



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

Registered with the Charity Commission (charity no. 1127633)

Governing Document

This Governing Document was most recently amended on 2 May 2026 by minute 23 of Britain Yearly Meeting.

Definitions

- a. The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain refers to the church in England, Scotland, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, including all its local meetings for worship and its constituent meetings for church affairs as well as all their work [referred to below as the Society].
- b. Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) [Britain Yearly Meeting] refers to the centrally held and managed policy, property, employment and work of the charity constituted by this document.
- c. Yearly Meeting in session [Yearly Meeting] refers to the assembly, held at least once a year, in accordance with this Governing Document, that is open to all members of the Society.
- d. Constituent Meetings for Church Affairs refers to the geographical groupings of smaller local groups (known as Local Meetings), which are recognised by Britain Yearly Meeting as Constituent Meetings for Church Affairs for the Society, and which appear on the list of Constituent Meetings for Church Affairs maintained by the Recording Clerk of the Society. Most Constituent Meetings for Church Affairs are known as Area Meetings. Constituent Meetings for Church Affairs have power to confer membership of the Society. A Constituent Meeting for Church Affairs may be a charity in its own right, and may be registered as such with the Charity Commission, or may be part of a larger Quaker charity operating across a wider area. These charities are independent of Britain Yearly Meeting but are governed in accordance with similar principles.
- e. The Book of Discipline is the written record of the faith and practice of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain. The current edition is *Quaker faith & practice*.
- f. In this Governing Document:
 - i. The term “Member” refers to someone who has been accepted into

- membership by a Constituent Meeting for Church Affairs.
- ii. The term “Attender” refers to someone who attends Quaker meetings regularly or otherwise has a close connection to the Society but is not a Member.
 - iii. The term “Friend” is used to include both Members and Attenders (Friends are also known as Quakers).

1. Governing Document

Britain Yearly Meeting and its property shall be administered and managed in accordance with the provisions in this Governing Document. Further guidance can be found in the Book of Discipline.

2. Name

The name of the charitable body is Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), which also uses the working name “Quakers in Britain”.

3. Object

The object of Britain Yearly Meeting is the furtherance of the general religious and charitable purposes of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain and beyond.

4. Application of Income and Property

Within Britain Yearly Meeting money and property are used to further the object by work such as:

- a. Sustaining our church and faith: organising and maintaining the whole of the Society as responsive to the leadings of the Holy Spirit; this entails calling, briefing and running decision-making meetings with all the facilities necessary for them to work efficiently and effectively, and also conducting relations with other churches and faiths and ecumenical bodies;
- b. Supporting meetings: supporting Friends in their local organisation by providing services and advice relevant to the current needs of the Quaker community: for example such work may relate to children, elderly people, those getting married, those looking after meeting houses, and those raising funds;
- c. Promoting Quakerism: raising awareness and developing understanding about the basic tenets of Quaker faith and practice, such as spirituality, peace and human rights, within and without the Society;
- d. Witness through action: putting Quaker thinking into practice in relation to the problems and needs of people at home and abroad: for example, through training, conferences, work with those in positions of power, and social and development projects.

5. Amendments

Amendments to this Governing Document must be agreed by Yearly Meeting in session and recorded by minute of that meeting.

6. The conduct of business meetings

Meetings for church affairs, in which the Society conducts its business, are meetings for worship based on silence, carrying the expectation that God's guidance can be discerned if members are truly listening together and to each other. The unity that is sought depends on the willingness of all to seek the truth in each other's utterances. There is no voting in the meetings, because the Society believes that this would emphasise the divisions between differing views and inhibit the process of seeking to know the right way forward, the will of God as expressed in the sense of the meeting. Further guidance on the conduct of business meetings and the Quaker business method is set out in the Book of Discipline.

The clerk of the meeting bears the final responsibility for preparing the business, conducting the meeting and drafting the minutes of the meeting. Minutes are drafted by the clerk during the course of the meeting, but the final decision about whether the minute represents the sense of the meeting is the responsibility of the meeting itself, not of the clerk.

7. Membership

The membership of the Society consists of all those who are recorded as members by any of the Constituent Meetings for Church Affairs in England, Scotland, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

8. Meetings for Church Affairs

Yearly Meeting in session is the final constitutional authority of the Society. It meets in session at least once each calendar year.

Yearly Meeting sessions may be held in a suitable venue and/or by electronic means. It is intended that sessions will generally be arranged in such a way as to facilitate attendance both at the venue and by electronic means.

All Members have the right to attend Yearly Meeting and to take part in its deliberations and decisions. Attenders may attend at the discretion of the clerk of Yearly Meeting.

