

Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious
Society of Friends (Quakers)

Agenda & notes

Compiled for Yearly Meeting,
Friends House, London, and online
28 April – 1 May 2023

Includes online preparatory sessions,
21–23 April 2023, and additional session,
1 July 2023

Accessible version



Proceedings

A number of documents will help us meet with hearts and minds prepared. Collectively, these are the 'Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain 2023'.

The full set comprises:

1. *Preparing for Yearly Meeting*, including community guidelines.
2. *Agenda and notes*, with introductory material for Yearly Meeting and annual reports of Meeting for Sufferings and other related bodies
3. *Testimonies*, including index of epistles
4. *Trustees' annual report*, including financial statements for the year ended December 2022
5. *Patterns of membership*, including the 2022 tabular statement
6. *Minutes*, which are distributed after the conclusion of Yearly Meeting.

All documents will be available online at www.quaker.org.uk/ym. Many Friends will read the documents online, but if you need printed documents, they will be in a printer-friendly PDF

format. We ask Friends to print their own copies or to seek assistance from someone in their meeting. This will help us to save costs and reduce the environmental impact of Yearly Meeting.

If you require accessible documents, please request these when booking for Yearly Meeting. If these do not meet your accessibility needs, or the needs of someone you know, please email ym@quaker.org.uk.

All *Quaker faith & practice* references are to the fifth edition, which can be found online at www.quaker.org.uk/qfp.

You can read about Yearly Meeting in chapter 6 of *Quaker faith & practice*. Alternatively, contact Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee on 020 7663 1040 or at ym@quaker.org.uk or go to www.quaker.org.uk/ym.

1. Introduction and information

1.1 Introduction

Yearly Meeting is when Quakers in Britain come together to worship, make decisions and spend time as a community.

Yearly Meeting is also when we can learn, practise, improve, and take back to our local meetings ways of conducting business that are rooted in Quaker tradition and our own experience, yet also meet contemporary challenges.

Yearly Meeting is a blended event. This means that some Friends will participate online, while others will be physically present at Friends House in London.

We all need to approach this style of event with care, patience and compassion.

The purposes and functions of Yearly Meeting are described in *Quaker faith & practice* 6.02–6.11, which also gives the background to the business agenda.

Yearly Meeting

The primary business sessions of Yearly Meeting 2023 will be held from 28 April to 1 May, with an additional session to be held on 1 July. A range of online preparatory events will be held before Yearly Meeting, with most organised for the weekend before Yearly Meeting.

There are different types of sessions taking place. Details of Yearly Meeting in session and preparatory sessions on the main topics of Yearly Meeting are included in this document.

To access the full schedule of events you first need to register to attend Yearly Meeting. You can do this online at <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/ym2023>.

Once your registration has been confirmed you will be sent a link to the online Yearly Meeting Planner. Please refer to the Planner for details of lectures and other sessions (namely: orientation, worship, Special Interest Meetings and Yearly Meeting preparation sessions) at: <http://ym2023.sched.com>.

1.2 Contact details

Yearly Meeting Arrangements

Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee
Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ

Please send comments on business or the agenda to Yearly Meeting Arrangements

Committee at arrangements@quaker.org.uk.

General enquiries

Quaker Church Affairs (previously known as Events & Committee Services)

Telephone: 020 7663 1040

Email: ym@quaker.org.uk

Website: www.quaker.org.uk/ym

Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/quakerspace

Twitter: [@bymeevent](https://twitter.com/bymeevent) [#YM2023](https://twitter.com/hashtag/YM2023)

2. How does Yearly Meeting work?

2.1 Discipline of Yearly Meeting sessions

The principles of the Quaker business method are the same for Yearly Meeting as for area and local meetings. Please read the guidance found in chapter 3 of *Quaker faith & practice*.

“In our meetings for worship we seek through the stillness to know God’s will for ourselves and for the gathered group. Our meetings for church affairs, in which we conduct our business, are also meetings for worship based on silence, and they carry the same expectation that God’s guidance can be discerned if we are truly listening together and to each other and are not blinkered by preconceived opinions.”

Quaker faith & practice 3.02

Community Agreement

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee asks all of us to share responsibility for creating a safe and loving community by upholding Quaker discipline at this blended Yearly Meeting. When registering to attend Yearly Meeting, all Friends were asked to agree to our Community Agreement – a copy is available at www.quaker.org.uk/documents/yearly-meeting-2023-our-community-agreement.

Yearly Meeting brings together a large number of Friends, and this can be a powerful spiritual experience. With large numbers, it is usually the case that not everyone who wishes to give spoken ministry is called. The clerks will seek to ensure that different voices are heard. It is useful to remember this:

“Not all who attend a meeting for church affairs will necessarily speak: those who are silent can help to develop the sense of the meeting if they listen in a spirit of worship.”

Quaker faith & practice 3.05

The agenda gives the timings of sessions. Published starting times indicate when the clerk will formally open the sessions; please aim to arrive before that time, so the meeting can gather in silence beforehand. To help create and maintain a gathered blended meeting, it is helpful, if at all possible, if Friends avoid arriving late, leaving early, or moving around.

The Quaker business method is a discipline in which all participating should focus on worship and discernment of the matter at hand. Please avoid any activity that detracts from

this discipline. This includes knitting and unsuitable use of electronic devices.

However, Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee is aware that some Friends with particular needs will find it easier to concentrate if using their hands. If this is the case for you, please let elders know by emailing ym@quaker.org.uk and they will be in touch prior to Yearly Meeting.

You can use electronic devices to access Yearly Meeting documents, but please make sure you do not disturb others. Please ensure your device is on 'silent'.

Resist the temptation to check emails or post on social networks while in sessions.

Outside sessions, please think carefully about posts to social networking sites. What stage have we reached in our discernment? Are you being tempted to anticipate a decision? Remember, ministry given in session has been offered in the context of a gathered meeting for worship and therefore might not be appropriate to share in a public forum. Yearly Meeting has not made a decision until a minute has been agreed.

Safeguarding the health and well-being of our community

The following section sets out the action we will take to safeguard the wellbeing of the most vulnerable members of our community. There are a number of respiratory and flu-like illnesses in circulation.

We encourage you to take the following measures and precautions before arriving:

The following section sets out the action we will take to safeguard the wellbeing of the most vulnerable members of our community. There are a number of respiratory and flu-like illnesses in circulation.

We encourage you to take the following measures and precautions before arriving:

- if you feel unwell
- if you have a positive LFT
- if you, or anyone in your household have symptoms such as a new cough, sore throat, high temperature, runny nose, headache, fatigue, sneezing
- if you, or anyone in your household have Covid-19, flu or another contagious illness.

Action that we will take during Yearly Meeting:

- We will provide a socially distanced seating area.
- We invite you to consider wearing a face-covering when indoors if you feel more comfortable doing so (except when eating or drinking).
- We do not ask you to refrain from physical contact, but please always check with individuals whether they are comfortable with hugging or shaking hands.
- Please follow good hygiene procedures such as regular handwashing for 20 seconds. If

you use hand sanitiser, you should use the same method to apply this as when washing your hands, and continue doing so until it dries. There will be sanitiser in the meeting rooms and in other locations around the building.

For more details about what is in place at Friends House, please see www.friendshouse.co.uk/covid-19.

2.2 Spoken ministry and discipline: online participation

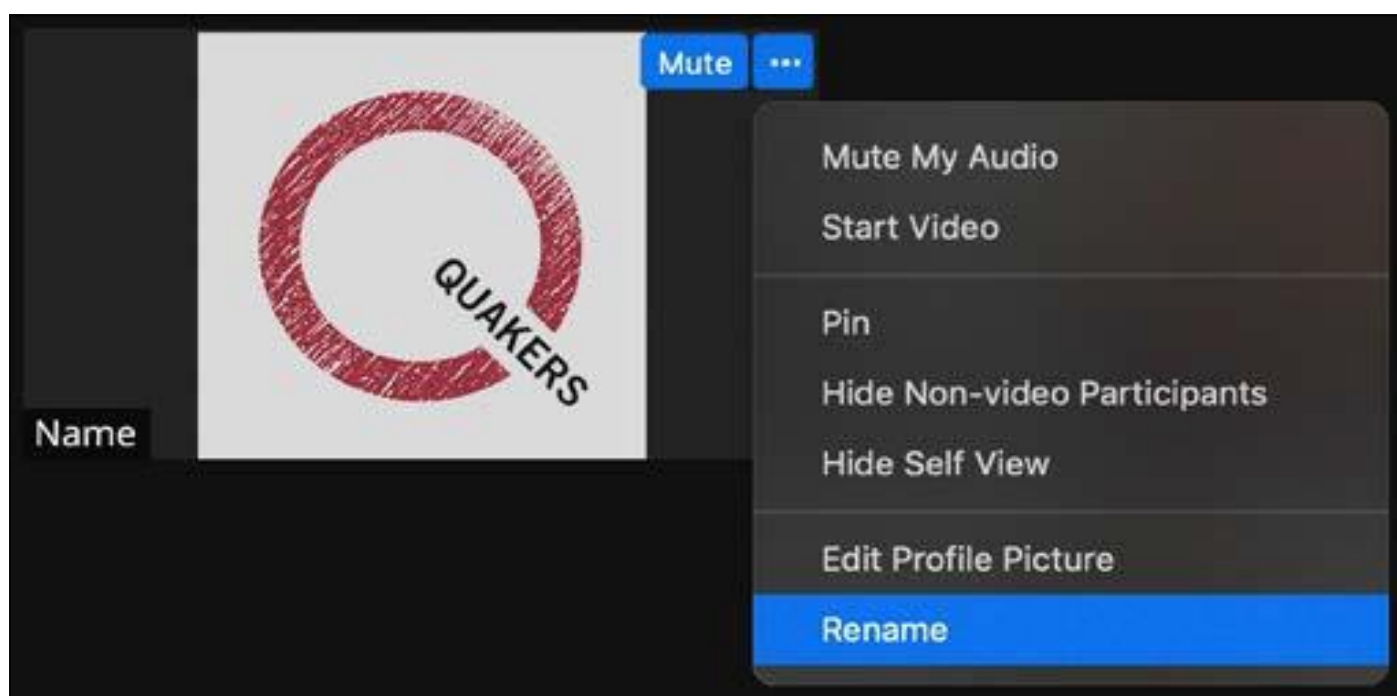
Online meetings will be held using Zoom. Yearly Meeting sessions will open ten minutes before the start time so that the meeting can gather in silence beforehand.

