

Calling letter



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

21 November 2025

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

I am looking forward to another full and varied meeting with you. As we are back in Friends House we trust that those of you attending online will be able to participate without the difficulties that we had in October.

We expect to take a number of items on draft minute at the beginning of the meeting. We will share the draft minutes before the meeting and we encourage you to share any questions or concerns in advance if possible.

We will hear the annual report on the work of the Book of Discipline Revision Committee and a regular report from the Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees. We have no advance papers from Trustees because they do not meet until the week before we do, but we expect them to update us on their work and the BYM budget for 2026.

We have three specific recommendations from committees and working groups to consider. Quaker Life Central Committee has endorsed a proposal for new wording for the Quaker marriage declaration and we are now asked to agree to this. Meeting for Sufferings appointed a group to consider future arrangements for the registration and re-registration of Quaker Recognised Bodies and we will consider its recommendations. And finally our own Church Government Advisory Group will bring suggestions for changes to *Quaker faith & practice* so as to bring it up to date when Meeting for Sufferings is laid down.

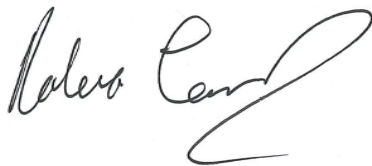
Two matters that come before us are sensitive. With that in mind the relevant documents are provided as attachments to the covering email, rather than being included in the pack and published on the website. One of these is a minute and paper from Quaker Committee on Christian and Interfaith Relations about the theological basis for our concern for the inclusion of trans people (paper 11). The other is the application by Sex Matters to Quakers to become a Quaker Recognised Body (paper 14b). We ask Friends not to share these documents with others, or to engage in discussion about them over social media or in other public forums ahead

of our meeting. Of course you will want to prepare yourself for the task of discerning the best way forward, but we want the discernment to take place in the context of a gathered meeting for worship for business, without a backdrop of wider public debate. We hope that you understand.

In addition to the papers for the meeting, included with this mailing are reports and epistles from European yearly meetings held in 2025. These are not on the agenda but are shared for your information.

We have a preparation session on Monday 1 December, and this will be a chance to look in more detail at both the marriage declaration and the proposed changes to *Quaker faith & practice*. I look forward to seeing you soon.

In Truth,



Robert Card
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

Papers enclosed with this mailing

Agenda

Minutes from MfS Arrangements Group

MfS 2025 12 07a & b Governance developments in Scotland

MfS 2025 12 08 Governance developments in Yorkshire

MfS 2025 12 09a AM annual compliance report

MfS 2025 12 09b Memorandum of understanding

MfS 2025 12 10 Review of Quaker recognised bodies registration process

MfS 2025 12 11 Theology of trans inclusion

MfS 2025 12 13 Book of Discipline Revision Committee annual report

MfS 2025 12 14a Quaker recognised bodies renewal for Peace Works Zimbabwe

MfS 2025 12 14b Quaker recognised bodies application Sex matters to Quakers

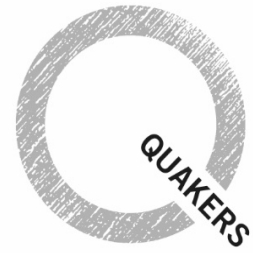
MfS 2025 12 15 Quaker marriage declaration

MfS 2025 12 16a & b Changes to *Quaker faith & practice*

MfS 2025 12 17 Reports & Epistles from European Yearly Meeting's in 2025

A reminder of how you can prepare for the meeting

- Read the agenda and papers in good time
- Contact the other representative/alternate from your area meeting or body
- Send any comments or questions to the clerks (sufferings@quaker.org.uk), before the meeting to be received by morning of **2 December 2025**



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

Agenda

Meeting for Sufferings – Saturday 6 December 2025

At Friends House and by video conference,
open for arrivals from 9.30am for 10am start

	Item	Paper
10am	Session 1	
1	Opening worship	
2	Welcome and introductions	
3	Agenda Adoption and acceptance of the agenda	
4–9	Items to be taken on draft minute: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership (04) & appointments (05) (to follow) • Prison and Court Register (06)) (to follow) • Governance developments in Scotland (07a & b) and Yorkshire (08) • Area Meeting annual compliance report (09a) and an update on the Memorandum of Understanding between Quaker charities (09b) 	MfS 2025 12 4–9 For decision
10	Review of process for registration & renewal of Quaker Recognised Bodies To consider recommendations for future process	MfS 2025 12 10 For decision
	Shuffle break	
11	Theology of trans inclusion Consideration of a paper from Quaker Committee on Christian & Interfaith Relations	MfS 2025 12 11 For consideration
12	BYM Trustees Report from the Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and Yearly Meeting Treasurer and to receive the November minutes.	MfS 2025 12 12 For information
12.30pm	End of Session 1	

12:30pm to 1.45pm Lunch break

	Item	Paper
1.45pm	Session 2	
13	Book of Discipline Revision Committee To receive the annual report	MfS 2025 12 13 For information
14	QRB applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To consider application for renewal by Peace Works Zimbabwe (14a) To consider application for registration by Sex Matters to Quakers (14b) 	MfS 2025 12 14 For decision
	Shuffle break	
15	Quaker marriage declaration To consider recommendations for changes to the Quaker marriage declaration	MfS 2025 12 15 For decision
16	Changes to <i>Quaker faith & practice</i> To consider the proposals from Church Government Advisory Group (16a & b)	MfS 2025 12 16 For decision
4pm	End of Meeting	



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held online 3 November 2025

Minutes

Present: Elizabeth Allen, Robert Card, Charles Philips, Lex Ryder, Mary Savage

In attendance: Sarah Donaldson

We began our meeting with a short period of worship.

1. Meetings attended and work completed by the Clerks and others

Our clerk has prepared a first draft of the Meeting for Sufferings annual report 2025, and we have been asked to comment on it. The draft will be updated to include MfS in December, and is due to be submitted to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee on 6 January 2026. This is the final annual report of MfS.

2. Review of Meeting for Sufferings in October

We have reviewed the minutes from Meeting for Sufferings in October and reflected on continuing business:

- Minute 9 on governance in Scotland – Church Government Advisory Group has been asked to look at the implications of what has happened so far. There will be further business relating to the governance changes in Scotland at the December meeting.
- Minute 10 on the annual report of Quaker World Relations Committee – this minute mentions the expectation that we will receive reports from the BYM representatives to European Yearly Meetings. These should be available to go out with the papers for December. We will need to consider whether it is necessary to refer to them during the session and/or the minutes.
- Minute 11 on the report of BYM trustees – we expect to return to the review of strategic priorities at our March 2026 meeting.

- Minute 14 on the theological and community aspects of online and blended worship – we have passed this matter to the Agenda Planning Committee to take forward.
- Minute 15 on the faithful relationship of church and state – although this is unlikely to be the last word on this topic we will not return to it at Meeting for Sufferings.

We have reviewed the meeting overall, helped by feedback from the Support Group. There were considerable technical difficulties that made the experience difficult for those attending online and we are sorry about that. We note that staff have learned lessons that will be useful for the planning of the Yearly Meeting session to be held at an external venue in Manchester in July 2026. Other than these technical issues, we feel that the meeting went well.

3. Forward plan

We have reviewed our Forward Plan, looking at matters expected to come to MfS in March 2026. We are expecting to receive the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations annual report, and the MfS annual report 2025. We hope to share practical plans for how the Court & Prison Register will be taken forward. The Quaker Life working group on membership and new ways of belonging might have an update on their work.

Plans to commemorate and celebrate the work of MfS are progressing: the Friends House Library staff are working on a display and we have a budget for a cake.

We have had no updates on Quaker Life Central Committee's work on vulnerable adults, and we ask Sarah to find out about this item so that we can decide how to pass it on appropriately.

We agree to remove the item on the broad consideration of the theological underpinnings of nominations from our 'will return when ready' list.

We ask our secretary to update the plan accordingly.

4. Meeting for Sufferings in December

We have considered potential business for Meeting for Sufferings in December. In addition to required business, we expect to receive reports from BYM Trustees (plus the 2026 budget), and the Book of Discipline Revision Committee. We will receive and consider the AM compliance report from QLCC for MfS. The group we set up to review the process for registering and re-registering Quaker Recognised Bodies will present its report and proposals, for MfS discernment. Our Church Government Advisory Group will bring suggested text for changes to *Quaker faith & practice*. We will consider QLCC's proposed amended wording of the Quaker marriage declaration. We also expect to receive the QCCIR paper on the theology of trans inclusion. We might have an item on 'Peacebuilding in Britain', and will take staff advice on whether or not this is practical. We want to spend time on this matter.

We have received the following minutes:

- a. Bristol Area Meeting on Israel/ Palestine – 14 September 2025
This minute was sent to MfS and Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee for further discernment. We do not think this minute is ready to come to Meeting for Sufferings. It needs more threshing and we hope Bristol Area Meeting will do this, with the help of QPSWCC.
- b. North East Thames Area Meeting about community tensions provoked by ongoing anti-asylum seekers demonstrations – 15th September 2025
If we are able to take the item on 'Peacebuilding in Britain' in December, the minute will be included in the accompanying papers. If we are unable to take this item until March, this minute will be shared with Friends for information.
- c. Sheffield & Balby on Israel/ Palestine and the right to protest – 21 September 2025
The requests made in this minute are a matter for BYM Trustees. We will make sure that they have seen this minute.
- d. Sheffield & Balby arrests
We attach this minute to these Arrangements Group minutes for information.
- e. East Scotland laying down AM - 18 October 2025
We agree to add this to the agenda for information.
- f. General Meeting for Scotland laying down GMS – 20 September 2025
We agree to add this to the agenda for information.
- g. Quaker Life Central Committee on proposed new wording for the Quaker marriage declaration – 20 September 2025
This item is on the agenda.
- h. Quaker Life Central Committee on area meeting returns - 20 September

We expect the matters raised will be covered in the Compliance Report, which is on the agenda.