9. Notice of meetings

The dates, times and places at which Yearly Meeting sessions are to be held shall be determined by the Yearly Meeting in session on the recommendation of its Agenda Planning Committee. Notice of these details (including the platform for attendance by electronic means) shall be given by publishing them on the official Yearly Meeting website.

At least one Yearly Meeting session shall take place in each calendar year, and it is intended that there will normally be four Yearly Meeting sessions per year.

It is intended that notice will be given at least a year in advance, but at least three months' notice must be given of any Yearly Meeting session other than an additional Yearly Meeting session as described below.

Attendance by electronic means will include any method of remote attendance approved by Yearly Meeting which allows all those attending the meeting to communicate contemporaneously with each other.

Exceptionally, an additional Yearly Meeting session may be called by either the trustees or the Agenda Planning Committee on the recommendation of a combination of any three of the clerks or assistant clerks of the following: Yearly Meeting, the Agenda Planning Committee and the trustees. Notice of an additional Yearly Meeting session shall be published via the official Yearly Meeting website and shall include the information required for Yearly Meeting sessions set out in the first paragraph of this section. The minimum notice period for an additional Yearly Meeting session shall be two weeks.

In exceptional circumstances any three of the clerks or assistant clerks of the following: Yearly Meeting, the Agenda Planning Committee and the trustees may change the venue and means of attendance at a Yearly Meeting session (including cancelling the venue and making the meeting accessible only by electronic means) or cancel or postpone the date of a Yearly Meeting session by giving notice of the change via the official Yearly Meeting website. Notice of the change shall be given as soon as possible, but may be given up until the time of the relevant Yearly Meeting session. Where a Yearly Meeting session is postponed then the postponed session must be held no later than three months after the originally scheduled date.

10. Clerks

The Yearly Meeting in session shall appoint a clerk and an assistant clerk on the nomination of Central Nominations Committee.

The terms of service of the clerk and assistant clerk to Yearly Meeting are set out in the terms of reference of the Agenda Planning Committee.

In the event that a nomination for clerk is not approved then the appointment may be deferred for further discernment by Central Nominations Committee or an alternative appointment may be made by that Yearly Meeting in session (if it determines that an appointment is urgently required).

11. Trustees

A body of 10 to 14 Friends shall be appointed by Yearly Meeting in session to act as trustees. Yearly Meeting shall appoint a clerk to the trustees and shall approve the trustees' terms of reference.

Trustees shall generally be appointed to serve for a term of three years, with reappointment possible for a further three years. Ordinarily the maximum term of service will be six years. If a trustee is initially appointed to start their service in the middle of a year, or if they are appointed to serve as the clerk to trustees then they may serve a maximum total term of seven continuous years as a trustee.

Urgent Appointments

Where there is an urgent need to appoint an additional trustee between sessions of Yearly Meeting then the clerk and assistant clerk of Yearly Meeting acting jointly may make such an appointment on the recommendation of Central Nominations Committee. Any appointment made in this way must be taken to the next session of Yearly Meeting for consideration and, if appropriate, confirmation. If the appointment is not confirmed, the trustee will cease to act at the session of Yearly Meeting at which the decision not to confirm the appointment is made.

12. Eligibility, disqualification and removal of trustees

Only a Member is eligible to be appointed as a trustee. An appointed trustee may hold office unless they

- a. notify to the recording clerk of the Society a wish to be released from service as a trustee;
- b. cease to be a member of the Society;
- c. fail to attend two trustee meetings in a row without prior reasonable notice, as determined by the clerk of trustees;
- d. are determined by the Yearly Meeting to no longer be a fit or suitable person to carry out the duties of a trustee;
- e. become physically or mentally incapable of managing their own affairs;
- f. come to the end of their term of service.

The trustees may recommend the removal of a trustee under the terms of (c), (d) or (e) above. Any such recommendation shall be minuted by the trustees and shall be reported to the next session of Yearly Meeting. A trustee shall only cease to hold office under (c), (d) or (e) above if the Yearly Meeting in session decides that they should cease to hold office. On receipt of a trustee minute recommending the removal of a trustee under (d) above then Yearly Meeting will seek that trustee's views on the matter in such manner as the Yearly Meeting thinks fit, for example by asking Central Nominations Committee to arrange this. Yearly Meeting shall take into account any views expressed by the trustee before reaching its decision. The decision of Yearly Meeting shall be final and binding.

Friends who are legally ineligible to act or who are disqualified from acting as trustees shall not be able so to act nor to continue so to act.

Release or removal of a trustee from office under (a) to (e) above shall be recorded by minute of Yearly Meeting.

13. Meetings of the trustees

The trustees shall meet at least twice a year and otherwise as required, using Quaker business method as described in the Book of Discipline, and recording their decisions by minute. Trustees may agree to hold meetings by video conference.

An effective working strength of the trustee body, normally represented by at least half of the trustees for the time being, should be present for decisions to be made in right ordering.