If you are called away from your computer, please turn off your camera.

The following notes explain how Yearly Meeting will be conducted using Zoom.

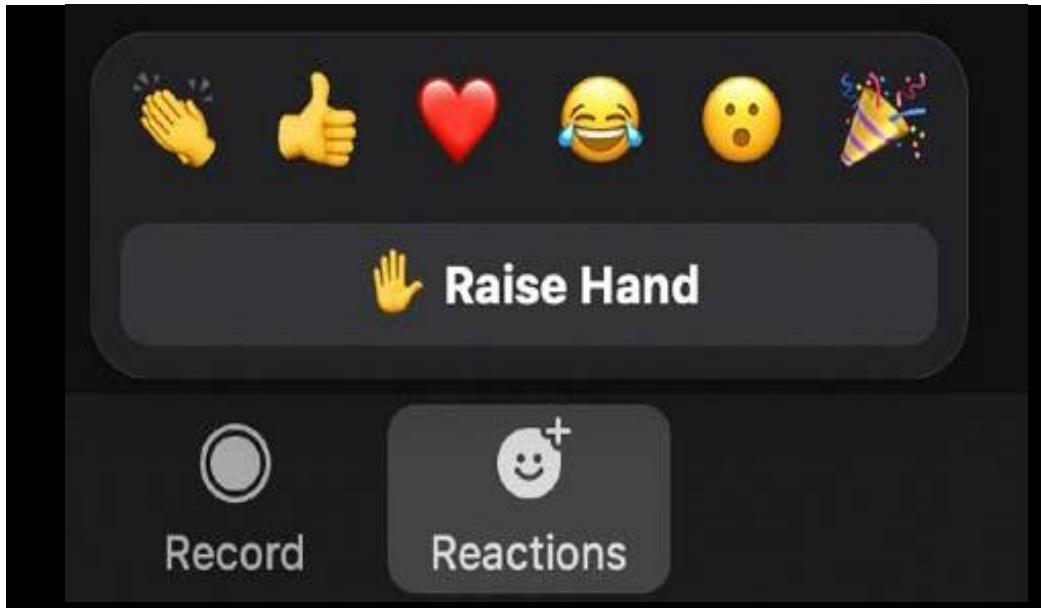
Your name: how it should appear

- Use 'rename' to ensure your screen name includes both your first/personal name and surname/family name.
- Add the name of your area meeting (attenders can add either their area meeting, if known, or their local meeting or other worshipping community; visitors from other yearly meetings can add the name of their yearly meeting).

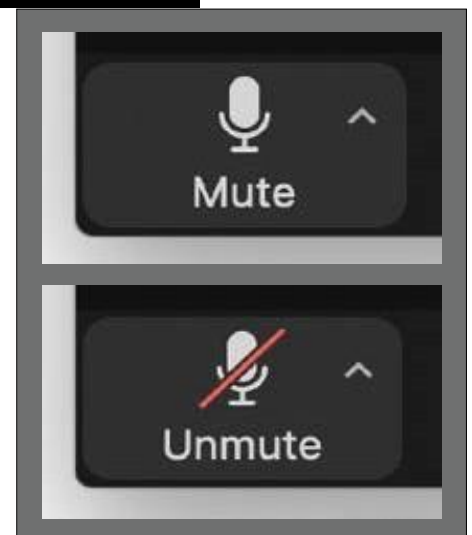


How to indicate that you feel moved to speak

- Use the 'raise hand' feature in Zoom to indicate that you wish to speak or minister. The 'raise hand' feature is usually found by clicking 'Reactions'.



- Wait until you are invited to contribute by a clerk, who will call you by name. If the clerk calls another Friend, all other raised hands will be lowered. If the clerk invites further ministry and you still feel led to minister, you will need to raise your hand again.
- If you are called, you will receive an onscreen message asking you to unmute; click 'unmute' and you may then speak. Please tell everyone who you are and where you worship before you begin your ministry (e.g. 'x area meeting' or 'attending xx local meeting or worshipping community').



- When offering spoken ministry, "try to sum up what you have to say in as few words as possible. Speak simply and audibly, but do not speak for effect." (*Quaker faith & practice* 3.10)
- When you have finished, your microphone will be muted and your hand lowered by technical support staff.

Note about microphone controls

- A red diagonal line through the microphone shows your microphone is muted and you cannot be heard. A microphone without a diagonal line shows your microphone is 'live' and you can be heard.
- For Friends who are familiar with using Zoom, at Yearly Meeting you will not be able to 'mute/ unmute' your own microphone unless invited by a technical support staff member on instruction from a clerk.

2.3 Spoken ministry and discipline: in-person participation

Entering late or leaving early can disturb other Friends. If you need to do so, please wait for a shuffle break or, if necessary, leave at the end of an item of business. Please avoid leaving or entering when the clerk is standing or a Friend is ministering.

The clerk will aim to conclude sessions by published closing times, but if it is necessary to extend sessions, the clerk will indicate when those who need to meet participants in the children's programme, or who have other pressing matters, can leave.

One door only will be used for latecomers, so please follow the directions of doorkeepers and wait quietly until a doorkeeper indicates you can enter.

Friends will be reminded at regular intervals to turn mobile phones to silent. Please do so. Even a phone set to vibrate can be distracting to Friends sitting near you. The exception to this rule will be parents or guardians with children in the Children & Young People's programmes, who need to be contactable in case of emergency.

We meet in a large room and therefore rely on the use of microphones. If you feel called to minister, please stand, or if unable to stand please raise your hand and wait for a microphone.

If you rise, and another is called, please sit down.

If you are called, please share your name and where you worship before you begin your ministry (e.g. 'x area meeting' or 'attending xx local meeting or worshipping community').

When offering spoken ministry, "try to sum up what you have to say in as few words as possible. Speak simply and audibly, but do not speak for effect." (*Quaker faith & practice* 3.10)

Each contribution should be heard in silence. Audible indications of approval or disapproval of spoken ministry are not part of the discipline of Britain Yearly Meeting.

After each contribution, there will be a pause to allow reflection. Please do not stand at this time.

When the clerk feels the time is right for a further contribution, they will say so. If you have tested your ministry and feel that the meeting needs to hear it in order to reach unity, you should stand at this point.

2.4 How Yearly Meeting will agree minutes

When the clerk discerns that the time is right, they will say they are ready to draft a minute. At this point, any Friend standing should sit down, and hands raised online will be lowered. While the minute is being drafted, please uphold the clerks in prayerful silence.

When the clerk asks if a minute is acceptable, please reflect on whether the minute is good enough. Friends may choose to answer "I hope so" or to remain silent. There is no need to indicate active assent. If, after reflection, you are clear that an amendment is necessary, stand or raise your hand and wait to be called; however, do not present fresh material at

this point.

2.5 Elders and pastoral support at Yearly Meeting

Elders at Yearly Meeting

The role of elders at Yearly Meeting is one of service for spiritual counsel, offering a ministry of presence during Yearly Meeting sessions and upholding our clerks throughout.

The team of appointed elders will provide a rota of attentive care for our meeting for worship for business during sessions and ensure active support to clerks between these. Elders are available between sessions to Friends who wish to consult them on the conduct of Yearly Meeting.

You can contact Yearly Meeting Elders online through the Yearly Meeting Planner.

Pastoral support

In the preparation weekend, pastoral care Friends will be available on Zoom, accessed via the Yearly Meeting Planner, at the following times:

- Friday 21 April, 18.00 to 19.00;
- Saturday 22 April, 18.00 to 19.00;
- Sunday 23 April, 18.00 to 19.00.

During Yearly Meeting, pastoral care Friends will be available in person within the Community Hub, which is in the Waldo Williams suite. Friends joining Yearly Meeting online can contact pastoral care Friends through the Yearly Meeting Planner or by calling 07856 611 609.

Supporting each other is an important part of our community's witness, and we hope that local and area meetings will seek to support their own participants as far as possible.

In all cases we will provide a listening ear and seek to signpost to longer-term support where relevant. Clearly, we cannot provide long-term befriending or support. However, we hope pastoral care Friends in your local meeting will be able to advise on local support.

Holding a blended Yearly Meeting is still new to all of us, and we won't always get it right, but we will do our best to respond to your needs and to help make our community a loving and inclusive one.

Help desk

For general help about Yearly Meeting, or if you have been unsuccessful using the above contact details, please contact the help desk via email at ym@quaker.org.uk or by calling 020 7663 1040.

