



Press pack for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017

“Living out our faith in the world: working with others to make a difference”

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

University of Warwick, Coventry
Saturday 29 July to Saturday 5 August 2017

#YMG2017
@ymevent_britain
www.quaker.org.uk/ym
www.facebook.com.bymevent

- **For interviews and photographs** during Yearly Meeting contact Anne van Staveren on 07958 009703 annev@quaker.org.uk
- **Accredited Journalists are welcome** to attend the business sessions of Yearly Meeting. Requests to film, photograph and record may be considered.
- **To seek accreditation** please email annev@quaker.org.uk
- **A press bench** will be available in the Butterworth Hall.

- **Recordings of key introductions** will be available on www.quaker.org.uk/ym
- **Follow Yearly Meeting on Facebook** <https://www.facebook.com/bymevent>
- **And on Twitter** @britishquakers @ymevent_britain #YM2017
- **And on Instagram**

Documents for Yearly Meeting

[YMG 2017 brochure \(PDF\)](#)

[Spiritual preparation \(PDF\)](#)

[YMG 2017 - Agenda and Notes; Documents in advance part 1](#)

[YMG 2017 - Epistles and Testimonies](#)

[2016 Trustees Annual Report including the financial statement](#)

[BYM Tabular Statement 2016 \(PDF\)](#)

[YMG Events Listing \(PDF\)](#)

Quakers in Britain Media Officer

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Guidance for journalists attending Yearly Meeting (YM)

Accredited journalists may attend Yearly Meeting.

To seek accreditation, email annev@quaker.org.uk

Requests to film, photograph and record may be considered.

Photographers who are commissioned and accredited will be guided to be discrete and not interrupt proceedings. No photographs of children and young people may be taken without permission and none are to be used on social media.

A Quaker business meeting is essentially a meeting for worship, except that it has a prearranged agenda. Spoken contributions are offered as ministry and are wrapped in silence. While anyone speaking during YM business sessions may be named in media reports, ministry is not generally attributed. In certain sensitive situations it may be necessary to ask journalists to maintain the anonymity of individuals speaking during full business sessions or in smaller sessions, if they are sharing personal experiences.

Like other Quaker business meetings, Yearly Meeting sessions are meetings for worship in which business is conducted while seeking God's guidance. Any activity which detracts from worship and discernment, such as live blogging or tweeting, is not considered compatible with our business method. No social media in YM sessions.

Who attends Yearly Meeting in session?

Those in formal membership of one of the constituent area meetings of Britain Yearly Meeting are encouraged to attend. Attenders who are not in membership are usually welcome to attend open business meetings and will need to let the clerk know in advance and may be asked to withdraw for certain agenda items. All journalists must be accredited through the Quaker media officer.

What is Yearly Meeting?

Britain Yearly Meeting in session is the final constitutional authority of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in England, Scotland, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. All members of the yearly meeting have the right to attend and to take part. In session it is the body in which concerns affecting the life and witness of Quakers in Britain may be shared and tested. It seeks to come to know the will of God on various affairs brought before it.

All those present contribute to the meeting, whether through the silence or by the spoken word, and all need to come with heart and mind prepared, ready to wait upon and respond to the leadings of the Spirit.

The Yearly Meeting is served by the clerk, two assistant clerks and the Recording Clerk at the table.

In all our meetings for church affairs we need to listen together to the Holy Spirit. We are not seeking a consensus; we are seeking the will of God. The unity of the meeting

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lies more in the unity of the search than in the decision which is reached. We must not be distressed if our listening involves waiting, perhaps in confusion, until we feel clear what God wants done. (Quaker faith & practice 2.89)

Sometimes a Special Interest Meeting will look at a matter in detail in advance of a session. Using our tested methods of discernment, they can bring guidance to assist the full session in making a decision.

Yearly Meeting sessions are dynamic. Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee will refine the agenda throughout the YM. Changes will either be proposed by Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee or decided by Yearly Meeting in session.

Yearly Meeting Gathering is held every three years.

Guidance for journalists on how Quakers make decisions

A Quaker business meeting is essentially a meeting for worship, except that it has a prearranged agenda. Whether it be a working party, a committee, a local, regional or national meeting, the process is the same: Quakers coming together in silence in order to draw closer to God and each other, and to seek the guidance of the Inward Light.

What's going on in the meeting?

