement

The mission of Earlham College, an independent, residential college, is to provide the highest quality undergraduate education in the liberal arts, including the sciences, shaped by the distinctive perspectives of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). A basic faith of Friends is that all truth is God's truth; thus Earlham emphasizes: pursuit of truth, wherever that pursuit leads; lack of coercion, letting the evidence lead that search; respect for the consciences of others; openness to new truth and therefore the willingness to search; veracity, rigorous integrity in dealing with the facts; application of what is known to improving our world.

To provide education of the highest quality with these emphases, Earlham's mission requires selection of an outstanding and caring faculty committed to creating an open, cooperative, learning environment. The College provides for the continuous support and development of this faculty.

The teaching-learning process at Earlham is shaped by a view of education as a process of awakening the "teacher within," so that our students will become lifelong learners. Students at Earlham are encouraged to be active, involved learners. The College provides extensive opportunities for students and faculty to interact with each other as persons, to learn from each other in a cooperative community, an important aspect of which is collaborative student/faculty research.

At Earlham College this education is carried on with a concern for the world in which we live and for improving human society. The College strives to educate morally sensitive leaders for future generations. Therefore Earlham stresses global education, peaceful resolution of conflict, equality of persons, and high moral standards of personal conduct.

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Introduction

Principles and Practices is a statement of the values that guide those of us who live and work at Earlham College and who form its campus community: students, teaching and administrative faculty, and staff. College trustees, and many alumni and former employees of the College, feeling themselves still members of the community, may also choose to be guided by these principles.

Principles and Practices also provides the foundation for campus policies that apply to all members of the community. Policies and procedures specific to students, faculty, and staff may be found in the *Student Handbook*, *Faculty Handbook*, and *Staff Handbook* respectively. Through the workings of our regular governance procedures, we endeavor to make all College policies, rules, and procedures consonant with the principles articulated in this document.

Principles and Practices grows out of three questions that the community continually seeks to answer:

- What sort of community do we aspire to be?
- What principles shape and sustain the community we aim to be?
- What practices are necessary if our community is to thrive, and what practices would prevent its thriving?

What sort of community do we aspire to be?

Earlham is an educational community, informed by the distinctive perspectives and values of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and aimed at providing the highest quality undergraduate education in the liberal arts and sciences. We strive to be a community of mutual support, responsibility, and accountability.

Our educational values, shaped by Quaker perspectives, are as follows: truth-seeking, wherever the evidence may lead; rigorous intellectual integrity; the nurturing of an open, cooperative learning environment; the recognition of the “teacher within”; the merit of lifelong learning habits. These values are rooted in a commitment to caring for the world we inhabit, improving human society, promoting global education, seeking peaceful management and resolution of conflicts, affirming the equality of all persons, and maintaining high moral standards of personal conduct.

This document speaks of the Earlham community in terms of “we”; however, we recognize that this is not a homogenous “we.” As an educational community, we are a changing group of diverse persons, bringing to this institution a variety of racial, ethnic, sexual, and other identities, as well as a great range of personal and cultural values, experiences, and perspectives. We welcome this diversity, and the strength and transformations it makes possible.

What principles shape and sustain such a community?

The nature of community at Earlham College grows out of respect for persons, integrity, a commitment to peace and justice, simplicity and a concern for human and natural resources, and governance based on consensus decision-making. One finds some of these principles at any educational institution, but others reflect Earlham’s strong Quaker heritage. In acting according to these principles, we try to cultivate a community that values not only the development of broad knowledge and deep competencies, but an active, successful, and joyful engagement in human society and the world around us.

These principles inform our community, yet there is variation within the community in the ways these principles are put into practice. We welcome this variety of insight and interpretation, and seek to learn from our differences. We acknowledge that practice of these principles may evolve over time and with reflection, for individuals and the community as a whole.

Principles, Practices and Queries

- Respect for Persons
- Integrity
- Peace and Justice
- Simplicity
- Consensus Governance

A Note on Queries: We borrow the use of Queries from Quaker tradition. Queries are meant as a means of self-examination or group examination, and inward reflection. Queries remind us that our actions are principled not because they conform to abstract rules, but because they are done thoughtfully and conscientiously. Queries take the shape of questions, but they do not have simple, uniform, unambiguous answers.

I. Respect for Persons

It is a long-standing Quaker belief that all persons have available to them an inner spirit of Truth. Quakers have named this spirit, variously, “The Inner Light,” “The Christ Within,” “The Inward Teacher,” or “God’s Voice Within.” Those of us who are Friends may prefer one of these names to another. Those of us who are not Friends, including persons of other religious traditions and persons of no religious tradition, find alternative ways to express respect for persons.