2.6 Orientation

Woodbrooke will host online orientation sessions leading up to Yearly Meeting sessions as follows:

Supporting online discernment

Joining hundreds of Quakers on Zoom can be exciting, but it's also very different from meeting and discerning together in person. It can feel disconnected, and other things might distract us when we worship from home. In this session, we will talk about what it means to centre down in worship and to uphold the discernment process. We'll think about the practical aspects of joining Yearly Meeting online this year and share tips on connecting spiritually in any space.

- Friday 21 April, 17:00–18:00
- Saturday 22 April, 12:30–13:30

How does Yearly Meeting work?

You may have been to Yearly Meeting before, whether in person or online, attended other online gatherings, or be completely new to it. In this session, Woodbrooke staff will guide you through the way the Quaker business method will work for this year's Yearly Meeting. They will talk about other events happening during Yearly Meeting, offer practical tips on getting the best from our blended sessions and provide a chance to ask any questions that you might have. There is no such thing as a silly question!

- Friday 21 April, 15:00–16:00
- Sunday 23 April, 12:00–13:00
- Friday 28 April, 16:30–17:30 (this will be a blended event, for those attending online and at Friends House)

Please refer to the online Yearly Meeting Planner for full details and to book.

Orientation material from these sessions will also be recorded and available on the Yearly Meeting website at www.quaker.org.uk/ym/programme.

2.7 Spiritual preparation and theme- related sessions

In the document Preparing for Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee introduced the main topics being discerned this year. Preparing for Yearly Meeting also suggested some spiritual preparation and resources (see www.quaker.org.uk/documents/preparing-for-yearly-meeting-2023).

During the weekend before Yearly Meeting (21-23 April) there will be a variety of sessions and media to help prepare Friends for discernment at the Yearly Meeting sessions. In some cases, additional background materials will be provided for some

of these sessions. If relevant, these will be made available to you after booking online via the Yearly Meeting Planner.

Some preparation sessions will also be held in March and early April. Please do look carefully at the times of the sessions you wish to attend.

Please refer to the online Yearly Meeting Planner for full details and to book.

Exploring our truth and integrity

This workshop introduces what truth and integrity mean in the context of our Quaker testimonies and exploring how we can use truth and integrity in our witness and worship. How do we demonstrate truth and integrity in our lives? How do we root our political action in truth and integrity?

- Tuesday 21 March 2023, 17:00–18:30

Truth and integrity: why, what, how?

- Sunday 23 April 2023, 19:00–20:30

A workshop about engaging with the world of politics and decision-making through our spiritual commitment to truth and integrity. How can we separate nuance and perspective from outright lies? Putting our faith into action involves seeking kinder ground and interacting with power.

This session is led by the Quaker Truth and Integrity Group.

Who is making the decisions? An exploration of the structures of Britain Yearly Meeting

- Wednesday 19 April, 19:00–20:30
- Thursday 20 April, 14:00–15:30
- Friday 21 April, 10:30–12:00
- Sunday 23 April, 16:30–18:00

We will look at the current structures within Britain Yearly Meeting, what the different bodies are for and how they connect with each other and with other Quaker organisations and committees.

Looking at Central Committees

- Saturday 22 April 2023, 14:00–15:30

At this Yearly Meeting, Friends will discern if now is the time for evolution in the structure of our Central Committees – the bodies appointed by Meeting for Sufferings to shape the

work carried out centrally for and on behalf of Friends. Our structures enable us to express our spiritual discernment in action within and beyond our own community; it is important that we have structures that work for our whole community.

Do we have the best possible structures? Is this the right time to consider how they might evolve?

In this preparation session the Britain Yearly Meeting trustees looking at this question will share some of their thinking and there will be space for questions. Everyone is welcome, not matter how well informed you feel about this question.

Looking at Meeting for Sufferings

- Saturday 22 April 2023, 19:00–20:30

We want to ensure that Britain Yearly Meeting is an organisation where decision making is clearly understood. This preparation session is an opportunity to hear from two Friends with very recent experience of trying to ensure the smooth running of Meeting for Sufferings and Britain Yearly Meeting trustees. Come and learn more about what they have been doing and what else might need to be done to allow these parts of our structures to fulfil their roles in the flourishing of Britain Yearly Meeting.

2.8 Photography and video

There will be Britain Yearly Meeting staff on site capturing photos and videos of activities and interactions for use in Quaker communications. The media recorded will be used to illustrate what happens at Yearly Meeting and may be used online and in printed materials. Images from the event may be used to attract new members, and encourage people to take part in our activities or contribute to our funds.

Filming takes place at Yearly Meeting in sessions. Footage is livestreamed and may also be used for Quaker communications purposes to illustrate Yearly Meeting in session. Most video will be used with different sounds (i.e. music or a voiceover), and additional consent will be sought for anyone who might feature prominently in published videos.

Anyone who does not want to appear in Quaker communications after Yearly Meeting can request a coloured lanyard, so they may be identified and kept out of published images.

3. Explanation of business to be taken at Yearly Meeting

3.1 Nominations and appointments

Yearly Meeting nominations and appointments

Yearly Meeting itself will nominate and appoint Friends to serve on Yearly Meeting Nominating Group and the Committee to Examine Minutes.

Yearly Meeting Nominating Group (YMNG) (see *Quaker faith & practice* 6.22)

To find out more or nominate please complete the short form at:

<https://forms.quaker.org.uk/ymnoms>, or visit the Nominations section of the Yearly Meeting planner.

You will need permission from the Friend(s) you are nominating, and up to date contact information.

You can only nominate Friends in membership who will be present at Yearly Meeting (online or in person). A list of nominated Friends will be shared with the Yearly Meeting on the planner website, and any objections should be made to Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee (at nominations@quaker.org.uk) before 17.00 on Sunday 30 April 2023.

An online meeting of all interested Friends will be held on Monday 24 April, 17.00 to 18.00 to explain the role, answer questions, and see if it is possible to nominate the final group. The nominations will then be brought to Yearly Meeting in session.

Committee to Examine Minutes

In recent years, Yearly Meeting clerks have experimented with different approaches to 'dots and commas' - checking minutes for slight inaccuracies.

The expected clerks for Yearly Meeting 2023 find this checking process helpful. For Yearly Meeting 2023, we hope to appoint a Committee to Examine Minutes as described in *Quaker faith & practice* 6.24.

Yearly Meeting will nominate and appoint Friends to serve on the Committee to Examine Minutes. This operates during Yearly Meeting and is responsible for checking the minutes at the close of each session and correcting any slight inaccuracies. Friends can be nominated to this committee in advance of Yearly Meeting. Friends must be attending Yearly Meeting (in person or online) to serve and have access to a computer and be comfortable with working with an online document. Further information is on the website www.quaker.org.uk/ym/get-involved. The

deadline for nominations is 17.00 on Sunday 23 April. If we receive nominations for more

than ten Friends, Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee will determine the names to be brought before Yearly Meeting on Friday 28 April.

Nominations from area meetings

In accordance with section 7.06 of *Quaker faith & practice*, area meetings are required to nominate representatives to Meeting for Sufferings for the triennial period beginning Yearly Meeting 2023 until Yearly Meeting 2026. Representation from area meetings is on the basis of two Friends per area meeting, one designated as the representative and the other as an alternate. A call for nominations was made at Yearly Meeting in 2022.

Nominations from Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees nominate the Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and the Yearly Meeting Treasurer.

Nominations from nominating committees

For the remaining vacancies, two different nominating committees bring the names of Friends to Yearly Meeting: Central Nominations Committee and the Yearly Meeting Nominating Group.

These Friends have been identified after a careful and prayerful process of discernment. Their names will be published in the Schedule of nominations, which will be available on the Yearly Meeting website www.quaker.org.uk/ym before Yearly Meeting.

If you see a problem with the service of any of the Friends nominated, you should contact:

Penny Finch, Nominations Secretary, either by email at nominations@quaker.org.uk or telephone 020 7663 1106.

This should happen as soon as possible and in good time before the session involved.

3.2 Receipt of annual reports

Yearly Meeting is the final constitutional authority of the Religious Society of Friends. Consequently, Yearly Meeting receives the annual reports of the committees appointed to carry out its business between Yearly Meetings. These reports are from the following groups:

- Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees are responsible to Yearly Meeting for the right stewardship of the centrally managed work and the assets and property of the yearly meeting. See *Quaker faith & practice* 8.17–8.20. Trustees are accountable to both Yearly Meeting and the charity regulators.
- Central Nominations Committee is responsible for bringing the names of Friends for service to both Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings. Consequently, they have an overview of the number of Friends who have offered their service and are involved in

encouraging Friends to consider service. See *Quaker faith & practice* 6.21.

- Friends Trusts Ltd is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. It is the denominational trust corporation for the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain and in this capacity holds property and investments as custodian trustee or nominee for meetings and other bodies within Britain Yearly Meeting. It receives legacies which are to benefit some aspect of the Society or its work and manages a number of Quaker trusts. See *Quaker faith & practice* 14.45.

Friends Trusts Ltd's audit will not take place until after Yearly Meeting, so no report is included in these documents. The report will be available on the website together with the company's annual report and financial statements when they have been approved by the directors.

- Meeting for Sufferings is the body entrusted with the general care of matters affecting Britain Yearly Meeting and, in the intervals between Yearly Meetings, the making of decisions and issuing of statements in the name of Britain Yearly Meeting. See *Quaker faith & practice* 7.02–7.06.
- Quaker Housing Trust is the yearly meeting's own national housing charity. It makes grants and loans to social housing projects. Independent of Britain Yearly Meeting funds, its income comes directly from Friends and meetings. See *Quaker faith & practice* 8.15.
- Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee is responsible for planning the agenda for, and use of premises during, each Yearly Meeting. At the beginning of each Yearly Meeting, Agenda Committee reports on the planning of that Yearly Meeting and sets the agenda in context. See *Quaker faith & practice* 6.18.

