



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

Book of Discipline Revision Committee

Book of Discipline Revision Committee: Our Principles - Revised

1. Content

Spiritual underpinnings

- All core content should have a clear link to Quaker spiritual experience.
- Content should make clear why we do what we do, especially the spiritual basis of our processes and structures.
- Content should be underpinned by a narrative reflecting this spiritually-based Quaker way and this will guide our choice of which anthology material to use and where.

Reflecting the diversity of our community

- We want to hold all things with love and respect especially in points of difference.
- The text may express multiple points of view, but we should not shrink from expressing any point of view at all.
- Use of the anthology model embodies the value we give to community, and models this.
- We want to introduce a diversity of experience, which reflects the experience of people who have directly lived with (topic/issue).

Language, Tone and the Voice of the Book as a whole

- 'Because' should be a key word for us and we shouldn't assume any knowledge.
- Recognise and be aware of unwritten assumptions and think about what needs to be articulated in order to be fully understood.
- We need to be clear about the voice we want to use.
- We acknowledge the tension between clear and poetic language and want to use both appropriately.

- Language should be plain and intelligible, and any jargon should be explained in context.
- The tone should be peer-to-peer, in it together: not from on high but being honest about difficulties.

What to include (and where)

- The book should tell the story of the Quaker journey so far.
- “Church government” and “anthology material” should not be seen as completely separate types of text: rich spiritual experience infuses both. We will decide later where and how these elements should appear, how they will relate.
- The way core material refers to structures should allow for flexibility and potential for change.
- Core states principles (the why, including the spiritual basis); supplementary gives details (the how).
- The book should provide guidance in applying Quaker practices of discernment; it should not attempt to be an encyclopedia of Quaker views on all topics.
- Not everything has to be in the book: there are and will be other sources.
- When using quotations we should be aware of their source, and not use them in ways that distort or obscure their original context.

General Principles

- We want to be inclusive, and should take care not to exclude unintentionally.
- Accessibility is a priority for both content and format.
- Not everything is linear and we shouldn't force it to be. We can be creative with different formats.
- Our job is not to set Yearly Meeting theology on, for example, Christian and non-Christian beliefs, but to describe the range.
- The authoritative basis of the text, as approved and adopted by Yearly Meeting, should be made clear.

2. Process

Process for our committee

- Hold all things with love and respect, especially in points of difference.
- We must be tender with each other as we move forward with this work.
- Our process should reflect the practice we are trying to express.
- We want to be inclusive, and should take care not to exclude unintentionally.
- It is ok not to know or to be unable to complete a task, or to adapt it to your way of working.
- Accessibility is a priority.

Process for developing the content

- We don't want to start from the constraints of the current chapters: themes will emerge.
- We don't create answers ourselves: if the current position is unclear, we should seek advice from Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings.
- We need to take everyone with us, for example through a grounded introduction of formats, access routes etc.
- We want the revision process to be part of a process of dialogue that will improve the life of the Yearly Meeting.
- Our process should be inclusive and accessible.