

Governance Gold

Complete set of documents



What is Governance Gold

Governance Gold is a series of guidance documents that give brief details of changes to practice or other church governance matters of relevance to clerks of local and area meetings.

It has previously been available on the Quaker website as series of single documents. This document has the complete set in one place and can be printed as needed.

Contents

- Number 1 December 2014 – Reporting changes of appointment
- Number 2 February 2015 – Membership transfer and acceptance certificates
- Number 3 March 2015 – Attenders at Yearly Meeting
- Number 4 July 2015 – Prison and court register. Replaced by Governance Gold 10
- Number 5 August 2015 – Quaker records
- Number 6 October 2015 – Chapter 16, Qf&p: Quaker marriage procedure
- Number 7 March 2017 – Qf&p changes
- Number 8 June 2017 – Reporting Deaths
- Number 9 November 2017 – Local meetings and worship groups
- Number 10 November 2019 - Prison and court register update
- Number 11 October 2022 – Length of testimonies



Britain Yearly Meeting
of the Religious
Society of Friends

Governance Gold

Dear Friends,

We are beginning a new initiative to assist clerks in keeping up to date with governance matters set out in *Quaker faith and practice*.

Our 'red book' gives us full information about the how and why of Quaker practice. There is a great deal of information to digest and there are changes from time to time. We hope by highlighting particular actions or issues to support you in following our agreed process.

Governance Gold will come with the clerks' monthly mailing and give brief details of changes to practice or other governance matters of relevance to clerks of local and area meetings. We hope you will find these build into a useful reference resource over time.

Overleaf you will find a further explanation as to the content you can expect to find in a *Governance Gold* update and the first one is also enclosed.

In Friendship,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Parker', written in a cursive style.

Paul Parker
Recording Clerk

Governance Gold



For the attention of: AM & LM clerks

Who is this for?

All *Governance Gold* papers will be sent to local meeting & area meeting clerks. It may be that some actions requested are specific only to either local meeting or area meeting clerks. This will be made clear in the text.

What to do with it?

Please make yourself familiar with the content and take any actions required in your role as LM or AM clerk.

We suggest that you keep these sheets in either paper or electronic format so that they build up into a reference resource. When you hand on the role of clerk to another Friend please pass on these papers as part of your handover.

How will I know it is up to date?

We will let you know if there are any further updates on the topic. If information becomes out of date we will provide a further *Governance Gold* paper to clarify the situation and say which previous paper should be discarded.

What are 'Gold papers'?

Britain Yearly Meeting committees refer to policy papers as 'Gold papers'. These are the key reference minutes and papers which will need to be referred to on an ongoing basis and which are often printed by departments on gold paper. This makes them easier to distinguish from other minutes and papers when they are needed.

We are producing *Governance Gold* in the same way so that these gold coloured sheets will be distinct within the clerks' monthly mailing.

Any further questions about *Governance Gold*?

Please contact Michael S Booth, Support for Meetings Officer at Friends House:
020 7663 1023, michaelsb@quaker.org.uk

Governance Gold



No. 1: December 2014 Reporting changes of appointment

For the attention of: AM & LM clerks

Governance update from the Recording Clerk's Office

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

Action requested

Please remember to report changes of appointment of clerks, treasurers, clerk to trustees and registering officers to Britain Yearly Meeting staff in Friends House.

Why

Keeping Friends House staff updated with the names and addresses of your meeting's appointments means that we will be in contact with the right person and the previous post-holder will not receive correspondence that they will need to forward.

How

Please send details of changes of appointments (remembering to include the dates of service) to updates@quaker.org.uk or by post to: Updates, Freepost QUAKERS (no stamp required).

If you are in regular contact with other staff members and let them know of an appointment update, then please ask them to forward the information to the updates@ email address.

Quaker faith & practice:

End of §4.04 (area meetings)

The Recording Clerk should be kept informed also of the names and addresses of clerks, clerks to trustees, treasurers and registering officers.

End of §4.35 (local meetings)

The meeting must at least appoint a clerk or convener and also a treasurer if it has any financial activities, or alternatively, Friends to share these responsibilities. The Recording Clerk should be informed of the names and addresses of the current holders of these offices in all local meetings.

Governance Gold

No. 2: February 2015

Membership transfer and acceptance certificates

For the attention of area meeting membership clerks



Governance update from the Recording Clerk's Office

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

Action requested

Please start using these new versions of transfer and acceptance of membership certificates. Samples are given overleaf and they can be downloaded from www.quaker.org.uk/membership. It is fine to continue to use any of the existing print versions you have. We have a small supply which we will continue to distribute until exhausted as the new process can be adopted while still using the old forms.