Yearly Meeting Epistle

The Yearly Meeting Epistle is the letter sent from this Yearly Meeting for Friends everywhere: to other yearly meetings worldwide and to local meetings in Britain. It is sent to all local meetings immediately after Yearly Meeting so that it can be read out at meeting for worship at the first available opportunity.

Quaker faith & practice 6.23 outlines the process for creating the epistle. The details for our blended Yearly Meeting are set out below.

Any Friend may give written advice on the content of the epistle by contacting the Epistle Drafting Committee, before 17:30 on Sunday 29 May (either by placing it in the box on the information desk in Friends House, or via the Epistle Drafting Committee box in the Yearly Meeting Planner online).

The Epistle Drafting Committee will then produce a Draft Epistle, which will be made available to Friends on the morning of Monday 30 May (on the information desk in Friends House and on the Yearly Meeting Planner online).

Comments on the content, text, style, grammar, language, etc. of the Draft Epistle should be sent to the Epistle Drafting Committee no later than 12:15 on Monday 30 May.

A revised Draft Epistle will be presented at the final session on Monday 30 May, 14:00–16:00, when no further revision (except perhaps excision) will be invited.

4. Agenda and notes

4.1 Preparation online

There will be preparation sessions from now until Yearly Meeting. These will be offered online only. See 2.6 above for full details and how to participate.

Ahead of Yearly Meeting there will be a range of Special Interest meetings about Quaker work and witness, offered by Quaker Recognised Bodies and some committees and work programmes of Britain Yearly Meeting. For further details of these, and of the Groups Fair, see the Yearly Meeting Planner online.

4.2 Throughout the weekend

Friends House opening hours

Friends House will open for registration on Friday 28 April 15:00. Saturday 29 April and Sunday 30 April opening times are 8:30 (doors open) to 21:40 (doors close), and on Monday 1 May the building will close at 17:00.

Young Adults at Yearly Meeting

Sessions throughout Yearly Meeting for 18 to

35-year-olds offer a way to be part of Yearly Meeting and to be in a smaller community. This gives those participating the chance to prepare for and reflect on their own experience of Yearly Meeting. During Yearly Meeting, there will be a hub on the second floor for all those aged 18 to 35 to gather informally and for scheduled activities.

Youth, Children & Families programmes

The Children & Young People's programmes are a central part of Yearly Meeting. They follow the themes of Yearly Meeting, using Quaker approaches and practices to encourage the faith formation and spiritual development of participants. There is an emphasis on building an exciting, challenging and creative community. All under-18s attending Yearly Meeting need to be booked onto their age-appropriate programme by a parent or guardian.

- The Children's Programme (ages 0 to 11). This age group will be exploring the topic of Truth and Joy. The Programme runs in the mornings and afternoons from Saturday to Monday as well as a programme for 5 to 11-year-olds running alongside the Swarthmore Lecture.
- The Young People's Programme (YPP) (ages 11 to 15) is arranged by a group of young people, with the support of adult volunteers and staff. YPP runs from Friday evening until Monday afternoon, running as a residential at Felden Lodge and concluding on Monday at Friends House. This age group will be exploring the topic of Truth &

Integrity.

- Accompanying is available for 15- to 18-year-olds to meet up socially at Yearly Meeting and attend Yearly Meeting in session. During Yearly Meeting we will be based in the Margaret Fell room.

4.3 Spaces and Events

Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke stands

East Corridor

The Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) stand and the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre stand will be in the East Corridor all weekend. Members of staff from BYM and trustees from Woodbrooke will be available at various times of the day to meet and ask any questions about the work. It will also be possible to ask questions and post a comment via the Yearly Meeting Planner.

Community Hub

Waldo Williams Suite

The community hub offers a warm and welcoming space to have time out from YM, to sit quietly and be occupied, with jigsaw puzzles, knitting and craft materials, or to have quiet conversation. It will share a space with pastoral care. As families with small children are likely to be in the space, it will be cheerful during the lunchtimes – do come and join in!

The hub will be open throughout Yearly Meeting and will have a host present as follows:

- Friday, 15:00–21:00
- Saturday, 09:30–17:15
- Sunday, 09:30–17:15
- Monday, 09:30–16:00.

New to Yearly Meeting?

Waldo Williams Suite

If this is your first time at Yearly Meeting, welcome! We recognise that this is a busy event where everyone may seem to know each other. If you are new and would like to meet other new people, then please do drop by the hub.

Café

At the times below there will be space in the courtyard, bookshop and café to meet and have a coffee:

- Friday, 15:00–21:00
- Saturday, 09:30–17:15
- Sunday, 09:30–17:15
- Monday, 09:30–16:00.

The Library

The Library will be open during the weekend and you are welcome to come in, whether to talk to staff, look at our displays and resources, or simply find a moment of quiet. Please check for exact opening times which will be displayed outside the door. Please note that the Library will be used for the groups fair on Saturday and Sunday lunchtimes.

Intergenerational Social Time

George Fox

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee invites Friends young and old to meet in the George Fox room, to chat about Yearly Meeting and get to know Friends from different generations. As we might notice, experience, youth, learning and upholding are not exclusive to any age range. Everyone welcome; there might be crisps.

- Sunday, 13:30–14:30

Groups Fair

An online groups fair will be held on Saturday 22 April at 5pm.

An in-person groups fair will be held on Saturday 29 April and Sunday 30 April from 12:15 to 13:15. Look out for details closer to the time.

Worship

There will be opportunities to worship (online and in person) at the start and end of each day as follows; unless stated otherwise, worship will be held in the Sarah Fell Room:

- Friday 28 April, 21:00–21:30 – following directly after the opening session in the Large Meeting House
- Saturday 29 April, 08:30–09:00 – worship with Friends from around the world
- Saturday 29 April, 21:00–21:30 – worship with Young Friends General Meeting
- Sunday 30 April, 08:30–09:30 – silent meeting for worship
- Sunday 30 April, 21:00–21:30 – worship with Friends from around the world
- Monday 1 May, 08:30–09:00 – worship with Friends from around the world.

Worship with Friends from around the world: an opportunity to worship with Friends from other Yearly Meetings. Each worship time will be hosted by Elders and Friends from Quaker World Relations Committee. All are welcome.

Further details of worship sessions will be available on the Yearly Meeting Planner.

Saturday 22 April, 11:00–12:00 (online only): Opening of Yearly Meeting

Welcome to Yearly Meeting

Please join this informal, online session to meet the Yearly Meeting.

Clerks and come together with Friends to prepare for our Yearly Meeting. We will have a chance to see one another's (screen) faces and hear some ideas for making the most of Yearly Meeting – whether you'll be attending in person or online, whether you plan to attend as much as possible, or just dip in and out of sessions.

Friday 28 April, 19:00–21:00: Yearly Meeting Session 1 – Opening session

Appointment of clerks

Central Nominations Committee nominates the following Friends to serve as clerk and assistant clerks for Yearly Meeting 2023, serving until the first session of Yearly Meeting 2024:

- Clerk: Adwoa Burnley, East Scotland AM
- First Assistant Clerk: Fred Langridge, Sheffield & Balby AM
- Second Assistant Clerk: Mary Aiston, Kingston & Wandsworth AM

1. Welcome to all

2. Children & Young People's programmes

The clerk will outline the age-related programmes happening in parallel with main Yearly Meeting sessions and identify times when we will all come together.

3. Appointment of Committee to Examine Minutes

The names of those nominated to serve on the committee will be read out and Yearly Meeting may approve them. Friends should refer to [Section 3.1](#) for an explanation of the nomination process.

4. Agenda introduction

The Clerk of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee will introduce the report of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee. The report can be found at [Appendix B](#) and Friends should refer to [Section 3.2](#) for an explanation of the role of the committee.

5. Eldership and Pastoral Care at Yearly Meeting

6. Central Nominations Committee

We will receive a report of the work of Central Nominations Committee ([Appendix B](#)) who are responsible for seeking names to bring to Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings for a number of committees, groups and roles.

7. Central Nominations Committee – nominations received

Central Nominations Committee brings forward nominations to us as specified in Table 4 of the Schedule of Nominations. Friends should refer to guidance in [Section 3.1](#).

8. Report of Yearly Meeting Nominating Group (2022–2023)

The Nominating Group appointed at Yearly Meeting 2022 brings forward nominations as specified in Table 5 of the Schedule of Nominations.

9. Central Nominations Committee – nominations required

We ask Central Nominations Committee to bring nominations to Yearly Meeting 2024 as specified in Table 4 of the Schedule of Nominations. Friends should refer to guidance in [Section 3.1](#).

10. Appointment of Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and Yearly Meeting Treasurer

Nominations from Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees for Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and for Yearly Meeting Treasurer are listed in Table 2 of the Schedule of Nominations. Friends should refer to guidance in [Section 3.1](#).

11. Book of Discipline Revision Committee

Our Book of Discipline Revision Committee, which is working on our behalf to revise Quaker faith & practice, has shared two draft texts with us for comments and feedback:

www.quaker.org.uk/rqfp.

We will hear a brief reflection from the committee about what they are learning from this process and how it helps them to hear from the many different voices within our Quaker community.

