



An invitation for local & area meetings to share in

Britain Yearly Meeting 2012

May 25 – 28 at Friends House, London

This invitation consists of the following sections:

- A summary of the thinking behind the agenda of Yearly Meeting 2012
- An invitation to make Yearly Meeting a part of local Quaker life
- Text from *Documents in advance* about the key themes of the Yearly Meeting along with a timetable to help your planning. Please consider holding meetings for learning on these themes even if members of your meeting are unlikely to attend YM in session.

As well as the main sessions there are programmes for 0-18 year olds.

The Young People's Programme (ages 12-15) and Junior Yearly Meeting (ages 15-18) both have exciting residential programmes and do not need an accompanying adult whilst there is also a programme for Children (ages 0-12) of Friends at Yearly Meeting.

To find out more and how to book please visit www.quaker.org.uk/cyp-events .

A full *Events listing* will be available online about a month before Yearly Meeting.

Documents in advance and related publications will be available from the beginning of April online and in print from the Quaker bookshop.

To receive updates about when new information is available please visit our webpages and leave your contact details in the 'keep me informed' box.

www.quaker.org.uk/ym

Moving forward as a committed community

from the Clerk of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee

Yearly Meeting Gathering 2011 in Canterbury set Friends off on a new and important journey with the commitment in Minute 36 to 'become a low-carbon, sustainable community'. The Yearly Meeting also minuted, following a session on economic justice, that 'we rededicate ourselves to a corporate discipline of waiting and opening to the leadings of the Spirit on the issues'.

It was not surprising therefore that, when Friends gathered in the autumn to help contribute to the discernment by Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee of the agenda for Yearly Meeting 2012, the issues of sustainability and of economic justice were uppermost in their minds. We had also received a minute from an area meeting which asked that 'there should be a substantial amount of time put aside for in depth ongoing consideration of the themes of sustainability and economic inequality'. So it became clear to the Agenda Committee that we must see Yearly Meeting 2012 as part of a process of moving forward from our 2011 commitments towards our future as a community.

The agenda will have as its major theme 'Economic justice and sustainability'. There will be a plenary session focussing on the spiritual basis for action on social and economic injustice. Opportunities will be available for individuals and meetings, as well as Meeting for Sufferings and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, to report back on the steps they have already taken in response to Minute 36. But we shall also find time to think about what sort of future our actions should aim to bring about.

What does it mean to be a Quaker? We know that we find unity in our worship together, despite a wide spectrum of belief. Can we celebrate our diversity and deepen our understanding of our discipline and discernment processes? This Yearly Meeting will start a process of listening to each other about 'What it means to be a Quaker'. This process, which is being taken forward together with Quaker Life, incorporates such activities as '*Being Quaker, doing Quaker*' and '*Becoming Friends*'. This exploration is intended to culminate at Yearly Meeting Gathering 2014.

We shall have the usual reports, from Meeting for Sufferings and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, to consider as well as a number of amendments to *Quaker faith & practice*. We will also have an opportunity to hear from Friends who have attended the Friends World Conference in Kenya. In addition there will be usual opportunity for participation in special interest meetings, attendance at the Swarthmore and Salter Lectures: the Groups Fair on Sunday evening will be accompanied by a variety of food options, similar to those at Yearly Meeting 2010.

All these activities which help to bind us together as a community, will take place from Friday 25 to Sunday 27 May. The final day of Yearly Meeting, Monday 28 May, this year is not a Bank Holiday anywhere in Britain Yearly Meeting. We are therefore conscious that some Friends will not be able to attend and so we have decided to look again at the shape of the day. The majority of Monday morning will therefore be devoted to a series of participatory workshops related to the two main

agenda topics: there will be an element of choice for Friends as to which to attend and, for those unable to be there, materials from the workshops will be made available on the website. The afternoon session, will as usual take the concluding business of the Yearly Meeting and is intended to finish so that Friends can be on their way home before the evening rush.

Further information will be available on the website and in *Documents in advance* when it becomes available.

