



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

Elders introduction 2025.

Good evening, Friends. My name is Lee Taylor. I am a member of Luton and Leighton Area Meeting, Milton Keynes Local Meeting. And I am Ruth McCarthy, a member of York Area Meeting, New Earswick Local Meeting. We are the convenors of yearly meeting elders.

Our task as elders is to offer a ministry of prayer, presence, and counsel, both online and in Friends House. That means anchoring our shared discernment in worship and upholding our clerks as we all attend to the Spirit's movement among us. You can recognise us by the purple sashes we wear and by 'YM Elder' before our names online. There are 14 of us this year and I'm going to ask them all to stand so you can see who we all are.

As a team, we hope to provide attentive care for our sessions and meetings for worship, and to prayerfully support all involved in this yearly meeting – which means all of us. There are no observers in Quaker worship and discernment; we are all participants, each called to be faithful to the promptings of the inward Spirit and to listen tenderly as that Spirit speaks to us through spoken ministry and in the silence.

Elders will be available for Friends to talk with briefly after each session or by arrangement, both in Friends House and online.

We meet in worship to seek God's will for ourselves and our community. Attending Yearly Meeting can feel a bit overwhelming. But we don't have to do this on our own: in worship we set aside our own agendas and ideas to wait on help from a Power greater than ourselves. Let's help each other to witness this Life and Power working among us, softening our hearts and renewing our minds. Though the days ahead will be busy, in worship we can set down our burdens and know God's love and peace.

Elders' concern is to support the meeting in listening to the Spirit moving among us. This is sometimes called, or perceived as, 'keeping the discipline': but let's not forget that listening to the Spirit, feeling ourselves gathered and held, is deeply joyful and peaceful. We Quakers can be a serious bunch, but there's much to celebrate as we find ourselves joined together and discerning what we are being called to do. In our local meeting communities we meet with those we know and we are used to worshipping together. In this very large gathering some of us are at home on our own looking at a screen while others are sitting together in this room with many people we don't yet know. But what unites us all is the Spirit which will guide us over the next few days as we wait in worship.

Anyone among us may be led to minister over the coming days. If you are called to speak, then speak as words are given to you, no less and no more. Stay grounded in our expectant waiting. Ask yourself: is this prompting to speak rooted in God's love for Friends present? Are these words for now and for all of us, or are they just for me? Will they leave the meeting with a sense of God's gathering and guiding presence,, or will they scatter the meeting and make it harder for us to listen to the Spirit? Remember that words spoken in faith are not spoken in vain. Our discipline of faithful waiting can enable us to move forward together in a unity that can surprise us all.

Friends, let us pray that in this gathering we are empowered to listen and discern in hope and generosity, to speak with brave faithfulness and gentleness, to open ourselves to new learning, and to trust in the Light.

Co Convenors of Elders April 2025