12. Matters arising

Saturday 29 April, 9:30–12:30: Yearly Meeting Session 2 – Releasing Energy and Revitalising Quaker Communities

13. Releasing Energy

In this session we will hear from two Friends about how they have both, in different ways and in different places, been led to explore new possibilities within their Quaker life. One will talk about ways in which her meeting responded to the pandemic and then to the cost-of-living crisis. Then we will hear about some of the process which has been happening for all Friends in Wales, moving towards a simpler structure.

Both these Friends found, as we all have done, that the world changed around them and prompted changes in aspects of their Quaker life. They are experiencing those changes as a joyful and positive evolution. The circumstances of our work as a religious society have changed and we are led to work in new ways which could be more inclusive and must be sustainable into the future. Let our hearts and minds be not just 'prepared' but open to the possibilities offered by change. Simpler structures could release energy for following the leadings of the spirit. This session is a chance to share positive new ideas and imagine how the evolution of our Society may continue.

Saturday 29 April, 14:30–17:30: Yearly Meeting Session 3 – Looking at Central Committees

14. The work of our trustees: report on Trustees' work in 2022

The annual review of Britain Yearly Meeting's centrally managed work is published at www.quaker.org.uk/annualreview. Trustees' annual report and financial report will be received at an additional Yearly Meeting session on 1 July. The annual report will be published at www.quaker.org.uk/annualreport at a later date.

15. Looking at Central Committees

In this Yearly Meeting session, we will be considering the structures of our organisation.

Each committee has arisen and developed in response to a particular need. Each generation of Friends has been faced with a structure in some respects untidy, and we may be thankful for the clear-minded among us who help us, from time to time, to set our house in better order. But order without life does not work, and our continual task is to ensure that our structures are in harmony with the changing tides of life in Britain Yearly Meeting.

Quaker faith & practice 8.24 reminds us that from time to time our structures must be revisited and brought into line with what we need from them today. In 2018, Meeting for Sufferings and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees agreed Simple Structures and Practices as one of three strategic priorities for Britain Yearly Meeting. The aim is to create structures and practices that are simpler, more inclusive, and more sustainable. Meeting for Sufferings minuted (2020) that simplification should ‘take a radical approach to our structures not being constrained by the historical development of different bodies’.

Since then, there has been intense activity at local, area, regional and national level to identify and test ways to simplify our Quaker organisation. In parallel, the pandemic has required Quakers in Britain to find new ways of worshipping and discerning together which have enabled a more diverse range of Friends to participate and which are still evolving.

Quaker communities across the yearly meeting – from local and area meetings to Young Friends General Meeting and our national gatherings in Wales and Scotland – are all undertaking their own discernment about the future structures they need. At Yearly Meeting level, Meeting for Sufferings has led some of the work, Trustees have overseen other elements, and some has been worked on by the two Central Committees – Quaker Life and Quaker Peace & Social Witness. Across all groups there has been a continuous effort to share what has been learned and heard from Friends.

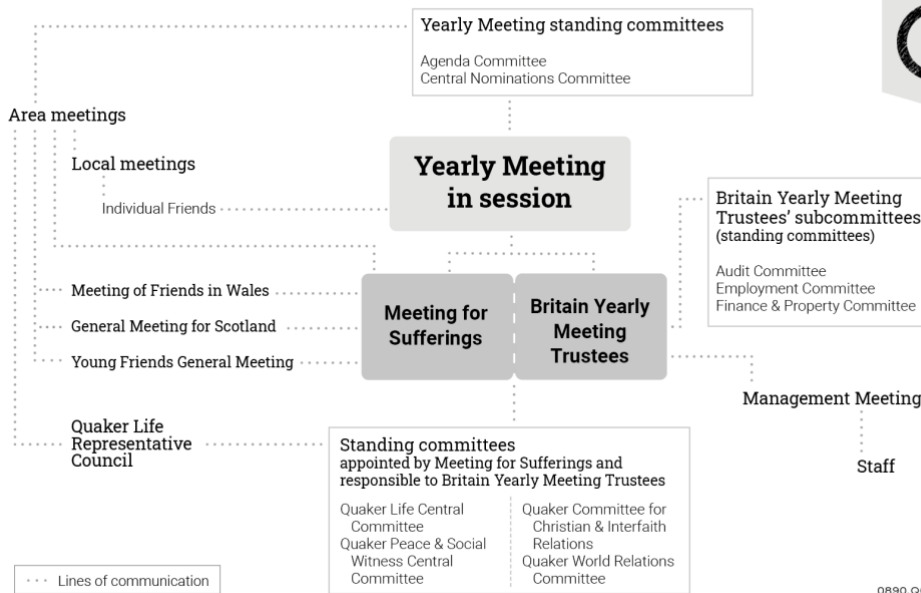
At Yearly Meeting in 2023, Friends will discern if now is the time for evolution in the structure of our Central Committees – the bodies appointed by Meeting for Sufferings to shape the work carried out centrally for and on behalf of Friends. In preparation for this, over the last two years, hundreds of Friends have shared what gives them joy in service and their hopes for a potential future structure – a structure that is understandable, enables Friends to participate in joyful and worshipful service, and has a range of opportunities for them to be involved according to their leadings, gifts, and time.

The opportunities for service need to match the diversity of our community and allow people to give service in different ways at different points in their lives.

Our structures enable us to express our spiritual discernment in action within and beyond our own community. In accordance with 8.18 Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees in their stewardship role are entrusted to undertake “periodic revision of the structure of the standing committees” but changes to the Central Committees can only take place with the authority of Yearly Meeting. So, this item is before us to consider if now is the right time to see how we can “set our house in better order” and respond to “the changing tides of life in Britain Yearly Meeting”.

Below you see an attempted illustration of the current structures of BYM central committees. There are many links between people and groups and no diagram can capture the way we work – but it should give you an idea.

Britain Yearly Meeting committee structure
January 2023



This link will take you to the Quakers in Britain website which gives information about what the current structure is: www.quaker.org.uk/our-structures.

Saturday 29 April, 19:00–20:15: Swarthmore Lecture 2023 – ‘How we can change society’

This year’s Swarthmore Lecture will be given by Esther Loukin.

Esther will speak from her experience of life as a disabled person, and how she has tried to bring about change, as well as the diversity of tactics needed to achieve change. Esther will explore how the Spirit

is in that action, and where it has deepened her work. She will also share her experiences of inclusion and exclusion and her hopes for the future. We hope Friends will be encouraged to reflect on where their own actions challenge inequality, which harms us all.

The Swarthmore Lecture will be held on 29 April at 19:00 in person at Friends House, and live-streamed via YouTube.

For more information and to sign up to be sent the link for the livestream please see www.woodbrooke.org.uk/swarthmore.

There will be another opportunity to watch the Swarthmore Lecture as a YouTube Premiere on Tuesday 2 May 2023 at 19:00. Friends are invited to watch together at that time, and discuss with others via YouTube’s live comments. After it has premiered, the lecture will be available to watch in your own time via www.woodbrooke.org.uk/swarthmore.

The Swarthmore Lecture is part of the work of Woodbrooke Learning & Research.

Sunday 30 April, 10:30–11:30: Yearly Meeting – All-together worship

This will be a huge meeting for worship, taking place across Britain in homes, meeting places and at Friends House. We will come together as a single loving, inclusive and all-age community across the length and breadth of Britain Yearly Meeting.

As well as individuals joining online from home, local Quaker communities are invited to take part via a live link. We hope those unable to connect online will either join others connecting online locally, or worship with us together in spirit.

Worship for everyone together, all ages, on Zoom and in-person, which also offers ways into worship and settling into stillness.

Preparation materials for worship will be sent from Quaker Life to local and area Meetings that are signed up to 'Journeys in the Spirit'. We hope to make available a list of participating meetings so that those wishing to attend in person can do so wherever they are in the country. For details, see www.quaker.org.uk/ym/programme.

If individuals wish to join All-together worship from home, please register for Yearly Meeting.

Sunday 30 April, 12:00–13:00: Yearly Meeting Session 4 – Truth and Integrity

16. Truth and Integrity

So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter.

Isaiah 59:14 NIV

One of the names early Quakers called themselves was "Friends of Truth". This session builds on two preparatory sessions organised by Britain Yearly Meeting staff and by the Quaker Truth and Integrity Group. It will explore how we can be Friends of Truth and Integrity today. What do the words mean and how do we experience what they describe? How can Quakers work with churches, faith groups and others to strengthen respect for truth and integrity in ourselves, our communities and our politics? How do we listen to the views and experience of people outside Britain Yearly Meeting who may share aspects of our concern? We expect this exploration to continue during the coming year and at a further session at Yearly Meeting 2024. Conclusions there may serve as a basis for future witness that may lead us to working on truth and integrity alongside people with whom we

disagree on other issues.

The introduction will be longer than is usual for a Yearly Meeting session as it launches a year of discernment rather than just an hour. In the session time which follows Friends may be led to respond and to consider how the topic should be approached in the coming months and at Yearly Meeting 2024. The issues we face were described by Thomas Penny in the introduction to his 2021 Swarthmore Lecture. “The opening of new channels of communication, the algorithms of social media and the polarisation of political opinion have narrowed many people’s sources of information, making political debate more confrontational and facts more elusive. For Quakers, with our historic witness to truth, this presents challenges: What can we do? How can we remove the blinkers obscuring our view of the world and help others to remove theirs? Can we find ways to reduce the conflict that results from such different takes on reality? How can we be champions of truth?”.