A meeting starts with a period of quiet worship. The clerk then opens the business part of the meeting. As in a secular meeting, someone presents an item, and answers questions of clarification. But rather than debating the matter, the gathering then tries to discern, in an atmosphere of worship, what love requires of us.

Spoken contributions are offered as ministry and are wrapped in silence. No vote is taken, as we are not trying to reach consensus or establish the will of the majority, but to work in harmony with the Spirit. This approach can be very liberating, because it ensures that minority views are not dismissed or suppressed. A minute is drafted by the clerk and presented to the meeting; it is for all those present to agree the record of their deliberations.

What is the role of Quakers in the meeting?

As in any meeting for worship, the primary role is to listen respectfully to others and to 'the promptings of love and truth in your heart'. Each contribution should be heard in silence as Quakers learn what they can, if disagreeing strongly. Come to the meeting with heart and mind prepared – not heart and mind made up.

What is the clerk doing?

Clerks prepare the agenda, do the necessary administration and guide the meeting through the items of business. The clerk has to try and discern the outcome of each item (often called 'the sense of the meeting'), and to prepare a draft minute to lay before the gathering.

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Who can speak, and how often?

Quakers are given this guidance: once an item on the agenda has been introduced to the meeting anyone may speak, but remember, this is a meeting for worship. If you feel led to minister, test your prompting first. In formal meetings it is the practice to stand and wait to be called by the clerk; if another Friend is called or the clerk stands, you should sit down again. There is no need to repeat a point which has already been made, or to speak twice to the same matter unless asked to do so. Try to resist the temptation to be argumentative. The point is not to win an argument but to uphold our community as we work together for a better world.

How are decisions made?

Quakers are given this advice: if you feel the minute doesn't reflect the sense of the meeting, or is badly worded, there will be an opportunity to comment after the draft minute is presented. If you don't agree with the decision reached, try to set aside your disappointment and accept that the decision has nevertheless been reached collectively through the discipline of waiting together in the Light, in a sincere search for love and truth. The right decision is important, but no more so than reaching it by the right process – a process in which you played your full part. Remember that unity is not the same as unanimity. You may need to continue reflecting on the matter and talking it over with other Friends, as Quakers refer to each other. Sometimes, at a subsequent meeting, it becomes clear to the meeting that a new direction is needed.

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About Quakers

- Quakers are known formally as the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, a radical movement, rooted in Christianity, founded in seventeenth-century England. Quakers refer to each other as Friends.
- Around 22,700 people attend 474 Quaker meetings in Britain. Nearly half a million worship in Quaker meetings worldwide. Commitment to peace, equality, sustainability, simplicity and truth, challenges Quakers to seek positive social and legislative change.
- **Quakers are known for** a key role in ending the slave trade, working to end the use of child soldiers, and with others, bringing thousands of mainly Jewish children to safety on the *Kindertransport* away from Nazi-occupied Europe. Quakers won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947 for post-war relief work. Quakers helped to set up charities like Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Oxfam and Campaign Against Arms Trade and Circles of Support and Accountability, a programme to help prevent sex offenders re-offending.
- **Quakers share a way of life rather than a set of beliefs.** Quakers seek to experience God directly, within themselves and in others and the world.
- **Quaker spiritual practice:** the bedrock of the Quaker way is the silent meeting for worship. We seek a communal gathered stillness, where we can be open to inspiration from the Spirit of God. During meetings for worship some may feel moved to speak: all can do this, as all are considered equal. Meetings can be held anywhere, anytime, often on Sundays in Quaker meeting houses.
- **Leadership:** Quakers do not have priests, or a hierarchy, holding that all people can have a direct relationship with God. All Quakers can participate in decision-making processes and to help run the Society.
- The Quaker way has its roots in Christianity and finds inspiration in the Bible and the life and teachings of Jesus. Quakers find meaning and value in the teachings of other faiths and acknowledge that ours is not the only way.
- **Sharing experience:** our focus is on experience rather than written statements of belief and our collective experience is shared in the book *Quaker faith & practice*, an anthology of Quaker insights from the founding of the Religious Society of Friends in the seventeenth century to the present day. It is updated every generation, recognising that understanding of truth moves on.

Quakers Say

- There is something sacred in all people.
- All people are equal before God and each person is a unique and precious child of God.
- True religion leads to respect for the earth and all life upon it. Religion is about the whole of life.
- We meet in silence to discover a deeper sense of God's presence.
- Live adventurously.

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