Preparation Meeting on Monday 1 December

We agree to use this meeting to give Friends more time to consider the proposed changes to the Quaker marriage declaration, and to Quaker faith & practice.

We ask the clerks to finalise the agenda in consultation with staff.

4. Any other matters

There being no further business to conduct, we part planning to meet again on 18 December to review Meeting for Sufferings in December.

Signed in and on behalf of the meeting,
Elizabeth Allen, Clerk

North East Thames Area Quaker Meeting

15th September 2025, 6.30 pm Held online

NET 25.78 Minute from Epping Local Meeting

We have received Epping Minute 25/11 (attached)

Our witness to our testimonies in Epping which has been circulated in advance. We send our loving support to Epping friends and concerned residents in the town. We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

We ask our clerks and elders to work with Epping friends to draft a letter to the Essex Police Commissioner.

Attached Minute from Epping Local Meeting, held online on 14th August 2025

Epping LM 25/11 Our witness to our testimonies in Epping

We considered the situation in Epping where ongoing demonstrations are causing fear and disunity. We seek to be true to ourselves and our Quaker testimonies as we search for ways to cross divides and decrease tensions.

We issued a statement via our Facebook page that reads:

“Epping Quakers are deeply saddened by recent events in our town. We uphold those in our community who support justice, work to end violence against women and children, and those who seek to create an equal and just society for all.

We hold victims of violence, and those seeking to flee violence, in the light.

We hope to work with others from our community who also hold a commitment to peace in order that we can work towards creating a safe environment for all those who live and work in Epping.”

We are aware of growing dialogue in the Town that reflects people seeking to bring the community together and wish to support these efforts.

We have been invited to send a representative to a small meeting, on the afternoon of the 21st September, convened by the ministry team at St John's Epping seeking ways to rebuild community cohesion over the coming months. We are happy to join this meeting and will seek one or more Friends who can represent us.

We have been in dialogue with an all-age group of Epping residents wishing to come together peacefully and seek common ground. They asked to use the Meeting House Burial Ground for a picnic and fun event suitable for all ages and invited us to join them. We have met one of the organisers who attended Meeting for Worship.

We agree to offer the use of the Meeting House for this event on the 23rd August with a number of Friends willing to be present to welcome people and ensure the

building is safely closed up afterwards. We hope this will be a launch pad for other positive initiatives that we can potentially support.

Our Friends Chris Evans and Rebecca Fricker are in contact with members of the United Reform Church with discussion of the potential for an event together around the time of the DSEI arms fair in Docklands reflecting the seeds of war and the consequent need for asylum.

We will continue to monitor the situation and seek to promote peace wherever we can. We forward this minute to our Area Meeting Clerk and ask for it to be circulated ahead of Area Meeting.

Sheffield & Balby Area Meeting 21st September 2025

Minute 10 - Record of the arrest of Friends

We have heard that our Friends Paul Dawson and Dilys Candler were arrested on 9th August and 6th September respectively under anti-terrorism legislation for holding up a sign saying "I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action".

We ask our Clerks to send this Minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Governance Changes in East Scotland AM, North Scotland AM and West Scotland AM

Further to minute MfS/25/10/09, when Meeting for Sufferings endorsed the plans of East Scotland AM, North Scotland AM and West Scotland AM to lay themselves down, we now receive minutes of intended closure from all three area meetings. Although these Quaker charities remain formally open while all legal formalities are complied with, these area meetings no longer exist as Quaker entities. It has already been agreed that Quakers in Scotland will take on the responsibilities of the area meeting for these areas.

Meeting for Sufferings has already asked Church Government Advisory Group to propose appropriate changes to *Quaker faith & practice*. Meeting for Sufferings is now asked to receive and record these closing minutes so that arrangements can be made to update the official list of area meetings in Britain Yearly Meeting.

East Scotland Area Meeting

The clerk writes:

Friends,

We held the final meeting of East Scotland Area Meeting yesterday, 18th October. It was a gathered and moving occasion. In addition to the business, we gave ourselves time to reflect on these times of change, on the past and on the future. We were given the image of cultivating seeds, and new growth.

The final Minute reads:

East Scotland Area Meeting 25.10.12 Minute of Closure

Consent having been obtained from OSCR and from Meeting for Sufferings

- a. we agree to wind up the affairs of East Scotland Area Meeting and, after settlement of all debts and liabilities, transfer the remaining assets of the charity for nil consideration to Quakers in Scotland (registered charity SC054060);
- b. upon completion of which the charity shall be declared dissolved;
- c. we give authority to the Trustees to take all measures they consider necessary to give effect to this process.

We ask the Clerk to arrange for ESAM Minutes and other significant records to be deposited for safe-keeping in Dundee Meeting House.

East Scotland Area Meeting has served Friends in our area since 1966. We are grateful to all who have served it over the years. The work will continue under the new framework and we thank all those who will be contributing to this.

We send this Minute to Quakers in Scotland, Meeting for Sufferings and the Recording Clerk.

In friendship,
Robin Waterston
Clerk

North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting

Saturday 25th October 2025 Aberdeen & online

Minute 51/25

On 20th September General Meeting for Scotland was laid down and its responsibilities as set out in *Quaker faith & practice* 5.03 transferred to Quakers in Scotland (QiS).

We had intimated to Meeting for Sufferings that North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting would also wish to transfer its responsibilities to QiS. This has been heard by Meeting for Sufferings and we receive the following minute:

Meeting for Sufferings

Held at High Leigh Conference Centre and by video conference over the weekend of 3-5 October 2025

MfS/25/10/09 Governance in Scotland

We receive and note the following minutes:

East Scotland Area Meeting minute 25.09.03

North Scotland Area Meeting minute 32/25

West Scotland Area Meeting minute 065/25

All three area meetings wish to lay themselves down and become part of Quakers in Scotland (QiS). We agree to this and endorse the proposals for reorganisation. We are content that QiS will take over the responsibilities of these area meetings.

In keeping with the legal requirement, each of these area meetings has obtained consent from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator to dissolve their area meeting charity.

We have been informed that on 20 September 2025 General Meeting for Scotland (GMS) held its final meeting and minuted its intention to dissolve the charity as soon as all legal formalities can be completed. As we heard at our July meeting, QiS will take over all the responsibilities of the General Meeting.

We ask our Church Government Advisory Group to propose appropriate changes to *Quaker faith & practice* to take account of these governance developments in Scotland.

When Meeting for Sufferings is laid down, there will be a new system of representatives to Yearly Meeting sessions. Until then, following the transition to QiS of GMS, East, West and North Scotland Area Meetings, we ask Quakers in Scotland to make suitable arrangements so that four Friends continue to be appointed to attend Meeting for Sufferings (online or at the venue).

We uphold our Friends in Scotland as they develop new structures that aim to help Quakerism in Scotland to thrive.

Robert Card, Clerk

Sarah Donaldson, Meeting for Sufferings Secretary

The Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) have also consented to the transfer of NSAQM assets and responsibilities to QiS. Our Trustees have recorded the following minute:

1. We have received the following minute from Area Meeting Dated 30-31 August 2025-:

“33/25 We ask trustees to write to the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) asking them to approve the laying down of the charity (North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting).”

Application for Consent to Wind-up the charity was sent to OSCR on 6th September 2025.

The following reply was received on 17th September 2025.

“Consent to wind up/dissolve Religious Society Of Friends (Quakers) North Scotland Area Meeting, SC017958

“I am writing to let you know our decision about your request for consent to wind up/dissolve the charity named above. This decision has been made under section 16(2) (c) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005.

“The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) gives consent to your proposal to wind up or dissolve the charity.”

West Scotland Area Meeting

Meeting for Worship for Church Affairs Saturday, 11th October 2025

Extracted minutes

Minute 086/25 Transfer to Quakers in Scotland

On 20th September General Meeting for Scotland was laid down and its responsibilities as set out in *Quaker faith & practice* 5.03 transferred to Quakers in

Scotland. To ensure the new body can meet its responsibilities all GM appointments, except those of trustees and treasurers, transferred with their ongoing terms of service to Quakers in Scotland.

We agree for West Scotland Area Meeting to transfer its responsibilities to Quakers in Scotland on Saturday 8th November. This is the date of the next meeting of Quakers in Scotland and would enable it to minute acceptance of the Area Meeting responsibilities and ensure there was no gap in the care of the meetings.

We agree that all current AM appointments, except those of trustees, treasurer and clerks, pass to Quakers in Scotland with their ongoing terms of service. A list of these appointments is attached. This will ensure a smooth transition of roles from AM to QiS.

At our meeting in August, we took time to consider what aspects of community and connections we felt were important to build on as we develop in the new ways of being.

We felt it was important to ensure we continue to provide opportunities for discussions and learning to maintain links between meeting communities.

We hope that new ways to organise outreach and enquirers events can be found to ensure we continue to make ourselves visible and accessible to those seeking a spiritual community.

We look forward to more opportunities for residential gatherings and other approaches to enable us to meet and share time and meals, to get to know one another and be part of the larger community.

As Quakers in Scotland becomes our new spiritual community embracing all Friends in Scotland, we welcome the opportunity to explore and grow as a supportive Quaker community.

We send this minute, the attached list of appointments, and a list of Local Meetings, to the Clerk of Quakers in Scotland.

Minute 087/25 Minute from Meeting for Sufferings

We have received the following minute for Meeting for Sufferings

MfS/25/10/09 Governance in Scotland

We receive and note the following minutes:

East Scotland Area Meeting minute 25.09.03

North Scotland Area Meeting minute 32/25

West Scotland Area Meeting minute 065/25

All three area meetings wish to lay themselves down and become part of Quakers in Scotland (QiS). We agree to this, and endorse the proposals for

reorganisation. We are content that QiS will take over the responsibilities of these area meetings.

In keeping with the legal requirement, each of these area meetings has obtained consent from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator to dissolve their area meeting charity.

We have been informed that on 20 September 2025 General Meeting for Scotland (GMS) held its final meeting and minuted its intention to dissolve the charity as soon as all legal formalities can be completed. As we heard at our July meeting, QiS will take over all the responsibilities of the General Meeting.