Sunday 30 April, 15:00–18:00: Yearly Meeting Session 5 – Looking at Meeting for Sufferings

17. The work of our national representative body: receipt of annual report from Meeting for Sufferings

In this session we will receive and consider a report of the work of our national representative body, Meeting for Sufferings, which acts on our behalf between Yearly Meetings. The written report can be found at [Appendix D](#).

18. Looking at Meeting for Sufferings

Consultations within the Society over the last few years have stressed how strongly Friends feel that spirit-led discernment should be at the heart of our decision-making processes. We look for the two bodies that can act for the national Quaker community in a prophetic role – Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings – to give more attention to spirit-led discernment in mapping the way forward for the Society of Friends. This is where we rightly recognise the voice of authority. We also want these processes to involve as many Friends as possible so that they better reflect the diversity of spiritual, and life experience found among us.

Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017 heard ‘the call to examine our own diversity, particularly in our committee and organisational structure, locally and nationally ... to look at how we can remove barriers and actively seek wider participation in the full life of our meetings’.

Yearly Meeting Gathering 2021 minuted ‘that there was a need for greater clarity about the respective roles of Meeting for Sufferings and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees in developing vision and strategic direction’ and continued by acknowledging ‘that there are unresolved tensions that impact on the role of Meeting for Sufferings and that their role may now need review. We ask Meeting for Sufferings to consider this and return to us.’ [Minute 28]. In

March 2022, Meeting for Sufferings agreed to commission a review and asked the group already reviewing Yearly Meetings and Yearly Meeting Gatherings to add this to its work.

The group reported to Meeting for Sufferings in December 2022 offering further encouragement to the meeting to improve its ways of working to give more time for discernment and asking for work to be done on improving communications within the yearly meeting. Importantly it confirmed the conclusions of YMG 2021 that clarification was needed about the relative roles of Meeting for Sufferings and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees.

This has therefore been referred to Yearly Meeting for discernment. A way forward is needed to enable both Meeting for Sufferings and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees to work alongside each other without duplication or confusion.

The review group describes the current relationship as containing elements of 'friction' with the two bodies rubbing uncomfortably together. Yearly Meeting has repeatedly minuted its confidence in the work of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees in managing the resources of the yearly meeting and carrying out oversight of the centrally-managed work since their establishment in 2006. Trustees' guidance of the yearly meeting through the period of the pandemic of 2020-21 has been seen as successful and widely valued. However, the review group also heard from some Friends, including members of Meeting for Sufferings, who feel that Britain

Yearly Meeting Trustees make decisions which influence the direction of the Society without sufficient direction from Yearly Meeting, with the result that Meeting for Sufferings feels more like a consultative than a decision-making body.

The review group does not believe that this 'friction' is due to failure in either body. Some Friends feel that a greater degree of consultation is appropriate for some Trustee decisions. Meeting for Sufferings is currently restricted in its powers and by resource constraints in delivering the degree of consultation that is looked for.

Nevertheless the review group concludes that there is a lack of clarity over the responsibilities of the two bodies which can be seen either as about accountability or about where decisions can be appropriately taken.

Accountability

There is no argument about the position of Meeting for Sufferings and BYM Trustees with respect to Yearly Meeting. Both are accountable to the yearly meeting and report on their stewardship annually. Both can make recommendations on new work to be undertaken and the future direction of the Society. Both can accept direction from Yearly Meeting as to the tasks which are delegated to them. They sit side by side on the same 'level' in any diagram of our structures with Yearly Meeting above them [see Quaker faith & practice 8.05].

Despite being seen as acting for Yearly Meeting between its annual sessions, Meeting for Sufferings does not have the same powers as Yearly Meeting. BYM Trustees report to it for

information only and are not accountable to it.

If this is seen as the major aspect of the problem, the solution is to change the position of Meeting for Sufferings in the structure.

We could move Meeting for Sufferings up a level so that it became part of a continuing Yearly Meeting - this would mean Meeting for Sufferings would have all the powers of Yearly Meeting and that

all members could participate. Or we could move Meeting for Sufferings down a level - this would mean acknowledging that it is most useful as a consultative body to provide BYM Trustees with the feelings of the national Quaker community on issues before it.

Decision making

Another way of expressing the situation is, as Yearly Meeting Gathering 2021 said, to concentrate on greater 'clarity about the respective roles of Meeting for Sufferings and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees in developing vision and strategic direction'.

Yearly Meeting in session as 'the final constitutional authority of the Religious Society of Friends...' [see Quaker faith & practice 6.12] has the power to determine strategic direction for British Quakers and to set policy for major areas of work. It is not appropriate for this power to be delegated to another body.

If BYM Trustees and Meeting for Sufferings are to retain their current place in the structure as co-equals under Yearly Meeting, there needs to be clarity on what decisions each body can make when changing circumstances arise. If vision and strategic direction need to change between sessions of Yearly Meeting where are those decisions taken and what consultation needs to be undertaken to ensure appropriate involvement, transparency and legal compliance. Such clarity, although not easy to achieve, would have the effect of minimising causes of friction between the two bodies.

Questions for the Yearly Meeting

- How can Britain Yearly Meeting be an organisation where decision making is clearly understood and where spirit-led discernment involves as many Friends as possible?
- How could changes to the relationship between Meeting for Sufferings and BYM Trustees release energy and help achieve this vision?
- If we are led to make changes, should this involve structural change (as outlined under Accountability above) or only clarification of roles (as outlined in Decision making above)?

Sunday 30 April, 19:30–20:30: Meet the Swarthmore Lecturer – online and in the Large Meeting House

An opportunity to join Esther Loukin for a session including reflections, questions and answers, following her lecture on Saturday ([page 27](#)).

There will be two opportunities to ‘meet the Swarthmore Lecturer’ – one on the evening of Sunday 30 April at 19:00 (blended) and one on Wednesday 3 May at 19:00 (online only).

Please refer to the online Yearly Meeting Planner for full details and to book. Please only sign up for one event to allow as many people as possible to participate.

The Swarthmore Lecture is part of the work of Woodbrooke Learning & Research.

Monday 1 May, 9:30–12:00: Yearly Meeting Session 6 – Required Business; as led

19. Yearly Meeting Nominating Group: appointment

20. As led

21. Receipt of other reports

We will formally receive the following reports

- Quaker Housing Trust ([Appendix B](#))
- Tabular Statement (www.quaker.org.uk/ym/documents)

Monday 1 May, 14:00–16:00: Yearly Meeting Session 7 – Our all-age community, closing session

Receipt of the Yearly Meeting Epistle, and closing business.

We will take the opportunity to come together as an all-age community and hear minutes from the Children & Young People’s programmes, which finish today. We will receive the Junior Yearly Meeting Epistle. The session will conclude with worship for all ages.

22. Receipt of the Yearly Meeting Draft Epistle

23. Yearly Meeting Nominating Group 2023–2024

24. Minute of Record: Epistles

- 25. Minute of Record: Testimonies**
- 26. Minute of Record: Friends from other yearly meetings**
- 27. Minute of Record: Inter- church and interfaith visitors**
- 28. Reading and signing of the Yearly Meeting Epistle**
- 29. Receipt of minutes from the Children & Families and Young People's Programmes**
- 30. Receipt of Junior Yearly Meeting Epistle**
- 31. Meeting for worship with those participating in the Children & Families and Young People's Programmes**
- 32. Thanks**
- 33. Naming of clerks for Yearly Meeting 2024**

Saturday 1 July, 10:00–10:45: Yearly Meeting Session 8 – Receipt of Trustees' annual report

34. Receipt of Trustees' annual report and financial statements

Trustees will present the annual report and financial statements for the work of Britain Yearly Meeting in 2022.

5. Appendices

A: Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee (YMAC) annual report

At the time of writing this report in December 2022, Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee is at the exciting and terrifying point in our discernment that happens every year, when we have a table covered in jigsaw pieces but do not yet know how it will all fit together into a Yearly Meeting. By the time you read this, Friends, I have faith that it will be much clearer.

Our hope and intention is to enable a time of gathered worship and fellowship, in which we can listen deeply to what love requires of us.

How can we release our energy to follow the leadings of the spirit? How can our organisation's structures best support what God calls us to do?

YMAC is excited by these questions, which underpin much of the agenda we're bringing to Yearly Meeting. Part of YMAC's discernment task is relatively straightforward this year: our Yearly Meeting in 2023 will hear back from groups doing work on our behalf, that Yearly Meeting has requested. Some of these groups now need to test their discernment so far with Yearly Meeting, or have questions that only the Yearly Meeting itself can answer. We need to give time to these. YMAC's job is to help everybody to come with hearts and minds prepared to answer them. Some of the questions are about structures and committees, and our consideration at Yearly Meeting reflects work underway in many Area and Local Meetings exploring similar themes.

The world beyond our Quaker structures does not pause while we do the necessary work on ourselves as an organisation. We will also spend some time considering truth and integrity, in politics and more widely, and we expect this discernment to continue in future Yearly Meetings. There will be 'as led' time during Yearly Meeting, and Arrangements Committee will be responsible for discerning the right use of this time during the event.

As well as the contents of Yearly Meeting sessions and preparatory materials, members of our committee are working, along with staff, on everything else that makes a Yearly Meeting, from social opportunities to pastoral care to communicating all of this clearly to Friends.

Building on our experience of Yearly Meeting 2022, and listening to your feedback, we are happy to be approaching our second blended - online and in-person - Yearly Meeting and we hope it can feel even more fully inclusive of those attending in each of those ways (or a mixture of both).

