



Background

In 2025 Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees started the process to refresh the strategic priorities for the centrally managed work of Quakers in Britain. The document that follows has been developed in the light of discernment by Meeting for Sufferings, BYM Trustees and staff. It is intended to offer a framework for the next five years.

Strategic priorities

Our faith in the future, agreed by Meeting for Sufferings in 2015, describes six broad areas of focus for the whole Quaker community in Britain. These are:

In turbulent times:

- Meeting for worship is the bedrock of living as a Quaker
- Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all-age
- All Friends understand and live by Quaker discipline
- Quaker values are active in the world
- Quakers work collaboratively
- Quakers are well-known and widely understood.

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees are responsible for the work, assets and property of Quakers in Britain. From time to time they work with Meeting for Sufferings to establish strategic priorities for the centrally managed work, set out in the document below, in realising the aspirations set

out in *Our faith in the future*. The priorities are organised under the four charitable purposes described in chapter 8 of *Quaker faith & practice*, which govern all Quaker work (set out in full below).

These priorities are supported by the strategies developed by Quaker Life and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committees, and other strategies developed by Trustees and staff, notably the Communications Strategy, the IT Strategy and the Governance Strategy.

What gifts do Quakers have to offer? We bring:

- a radical faith perspective rooted in core Quaker spiritual insights.
- a discerned ethical and spiritual position on many issues, which is embedded in the policies and practices we adopt.
- a network of committed and concerned individuals willing to pray, take action, contribute time and money and speak out.
- good levels of recognition and a respected moral voice.
- a long, valued and well-documented history both as a faith community and a force for positive social change through our work on peace, justice and equality.
- longevity and a willingness to stick with people, communities and concerns over the long term.

Context

What are the drivers for these strategic priorities?

External context

- We live in a time of multiple crises: climate breakdown, rising inequality, the drumbeat of war, and increasing isolation are creating both challenges and opportunities for spiritual community. The rise of polarisation and extremism in the UK may mean we are called to broaden and deepen our peace work. These crises may threaten our organisational resilience and we will need to be agile enough to respond.
- This political and social polarization, among Quakers and in society more widely, threatens our ability to build community and work effectively in broad coalitions.
- We are living through a time of rapid technological change, with many activities moving online and the rise of artificial intelligence both as a tool and a potential threat.
- The erosion of democratic norms, loss of accountability in public life and restrictions on freedom to protest are making our testimony to truth, integrity and peace more relevant.

The Religious Society of Friends in Britain

- The demographics of the Quaker community are changing: an experienced, well-networked generation is growing older; meanwhile younger Quakers have different engagement patterns and needs. Many Quaker communities still lack diversity compared with the broader world; we are missing voices that would enrich the community. Different income patterns are a risk to income, engagement and volunteer recruitment.
- The geography of the Quaker community is also changing: we may see a decline in location-based communities and a move towards new models of connection and community which aren't tied to physical proximity, including online.
- We see an opportunity for growth in our Quaker community, noting that in recent population-wide surveying, there appears to be a significant group of people identifying as spiritual but not currently involved in organised religion, and a rise in young adults seeking a spiritual path.
- Many Quaker structures, especially at local and regional level, are changing to become fit for purpose, but some places are left behind. The Quaker property portfolio may also need to change to remain appropriate to the need.
- Some existing Quaker communities are not sustainable for the longer term unless something changes.

Our organisation, Britain Yearly Meeting

- A once-in-a-generation constitutional change to Yearly Meeting, our ultimate decision-making body, provides an opportunity for a reset in our national structures. With the laying-down of Meeting for Sufferings, the relationship between Yearly Meeting and BYM Trustees will change, and more direct dialogue between Friends and their central organisation will become possible.
- We are a well-resourced organisation with stable income. However our income is not growing in line with our costs, so to be financially sustainable we must balance our budget and seek ways to remain impactful and provide a good service to Quakers within our financial constraints or find additional sources of income.
- The next generation of Quakers may have even less disposable income and time than the last to contribute to their Quaker communities.
- Britain Yearly Meeting is, by its nature, an organisation delivering across a wide range of purposes and interests, and as a result there is a risk that resources are spread too thinly over many objectives.

Commitments

We commit to;

- remaining simple, radical and spiritual in all that we do.
- effective collaboration, partnership and solidarity wherever possible.
- the inclusion of young people, children and their caregivers as widely as possible.
- an approach which embodies equity, inclusion, anti-oppression and reparative justice.
- putting corporate discernment at the heart of our decision-making, ensuring our actions are underpinned by our theology.
- doing work which is well-planned and well-resourced, makes a difference, is impactful and provides good value for money
- being compliant except where we discern a need to be defiant.
- operating in ways which are both environmentally and financially sustainable.
- holding the inherent tension between speaking out with a prophetic voice and retaining the ability to play a role as reconcilers able to hold principled, impartial spaces in which unity can be reached across divides

Charitable purposes

Our work rests within the four areas defined as the charitable purposes of Britain Yearly Meeting in *Quaker faith & practice* 8.03 (set out in the table below)

We see the first of these as crucial – we are first and foremost a church and national worshipping community – from with the others flow and without which the other purposes cannot be achieved.