Staff may attend trustee meetings in order to provide the trustees with information about their work, and so that they can interpret and carry out trustee decisions more

effectively. Staff are not trustees and are not responsible for the decisions made by the trustee meeting. The trustees shall have the power to exclude staff from parts of their meetings, as appropriate.

14. The funds and property of Britain Yearly Meeting

The trustees are guardians of the assets of Britain Yearly Meeting with responsibility for ensuring that they are properly used for the religious and charitable purposes for which they were given in accordance with this Governing Document. They have overall responsibility for the financial probity of the conduct of the business of Britain Yearly Meeting and for ensuring that it has appropriate systems of control, financial and otherwise, which will ensure high standards of governance and compliance with the legal and regulatory requirements.

The trustees shall have the following powers, which they should always exercise in accordance with any relevant guidance contained in the Book of Discipline:

- a. To raise funds from individual contributors and meetings; from legacy income; from grants and other sources outside Britain Yearly Meeting; from dividends and interest from investments; from rents from investment properties; and from the sale of goods or services provided in furtherance of Britain Yearly Meeting's objects;
- b. To buy, lease or acquire property, and to dispose of it;
- c. To borrow money;
- d. To set aside income as a reserve;
- e. To make investments in accordance with legal constraints and the ethical testimonies of the Society;
- f. To co-operate with other charities, or to enter into partnerships;
- g. To establish or support trusts or institutions or trading companies formed for charitable purposes within Britain Yearly Meeting's charitable object;
- h. To employ staff;
- i. To pay pensions;
- j. To obtain and pay for goods and services;
- k. To reimburse the reasonable expenses of Friends, including the trustees, incurred when acting on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting;
- l. To open and operate bank accounts;
- m. To effect insurance;
- n. To appoint an independent auditor of Britain Yearly Meeting's accounts;
- o. To insure themselves against the costs of a successful defence to a criminal prosecution brought against them as charity trustees or against personal liability incurred in respect of any act or omission which is or is alleged to be in breach of trust or breach of duty;
- p. To delegate their powers or functions as set out in Clause 16 below;
- q. To establish committees or working groups for carrying out agreed programmes of work;

- r. To do all other such lawful things as are necessary for the efficient conduct of the charity's administration and the management of its property and affairs.

15. Trustees not to be personally interested

Subject to the provisions of the second paragraph of this clause, and subject to sub-clause 14(o), no trustee shall acquire any interest in property belonging to Britain Yearly Meeting (otherwise than as a trustee) or receive remuneration or be materially interested (otherwise than as a trustee) in any contract entered into by the trustees.

Any trustee for the time being who possesses specialist skills or knowledge may charge and be paid reasonable fees for business done by them or their firm when instructed by the other trustees to act on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting, provided that at no time shall a majority of the trustees benefit under this provision and that a trustee shall withdraw from any meeting at which their own instruction or remuneration, or that of their firm, is under discussion.

16. Power of trustees to delegate

The trustees may delegate any of their powers or functions to a committee including two or more trustees, but the terms of any such delegation must be recorded by minute. The trustees may impose conditions when delegating, including the conditions that:

- a. the relevant powers are to be exercised exclusively by the committee to which they are delegated;
- b. no expenditure may be incurred except in accordance with a budget previously agreed with the trustees.

The trustees may delegate decision-making to staff.

The trustees may revoke or alter a delegation.

All acts and proceedings of any committee with delegated trustee powers or functions must be fully and promptly reported to the trustees.

17. Repairs and insurance

All the buildings of Britain Yearly Meeting shall be kept in repair and buildings and contents shall be adequately insured. The trustees shall also insure suitably in respect of all appropriate liability insurances, including employer's, occupier's and public liability.

18. Annual Report and Accounts

The trustees' report and accounts shall be prepared on an annual basis and approved by the trustees and shall be presented to Yearly Meeting in session for consideration and acceptance. The accounts shall form part of the *Proceedings* of Yearly Meeting. They shall be submitted to the Charity Commission upon completion.

19. Registered particulars

Britain Yearly Meeting shall be registered as a charity with the Charity Commission for England and Wales which shall be notified of any changes to this Governing Document.

Signed:

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Clerk of Yearly Meeting

This Governing Document was adopted on the twenty ninth day of May 2006 by Minute 28 of Britain Yearly Meeting and was amended as follows:

- 2 December 2006 by Minute 4 of Meeting for Sufferings,
- 5 July 2008 by minute S/08/07/13 of Meeting for Sufferings
- 7 August 2014 by minute 34 of Britain Yearly Meeting
- 6 August 2021 by minute 28 of Britain Yearly Meeting
- 2 May 2026 by minute 23 of Britain Yearly Meeting