

Governance Gold

For the attention of Area Meeting Clerks

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Update about Church Government

Quaker faith & practice (Qf&p) gives us full guidance as to how to be in right ordering for our church affairs. Our faithfulness in following our agreed process upholds our Quaker community. In these papers we are highlighting matters for your attention and action. Please keep these papers for ongoing reference.

Testimonies

Please find below some extra information about the written testimonies to deceased Friends that are published each year by Britain Yearly Meeting. Testimonies is one of the documents published in advance of Yearly Meeting (you can view the latest example under 'All Documents' at www.quaker.org.uk/ym/documents).

The testimonies are more fully described as testimonies to the grace of God as shown in the life of deceased Friends. Each has been sent to the yearly meeting by an area meeting that has decided it is right to share the testimony more widely.

Extracts from some of these testimonies are read aloud at Yearly Meeting to help us gather together and be ready for consideration and discernment. There is a good description of these testimonies in *Quaker faith & practice* 4.27–4.30, as well as useful guidance at www.quaker.org.uk/documents/testimonies-an-enduring-presence.pdf.

Many Friends lead full lives, but a testimony isn't the story of their life. It can be seen as their final piece of ministry, which may help to guide and inspire future generations of Friends.

There are many engaging ways to keep the memories of Friends. Biographies can be published as books or on a meeting's website. Meeting websites can easily feature pictures, videos and vocal contributions.

Britain Yearly Meeting only publishes the text of a testimony. We do not normally publish material that might accompany a written testimony, such as photographs, artwork, poetry, diary extracts or personal correspondence. Publishing this supplementary material could easily result in a lengthy and unwieldy document. Also, such material could be protected by copyright, meaning permission would need to be obtained before we can legally publish. This can be both time-consuming and costly in terms of licensing fees.

Perhaps one of the hardest parts of writing a testimony is deciding what can be left out. There is no minimum or maximum length for a testimony – it needs to be the length it needs to be. However, research has shown that text that exceeds a certain length ceases to be engaging. Less really is more! It might be useful to know that a page of the published document accommodates around 600 words.

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