As I write, we are eleven committee members, two clerks of YMAC and the Yearly Meeting clerk nominate, who attends YMAC ex officio. We are often joined by a representative of Young Friends

General Meeting and the arrangements committees of Junior Yearly Meeting and the

Young People's Programme. We are young and old and middle-aged, in paid work and studying and self-employed and retired and busy volunteers, and we all bring different life experiences to our discernment. We are carrying several vacancies and this means there is more for each of us to do.

Service on YMAC is hugely rewarding too. We make beloved friends not only within the committee, but also among those we meet during the course of our discernment and of the Yearly Meeting. We hope that we can meet in person more than once in the coming year, as the work is intense, and chats over meals and in the coffee queue can lead to unexpected flashes of inspiration.

The journey - from the blank slate, through the table of jigsaw pieces, to sitting in a Yearly Meeting session where anything could happen because that's how our spirit-led discernment works - can be exhilarating.

Fred Langridge

Clerk, Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee

B: Quaker Housing Trust annual report

Background

The Quaker Housing Trust (QHT) was set up by Yearly Meeting in 1967 to take forward Friends' concerns on housing and homelessness. With donations from Friends, QHT provides grants and loans for social housing projects for those in genuine housing need. This is typically support to

small and medium-sized charities to provide housing for vulnerable people, particularly those at time of transitions in their lives. QHT supports projects which provide comfortable, secure and long-term homes, built to high energy efficiency standards, both so running costs for tenants are lower, but also fulfilling our sustainability testimony.

Work of the Quaker Housing Trust in 2022

During 2022, the Quaker Housing Trust made awards totalling £171,191. These projects will make a real difference to people experiencing homelessness across England, Scotland and Wales.

Eight projects were funded, providing housing for those at periods of transition in their lives, including refugees and asylum seekers, people experiencing street homelessness and older people.

Street Connect Glasgow were supported to purchase of a two-bedroom flat in Glasgow to be used as Move-On accommodation for individuals affected by drug and alcohol addictions who have successfully completed a period in residential rehabilitation, and who are in a transition to living fully independent lives in the community.

Another example of a funded project is Open Door North East, a charity which houses people seeking asylum and refugees in the Tees Valley Area. An award was made to this organisation to purchase a house in Middlesbrough which will be used as accommodation for a refugee family.

The Quaker Housing Trust has three separate funding programmes. The main programme supports projects for building or refurbishing accommodation to provide long-term homes to people at transition points in their lives. The Audrey Deacon legacy has been used to support similar projects for older people.

Additionally, QHT supports projects at an early stage, working with organisations to strengthen them and prepare them to undertake a project delivering new or refurbished homes. These feasibility grants are limited to £6000 and can focus on environment assessment or financial feasibility.

Our funding programmes are oversubscribed. There are brilliant charities out there creating housing and we would like to support more of them. In recent years, there has been a

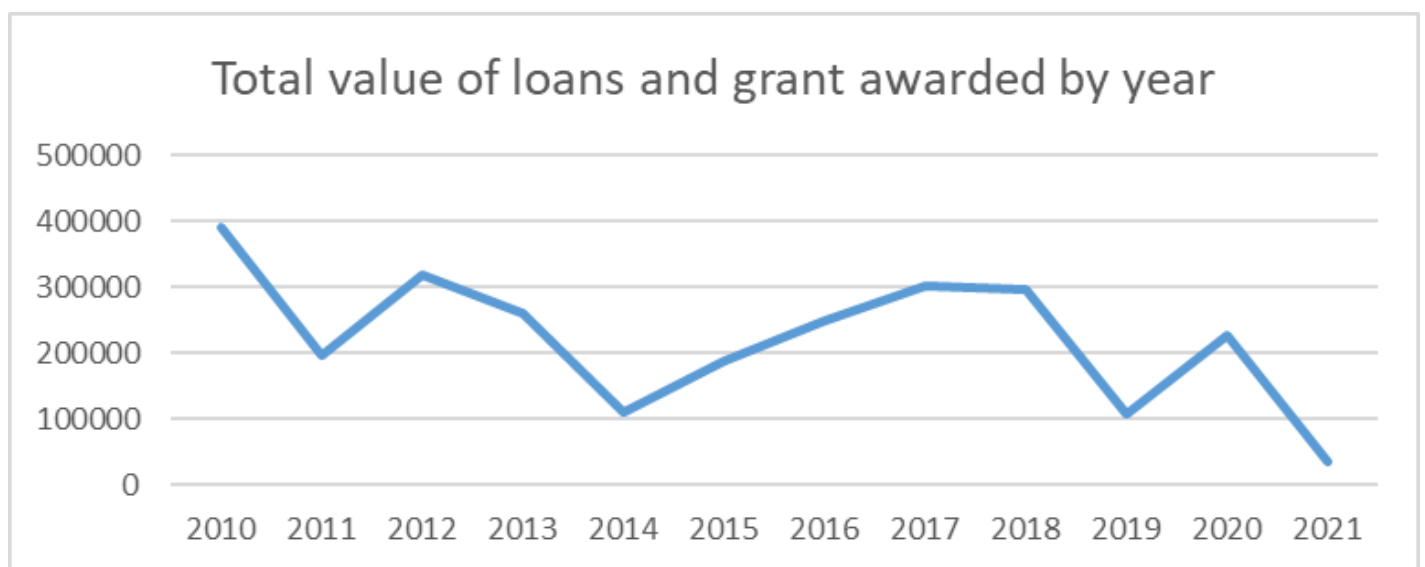
significant fall in donations made by Meetings and Friends in recent years which severely limits our ability to make awards. Only twelve meetings held collections for Quaker Housing Trust and individual donations amounted to £4000. This means that most of our funds come from repaid loans from earlier awards.

We would like Friends to consider their own housing position and their ability to help those in housing need through donating to QHT. Regular donations would increase the number of projects we can fund. Leaving a legacy to QHT would allow Friends to ensure their fortunate housing position can be used to house people who are less fortunate.

Developing our grant and loan making strategy

QHT is in the process of revising our grant-giving strategy, with regular discernment of our priorities so we can respond more quickly to new and emerging housing needs in Britain due to crises at home and abroad, as well as targeting areas where we receive fewer applications.

We are excited that our new strategy includes having a new strand of work assisting Quaker Meetings and Quaker bodies to repurpose and transform some of their little-used assets into social housing with advice and financial support. We will be consulting with Local Development Workers and other Quaker bodies to help us shape this new strand of work to create maximum impact.



C: Central Nominations Committee annual report

Dear Friends, those of you who assiduously read and remember our annual reports will notice a number of recurring themes: we give a brief overview of what we do, talk about some of the challenges, and ask for your help in letting us know about you, so that we have a wider pool of names to draw upon.

So, this year's report may not be a complete surprise, but we would still like you to read it.,

Who We Are and What We Do

We are the main nominations committee for the central work of Britain Yearly Meeting. The remaining nominations are discerned by Quaker Peace and Social Witness who have a standing search group; there is the Yearly Meeting Nominating Group, which finds names for the other nominations committees listed above, and the Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees are responsible for discerning the names of the

BYM Treasurer and the Clerk to BYM Trustees. We search for names, using Quaker Service Information Forms (aka QSIFs or historically: the yellow forms), or the expressions of interest forms you have filled in, our own experience of Friends, approaching the Local Development Workers, and making links with Quaker recognised bodies. We also sometimes put advertisements in the Friend or in Quake. After we have discerned your name, we then approach those whom you have named as supporting Friends to help us know whether this particular service might be a good fit for you and the committee or role at this time.

Nominating body	The roles
Trustees	Yearly Meeting Treasurer Clerk to BYM Trustees
QPSW Standing Nominations Committee	QPSW groups and sub-committees
Yearly Meeting Nominations Committee	Membership of the other nominations committees
Central Nominations Committee	Everything else

We usually have about 100 names to find each year, not just replacing those who have completed their service, but also those who have asked for early release. There may also be new committees or groups sought for particular, usually short-term, tasks. Some of these roles may need specific skills or experience, but many of them are enriched by Friends who have as wide a range of experience, whether academic or lived, as possible.

But while for much of the time when we meet together, whether on line, or once a year in person, we focus on the work of discerning names for roles, we also take time to consider

more widely how we work. Do we need to change anything so that we can find the best names for any particular service? Part of that thinking is about how we can encourage more Friends to communicate with us about who they are and what they care about. Less than 10% of Friends have filled in either Quaker Service Information Forms, or expressions of interest forms, all of which are accessible on the BYM website. We know sometimes it is because the forms seem forbidding or just don't give you the chance to tell us about your wider interests and experience. The forms have been changed with fewer tick boxes and more open questions. It may be you are afraid we will hound you to agree to be nominated for all sorts of jobs and your life will never be your own again. For what it's worth, we don't actually do that. If you feel you have to say no, or not now, we accept that.

Barriers and opportunities

We know that Quakers in Britain are not as diverse as the wider national population, and those involved in central service may be even less diverse. There are Friends who feel marginalised by the structures and systems we have, but we hope you will be willing to tell us about you and about what prevents you from serving, and what would enable you to take a role on. Then we can try to find a way to make it possible for the work to be done by all those who really care about it. We can promise that we will do our best.

We also have a responsibility in our searches, to avoid looking at the same names over and over again, and we want to find as many ways as possible to engage with all Friends throughout the Yearly Meeting.