Within each of these four areas we identify the following priorities for the next five years:



Priorities

Sustaining church and faith

Organising and maintaining the whole of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain 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, faiths and ecumenical bodies.

In order to deliver

Inclusive, spirit-led Yearly Meeting sessions that drive renewal

A transparent agenda-setting process for Yearly Meeting

Strong interfaith presence and solidarity with other faith groups and Quaker groups around the world

Clear understanding, articulation and embodiment of Quaker theology

Safe and legally compliant operation of Quaker communities

Fit-for-purpose local, regional and national structures

We will

Inclusive, spirit-led Yearly Meeting sessions that drive renewal

Make our agenda planning process transparent, and publicise it well

Maintain good relations through our committees for Christian & interfaith relations and world Quaker relations.

Renew our Book of Discipline
Support learning about the Quaker way

Maintain and support governance and compliance functions for Quaker Communities

Support structural change in area / regional communities

Strategic priorities 2026-2030

Supporting Quaker communities

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.

In order to deliver

A faith for our time grounded in deep worship and authentic ministry

Inclusive intergenerational communities

Communities engaged in the wider life of the yearly meeting

Communities and Quakers who are outwardly connected, active and welcoming

Simpler structures using appropriate Quaker discipline

We will

Ensure that faith and worship are at the heart of all we do

Develop more ways for Quaker communities to worship, connect and act

Encourage a wide understanding and knowledge in Quaker communities of faith, practice and spiritual discipline

Equip and support friends well to hold responsibilities and give service

Provide opportunities for experimentation, exploration, creativity and growth



Strategic priorities 2026-2030

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 Religious Society of Friends in Britain.

In order to deliver

Growth in Quaker numbers and new communities, as well as more sustainable existing communities

Increased public awareness of Quakers

Better public understanding of Quakerism

Visible Quaker witness, inspiring others to join

We will

Support Quakers and Quaker communities to confidently share Quaker faith and witness nationally and locally; support people to find, attend, return to and join Quaker communities.

Proactively communicate Quaker faith, theology and practices

Promote Quakers as an inclusive intergenerational faith community

Communicate clearly about Quaker work and action



Strategic priorities 2026-2030

Faith in 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.

In order to deliver

Effective action on behalf of Quakers on discerned areas of concern

Quaker communities who are visibly living their faith in the world

Discernment and support for Quaker work

Public influence through advocacy, protest and quiet diplomacy

Quaker work rooted in integrity

We will

Work on peace & peacebuilding, climate justice and reparation

Support Quakers to be and to build resilient communities of faith-led action

Use Quaker faith and theology to drive decisions about how and where we work

Lead in civil society and political engagement through effective coalitions

Embed environmental sustainability in our communities, premises and programmes; align our investments and other Quaker assets with Quaker values and positions



Things we'll explore further:

We'll explore:

- Whether we should offer some optional additional services on paid-for basis to area meetings, other Quaker communities and others.
- Whether we can fundraise in new ways, including from people who are not Quakers for certain types of work – for example, elements of our programme work on peace and climate justice – where these funders are aligned with our values.
- How we might make better use of restricted or hypothecated funding (i.e. earmarking of funding for specific purposes or projects).
- How we keep our core infrastructure in right proportion to our charitable activity, how we measure the difference we make, and work in the most impactful way.
- How we can work in a more integrated way, and how we can be experimental and innovative within our resources, taking risks where we are called to do so.
- How we can partner better with Quaker Recognised Bodies, other charities and faith communities to achieve our goals where our objectives and values are aligned.
- How Quakers can lend their voices and influence to causes aligned with our discernment.
- What is drawing people to Quakerism today and how will this affect the make-up of our meetings and the approach we should take to promoting Quakerism in the future.

Things we won't do:

We won't:

- Do work which is not aligned with these priorities.
- Fund projects ourselves that could be paid for by someone else.
- Take on new work or continue programmes we can't resource properly.
- Duplicate work done by others.
- Work in an uncoordinated way where our resources are not used to best effect
- Take on work we don't know will be impactful or can't be measured.
- Take on work which doesn't require our specific contribution, grounded in the discernment of our Quaker structures.
- Take on work which partners could do better or are already doing.
- Speak out on matters where we do not bring a different and specifically Quaker or faith perspective to the situation.
- Allow the organisation to be put at risk through a lack of contingency planning or awareness of external factors such as political turmoil or climate change.

Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers),
Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ.

Reg. charity number 1127633

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