Why

A Friend brought to our attention that the wording on the forms and the wording in *Qf&p* 11.24 are not in total agreement. We can see no reason why a transfer out request needs to be delayed until the next area meeting, so the new forms should speed up any transfer of membership and simplify the process. An area meeting should continue to agree to any transfers in and also minute the receipt of certificates of acceptance that are received from other area meetings.

Quaker faith & practice:

Sections 11.23–11.26

Part of paragraph 1 of 11.24: “On receiving such a request from its member, their current meeting should issue a certificate of transfer...”

Part of paragraph 3 of 11.24: “The membership is not transferred until the certificate of transfer is accepted by the receiving area meeting and a confirmation of that acceptance has been received by the issuing area meeting.”

Sample certificates

Certificate for Transfer of Membership



To the clerk or assistant clerk (membership) of Area Meeting

The following member(s) of our Area Meeting:

.....
.....

has/have moved to

.....
.....

It is desired that membership should be transferred to your Area Meeting.

Signed on behalf of Area Meeting

Signature of clerk / assistant clerk (membership) Date signed

Address to which Certificate of Acceptance is to be sent:

.....

..... Postcode

Qfp §11.24 does not require an Area Meeting to authorise the issue of a certificate for Transfer of Membership.

2015 version

Certificate of Acceptance of transfer of membership



To the clerk or assistant clerk (membership) ofArea Meeting

Your certificate for transfer of membership on behalf of:

.....
.....

has been accepted by our Area Meeting by minute number

Signed by direction of Area Meeting held 20.....

Signature of clerk / assistant clerk (membership). Date signed

Notes: The person completing this certificate is to send

- (a) a copy to the area meeting from which the certificate for transfer of membership was received;
- (b) a copy to the overseers of the local meeting to which the transferred member(s) will be attached;
- (c) a copy of the certificate for transfer of membership to updates@quaker.org.uk

or by post to Freepost QUAKERS

A copy is to be retained by this Area Meeting as a permanent record.

NB Please let the Friend(s) concerned know that a copy will be passed to Friends House to update the BYM membership database.

2015 version

Governance Gold

No. 3: March 2015

Attendees at Yearly Meeting



For the attention of area and local meeting clerks

Governance update from the Recording Clerk's Office

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Action requested

Attending Yearly Meeting is the highlight of the Quaker year for many Friends. However, please remember that adult attendees need formal permission to attend Yearly Meeting. It will be helpful for members of a meeting to actively support any attendees who come to Yearly Meeting during the weekend. A letter from an elder, or a meeting clerk if there are no elders, should be sent to RCO at Friends House or emailed to ym@quaker.org.uk giving the name, address and meeting of the attendee. Different arrangements apply in the case of Yearly Meeting Gatherings.

Why

Quaker faith & practice states that permission for the attendance of non-members at one or more sessions may be given at the discretion of the clerk. Attendees often find it helpful to experience Yearly Meeting in session as part of their journey with Friends.

Quaker faith & practice:

6.02 We did conclude among ourselves to settle a meeting, to see one another's faces, and open our hearts one to another in the Truth of God once a year, as formerly it used to be.

6.11 (part) *Mary Hughes (1860–1941) comes with heart and mind prepared:* Anyone who lived with her during April and May knew how intensely Friends' Yearly Meeting was on her mind. It was as important to her as 'going up to Jerusalem'.

6.15 Permission for the attendance of non-members at one or more sessions may be given at the discretion of the clerk, if satisfied that their presence is likely to be of service to the Society. Such permission should be sought well in advance of Yearly Meeting and should be supported by one or more elders to whom the applicant is well known. Last-minute requests should not be made. Elders supporting applications should ensure that non-members receive suitable support and guidance to enable them to be of service and to benefit from attendance at Yearly Meeting. If called to speak in a Yearly Meeting session, non-members should be sensitive to the fact that they are not in membership and should make this known.

Governance Gold

No 5: August 2015
Quaker records



For the attention of AM and LM Clerks and also Clerks of AM Trustees

Governance update from the Recording Clerk's Office

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

Action requested

Please remember our responsibilities to keep the records of our Quaker Meetings safe.

Why

The Religious Society of Friends has throughout its history sought to be meticulous in the keeping of records.

The National Archives defines a record as 'recorded information regardless of media or format, created and received in the course of individual or organisational activity which provides reliable evidence of policy, actions and decisions'.

Records are kept to fulfil administrative, business, financial, accounting and legal obligations. They provide evidence of decisions, activities, relationships, rights and obligations, and inform current and future work. Some records are of historical value and should be retained permanently as archives. See www.quaker.org.uk/records-custodians for further information.