We ask our Church Government Advisory Group to propose appropriate changes to Quaker faith & practice to take account of these governance developments in Scotland.

When Meeting for Sufferings is laid down, there will be a new system of representatives to Yearly Meeting sessions. Until then, following the transition to QiS of GMS, East, West and North Scotland Area Meetings, we ask Quakers in Scotland to make suitable arrangements so that four Friends continue to be appointed to attend Meeting for Sufferings (online or at the venue).

We uphold our Friends in Scotland as they develop new structures that aim to help Quakerism in Scotland to thrive.

We thank Meeting for Sufferings for their agreement and support as we move forward together as Quakers in Scotland

Minute 088/25 Laying down the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) West Scotland Area Meeting

As recorded in minute 086/25 we intend to transfer all the responsibilities, as listed in Qf&p (4.02-4.30), of the Area Meeting to Quakers in Scotland on 8th November 2025.

We have heard that OSCR have given consent to dissolving West Scotland Area Meeting as a charity.

We, having received notification of agreement from Meeting for Sufferings to the same, agree to wind up the affairs of the charity and after settlement of all debts and liabilities, transfer the remaining assets of the charity for nil consideration to Quakers in Scotland (registered charity SC054060).

Upon completion of this, the charity shall be declared dissolved.

We give authority to the Trustees to take all measures they consider necessary to give effect to this.

Recorded on behalf of West Scotland Area Meeting

Kathryn Gulliver

West Scotland Area Meeting Clerk

11th October 2025

General Meeting for Scotland

General Meeting for Scotland has kept Meeting for Sufferings informed of its plans and in its minute MfS/25/07/12 Meeting for Sufferings gave its approval for General Meeting for Scotland to transition to Quakers in Scotland. Minute MfS/25/10/09 noted that General Meeting for Scotland had held its last meeting (and asked Church Government Advisory Group to propose appropriate changes to *Quaker faith & practice*) but the minute was not received at that meeting.

Meeting for Sufferings is now asked to receive and note the concluding minute of General Meeting for Scotland.

Extracted Minute 25/09/16 General Meeting for Scotland:

At a hybrid Meeting held 20th September 2025 at the Soutar Theatre, Bell Library, York Place, Perth PH2 8EP, and by video conference.

Concluding minute

General Meeting for Scotland has served Friends in Scotland since 1807 and we remain spiritually connected to all those who have belonged to it and served it over the years. We are grateful for the manner in which General Meeting has given life to our faith and witness in Scotland. That will continue under a new name and potentially enlarged responsibilities as we continue to adapt our structures to a changing world.

With the authority given us by Meeting for Sufferings by its minute MfS/25/07/12 (Governance in Scotland) of 5th July 2025, we hereby lay down General Meeting for Scotland and transfer its functions to Quakers in Scotland, which will begin functioning as a Quaker body this afternoon.

As noted in minute 25/09/13, we have heard that the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) has given consent to dissolving General Meeting for Scotland the charity.

We, having received notification of agreement from Meeting for Sufferings to the same, agree to wind up the affairs of the charity and after settlement of all debts and liabilities, transfer the remaining assets of the charity for nil consideration to Quakers in Scotland (registered charity SC054060).

Upon completion of this, the charity shall be declared dissolved.

We give authority to the General Meeting Trustees to take all measures they consider necessary to give effect to this. We ask them to report to Quakers in Scotland when the charity is finally wound up.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings and to the Recording Clerk.

Michael J Hutchinson

Michael J. Hutchinson, Clerk

To: Meeting for Sufferings and the Recording Clerk

Simplifying Quaker governance in the Quakers in Yorkshire region

Introduction

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to uphold and support Yorkshire Friends as they take steps to create a new charity, Yorkshire Quakers. The new charity will provide a shared trustee body for seven Area Meetings (AMs) and Quakers in Yorkshire. The Area Meetings will continue to exist as Quaker communities, focusing on worship and witness.

The context

This proposal is in the context of Meeting for Sufferings' consideration in 2022 (part of minute MfS 22/07/06: 'We are content in principle to see significant amalgamations of area meetings and other bodies').

There are seven AMs in the Quaker in Yorkshire region: Brighouse West Yorkshire, Central Yorkshire, Craven & Keighley, Leeds, Pickering & Hull, Sheffield & Balby, and York. In 2024 there were nearly 1,900 members and attenders in the region (roughly 10% of BYM total).

After General Meetings were laid down in 2005, [Quakers in Yorkshire](#) was maintained as a Regional Gathering (Q&fp 5.06 and 5.07). Quakers in Yorkshire is registered as a charity. Its activities include four meetings a year, residential and other events for children and young people, publishing a book of members and attenders, and administering a number of Quaker trusts. It is the responsible body for Bootham and The Mount Schools and also appoints governors to three schools (Bootham, Breckenbrough and The Mount) and Glenthorne Quaker Centre.

Why are we proposing changes?

AMs in Yorkshire are facing the same pressures as other AMs. Charity and other regulation, safeguarding requirements, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, are all contributing to increased demands on trustees and clerks. Aging and declining membership makes it difficult to fill roles, especially for trusteeship. There is duplication of effort in neighbouring AMs, and unnecessary complexity. The seven AMs in the Yorkshire region have a total of 1,170 members, with about 300 charity-related roles.

The journey so far

Full information about the process, including reports, is available on the [Quakers in Yorkshire](#) website.

For several years, some Friends have been exploring ways of simplifying governance. Some small changes have already been made - for example, some

AMs share a Registering Officer. Discussions about these issues have been made more possible partly thanks to the existence of Quakers in Yorkshire, and partly through Meeting for Sufferings, when Yorkshire-based representatives met together. We have also been supported by our Local Development Worker and the Youth Development Worker.

In 2019 we set up the Group to Reinvigorate And Simplify Processes (GRASP), with representatives from each Area Meeting. The group made recommendations in 2021, which led to the Yorkshire Governance Group.

That group's report 'Keeping the Wheels Turning' (2023) recommended working towards the formation of a single registered charity covering all Quaker life and work in Yorkshire and that we retain Area Meetings as purely Quaker bodies not having separate legal status. In Spring 2024, the seven AMs agreed in principle to these recommendations: the relevant minutes can be read on the [Quakers in Yorkshire website](#).

Detailed proposals were ready by Autumn 2024, and in Spring 2025 all seven AMs, and Quakers in Yorkshire as a body, responded by minute (copied below). All agreed to the work continuing. There were some hesitations and caveats, which are being considered and addressed.

The working group was expanded to form the Yorkshire Quakers Implementation Group, which has two representatives from each AM.

What's happening now?

We have five working groups (governance, finance, property, safeguarding and employment). These groups are working with role-holders in Area Meetings to gather information, clarify expectations, and lay the ground-work for future arrangements.

The governance group has prepared a draft constitution. This is based on the constitution of [Cymar](#) (Cymdeithas Grefyddol y Cyfeillion (Crynwyr) yng Nghymru a'r Gororau/The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Wales and the Marches), the body formed in 2024 by the merger of five charities in Wales and the Marches.

Area Meetings are now considering the draft constitution and appointing the first trustees. We then plan to apply to the Charity Commission for registration in late 2025 or early 2026.

The trustees will then work with each Area Meeting to confirm future arrangements and implement the transition. We expect this to happen in stages, with each body merging when it is ready.

Minutes from Area Meetings (2025)

(a) Brighouse West Yorkshire AM held on 24 November 2024

24.11.09: Proposals for a Yorkshire Quakers Charity

The document, 'Proposals for a Yorkshire Quakers Charity' produced by the Yorkshire Quakers Governance Group had been circulated in advance of this Meeting. This paper sets out proposals for a single charity, to be called Yorkshire Quakers, which would be the merger of the existing seven Area Meeting charities plus the Quakers in Yorkshire (QiY) charity. The new charity would be responsible for the finances, employment of staff, properties, and regulatory requirements over the QiY region. This would enable Area Meetings to concentrate on supporting worship and witness as they would no longer be separately registered charities.

Following discussion, we decided that we wish to commit to merging into a single Yorkshire Quaker charity.

(b) Central Yorkshire AM held on 9 November 2024

Single Charity in Yorkshire

Minute 5.ii) refers to the proposal for a single charity in Yorkshire and includes minutes from 3 of our local meetings. David Bower, who is part of the Yorkshire Quaker Governance Group, was present at our meeting and was able to take questions on the proposal.

Our meetings recognise the complexity of what is being proposed but feel that this will be of great benefit to the future of Quakerism in Yorkshire.

From the minutes submitted and the comments made in this meeting CYAM supports the establishment of a single charity in Yorkshire and will report this to the Yorkshire Quaker Governance Group.

In addition, thanks were expressed for the excellent paper from the group setting out the proposals.

(c) Craven & Keighley AM held on 11 January 2025

2025/10 Substantive item: The Yorkshire Quaker 'simplification' proposals

Local meetings and Trustees have considered the proposals for a merged charity, to be called Yorkshire Quakers. All our Local meetings and Trustees support the proposals, with some caveats, including the opportunity of continuing involvement with the developing process.

We have been reassured that the proposed General Meetings would be a primary focus of making decisions as a meeting for worship for business.

We agree to commit Craven and Keighley Area Meeting to merge our charity into a single Yorkshire Quakers charity.

(d) Leeds AM held on 20 November 2024

2024/11/06 Simplifying our structures and processes

Discussions about ways to simplify structures and processes across Yorkshire have been underway for some years. Earlier this year our Area Meeting considered an outline proposal for creating one trust body, and minuted our agreement that this should be explored further (see minute 2024/03/05). Further work has been done on this and proposals for a single charity have been circulated (see minute 2024/06/09).