We hope you will think about joining the Yearly Meeting community gathered at Friends House in London in May 2012. However building that community can helpfully start long before Yearly Meeting as we take opportunities to explore with local Friends some of the themes we will be considering. We can also make plans to travel to London together, and consider with others plans for accommodation.

There is further information about all these aspects later in this booklet and Friends are encouraged to look on the Yearly Meeting website for more information as it becomes available.



Chris Skidmore

Other activities

In addition to Yearly Meeting in session there will be public Special Interest Meetings hosted by various groups. Some of the major ones are highlighted here.

Salter Lecture

Friday 25 May at 16.00, Large Meeting House

The Quaker Socialist Society have invited Danny Dorling, Professor of Human Geography, to talk on social inequality in the UK and its causes. We hope that his lecture will draw on his research for his latest publications *Bankrupt Britain and Fair Play: A reader on social justice*.

Swarthmore Lecture

Saturday 26 May at 19.30, Large Meeting House

This year's Swarthmore lecture, 'Snakes and Ladders', will be given by Rachel Brett, who has worked for many years in the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva. Rachel will consider what it is that drives Quakers to work on issues around human rights and refugees.

Groups Fair

Sunday 26 May from 18.00 in various locations

Listed Informal Groups share with Friends their news, thinking and work. There will also be a fête atmosphere with stalls with delicious locally produced food in the courtyard.

An invitation to make Yearly Meeting a part of local Quaker life

In addition to worship, our local meetings are strengthened by many communal activities.

During a Yearly Meeting ‘we aim to create a truly gathered community who can go to the heart of who we are and what the world needs of us’*. Our discernment and time together should be ‘an inspiring event which takes us into and out beyond ourselves, and also carries us back, strengthened and grounded, to our local meetings and daily lives’*.

Those local meetings which consider Yearly Meeting an integral part of their local life are strengthened by YM decisions and inspiration.

*from minutes of YM Gathering 2009 Planning Committee

The invitation

We invite your meeting to consider how you might wish to integrate Yearly Meeting into your local meeting life and offer you the following ideas:

- Acquaint yourselves with the topics by using the learning materials on the next pages;
- come to Yearly Meeting as a local / area meeting. Suggestions below give information on getting to and staying at Yearly Meeting as a group. The more local meetings try this the larger the community of Friends staying in the same accommodation will be, giving even broader opportunities for being immersed in a Quaker community;
- consider how you might share the fruits from Yearly Meeting with others in your local / area meeting.

Travel

There are many options for cost effective travel

Train

GroupSave tickets allow up to 4 adults to travel for the price of two on off-peak trains. Additionally up to 4 children can travel for £1 each. Everyone needs to travel together.

The best prices on rail travel become available 3 months before the date of outward travel so plan and book early. GroupSave return rail travel for 4 people from Liverpool would cost £35 each. Some train operators have bigger discounts for groups of 9 or more.

Coach

Coach tends to take a lot longer than express rail (as a rule of thumb 2½ times longer) and have less frequent departures so can be far from convenient. However, it is more ‘climate friendly’ than travelling by car and can also be very inexpensive, with return fares from £2.50. All coaches accept a small suitcase as luggage and have some disabled access and toilets on board; some have Wi-Fi internet access.

National Express - www.nationalexpress.com

Prices are from around a third of the non-discounted adult rail fare. There is an extensive national network BUT coaches come in to London Victoria Coach station which leaves a transfer and onward journey.

Megabus - www.megabus.com

Megabus have a limited network with fewer journeys than National Express but stop at London Euston, opposite Friends House. Advance fares are from £1 each way plus a booking fee of 50p. Even from Inverness!

Car

For some people cars are a necessary way of travelling. Car sharing cuts down the passenger mile fuel use. Using the most economical car available that is suitable for the journey further reduces the carbon footprint.

Parking near Friends House is limited and you should be aware not only that finding economical parking can be a trial but also that coming South of the Euston Road can incur the London Congestion Charge (£10/day is chargeable for travel between 07:00 to 18:00 on both the Friday and Monday of YM) which needs to be paid that day so as not to incur a fine of £60.