Please note: *Qf&p* 4.40 (given below) includes a catch-all statement as section d. Records kept under this section should include documents and notes on safeguarding matters.

Quaker faith & practice

"It is advised that the following be preserved in Friends' ownership:

- a. minute books of yearly, general, area and local meetings;
- b. minute books of elders and overseers and of standing committees of meetings for church affairs;
- c. official registers of members (11.37), printed lists of members and attenders (11.39), marriage registers (16.55), registers of burials (17.12), burial ground plans (14.31), registers of properties and trusts (15.18);
- d. such other documents as it is reasonable to expect may be needed for future reference.

It is an essential part of the stewardship of the meeting's assets that the custodian should maintain a full catalogue of records and where they are located, whether kept in meeting house safes or strongrooms or elsewhere. It is advised that area meetings should check the accuracy and completeness of their catalogues at least triennially." *Qf&p* 4.40

Governance Gold

No 6: October 2015

Chapter 16, *Quaker faith & practice*

Quaker marriage procedure



For the attention of AM and LM Clerks and also registering officers.

Governance update from the Recording Clerk's Office

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News

In this mailing is the version of Chapter 16 that was agreed by Yearly Meeting in May 2015. It is also available online at <http://qfp.quaker.org.uk>.

If you wish to contact the Quaker Centre Bookshop for paper copies please telephone 020 7663 1030 or email quakercentre@quaker.org.uk.

Action requested

Please ensure that this version of chapter 16 is used and consulted for all aspects of our Quaker marriage procedure, including the role of the registering officer.

Why

Our book of discipline, *Quaker faith & practice*, is agreed and accepted by our Yearly Meeting. It is important that meetings use the current version when changes have been agreed on matters of governance.

Yearly Meeting 2015, minute 32 (final sentence)

“We rejoice in the changes contained in the whole of the revised chapter and recognise the hard work over the last five years which has brought this about.”

Governance Gold

No 7: March 2017

Changes to *Quaker faith & practice*



For the attention of AM and LM clerks

Governance update from the Recording Clerk's Office

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

News

Yearly Meeting 2016 agreed some changes to *Quaker faith & practice*.

Our website <http://qfp.quaker.org.uk> has now been updated with these changes.

Compared to the printed fifth edition, first published in 2013, changes have been made to the following sections:

3.24i, 3.27, 3.28, 4.10t, 4.40, 6.18, 6.19, 8.09, 8.10, 8.14, 8.16, 9.05, 9.06, 9.13, 9.14, 10.21, 13.45-13.58, 14.23, 14.29, 14.45 and the whole of chapter 16.

Sections that have changed numbers are

3.28-3.30 now 3.29-3.31

and 8.16-8.25 now 8.17-8.26

The current version of Chapter 16 is also available as a separate booklet with each new printed copy of *Quaker faith & practice*. This booklet is also available free of charge from the Quaker Centre Bookshop: tel 020 7663 1030 or email quakercentre@quaker.org.uk.

Action requested

Please ensure that the fifth edition of *Quaker faith & practice* is used and use the newer text from the website when appropriate.

Why

Our book of discipline, *Quaker faith & practice*, is agreed and accepted by our Yearly Meeting. It is important that meetings use the current version when changes have been agreed on matters of governance.

Quaker faith & practice (final words of the introduction)

“...we must humbly acknowledge that our vision of the truth will, again and again, be amended.

In the Religious Society of Friends we commit ourselves not to words but to a way.”

Governance Gold

No 8: June 2017

Reporting deaths of Friends



For the attention of AM and LM clerks

Governance update from the Recording Clerk's Office

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Action requested

Please remember to let us know when a Friend or active attender dies, or for health reasons steps back from active participation in the life of their meeting.

Why

Two major reasons are:

- Unwanted correspondence is a real cause of annoyance, we don't wish to add to it. Some Friends will reach a stage in their life when they need to dramatically reduce the correspondence they receive.
- We know that it causes real distress when a letter or email is sent to someone who has died. Although staff members check death notices in *the Friend*, and often receive notifications from families, it is very helpful if meetings can let us know when someone has died. Being told twice is better than not being told at all.

How

You can send an email to updates@quaker.org.uk or write to the Updates team, C&S, Friends House, Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ or telephone 020 7663 1006.

Quaker faith & practice 10.30 (part)

"If all those who belong to our meeting are lovingly cared for, the guidance of the spirit will be a reality. The celebration and commemoration of life's great events draw us together as we share the occasion and rejoice or mourn with one another."