From this belief follows an assumption of equality of all persons and grounds for respecting all persons. We aspire to be a community whose members act with regard for the intellectual, physical, and emotional well-being of others, seeking to find mutual respect and happiness in our relationships with persons of every race, ethnicity, class, religious preference, gender, physical ability, sexual orientation, or age, even seeking to respect persons removed by time and place.

Practicing Respect for Persons

We strive to be respectful of others in our daily interactions. We are a community that deliberately welcomes persons of all religious faiths, all spiritual convictions, and those who have no religious affiliation or faith. A small but meaningful mark of our attempt to meet one another as equals is our practice of addressing one another by first names rather than by titles and honorifics.

In all our activities, we seek to affirm and reinforce mutual respect, responsibility, and caring. In all interpersonal relationships we seek to be helpful, companionable, and considerate. As a community, we reject all coercive and destructive behavior in interpersonal relationships.

Queries

- Do I examine myself for evidence of prejudice, and then work to overcome it?
 - Do I resist the temptation to accept and spread mean-spirited rumor and innuendo?
 - When disagreeing with people, do I try to be respectful and avoid making personal attacks?
 - Do I think about building a community that fosters the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual good of everyone?
 - When I disagree, do I do so explicitly, so that others may reply, or do I defend my interests with deliberate silence and inaction?
 - Am I physically and emotionally responsible in sexual relationships?
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II. Integrity

The Quaker testimony of integrity asks us to aspire to personal wholeness, honesty, and truthful living. Integrity means completeness or one-ness, and implies a commitment to truth-telling. Integrity nourishes our trust in one another, allowing us to rely on one another and to be relied on by others. It means speaking truth to one another: to our students, our teachers, our employers, and our employees.

In an educational community, academic integrity has special meaning, for an educational community depends on all its members pursuing truth honestly, crediting scrupulously the work of others, and taking credit only for one's own work and discoveries.

Practicing Integrity

We strive to act with integrity in all our dealings with one another, being truthful and honest and fair. We undertake all our commitments and responsibilities in good faith. We strive to take responsibility for our actions and decisions, and to hold each other mutually responsible for living in accordance with our principles and community agreements. We are careful and honest in our evaluations of others' work, whether of students, teachers, colleagues or co-workers.

Queries

- Do I speak the truth even when it feels difficult to do so?
- Do I confront lapses in integrity in myself and in others?
- Do I seek ways to be open to opinions and ideas without weakening my commitment to critical thinking, intellectual rigor, and truth-seeking?
- Am I careful to credit others, rather than taking credit for works and ideas not my own?
- Do I seek to evaluate students, teachers, colleagues, employees, and co-workers honestly and fairly?
- Do I conduct College business in a way that guards and cares for the College's reputation for integrity?

III. Peace and Justice

The Quaker peace testimony is perhaps the most distinctive of Friends' beliefs, distinguishing Quakers from many other believers. It holds that violence, whether physical, emotional, or verbal, is an injustice that harms not only victims but also those who are violent, and is never the means to achieving a just and lasting peace. Friends also seek to challenge institutional and social structures that, while sometimes invisible or taken for granted, still do violence.

Many thoughtful and moral people disagree with the strong form of Quaker pacifism that deplores all use of violence, but the Quaker peace testimony will always challenge us to seek non-violent responses to conflict and to look for just and peace-making solutions.

Practicing Peace and Justice

We work actively for the peaceful resolution of conflict, and for the removal of causes of violence and injustice. We strive to live peacefully within our own community as we pursue a more just, non-violent, and sustainable world.

Queries

- When conflicts arise, do I make creative and non-violent efforts to resolve them?
 - Am I careful to avoid all forms of violence and coercion in my relations with others?
 - Do I think about power: who has it, and how it should be used? Am I careful to use my own power for just and constructive ends?
 - Do I think carefully about the ways the College as an institution can be a force for justice, peace, and environmental responsibility in the world?
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IV. Simplicity

The Quaker testimony of simplicity may be the least well-understood tenet. Simplicity implies clarity, calm, and focus, rather than distraction, stress, and excess. Lacking simplicity, our lives begin to lack integrity, and we become “not a single self, but a whole committee of selves,”¹ pulled in many different directions by so many needs, wants, and desires.

Simplicity allows us to make right and appropriate use of all our resources, whether human or environmental. It enables us to discern what is really necessary and essential for our happiness and the well-being of others, and to seek a life that is whole and sustainable.