Detailed proposals for the merger of the existing Area Meeting Charities to a single trust body have been displayed in a paper on the Quakers in Yorkshire Website from the 4th of September, 2024. The paper concludes:

Area Meetings are asked to consult their Local Meetings and their Trustees before discerning whether the proposals in the paper are the right way of helping to simplify our organisation and help reinvigorate Yorkshire Quakerism. It is likely that there will be a range of views so Area Meetings will need to discern whether a merged charity will enable the future of our Society to be simpler. The basic question for Area Meetings is Do you wish to commit to merging into a single Yorkshire Quaker charity?

Our Leeds Area Quaker Meeting Trustees have considered and support the recommendations.

We are now asked to confirm if Leeds Area Quaker Meeting would like to proceed with the proposal.

We understand that if the merger did proceed, Leeds Area Quaker Meeting would continue, but we would be being freed of our Charity responsibilities. This should mean that we will be in a better position to concentrate on promoting worship and witness.

We have heard some hesitations, including:

- some Friends may feel less committed to a much larger Charity than LAQM;
- money deposited by one large charity would no longer be protected under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme;
- local meetings may become less financially independent, not able to set their own budgets;
- the actual number of roles needed in the future plans will be more than originally anticipated.

We have also heard there are many benefits offered by the proposed new system, in areas such as Safeguarding and Registering Officers. Simplification means that we may well lose some things, and change can be painful.

We are glad to know that our Treasurers are working with members of the Yorkshire Quaker Governance Group to resolve areas of uncertainty.

Overall, we feel that the direction of travel is the right one and will benefit us in the future.

Leeds Area Quaker Meeting agrees to the proposal that we merge with other Yorkshire Area Meetings to form a single Yorkshire Quaker charity.

We forward this minute to the Yorkshire Quaker Governance Group (Simplifying Charitable Functions Group), so that they are aware of our hesitations.

(e) Pickering & Hull AM held on 9 November 2024

PHAQM/2024/75 Yorkshire Quaker Governance

Further to Minute PHAQM/2024/64, five of our Local Meetings have sent Minutes as requested. They all support the proposals, some wholeheartedly, although there is a worry that the larger group may find it difficult to understand the needs of smaller local meetings. We urge the development of good communication systems.

We agree to commit to the proposed merger and ask our AM Clerk to forward this minute to the Yorkshire Quaker Governance Group.

(f) Sheffield & Balby AM held on 19 January 2025

Minute 6 - Yorkshire Quaker Governance

Since January 2024 we have been considering the proposal from the Yorkshire Quaker Governance Group to replace the current seven Area Meeting charities and the existing Quakers in Yorkshire charity with one Yorkshire wide charity. (Minutes 7 from 14th January, 4 from 15th September and 3 from 9th November refer.) The proposal has been circulated in advance and is attached to these minutes along with notes of small group work at our November meeting.

This matter has also been considered by each of our Local Meetings. Balby Doncaster, Hope Valley and Nether Edge have expressed general support for the proposal though there has been a request for additional financial information. Sheffield Central felt that further discernment was needed.

On 7th January Friends from across the Area Meeting met online with Peter Rivers. Peter has been involved with the “merger” of Area Meetings in Wales and Southern Marches into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with the working name of Cymar. The content of Peter’s presentation has been circulated and is attached to these minutes. Peter told us of the many complications and the high cost of the

process of merger and of his optimism that now this is largely complete the Area Meetings will reap the benefits of simplification.

We note that Ann Hindley, our representative on the Group, is writing a brief for legal work to use to obtain a quote for legal fees. A Yorkshire charity should be able to use much of the set up work done by Cymar. This would reduce set up costs.

There was concern that the proposal has not been properly costed and that the working group does not have evidence that Friends will be able to donate sufficient funds. It's important for the Group to answer questions about detail before moving further ahead with a merger.

Can we afford to be part of a merged charity? Sheffield Central, for example, has limited reserves which it needs for its own purposes.

There is a question hanging over the future of Doncaster Meeting House and the future for Sheffield Central Meeting House is still not completely certain. Is it sensible to transfer properties which could end up being sold? On the other hand it's rarely the perfect time for change.

There is a fear that the further away something seems to be the smaller the number of Friends who may take an interest in it.

Could a merged charity help with our financial deficit and the "people" deficits of other Area Meetings?

We currently have a group of trustees, unlike some Area Meetings. But it hasn't always been easy to appoint to this group and it may get harder. The people in the room are mainly beyond 50. Many of them carry heavy burdens in their meetings which they will want to lay down. For example we are currently having trouble finding an Assistant Area Meeting Treasurer.

We need to think about the legacy we leave to younger members. We also need to think about how this potential merger serves British Quakers, not just our Area Meeting. We should live boldly and with a vision for the future.

We agree to ask that the Governance Group provide us by the end of September with full costings for the set up and future running of the merged charity. We will also need enough information to be able to calculate the cost savings to our Local Meetings. If it is able to do this and we are also satisfied that our Area Meeting's cost can be met by Friends we will enter with hope into the proposed merger.

We ask our Clerks to send this minute to the Clerk to the Governance Group and to Local Meetings.

We are grateful for the work that has been done so far to aid our discernment.

We thank Ann Hindley for all her work in representing us on the Governance Group and for supporting us in our discernment.

(g) York AM held on 11 January 2025

2025/6 Simplifying Meetings: Minding the Future

Do you wish to commit to merging into a single Yorkshire Quaker Charity?

Further to minutes 2024/19 and 2024/52 the proposals from the Yorkshire Quaker Governance Group have been discussed in local meetings and five LBM minutes were circulated with the agenda for this meeting together with minute 59 from the York Area Meeting Trustees meeting held on 8.12.2024. In general these minutes favour the move to a single charity but reservations are expressed about some of the practical difficulties of managing all the properties and the potential costs of making the change. Friends are also anxious that they don't feel out of touch with the work of Trustees.

Martina Weitsch(NE), Clerk of YAM Trustees, held on line sessions on 16 and 18 October to explain the proposals. These were helpful.

Today the Assistant Clerk read the YAM Trustees minute 59 and the Clerk repeated the above question which is our focus today.

In general Friends in York Area Meeting support the aim of simplifying our structures at a time of a declining and ageing membership. At the same time they have concerns about some of the practicalities such as the cost of employing additional staff to administer the Yorkshire Charity and the substantial task of maintaining all our Quaker properties. Concerns have also been expressed about the need to move forward with plans to unify the Area Meeting finances and to improve the monitoring of these finances and also to improve the booking systems. We wish our Trustees and all Local Meeting Treasurers to progress these changes.

However, we commit in principle to merging in a single Yorkshire Charity which will be established over the next year . We will then have to decide whether we wish to join this charity. We ask Martina Weitsch, our representative on the Yorkshire Quaker Governance Group, to keep us posted on how discussions are progressing. Overall the change seems an imaginative and practical way of addressing significant concerns we have about the future not just in York Area Meeting but in Area Meetings across Yorkshire. Put another way, of Simplifying Meetings and Minding the Future.

We thank all concerned with these discussions.

(h) Quakers in Yorkshire held on 18 January 2025

9. Report on Simplification and Reinvigoration

David Olver, Clerk of QiY Trustees, has spoken to us about the steady progress

being made towards the simplification and reinvigoration of Quaker bodies in Yorkshire, a process that is being coordinated by the working group formed of AM representatives. One aspect in particular will be at the forefront of concern for all Friends, namely the appointment of trustees to serve the new body, Yorkshire Quakers. This is an important stage of the process and all Area Meetings are asked to support the QiY Nominations Committee with suitable names when requested by the Nominations Committee.

This meeting agrees that QiY as a charity supports the work that has taken place so far and hopes that the working group will be able to finalise details in due course. On this basis QiY agrees to join the new charity as previously notified to all AMs with the benefits that those changes have for QiY as a whole.

Friends will also be interested to know that Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, will be joining us at Doncaster for our meeting on 26th April to prompt a discussion on the spiritual benefits that we might seek from the reorganisation and simplification of our necessary business. Paul will be using examples from the other schemes that are underway in the UK and showing how our meetings might change in the future.

AM annual reporting, summary for Meeting for Sufferings

Number of respondents 62 of 74 charities invited

Background

We have continued requesting an annual return from charities that form the formal Quaker structure in Britain (74 bodies). This number is going to change over the coming year with changes to charity structures in Wales, Scotland and London. This should reduce the overall number of charities to about 60 over the course of the next two years.

In total there have been 62 responses in 2025. There are eleven charities who have not reported, **seven of the eleven also failed to report in 2024.**

This year we have trialled aligning the sustainability reporting with EcoChurch themes. There are more than 50 meetings are registered with EcoChurch and we hope this will provide data that is easier to use. Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) minuted the following on using EcoChurch themes for sustainability reporting.

QLCC 25.53 Area meeting sustainability reporting

We receive paper QLCC 2025 09 03. Oliver Waterhouse has shared his excitement to have some data to report to us. Historically there have been Meetings that have found it difficult to decide whether to report and what to report if they do so. Using the data around the involvement of Meetings in the Eco Church Network has made qualitative data possible.

We sought clarity about how meetings who aren't registered will be supported to report against the Eco Church categories. We are reminded that the Eco Church website is useful and staff are prepared to support.

We commented on the potentially limited amount of information this method of reporting provides and perhaps some of this information could be supplemented by the wider membership of each AM. At the moment we only have a mechanism for each AM to report once (rather than have multiple submissions of their different activities) but this is something we can consider should it be clear it's useful and widely desired.

We endorse the use of the Eco Church data as a way to demonstrate the ecological sustainability and activity of Meetings in Britain Yearly Meeting.

We intend to continue the use of Eco Church for a further year to see if the data we receive from meetings continues to improve.

In addition to this minute QLCC has agreed to take responsibility on behalf of BYM for monitoring compliance by the charitable (bodies in the formal Quaker structure. QLCC has received various data on compliance and spent time considering which areas it would like staff to report on each year. These are as follows.

General compliance issues

- For the number of excepted charities in the Society's formal structure to reduce.
- Charities that report year-on-year that they are unable to fulfil key roles. (Clerk of Trustees, Treasurer, Safeguarding Coordinator are specifically requested in the survey).
- Charities that have not fulfilled key roles and then fail to report in the following year.
- Consistent failure to report to the charity regulator on time and / or send their TARA to BYM.
- Charities that fail to send an annual return to BYM.