Accommodation

Some Friends will be offering hospitality in their homes in London and the surrounding areas. For Friends wanting to stay where there may be lots of other Friends the following should be considered:

Whatever you do, plan and book early. The following weekend is the national celebration for the Queen's diamond jubilee and there may be some difficulty getting accommodation in London.

Tavistock Hotel

£165 for three night Bed & English Breakfast in private room including 2 dinners and free parking if needed. Roughly a 5 minute walk from Friends House. This is only bookable on the 'Lets Go Weekend' offer at www.imperialhotels.co.uk/offers/lets-go-weekend

The Generator Hostel

A hostel with good reviews. Hostels are normally youthful establishments where the norm is sharing dormitories or bedrooms and so the prices vary slightly according to numbers. As a guide £74.49pp for three nights Bed & continental breakfast sharing a triple room – shared bathroom. Roughly a 10 minute walk From Friends House. www.generatorhostels.com/en/london/

Accommodation with Friends

Hospitality is offered in the homes of local Friends but is unlikely to be suitable for groups. It costs £15/person/night to cover expenses. If you would like to enquire about this please e-mail YMhosp@quaker.org.uk or phone 0792 337 2729.

After Yearly Meeting please fill in an evaluation form and let us know your experiences of travelling and staying together.

What it means to be a Quaker today

Expected to be in session 5 on Sunday afternoon

If you were approached by an enquirer asking, 'What do Quakers believe?' how would you answer? What if the question were, 'What do you believe?' would the answer be more straightforward? We are a faith without a creed, that is, there is no requirement to accept specific beliefs in becoming a Quaker. And yet there are those things which do bind us and unite us, both in belief (that we all have access to the Inward Teacher, for example) and in the practice of our faith (the meeting for worship and our business method, to name but two). Within our religious community we recognise a wide range of seekers representing a considerable diversity of religious backgrounds and spiritual beliefs. Our willingness to embrace that diversity is part of what creates a strong spiritual community. Yet it is also presents us with the challenge to discern what it means to be a Quaker today.

How do we nurture those things which bind us while at the same time celebrating our differences? How well do we express the joys as well as the responsibilities of membership, so that the progress from enquirer to attender to member is nurtured rather than avoided? These questions have been raised in recent years by a number of Quaker groups and meetings, suggesting that the time has come for a deep consideration of what it means to be a Quaker today.

This session at this Yearly Meeting is the beginning of a process that will take us through to Yearly Meeting in 2014, when we are likely to consider the issue of membership. Over the next year or so we shall be listening to one another, sharing our faith and beliefs, and our understanding of discipline and discernment. We introduce this process with the words of a single Friend, describing both an individual spiritual journey and making observations on the diversity of beliefs among modern Friends. As we return to our local groups, we hope that this will be the start of an exploration for all of us, and for each of our immediate Quaker communities, as we seek to build an even stronger spiritual fellowship.

Learning Resources

Quaker identity and the heart of our faith - Study material based on a Quaker Life Conference in 2008 at <http://www.quaker.org.uk/files/Faith-and-practice-proceeding.pdf>

Committee on Eldership and Oversight: *Moving into membership* (revised 2011). £5.00

Timothy Ashworth & Alex Wildwood: *Rooted in Christianity: open to new light. Quaker spiritual diversity*. £9.00

David Boulton: *Real like the daisies or real like I love you? Essays in radical Quakerism*.

Geoffrey Durham: *Being a Quaker: a Guide for Newcomers*. £6.99

Ben Pink Dandelion: *Celebrating the Quaker Way*. £2.50

Robert Halliday: *Mind the oneness: the foundation of good Quaker business method* (George Gorman Memorial Lecture 1991). £7.00

Quaker Quest: *Twelve Quakers and...* series. £2.50 each or collected as

Jennifer Kavanagh (ed): *New Light: 12 Quaker Voices*. £11.99

Winning essays in *The Friends Quarterly* Issue 2 May 2010, also at <http://www.thefriend.co.uk/fq/>

Simon Best: *Sustainable, radical Quakerism: a faith for the twenty-first century* (George Gorman Memorial Lecture 2011) soon to be published in *The Friends Quarterly*

Economic justice & sustainability

Expected to be in sessions 2 and 3 on Saturday

‘As to our own planet which God has given us for a dwelling place, we must be mindful that it is given in stewardship... If by condoning waste and luxury we overspend the allowance God has given us, our children’s children will be cheated of their inheritance... We must guard too the variety and abundance of untamed nature and not forget the spiritual resources available to us.’