Governance Gold

No 9: November 2017

Local meetings and worship groups



For the attention of AM and LM clerks

Governance update from the Recording Clerk's Office

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

Local meetings – meetings for worship

Some meetings have enquired about being regarded as a “worshipping group” rather than a local meeting. They assume that this would mean having fewer responsibilities.

Local meetings are the only category of meeting in our Yearly Meeting. Any regular public meeting for worship has to be an activity of a local meeting. It can either be a local meeting in its own right, or part of another local meeting. A local meeting, as a community of Quakers, can hold as many regular meetings for worship as it chooses. They may be held at different times, and in a variety of places.

When a public meeting for worship is held, there is potential liability (both spiritual and legal). The meeting needs to be under the care, eldership and stewardship of the AM, its overseers, elders and trustees. This is done by being, or being part of, a local meeting.

Local meetings need to consider the responsibilities noted in *Quaker faith & practice* 4.33. The important word here is “consider”. There is a great degree of flexibility in how these responsibilities are fulfilled, and creative approaches can be used. Some responsibilities may be fulfilled through the work of the area meeting. An agreement can be reached with the area meeting through a memorandum of understanding, see 4.34.

For further guidance, or if you have any questions, contact:

Michael Booth, Church Government Adviser, michaelsb@quaker.org.uk, 020 7663 1023

Quaker faith & practice 4.31

“The area meeting may contain a variety of meetings for worship differing in size and practice. Any group of Friends may meet to worship at any time. The area meeting should encourage worshipping groups, as they evolve into regular meetings for worship, to adopt practical arrangements suited to their circumstances. The existence of a new local meeting or the laying down of an existing local meeting should be formally recognised by the area meeting and recorded by minute, which should be sent to the Recording Clerk.”

Quaker faith & practice 4.34 (part)

“Each local meeting should agree with its area meeting the duties and responsibilities which the local meeting undertakes on behalf of the area meeting. This agreement should be formally recorded as part of a memorandum of understanding.”

Governance Gold

No 10: November 2019

Prison and court register – update

(replaces Governance Gold 4)



For the attention of AM and LM clerks

Governance update from the Recording Clerk's Office

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

Prison and court register

Meeting for Sufferings maintains a prison and court register. This was affirmed by minute MfS/2019/10/09.

The register consists of the names of Friends who have been before the courts for matters of conscience, i.e. Friends who come into conflict with the law when acting under concern and bearing witness to the truth as revealed to them.

The purposes of recording an entry in the register are:

1. to enter the details of the matter into the permanent records of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), acknowledging Friends' witness and their willingness to face its consequences,
2. to remind ourselves that being a Quaker does not come without cost,
3. to record the Society's prayerful upholding of Friends who are suffering for their faith, and
4. to serve as a record of the actions of the State in restricting our freedom to worship and witness.

Inclusion of information in the prison and court register does not imply that Meeting for Sufferings itself has tested the Friend's concern and necessarily agrees with or condones their action.

The local and area meeting may prayerfully help such a Friend in their own discernment as they seek to follow their Spiritual Guide and may help in holding Meetings for clearness with the Friend and continually uphold them as necessary.

Friends and meetings are reminded of the guidance that may be found in *Qf&p* chapter 13 in understanding and discerning a concern (13.02-13.07) and then testing that concern (13.08–13.13). Information about Meetings for clearness can be found in *Qf&p* 12.22–12.24 and at www.quaker.org.uk/documents/clearness-meeting-guidance-2012

Please remember that the prison and court register is a public document. Area meetings should take care therefore also to establish the facts, and to assure themselves that the Friend consents to this information being recorded and placed in the public domain, before forwarding details to Meeting for Sufferings.

How to submit entries

Area meetings (or other bodies) should send the following details to the clerk of Meeting for Sufferings:

- Name and meeting
- Date and details of the action that led to the charge, and any resultant conviction.

It is not necessary for an area meeting to record this in their minutes.

Send to the secretary of Meeting for Sufferings:

sufferings@quaker.org.uk or

c/o Juliet Prager, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.

Quaker faith & practice

“Respect the laws of the state but let your first loyalty be to God’s purposes. If you feel impelled by strong conviction to break the law, search your conscience deeply. Ask your meeting for prayerful support which will give you strength as a right way becomes clear.”

Advices & queries 35

“In 1997 Meeting for Sufferings revived the practice of maintaining a register of Friends before the courts or imprisoned for matters of conscience.” *Qf&p 7.01 (part)*

A function of Meeting for Sufferings is “to make appropriate entries in the prison and court register”. *Qf&p 7.02.k*

Governance Gold

For the attention of Area Meeting Clerks

No. 11: October 2022



Update about Church Government

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

Testimonies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Michael S Booth, Church Government Adviser