Safeguarding

- The number of AMs that are not registered with a specialist safeguarding support organisation such as 31:8 or VolunteerScot.

Policy and risk management

- The percentage of charities that do not have key policies does not rise.
- No increase in the number of charities telling us that policies are developed locally.

Record keeping

- There is no increase in the number of charities that are consistently telling us that they do not think they are keeping records well.

Changes to these measures since 2024

Measure	2025	2024
General Compliance (<i>number of charities</i>)		
For the number of excepted charities in the Society's formal structure to reduce	13	15
Charities that report year-on-year that they are unable to fulfil key roles. (Clerk of Trustees, Treasurer, Safeguarding Coordinator are specifically requested in the survey)	5	12
Charities that have not fulfilled key roles and then fail to report in the following year	3	No data
Consistent failure to report to the charity regulator on time and / or send their trustees annual report and accounts (TARA) to BYM	2	5

Measure	2025	2024
Charities that fail to send an annual return to BYM	11	7
Safeguarding <i>(number of charities)</i>		
The number of AMs that are not registered with a specialist safeguarding support organisation such as 31:8 or VolunteerScot	4	6
Policy and risk management <i>(combined across 4 key policies, data, h&s, complaints, lettings)</i>		
The percentage of charities that do not have key policies does not rise	23%	32%
No increase in the number of charities telling us that policies are developed locally	37%	No data
Record keeping		
There is no increase in the number of charities that are consistently telling us that they do not think they are keeping records well	5	8

Update on Memorandum of Understanding between Quaker charities

Background

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the constituent charitable bodies of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain was agreed by Meeting for Sufferings in October 2023. Its purpose was to clarify existing relationships and duties.

Update for area meetings

As of now, the following 9 area meetings have not signed the MoU: Cumbria, Hampshire & Islands, Northumbria, South East London, South London, Sussex West, Swarthmoor (SW Cumbria), Thaxted, West Weald. All of these area meetings are involved with conversations about governance change and we anticipate that some will opt to close their charities within the next 12-24 months. Area meetings that have not signed but expect to continue as independent charities into the longer term are asked to contact Sarah Donaldson (sarahd@quaker.org.uk) to discuss any support they may need.

Update for other Quaker charities

General Meeting for Scotland previously signed the MoU and Quakers in Scotland will now need to do so, as will Cymar and Young Friends General Meeting. Staff will be in touch with these bodies to ensure they are clear on what is required of them.

Proposed minor amendments

The MoU was drafted with the expectation that it would be 'held' by Meeting for Sufferings. In preparation for the laying down of Sufferings, the Deputy Recording Clerk (Siobhán Haire) has reviewed the MoU to see if significant changes are required at this time. No substantive changes are proposed but the references to Meeting for Sufferings will need to be amended. The Deputy Recording Clerk will follow the procedure set out for amending the MoU (in section 4) and will work with Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) to prepare a revised version. If QLCC agree that there are no substantive changes, then the MoU will be amended accordingly. If they consider that the proposed changes are substantive, then they will need to be passed to Yearly Meeting for consideration.

Sarah Donaldson
November 2025

Group to review the process for Quaker Recognised Bodies: report on findings and recommendations

Summary

This report considers ways in which the process of registration and re-registration of Quaker Recognised Bodies (QRBs) need to be amended.

QRBs form an important part of the wider Quaker network of activity outside of the formal structures of Local and Area Meetings and Yearly Meeting (YM). Recent discernment across a range of areas at both Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) and YM suggests that this importance is only growing.

QRBs are extremely varied in their nature, and include campaigning groups, charities distributing funding, educational institutions and mutual support groups, among others. They are independent of Britain Yearly Meeting and exist as autonomous groups, but bear a degree of responsibility to uphold Quaker testimonies. *Quaker faith & practice* 13.19 states:

‘The bodies are seen as arising from Quaker faith, and provide a way in which conviction and witness can be explored and developed outside our formal structures... [they] are reminded of the responsibility to uphold our testimonies, and that care is needed in case the work or witness of the group is understood to be part of the yearly meeting’s corporate activity when it is not.’

Overall, the QRB process works well and QRBs greatly appreciate being recognised as such by BYM. However, the current process places significant demands on a single staff member, who plays a central role at present in both applications and renewals.

Currently, MfS plays a vital role in recognising and renewing QRBs. This will come to an end in 2026, so Yearly Meeting will need to take on this responsibility. We believe this creates a wonderful opportunity to embrace QRBs and to make this process more transparent, while enabling QRBs to play a more central role in the life of BYM, helping to invigorate and energise the wider Quaker community.

Serious difficulties can arise in renewal if, during the process, the status of a QRB is questioned. Currently, there is no clear process for raising, receiving or resolving such challenges. This can result in significant and disproportionate expenditure of staff time. This report suggests several alternative solutions.

The report is in four sections:

1. remit and approach;
2. review of current process and recommendations for improvement;
3. integrating the QRB process into new Yearly Meeting structures;
4. Summary of recommendations.

1. Remit and approach

An initial review of the process for registering Quaker Recognised Bodies was held in late 2024, reporting to MfS on 7 December 2024. That group concluded that a full review of QRB registration and re-registration was necessary, to explore issues around registration guidelines, application form/process, and decision-making processes. The group presented a set of terms of reference for a review group. Sufferings accepted these findings and terms of reference (minute MfS/24/12/08).

The present group was appointed in the March 2025 MfS and consists of four Friends: Andrew Bird (convenor), Ivan Hutnik, Magnus Ramage and Jenny Tipping; with support from Isobel Cockburn (staff member).

1.1. Purpose of the group

In its terms of reference, the group was established to fulfil five tasks:

- consider the purpose of registration and the system of Quaker Recognised Bodies (QRBs);
- review the guidelines and criteria for registration and re-registration as a QRB;
- review the application form;
- review the information provided to Meeting for Sufferings to aid its discernment;
- clarify any approval process after Meeting for Sufferings is laid down in 2026 in conjunction with staff supporting the transition from Meeting for Sufferings to a continuing Yearly Meeting.

1.2. Approach followed

The review group has met nine times, all through Zoom. Following the terms of reference, we agreed at our first meeting to follow three phases:

1. information gathering;
2. reviewing the current process in light of info received; and
3. making recommendations and preparing a final report.

The first phase, information gathering, was principally focused on the preparation and administration of a survey of existing QRBs (see the following section) and interviews with key staff members: Michael Booth, Church Government Adviser, who manages the registration and staff link process; and Sarah Donaldson, Senior Change Leader: Quaker Governance and member of Management Meeting.

Although we considered conducting interviews or focus groups with QRB clerks/convenors/committees, this was not possible in the time available.

1.3. Survey of existing QRBs

We agreed to conduct an online survey that would be sent to all existing QRBs and would cover the following areas:

- The application process
- The renewal process

- Relationship between QRBs and Britain Yearly Meeting
- Purpose of being a QRB
- Final thoughts

There were 19 questions in total, a mixture of multiple choice and free-text.

BYM staff hold contact details for the clerk, or other named contact, for each QRB. Through these contacts, all existing QRBs were sent an invitation to complete the survey along with a link. The survey was open from 14 April to 15 June (to allow sufficient time, as this period included BYM in May, at which many QRBs had a presence). 80 QRBs were invited to complete the survey, and 39 completed it (a response rate of 49%). In some cases, the current committee had changed since registration or re-registration and there was little memory of how the process had worked.

Key findings from the survey were as follows:

- A majority of respondents (51%) found the application process to be moderately easy, easy or really easy.
- Almost all (93%) found that the application form was an appropriate length.
- Almost half of respondents felt supported by staff in the process; most of the rest didn't seek assistance.
- Although most QRBs were registered more than three years ago (80%), few of them are aware of having been through a re-registration process. Those which had been through re-registration found it to be straightforward (with staff support).
- All QRBs have a link staff member, and 75% of respondents were aware of who their link staff member is. Most respondents were happy with the support they received from their staff link member, although around one-third had little or no contact with them.
- Asked about the main role of their link staff member, by far the commonest response was: 'to provide a connection between BYM and the QRB'. The next commonest responses were: 'to answer general queries', and 'providing guidance on how to access support from BYM and externally'.
- Asked about the group's intention in becoming a QRB, three responses were most common: 'to be seen as credible by Quakers, BYM and Meeting for Sufferings'; 'to provide a formal link to BYM and be recognised as part of its structure'; and 'to share our work with the wider Quaker world and raise our profile'.
- In terms of what groups have gained from being a QRB, the single most popular response was 'credibility and recognition', followed by 'ability to participate in Yearly Meeting', 'a formal link to BYM' and 'sharing our work with the wider Quaker world and raising our profile'.
- Asked what BYM could be providing QRBs that isn't currently offered, the single commonest response was 'nothing'. Other responses included: 'regular

and proactive contact and support', 'opportunities to advertise the group's work more widely', and 'more consistent relationship with staff'.

- We asked about sources of funding. A minority of responses (40%) answered the question. Of these, 60% did not feel that being a QRB had affected their ability to seek funding, while 40% felt that it had given them credibility.

Lastly, we allowed space for further thoughts. Some of these responses were confidential or very specific to particular QRBS and are not included. Some of the more general points included:

- 'It would be very useful to understand the possible direct contribution of QRBS to YM. How can Quakers in Britain best maximise the amazing work that so many QRBS do, and support/network/publicise these?'
- 'We think QRBS have a great deal to offer and that many Friends (especially newcomers) would benefit from knowing about them and contributing to the work.'
- 'I had thought, given the documentation we received when we became a QRB, that there would be more contact and maybe checking.'
- 'I was very surprised when our QRB status was renewed by Sufferings, when I as Clerk had not been asked to provide any update or evidence.'
- 'It feels that there is more to explore and that the full potential has not as yet, been realised, and we continue to work with our Quaker "Link person" to fulfil our potential.'
- 'This is a conversation-starter, and a stimulus of curiosity. Quaker outreach at its best as 'our lives speak', creating opportunities for discussion and connection.'
- 'It's a privilege to be one of this group of Quaker enthusiasts!'
- 'I think they are a good thing, so let's keep them going.'