Quaker faith & practice 25.07

The decision we took at Canterbury in 2011 lays a huge responsibility on us all as individuals, meetings and as a religious society. Our commitment in minute 36 is more than a gentle prompting, it requires us unequivocally to become a low-carbon, sustainable community. We have recognised the opportunities and challenges of our commitment, and we seek growth in the Spirit that will enable us to take effective action as a religious community.

At Canterbury, Pam Lunn’s Swarthmore lecture reminded us that the action we take now ‘is testimony – faith in action, witness in the world, Spirit-led ways of living because we can do no other.’ She asks if ‘we are able to rediscover solidarity as a people of God’ to find a larger, deeper challenge for our lives.

We see the need for Friends to move beyond the decisions made at Canterbury to a place where we are comfortable in transforming ourselves. Only then can we put our faith into action and challenge the conscience of society. How do our Quaker values connect with our vision for economic justice? Does our stewardship of money and the energy it represents reflect our Quaker values? How can we change our lives to be true to our Canterbury commitment?

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Learning resources

Living Witness, QPSW Sustainability & Peace Programme: Sustainability Toolkit. £5.00 (and the resources within in it).

Minute 36 of BYM 2011 (widely circulated).

Jonathan Dale: *Beyond the spirit of the age*, Swarthmore Lecture 1996. £3.00

Faith in Action: Quaker Social Testimony. £10.00

Pam Lunn: *Costing not less than everything: Sustainability and spirituality in challenging times*, Swarthmore Lecture 2011. £8.00

Richard Wilkinson & Kate Pickett: *The spirit level*, Allen Lane. £10.99

If you would like an electronic copy of this document please visit www.quaker.org.uk/ym
Priced books in reading lists are available from the Quaker Centre Bookshop at Friends House.

For other queries please e-mail karlg@quaker.org.uk or phone 020 7663 1109

Timetable for Britain Yearly Meeting 2012

	Friday May 25	Saturday May 26	Sunday May 27	Monday May 28
09.30	[Hatched pattern]	09.30 - 12.00 Session 2	09.30 - 12.00 Session 4	09.30 - 12.30 Session 6
10.00		Meeting for Sufferings	Stewardship Committee	Required business
11.00		Minute 36 progress	BYM Trustees	Workshops
12.00	12.00 onwards	Economic Justice & Sustainability	Postcards from the future	Workshops
13.00	Reception Rooms 8 & 9	12.45 - 13.45 Lunch	12.45 - 13.45 Lunch	Lunch
14.00	[Dotted pattern]	14.00 - 17.00 Session 3	14.00 - 17.00 Session 5	14.15 - 15.30 Session 7
15.00		Economic Justice & Sustainability	What it means to be a Quaker today	Receipt of Epistle
16.00		16.00 - 17.00	Special Interest Meetings	Special Interest Meetings
17.00	Overseas Visitors Tea George Fox Room	17.30 - 18.30 Supper	Supper	Under-19s minutes
18.00	Special Interest Meetings			17.30 - 18.30 Elders & overseers in Large Meeting House
19.00	19.00 - 21.30 Session 1	19.00 - 20.30	18.00 - 20.00	Time for leaving
20.00	Opening business	Swarthmore Lecture	Groups Fair	Luggage store & cafe closes
21.00	World Conference feedback	[Hatched pattern]	19.00 - 20.15	[Dotted pattern]
21.45	Time for leaving		Global singing in courtyard	
	Friends House closes 21.45	Friends House closes 21.45	Friends House closes 21.00	<i>all timings are subject to change</i>