Equally we know that the traditional way some committees work may not be a good fit, especially for younger Friends, who are in full time work with young families, who may be already feeling overburdened, or those who are at transitional points in their lives, and don't feel able to commit to extended service. We hope you will help us find the best ways to help you get involved without being overburdened – whether that means finding more flexible ways to work within committees, or being involved in shorter term projects with a specific objective.

As part of trying to broaden out the pool of Friends we might approach, we had asked Meeting for Sufferings to revisit a past minute which limits our searches to those in membership. A review group was set up and reported to Meeting for Sufferings last year, but the discernment was that the issue we had raised was so tied up with the membership, that they felt the meaning and role of membership should be revisited first.

This year's Swarthmore lecture is about how we can bring about changes in society, and it is as important to find ways of doing that in our own Society of Friends as it is in the broader society of which we are part. Please help us if you can.

But...

Despite some of the problems in finding Friends to serve, one thing we have all learned from this and other service, is that that service can be hugely rewarding, and has led us to

learn how much more we can do than we had ever imagined. At its best Quakerism is about growth and becoming the best we can be, and that growth is not just learning new skills and responding to new challenges more strongly than we ever expected we could, but we also grow in our faith as Quakers. There is, for us, no real division between the spiritual and the secular, and our service, at its best, is part of part of our spiritual growth. We hope that local Nominations Committees, might be encouraged to think of Central Service as one option for developing gifts within their local meetings, both for the individual and for the common good.

As part of the revision of the Book of Discipline, the Book of Discipline Revision Committee have produced a draft for a chapter on nominations, which sets out the basis on which we make all nominations. It includes the following, written by Judith Thompson:

“Each time I am asked to do something for Quakers I am filled with apprehension about the challenge but know from experience that I can trust the discernment that suggested my name. I have found that I will be given what I need. Each appointment confirms and strengthens my feeling that I belong to the Religious Society of Friends”.

The draft chapter can be downloaded in PDF and audio formats from:

www.quaker.org.uk/rqfp.

Lucy Parker and Fran Hicks,

Co-Clerks, Central Nominations Committee

D: Meeting for Sufferings annual report

Meeting for Sufferings is a committee of up to 100 representatives from across the YM: 70 AMs, Scotland, Wales, CCs and Standing Cttees, YFGM, Trustees. It meets four times a year to carry out business on behalf of the YM such as appointments, prison and court register, and registration of Quaker recognised bodies. We receive reports from QWRC and QCCIR, as well as minutes on matters of concern from area meetings and other bodies. It is empowered to set up groups for specific tasks e.g. Sustainability Monitoring Group, Book of Discipline Revision Cttee, groups to review nomination of attenders to central committee service and the role and purposes of YM, YMG and MfS.

In 2015, Meeting for Sufferings approved a vision statement, Our faith in the future (available at: www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/our-faith-in-the-future) providing a point of reference for all Friends to discern their current position and how they might best act to realise that vision. The structure of that document has been adapted to arrange this report.

A future where Meeting for worship is the bedrock of living as a Quaker

All our meetings are grounded in worship, often with significant time for worship sharing. The agendas can be very full and we have experimented throughout the year with ways in which to prepare through introductory sessions to give members of Meeting for Sufferings a better understanding of issues to be covered in the forthcoming agenda and the opportunity to ask questions of those presenting reports. Spirit-led discernment is central to our lives as Quakers and giving time to this must be our priority.

A future where all Friends understand and live by Quaker discipline

During 2022 we commissioned two reviews. The first, at the request of Central Nominations Committee, concerned the possible appointment of attenders to central committee service. The Meeting was unable to reach unity on the idea of allowing this change to established practice without first considering the meaning of membership in greater depth. Meeting for Sufferings has asked Area Meetings to consider questions on this matter prior to further discernment in 2023. This process is in addition to a parallel consideration by Quaker Life Central Committee of changing patterns of belonging to our communities and we are alive to the need to ensure that these processes are complementary.

The second review was requested by a minute of Yearly Meeting 2021 and concerned Meeting for Sufferings itself; the recommendations arising from it will be coming to Yearly Meeting in 2023.

In December we received the third report of the Book of Discipline Revision Committee. We have now received some draft text for comment. There is a palpable sense of excitement as we see progress towards a contemporary articulation of our discipline.

A future where Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all-age

Meeting for Sufferings is now over half way through its triennium. For understandable reasons, and in common with Friends everywhere, we have had to explore new ways of building our community in a virtual space. To create time for this we have experimented with different ways of conducting our business, giving greater emphasis to the use of draft minutes to expedite routine matters, and using online sessions to provide opportunities to consider issues in advance of formal sessions. This has allowed more time for discernment on substantive matters.

One aspect of our focus on the worshipping community has arisen from our minute of December 2020 in which we said, "Our testimonies to equality and truth demand that we engage in a drive towards real change, turning our declared intentions into reality. We are called to commit to becoming an actively anti-racist church".

We were challenged to address our use of language – specifically that of the word 'overseer' - in minutes from area meetings in early 2021. The word has been used over centuries but carries associations with hierarchy and the oppression of slavery. Area meetings were asked to consider this issue, and at our December meeting we concluded

that ‘overseer’ was no longer an appropriate term for the church officers responsible for the care of those attending our meetings. While no one term presented itself as an alternative, we noted that variants on “pastoral care” seemed to be prevalent in the existing usage of our area meetings.

We received reports on emerging patterns for area meetings in London and in Wales & the Marches. It was encouraging to hear of the experiments being made to address the challenges faced by our current structures.

A future where Quaker values are active in the world

Our first meeting of 2022 took place shortly after Russia’s incursion into Ukraine, and we were able to appreciate the nimble way in which QPSW staff, working with the Communications Team brought concerned friends together to respond and promote action.

In July it was inspiring to hear from General Meeting of Friends in Scotland about how they are furthering the yearly meeting’s commitment to work on climate justice, gender diversity and anti-racism. Their newly-revived Truth and Integrity work reflected the interest shown at Meeting for Sufferings last year in the threats to truth, integrity and democracy occasioned by new legislation and other actions by our elected representatives.

As usual, we received a report from our Sustainability Monitoring Group, this year reporting without the input of the Quaker Stewardship Committee. It is encouraging to hear of the range of work being done by Friends at both local and central levels, although sobering to realise how much more needs to be achieved.

Since Quaker Stewardship Committee was laid down in 2022, Meeting for Sufferings is now responsible for reporting to Yearly Meeting on how area meetings are complying with requirements laid on charities relating to accounts, safeguarding, data governance and employment practice. A process is being worked out between Quaker Life staff, who will be compiling information on compliance, Quaker Life Central Committee, and Meeting for Sufferings. We anticipate a report on area meeting compliance will form part of Meeting for Sufferings’ report to Yearly Meeting from 2024.

A future where Quakers work collaboratively

We heard about the role yearly meeting staff have taken in convening Civil Society Voices, a significant forum for debating issues affecting charities and social enterprises.

Trustees have kept us informed about the relationship between Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke, a separate Quaker charity, and it has been good to hear of the synergies between these two Quaker bodies and the funding support BYM is able to give to Woodbrooke Education.

A future where Quakers are well known and widely understood

Both Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) and Quaker World

Relations Committee (QWRC) now report formally to Meeting for Sufferings rather than the trustees, and we were pleased to receive their reports. Both these committees remind us that we are only one of many faith groups and a small part of the world family of Friends and that engagement with these wider contexts enriches us considerably.

We received the framework for Speaking Out, the policy underlying the activity of staff in presenting Quaker views to the wider society in which we live.

It has been another interesting year for Meeting for Sufferings, one in which most of our meetings

have been blended between online participants and those able to attend a physical venue, which has brought both challenges and opportunities and our experimentation continues as we seek to develop new ways of working that assist our process. We look forward, however, to the prospect of a primarily residential meeting in October 2023.

E: Quaker initialisms

This list is not exhaustive, but we hope it helps.

AM	Area Meeting
BYM	Britain Yearly Meeting
BYMT	Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees
CNC	Central Nominations Committee
FWCC	Friends World Committee for Consultation
LM	Local Meeting
MfS	Meeting for Sufferings
QARN	Quaker Action on Refugees Network
QCA	Quaker Church Affairs
QCCIR	Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations
QCEA	Quaker Council for European Affairs
Qf&p	Quaker faith & practice
QGSDC	Quaker Gender & Sexual Diversity Community
QHT	Quaker Housing Trust
QiB	Quakers in Britain
QL	Quaker Life
QLCC	Quaker Life Central Committee
QLRC	Quaker Life Representative Council
QPSW	Quaker Peace & Social Witness
QPSWCC	Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee
QSA	Quaker Social Action
QSC	Quaker Stewardship Committee
QUNO	Quaker United Nations Office
QWRC	Quaker World Relations Committee
YCF	Youth, Children & Families
YM	Yearly Meeting
YMAC	Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee
YMArrC	Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee

YMG	Yearly Meeting Gathering
YMNG	Yearly Meeting Nominating Group

Quakers share a way of life, not a set of beliefs. Quaker unity is based on shared understanding and a shared practice of silent worship – a communal stillness.

Quakers seek to experience God directly – internally, in relationships with others, and with the world. Local meetings for worship are open to all who wish to attend.

Quakers try to live with honesty and integrity. This means speaking truth to all, including people in positions of power. The Quaker commitment to peace arises from the conviction that love is at the heart of existence and that all human beings are unique and equal.

This leads Quakers to put faith into action by working locally and globally to change the systems that cause injustice and violent conflict.

Accessible versions of this document are available. Please contact the publications manager at publications@quaker.org.uk or call 020 7663 1162.

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