2. Review of current process and recommendations for improvement

This report examines each stage of the QRB process in the sequence that they take place, from initial application through to review and wider communication to Yearly Meeting. Suggestions are made throughout for how the current process might be enhanced. What will be required from YM now that MfS is being laid down is discussed in more detail in Section 3.

2.1.1. QRB application process

Currently this takes significant senior staff time. By improving the form and the process, much of the front-end of the task could be managed by more junior staff.

2.1.2. Application form

Current process: This is a solid form and is adequate for the current process but could be improved to provide those reviewing the application with sufficient

information to make a decision in cut and dried cases, as well as to provide extra information for the Quakers in Britain website.

Information on the purpose of QRBs, alongside the criteria for acceptance, is currently included in 'QRBs: an introduction', a document which is issued alongside the application form. It is not explicitly requested in the form itself, though applicants could choose to include it in the 'additional information' section.

Recommendation: This group suggests that the below information could be requested as part of an application form to support decision making.

- In what way is the organisation/body seeking to express and realise Quaker values as they see them? E.g. transparent and ethical processes and funding, in addition to the work of the group.
- What led the body to be formed initially?
- How has it evolved over the time of its existence?

2.1.3. Criteria for acceptance

Current process: The document 'QRBs an introduction', available on the Quaker website, explains that a group is eligible to register as a QRB if "its Quaker values and witness are upheld through its objectives, governance and arrangements". The document gives some examples of the sorts of objectives that might be pursued, as well as examples of what Quaker governance and arrangements might entail.

Recommendation: There is not a single clear checklist of criteria that a potential group might be able to work through to help them determine if they would be likely to be accepted. Such a list would be helpful to those groups considering registration and would also provide useful guidance if the case is unclear or gives rise to disagreement.

We suggest that:

- The criteria should be largely measurable based on answers to the form: this should include length of time in existence, size of group, that the group includes Quakers, governance structure, finances and purpose.
- The applicant group must also demonstrate a commitment to Quaker values. More work will be needed to make measurable criteria around Quaker values, however *Quaker faith & practice*'s statement that 'All groups or bodies using the name 'Quaker' or 'Friends' in their title are reminded of the responsibility to uphold our testimonies' (13.19) may be useful here. QRBs should be willing and able to keep up with the changing discernment of BYM in relation to Quaker values.
- These criteria could be incorporated into an application form to enable prospective QRBs to assess their own suitability prior to applying, as well as aiding staff and Friends in decision-making.

- It might be appropriate to include a consideration of safeguarding here to ensure that the prospective group has considered this. The review group is aware that any checking or auditing of this would have significant resource implications, so this would largely rely on trust.

2.1.4. Application screening

Current process: This process is currently managed by staff. Applications that are ready for decision are then passed to MfS.

Recommendation: Following our consultation with staff, we recommend that the processing of the form should follow a clear and defined process, and that the initial part of the review be carried out by more junior staff. Where there are questions regarding the application, these should be forwarded to the more senior staff responsible for QRBs.

2.1.5. Follow-up conversation with staff

Current process: At present all applicants undergo a phone call with a senior staff member to enable their application to be passed on to MfS.

Recommendation: A revised process should ensure that a conversation between the applicants and staff is only necessary on the rare occasions where there is lack of clarity in the responses entered in the form. This would be the responsibility of the more senior staff.

2.1.6. Approval of application

Current process: Currently, following the staff review, if the application meets the criteria for becoming a QRB, it goes before Meeting for Sufferings for discernment and approval. This will come to an end in 2026. Discussions with staff made it clear that in the vast majority of cases, when judged against the criteria, it is relatively clear to senior staff whether or not a body should be awarded QRB status or not. The majority of staff time is therefore spent on deciding a relatively small number of cases. We recognise that conflicts can take up a great deal of staff time and cause distress for all those involved.

Recommendation: We envisage that there could be four different approaches to replace the current process (this is discussed in more detail in Section 3 below):

- A. The QRB application process could be managed entirely by staff, the QRB approval being noted in the documentation and minutes of YM. The advantage of this approach is its simplicity. The disadvantage of this is that disputes will be difficult to manage to every Friend's satisfaction and would result in QRBs being less visible to Friends.
- B. The screened application could be brought to a "fringe meeting" or preparatory meeting of YM for review. This could provide an opportunity to highlight and celebrate the work of the QRB, particularly when it comes to renewal of QRB status (see below for further detail on how this might work).

However, preparatory meetings are not full meetings of YM, and therefore do not have the authority to make decisions.

- C. A new and separate body could be established to review applications. This might comprise BYM staff, YM clerks or members of the Agenda Planning Committee, as well as members of established QRBs. There may be some disquiet about creating a new committee when YM has discerned a simplification of structures.
- D. Applications could go to YM in the same way as they currently go to MfS for decision, but with an improved pre-approval process as outlined in the recommendations above to make the process more streamlined. This could take up a lot of valuable YM time, or end up as the same 'rubber-stamping' exercise as at present. This would require some further consideration by Agenda Planning Committee (APC).

The group feels that a combination of points B and D could have merit, whereby preparatory threshing meetings are held to consider QRB applications, but the ultimate decision is reserved for YM. This is considered in more detail in section 3.

2.2. Renewal of QRB status

Currently, this is a simple but sometimes lengthy process.

QRBs are generally required to renew once every five years for established groups, and after two or three years for new groups. The staff link person (see below for more detail) for the QRB is responsible for reminding the group of their need to renew their QRB status. Not all QRBs are aware of this requirement. Currently, the renewal is not given sufficient priority or gets overlooked by the QRB itself or the staff link, and so can become a somewhat lengthy process.

Current process: The task in renewal is to ensure that the QRB continues to fulfil its initial remit and that it remains healthy in terms of its membership, activities, funding and governance.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the renewal process should be simplified wherever possible. Further improvements to the renewal process might include one or more of the following:

- Ensuring the task is the responsibility of a limited number of staff, rather than the link person to the QRB. This will help ensure timely completion of the process.
- A separate form for renewal might be created that focuses on the pertinent aspects of the renewal, highlighting changes and developments since the initial QRB application, as well as its achievements over the past 5 years. This could help make the renewal a matter of celebration and opportunity for review for the QRB, not mere formality. It should also include an opportunity for both the QRB and BYM to check that the group continues to align with Quaker values.

- Providing early notice to the Quaker community of the intention to renew QRB status in YM documentation.

2.3. Staff links

Current process: A number of staff, in a wide variety of roles, currently act as link persons between BYM and QRBs. What this role entails in practice appears to vary widely, depending on the nature of the QRB and its needs, the experience of the link person, and their ability to dedicate time to this activity. In the best cases, the link person provides a vital role in ensuring that the QRB knows where and how to access information available across BYM. In some cases, it appears, the link person has little or no contact with the QRB except at the times of application and renewal. This lack of contact can lead to QRBs assuming low priority, resulting in problems of ensuring timely renewal.

Recommendation: Staff do not have ‘spare time’ to devote to this activity. If the link person is to play a useful role, this should be accounted for and budgeted within their job description. Alternatively, Management Meeting could be asked if it would be possible to make management of QRBs a specific part of someone’s role. This would have financial implications.

3. Integrating the QRB process into new Yearly Meeting structures

Meeting for Sufferings will be laid down, and thus its role in the QRB approvals and renewal process will cease, after May 2026. This requires that the current process be supplemented and adjusted. This section makes recommendations for how the QRB process might be integrated into YM after May.

3.1. Managing challenges

It is important to have a robust process by which applications can be challenged. Quaker Recognised Bodies which are not aligned with Quaker values hold the potential to cause reputational risk to BYM. However, it is also important that we leave enough flexibility to make the most of QRBs’ freedom to follow leadings, which may contribute to the future spiritual life of the community.

Current process: There is a lack of clarity around the process of challenging an application. Currently, the right of a QRB to establish or renew its status can in principle only be challenged by MfS, but in reality can be questioned more broadly. There is nothing wrong in this as such, but it can make the review process lengthy and fraught with difficulty. This has in some cases taken up a large amount of staff time.

Recommendation: Challenges should be substantiated. This may be by indicating that a group is not in alignment with Quaker values, *Quaker faith & practice* or minutes discerned by Yearly Meeting. In certain cases this may involve, for example, questioning a group’s financial probity, which has a clear reputational risk to BYM. It

should also be recognised that QRBs may have a leading to test that is not yet part of the established discipline of YM. The work and in particular the processes of any QRB should nonetheless be in line with the current discipline of BYM as discerned from time to time.

The following suggestions are designed to improve and streamline the process when a QRB's status has been challenged:

- A. The criteria for acceptance should explicitly recognise how the QRB views its Quaker values and how this fits with BYM's purpose (see Section 2: criteria for acceptance). This should help define whether a challenge is legitimate or not and may satisfy the challenger. If the values and processes of the group are acceptable to BYM and its purpose fits with that of BYM, then the challenge cannot be sustained. The nature of BYM itself changes over time. It is recognised here that 'Quaker values' is a loose term and there is wide variation in their interpretation.
- B. When there is a serious challenge over financial, ethical, safeguarding or reputational matters, staff time needs to be supplemented in some manner. This could involve speaking to groups individually or instigating mediation. We have three suggestions as to how this might be achieved:
 - I. Nominations could appoint a standing group that includes staff and QRB members among others, and which could be drawn upon as necessary (see 'Supporting staff in the QRB process' below for more detail).
 - II. BYM to appoint an ad hoc group when this becomes necessary, drawing on a similar mix of representatives as in (i).
 - III. The matter could be addressed by the Recording Clerk and Trustees. In some circumstances this might be essential; in all cases Trustees will need to be kept informed as they are ultimately responsible for managing organisational risk.
 - IV. A similar group could be appointed, albeit solely to deal with cases in conflict; this could be appointed on an ad hoc basis, as and when needed. It should be noted that it might be more difficult to gather a suitable group at short notice.
- C. It is possible for these matters to be brought before Yearly Meeting, however we foresee issues with this around the substantial preparation required by staff ahead of discernment. In some challenging cases, however, we recognise that it may be necessary for YM to discern a path forward.
- D. We also recommend that the process for dealing with challenges, once clarified, appears on the application form so that new or renewing QRBs have agreed to and are aware of it.

