

# Quaker Life



## Eldership and Oversight

We are not just Friends, but Friends together in our meetings. We experience joy, trust and peace, but also learn to accept, challenge or forgive each other. We want to grow in the Light of God but 'Part of the cost of discipleship is living with the other disciples' (QFP 10.28). How do Friends concerned for the spiritual life of the meeting and its expression in caring learn from others' experience?

## Building on experience

In the 21st century, time and change seem to accelerate. Many are new to Quaker ways, so how can wisdom develop and experience be shared? The Committee on Eldership & Oversight (CEO) has worked closely with Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre to develop a three year pattern of events.

In 2006, when many overseers and elders began three years of service, the emphasis has been on basic training. In the spring and summer the popular series of regional introductory days has been offered again. In the autumn and winter, Woodbrooke will offer basic weekend courses. These complement the various ways local meetings help new Friends take up these responsibilities.

In 2007, the theme of the Eldership & Oversight conference will be 'Finding the confident Quaker voice'. Two experienced Friends from each monthly meeting will have the opportunity to explore a topic of importance to Friends everywhere, developing our understanding and expanding our spiritual horizons. The normal residential courses at Woodbrooke will meet the needs of new and longer-serving Friends.

In 2008, the themes for training will be consolidation, building on experience and extending the insights of the conferences, as well as basic courses.

The open gatherings at Yearly Meeting explore topics in a different way. In 2006 we will revive our commitment to being Friends together, refreshing our work of oversight and eldership.



## Resources Room

The Resources Room provides a service to meetings, groups and individual Quakers with a focus on supporting and developing learning.

It holds over 4000 items, including books and study packs, games and audio visual materials.

A free service, it can be used in a variety of ways, either to supply items that users select from the online catalogue or to advise on and supply a selection of materials to meet particular needs.

Go to:

[www.quaker.org.uk/cat](http://www.quaker.org.uk/cat)  
then Search the catalogue,  
and specify Resources  
Room.

For general queries about  
the Resources Room,  
contact:

Bevelie Shember  
[bevelies@quaker.org.uk](mailto:bevelies@quaker.org.uk)  
020 7663 1013

To order eldership &  
oversight resources by post,  
contact the CEO Secretary  
(details overleaf).

## Advice & support

The Committee on Eldership & Oversight and Quaker Life staff provide confidential advice and support to meetings on all aspects of their worshipping life and pastoral care.

Contact  
020 7663 1023  
[anneh@quaker.org.uk](mailto:anneh@quaker.org.uk)

# Publishers of truth

Funerals, marriages and partnerships, conflicts, caring and listening – the series of books are essential resources for all responsible for oversight and eldership. Each one is based on material gathered from many meetings. The Committee on Eldership & Oversight visits meetings to hear about their innovations, their good practice and their problems. Drafts of the books are tested in meetings and revised.

*Spiritual Reviews*, first published nine years ago, has been completely rewritten in the light of meetings' experience. So often a crisis forces us to re-evaluate our purpose, re-discover the roots of our inspiration, and discover again our gifts and the bonds of community. Could we not re-new ourselves without a crisis? This book helps meetings to do just that.

How do you feel about people meditating in meeting? Or rustling anoraks or political statements? Acceptable or not? *The Boundaries Game* can keep Friends debating and discerning for days! We need to talk, listen and – maybe - change our minds if we are to be Friends together. *The Boundaries Game*, originally a training exercise, is fun, vigorous and an excellent way to develop our traditions.

Clearness attracts and worries Friends: how do we help someone reach clarity without intruding on privacy? How can we set up an effective clearness group that is grounded in the Spirit? Confidentiality can also make people anxious as they think of the opportunities for hurting people or breaking trust. *Clearness* and *Confidentiality* are two free leaflets, available summer 2006, which will fit your leaflet rack and be a tool for elders and overseers.



# Get involved

- Send a new overseer or elder on a course
- Buy, read, discuss and adapt the books
- Invite CEO members to your meeting
- Share your experience via the Committee
- Ask for advice, invite a mediator, consult CEO in confidence

“However experienced we are as Friends, days like this bring us face to face with the needs of the present and empower us to approach and deal with them.”  
Participant on an Eldership & Oversight introductory day

## Contact

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Quaker Life works with Friends in their meetings and with other local and national committees to help deepen experience of God's grace and its consequent expression in all our lives and in our meetings. It seeks to nurture the worshipping community of Britain Yearly Meeting, developing it into an inclusive community.

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