Practicing Simplicity

Living simply “cannot be reduced to lists of what is permitted or proscribed.”² In a culture that has made a virtue of consumption and overcommitment, the principle of simplicity challenges us to use and choose with care. We are led by this principle to be good stewards of all our resources, including our own time, energy, and talents, as well as the human and natural resources so unequally distributed throughout the world. We strive to make only just and reasonable demands on the time and resources of others, and to model balanced lives for those around us. Quakers often refer to the notion of centering as an intentional focus on both our inner spiritual life and regular examining of our priorities.

Queries

- Do I make thoughtful and intentional choices, considering what is important to my well-being and to those around me?
- Do I try to keep my commitments in a healthy balance?
- Do I find joy in a clear and focused inner life?
- Am I careful about how I use both human and environmental resources?
- Do I consider what the “right amount” is in whatever I use?
- Do we as a community work for an environmentally responsible and sustainable future?

V. Consensus Governance

At Earlham, we make decisions in a manner that accords fundamental respect to each individual. Our approach to governance is derived from Quaker decision-making practices, which are similar in some respects to consensus. Consensus-seeking is a way of reaching a decision in a group or committee through thoughtful speaking and careful listening to the ideas and concerns of all, so that one idea emerges from many. To make this possible, we take care that all may know what matters are being considered for decision and what process will be followed, we share information broadly, and we provide opportunities for all to contribute their concerns and best thoughts.

When groups of people are involved in making a recommendation or decision, we follow principles of consensus-seeking rather than parliamentary procedure (*Robert's Rules of Order*). Some believe that consensus-seeking is guided by the Holy Spirit, while others embrace the approach that consensus results from careful listening and conscientious effort to find a way that meets the concerns of all. Generally the group gathers in silence so that all can bring their best selves forward, and we allow silence to fall between each contribution to the discussion so that all can fully hear what has been said. A clerk or convener, accountable to the whole group, guides the discussion and is responsible for discerning an emergent conclusion.

Practicing Consensus Decision-Making

Consensus is the result of a group deliberation process, in which all who participate are eager and open to finding unity and concurrence. Participants should be more committed to shared insight and listening than to their own opinions on a matter. Speakers offer opinions, facts, and insight, and others listen openly, not for the sake of argument, but in a sincere effort to find the relevant truth. Discussion often takes time, and the discovery of an expression to which all can give approval may evolve slowly. On rare occasions, a member may not feel persuaded through the process, and may choose to stand aside from the decision.

In governance at Earlham, some groups, including Faculty Meeting and some committees, use consensus process to reach agreement, but not every person in the community will participate in every decision. However, the spirit of consensus-seeking informs decision-making even when a single office or committee is charged with making a particular decision or recommendation. Those responsible for a decision invite input, consult broadly, and listen carefully, especially to those who will be affected by a decision or who may have deep understanding of the situation in question.

Consensus-seeking asks that community members trust the process and the faithful participation of others, even when they have not directly participated themselves. While all persons' opinions may be heard, certain weight or authority may be conferred on the opinions of a few who are seen by many in the community to be especially centered, experienced, and wise.

Queries

- When I am part of a decision-making group, do I listen openly and carefully to what others say, opening myself to opinions different from my own?
- When a decision needs to be made, do I think about who or what group properly should be making the decision?
- Am I careful to consult, even if it may mean taking greater time in the process?
- Do I accept and support the well-made decisions of committees? Do I keep in mind that others have pondered the evidence on this matter before bringing it to a meeting for consideration?
- Do I take care, in speaking, to be constructive and to support the process toward new truth?
- Do I remain faithful to my own understanding of the truth, even if it means being the sole person to speak for it? Do I have the wisdom to discern when to stand aside, allowing a consensus to emerge?

This document was revised by committee during the 2004-05 academic year in accordance with the policy's four-year review cycle. The committee, made up of students (Doug Armour, Rob Hanna, Chris Hughes, Dalimu Kasonso), teaching and administrative faculty (Frank Carr, Christine Larson, Deborah McNish, Bob Southard, Kathy Taylor), staff (Janice Bragg, Lyn Thomas) and Board of Trustees members (Barry Coppock, Sara Jane Ryan, Joanne Warner) met regularly, consulted broadly across campus, and proposed "Revisions to Principles and Practices" to replace the former "Principles and Practices Document." It was approved by the Earlham College faculty, the student body, the President, and the Board of Trustees during spring and summer 2005.

¹ Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), 114.

² Paul A. Lacey, *Growing into Goodness: Essays on Quaker Education* (Wallingford, Pa.: Pendle Hill, 1998), 75.