3.2. Decision-making: preparatory (threshing) meetings and QRBs at YM

Yearly Meeting, because it will meet four times a year once MfS has been laid down, offers potential to give more time for Friends to consider the recognition of QRBs and the renewal of QRB status. However, YM sessions will likely have a lot of priorities, and may not have capacity for more than a cursory consideration of QRB applications. While recognising that preparatory meetings do not have decision-making authority, we do feel they hold value as spaces to give time and attention to the consideration of QRBs, rather than placing these matters within the tight agenda of a single day meeting.

Recommendation: Such sessions could be held as threshing meetings. They would require an elder to be appointed, a convenor to manage the practicalities of hosting and items brought forward, and would be open to all but not compulsory for any. At these meetings, new or existing QRBs would be invited to share what they do, the values that underlie this work, and their aspirations. It would give Friends the opportunity to explore such work, asking questions of the QRB. This might feel more like a celebration than an examination. They would also create a space in which challenges could be aired and discerned, lightening the load for main YM sessions and for staff.

Quaker faith & practice 3.26 explains the value of these smaller meetings in supporting business meetings to take decisions: 'The discussion of such matters in small groups, properly constituted, can help to involve the whole meeting and prepare it for decisions which must eventually be taken in the regular meeting for church affairs.'

No formal minutes would come from these meetings, but notes could be used to inform YM decision-making.

Applications could then be taken to YM in a similar way to the present process with MfS, but would be bolstered and supported by the discernment undertaken by the threshing meeting.

3.3. Communications

The role of Meeting for Sufferings in alerting AMs to the approvals and renewals of QRBs comes to an end in 2026. While many QRBs undertake their own communications activities, it might be helpful for BYM itself to communicate more about their activities. Integrating such news of QRB achievements into the broader life of the Quaker community could help invigorate and energise it. This could include some or all of the following:

- Enhancing the QRB section on the Quakers in Britain website to include greater detail of their objectives, membership and values. QRBs themselves would need to provide the information. There would likely need to be an agreed template or format for them to use.
- Recording significant scheduled activities in the calendar of the website and in social media posts.

- Continuing to hold preparatory or ‘fringe’ meetings as part of Yearly Meeting, or as part of YM in session.
- Including updates of QRB activities among the news in Quaker outlets, such as *Quake!* and other publications.

4. Summary of recommendations

This report has been written as a comprehensive reflection of the work of the Review Group and its discernment about the possible future of QRB application and renewal processes. Detailed recommendations are throughout, but a summary of recommendations has been included below for clarity:

Our recommendations are that:

- The application form is revised to make explicit additional information needed from applicants.
- More work should be carried out to clarify ‘Quaker values’ for the purpose of determining the extent to which QRBs are in line with them. More opportunity should be given to QRBs to communicate how these values are reflected in their work.
- An expanded application form should reduce the onus on senior staff members to gather information on prospective QRBs, and much of the application stage could therefore be held by a junior member of staff.
- The renewal form should be similarly improved to make clear its purpose. The administration of this should be improved to ensure timely renewal: this may be done by placing the responsibility on a junior member of staff rather than spreading responsibility between staff links.
- All QRB applications or renewals should be able to be discussed at a designated YM preparation meeting (to be held as a threshing meeting). These would be an opportunity for celebration as well as challenge.
- YM should ultimately have responsibility for approving or rejecting applications.
- BYM should make an increased effort to promote the work of QRBs.

Andrew Bird, Ivan Hutnik, Magnus Ramage, Jenny Tipping
November 2025

At a meeting of

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Held Tuesday 25 (evening), Wednesday 26 (evening), and 28 November (daytime) 2025, by video conference

Minutes

Present: Catherine Brown, Lis Burch (minutes BYMT/25/11/01 to BYMT/25/11/12b), Kit Fotheringham (minutes BYMT/25/11/06 to BYMT/25/11/12b), Ursula Fuller (minutes BYMT/25/11/01 to BYMT/25/11/05, BYMT/25/11/08 onwards), Jo Hills (minutes BYMT/25/11/01 to BYMT/25/11/18), Chris Jardine, Marisa Johnson (Clerk), Kit King (Assistant Clerk), Liz Law, Silas Price (BYMT/25/11/01 to BYMT/25/11/05 and BYMT/25/11/08 onwards), Elizabeth Redfern, Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer)

Prevented: John Lewis, Ruth McTighe

In attendance: Sarah Donaldson, Senior Change Leader: Quaker Governance; Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk (minutes BYMT/25/11/01 to BYMT/25/11/07 and BYMT/11/13 to BYMT/11/18); Vipan Narang, Finance Director; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk; Lisa San Martín, CEO Quiet Company

BYMT/25/11/01 Welcome and Introductions, Agenda Check, Conflicts of Interest Check

During our opening worship, we heard read an extract from Quaker faith & practice 20:36:

I wish I might emphasise how a life becomes simplified when dominated by faithfulness to a few concerns. Too many of us have too many irons in the fire. We get distracted by the intellectual claim to our interest in a thousand and one good things, and before we know it we are pulled and hauled breathlessly along by an over-burdened programme of good committees and good undertakings.

Acceptance of service on a weighty committee should really depend upon an answering imperative within us, not merely upon a rational calculation of the factors involved.

And we learn to say No as well as Yes by attending to the guidance of inner responsibility. Quaker simplicity needs to be expressed not merely in dress and architecture and height of tombstones but also in the structure of a relatively simplified and co-ordinated life-programme of social responsibilities.
Thomas R Kelly, 1941

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.
We have considered our agenda.
We receive a list of continuing minutes.

BYMT/25/11/02 Minutes Received

We receive the following minutes:

Minutes received

- Kingston & Wandsworth Area Meeting July, Separated Minute
- Yearly Meeting Transition Project Board July Minutes
- BYMT Internal Audit & Risk Committee September minutes
- QLCC September Minutes
- QLCC Separated Minute re PPC Nominations
- QPSWCC September minutes
- QPSWCC Separated Minute re PPC Nominations
- Reparations Working Group September Minutes
- APC October Minutes
- Agenda Planning Committee October, Separated Minute
- Quiet Company Board October Minutes
- Yearly Meeting Transition Project Board October Minutes

We ask that the Recording Clerk to respond to the minute from Kingston & Wandsworth Area Meeting on our behalf.

BYMT/25/11/03 Items taken on draft minute

- a. We note that our Annual Return and Accounts for the Year Ending 31 December 2024 have been submitted to the Charity Commission.
- b. We have reviewed and note the Gold Minutes recorded during 2024.
- c. We have reviewed the Scheme of Delegation and approve the updates and changes made since the last review. The next review will be in 2027.

BYMT/25/11/04 BYMT Governing Document and Terms of Reference Revision

We receive an updated note, following our September meeting, recommending updates to the terms of reference (ToR) for BYM Trustees necessary to take account of the laying down of Meeting for Sufferings. We note also proposed changes to the BYM Governing Document in light of legal advice received on the draft agreed at our September meeting (minute BYMT/25/09/03).

We support these recommendations and ask staff to prepare the revised documents to be laid before Yearly Meeting in session in May 2026.

We send this minute to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, with the accompanying papers.

BYMT/25/11/05 Clerk's Report

We receive our Clerks' report.

BYMT/25/11/06 Recording Clerk's report & performance dashboard

We receive the Recording Clerk's report and performance dashboard, which covered a vast range of work areas across BYM and the Quiet Company.

We heard that there is a high level of concern in civil society about its ability to be effective due to external pressures. We are pleased to hear of the publication by the government of the Civil Society Covenant, along with a joint board to oversee its implementation. We are saddened to hear of the withdrawal of the Sheila McKechnie Foundation and Bond from this area of work within the sector. We welcome the news that staff are exploring opportunities for funding to enable BYM to pick up some of the work that Bond was doing on campaigning, policy influence, and right to protest.

We welcome information about the support that Area Meetings that are considering their future are receiving from staff.

We thank the staff who have contributed to the report and answered our questions.

BYMT/25/11/07 Memorandum of understanding with Woodbrooke

We receive a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between BYM and Woodbrooke prepared for us by staff of both organisations. We note that the document will be supplemented by several appendices relating to individual projects in due course and ask staff to complete these.

Woodbrooke trustees approved the MoU at their meeting on 22nd November 2025.

We approve the proposed MoU, as amended to clarify the point on secondments, and look forward to receiving annual reports covering all aspects of this partnership from next year.

BYMT/25/11/08 Opening worship

We reopened the second part of our meeting with a period of worship. We heard in ministry a call to stay centred in our work and answer what Love requires of us.

BYMT/25/11/09 Finance, IT & Property reports

a. 2025 Quarter 3 report

We receive the finance reports for Q3 2025. Vipin Narang, Finance Director, spoke to the report.

Income is better than budgeted and includes a legacy of £1.5M. The Quiet Company's contribution is below budget, but significantly higher than in the same period last year. The increase in staff costs is due to the increase in employers' contributions to National Insurance and the use of agency staff to provide additional capacity at times. Progress is being made on recovery of old outstanding debts owed to BYM.

We thank staff for the careful preparation of this report.

b. Minutes of Finance, IT & Property Committee

We receive the minutes from the FIPC meeting which took place on 10 November 2025, noting that the committee recommends the proposed budget for 2026 which is before Trustees at this meeting.

Catherine Brown, clerk of FIPC, spoke to the paper and drew our attention to the IT strategy, and the issues of cloud-first infrastructure and cyber security that are being further looked into. In future there will be more work done to improve the evaluation of grants made to other bodies. We are impressed that the return on investment of resources in fundraising stands at £9 received for every £1 spent on fundraising, even with the allocation of overheads in the calculations. This is significantly higher than the sector standard and due to the generous donations given by Friends in response to being made aware of the need to support the work.

We are pleased to hear that a business continuity plan is in place to mitigate against a number of risks.

We thank the committee for their work.

BYMT/25/11/10 Budget 2026

We receive the proposed budget for 2026 and thank staff for their work in preparing it. We note Finance, IT & Property Committee minute FIPC/25/54(c) which recommends acceptance.

We note that the budget shows an unrestricted deficit of £1.02m (2025 forecast £1.04m), with a total deficit (restricted and unrestricted funds) of £2.75m (2025 forecast £1.46m). The proposed capital budget totals £1.8m and will be subject to further scrutiny by Finance, IT & Property Committee as funds are required to be released.

This budget is part of the process to achieve a balanced budget by the end of 2028. For 2027, further reductions in expenditure have been identified.

We approve the budget.

BYMT/25/11/11 Operational Plan 2026-2028

We receive the proposed Operational Plan for 2026-2028 and thank staff for the work that has gone into it.

We note that the Operational Plan is more closely aligned with the risk register and the budget, making the planning process more efficient and holistic.

We approve the plan.

BYMT/25/11/12 Changes to investment governance

a. Revised Investment Policy Statement (IPS)

In Minute BYMT/25/09/06(c) we approved a revised IPS and asked for some changes to be made. We have now received a report BYMT 2025 11 11a and our Treasurer has spoken to it.

We note that the wording has been changed to make it easier to understand.

We agree the policy, subject to the following amendment. We wish to expand the sentence excluding companies which profit from the illegal occupation of Palestine to include all companies which profit from conflicts and situations in breach of international law. This would include profits from the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the Russian occupation of parts of Ukraine, and similar situations in other parts of the world.

We have already recognised that in our complex world we cannot truthfully guarantee that our investments have zero exposure to the areas which give us concern.

This exclusion would therefore be added the list of companies which derive no more than 5% of their annual revenue from the excluded activities and in which we do not knowingly invest.

We thank the working group for developing this document and adopt the new statement.

b. Appointment of Investment Managers (Equities)

FIPC by its Minute FIPC 25/27 recommends that we approve the appointment of Royal London Global Sustainable Equity Fund as managers of our equity investments.

We appreciate that there will be risks as well as benefits by moving away from the discretionary management which we have been used to, but in the light of our experience we consider that this is the right decision. We note that it will be carefully explained to Friends. We agree to this recommendation.

c. Terms of Reference of the Investment Committee

We have considered these Terms of Reference (Paper BYMT 2025 11 11b) and approve them. We ask the Recording Clerk to appoint a member of staff as secretary to the committee.

We note that FIPC has agreed to the appointment of Nicola Parker as our investment consultant for 2026.

d. Appointment of Investment Managers (Fixed Interest)

We note that the Investment Committee will be meeting on Friday 5 December to consider tenders to manage our fixed income investments. We agree to deal with their recommendation by the between-meetings process.

BYMT/25/11/13 Worship

We reopened our meeting with a period of worship. We heed the call to prayer which we hear in different ways in our lives and ask ourselves what this call requires us to do.

BYMT/25/11/14 Risk management – biannual review

We receive a report summarising our risk picture following the latest, 6-monthly review of our risk register. We find the presentation of the risk register and review paper to be useful and accessible and thank staff for their hard work on this. We agree that we should continue to look at the balance between strategic and operational risks in the way we record the risks in order to ensure that we can focus clearly on those risks which most need attention at trustee level.

We note that further work is scheduled with Management Meeting and Operational Managers to moderate scores and granularity, but we welcome the progress made in engaging with risk in our planning and budgeting.

We ask staff to bring a small number of strategic risk areas to a future BYMT meeting for an in-depth look.

BYMT/25/11/15 Strategic Priorities

We receive a paper reporting on the work to update our strategic priorities for the coming five-year period. This draft takes into account comments and questions raised by Meeting for Sufferings at their meeting in October.

We agree to forward this draft to Quaker Life Central Committee and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee for their review, hoping to receive feedback from them by our February meeting.

BYMT/25/11/16 Communications & Fundraising Report

We receive a report from David Loxton, Head of Communications and Fundraising, summarising the work to deliver against our Communications Strategy in the past year.

We are pleased to hear about the high level of achievement of the Communications and Fundraising team and thank staff for their work.

BYMT/25/11/17 Theology of Trans Inclusion

Following our discussion in September, we gladly receive a minute (QCCIR/25/11/17) from Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations and a revised paper on the Theology of Trans Inclusion, together with the communications plan requested from staff.

We note that this paper will be before Meeting for Sufferings on 6 December and await their discernment as to the next steps.

We thank the committee for their hard work in preparing these documents, and we thank staff for the communications plan.

BYMT/25/11/18 Reparations Working Group

We receive the latest annual report from the Reparations Working Group. The Group has been working tirelessly over the last year on this multi-faceted work. We are pleased to hear that work continues nationally and regionally around the Yearly Meeting, as well as with other churches and Quaker meetings in the UK, the Americas, and Africa.

We agree to extend the period of work for the Working Group to the end of 2027.

Whilst we await firm proposals from the group as to our approach to making reparation, we agree to offer the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Pan-Afrikan Reparations use of Friends House for their annual conference once each year until at least 2033 (the bicentenary of abolition in the UK) in addition to those held at Friends House in the last three years. This would be a gift in kind with an equivalent financial value of around £250,000 over this period and will mean that the APPG will not have to reapply each year. We are conscious of the privilege that enables us to make such an offer, and the continuing impact of colonial influences on philanthropic giving, which we are keen to move away from.

BYMT/25/11/19 Health, Safety & Environmental Committee Annual Report

We receive the Health, Safety, and Environmental Committee annual report for 2025.

We have heard that the Estates & Facilities team have been making progress on improving compliance at Friends House, the Yorkshire Centre, and Swarthmoor Hall. A Health and Safety Strategy is also in development for presentation to FIPC and to the QC Board with a view to having it ready for implementation during 2026.

We are pleased to hear about the work being done to strengthen our approach to contractor safety and compliance and the introduction of quarterly Fire Warden sessions, and to know that a thorough review of our risk assessments has been undertaken.

We were saddened to hear of the RIDDOR-reportable incident that occurred at Swarthmoor Hall earlier in the year, when one of our volunteers experienced a medical emergency on site, and died shortly after. We are reassured that the Health Service Executive (HSE) did not deem any action necessary, and that staff have taken time since the incident to reflect on the lessons learned and put together a formal Fatal Incident Response and Reporting (Including RIDDOR Reporting to HSE) procedure.

We are heartened to hear of a new Net Carbon Reduction plan, and a new scheme

for reporting carbon emissions quarterly to include, from this year, food, drink, paper usage, and travel.

We are glad to hear of work being done to improve the culture around first-aid, as something vital to not only the peer-to-peer protection of staff and ensuring the safety of visitors to our buildings, but it allows us to be prepared should an incident occur in our day-to-day lives.

We thank the committee for their report.

BYMT/25/11/20 Nominations

We receive the following nominations from our Nominations Group:

Internal Audit and Risk Committee (IARC)

- Tina Leonard (Oxford & Swindon AM), renominated to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028

Employment Committee

- Tony Clodd, to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028 as representative of the Quiet Company Board
- Chris Jardine, to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028
- We receive a request for release with immediate effect from John Lewis

Finance, IT, and Property Committee (FIPC)

- Catherine Brown, renominated to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2027
- Steve Pullan, renominated to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2027
- Jo Hills, renominated to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028

Clerk of Finance, IT, and Property Committee

- We agree to appoint a Co-Clerk of FIPC and ask staff to amend the Terms of Reference accordingly.
- Catherine Brown, renominated to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2026
- Jo Hills, to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2027

Programmes and Prioritisation Committee

- Klaus Huber (Quaker Life CC), to serve from 29 November 2025 to 31 December 2027
- Jonathan Lingham (QPSW CC), to serve from 29 November 2025 to 31 December 2026
- Adam Drury (QPSW CC), to serve from 29 November 2025 to 31 December 2027
- Paul Whitehouse, to serve from 29 November 2025 to 31 dec 2028

Quiet Company Board of Directors

- Lis Burch, to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2027
- Lucy Parker (Norfolk & Waveney AM), to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028

BYMT Elders

- Catherine Brown, to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2026
- Elizabeth Redfern, to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2026

Anti-Oppression Champion

- Liz Law, to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2027

Investment Committee

- Elizabeth Redfern, to serve from 29 November 2025 to 31 December 2028
- Paul Whitehouse (YM Treasurer), to serve from 29 November 2025 to 31 December 2028
- Alastair Jackson (Chair of Friends Trusts Limited), to serve from 29 November 2025 to 31 December 2028
- Two further names to follow to be appointed between meetings if necessary

We agree to these appointments and release and thank Nominations Group for their hard work in bringing us these names.

BYMT/25/11/21 Appointments to Nominations Group

We receive the following nomination from our Clerk and Assistant Clerk, who are asked to find names to serve on our Nominations Group

Nominations group

- Ruth McTighe, to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028

We agree to this appointment and thank our Clerks for their work in bringing us this name.

BYMT/25/11/22 Meeting for Sufferings Preparation

We have prepared for Meeting for Sufferings.

In our preparations, we noted that Meeting for Sufferings in December has on its agenda an application from a group called Sex Matters to Quakers to receive Quaker Recognised Body status. In our view accepting this application would be understood to be an endorsement of their beliefs which are not inclusive nor welcoming of transgender and non-binary people, and thus incompatible with our ability to fully carry out our functions and duties as Trustees in relation to inclusion.

The matter is coming to Meeting for Sufferings for discernment. Trustees are members of MfS and regularly consider the business coming for decision in light of our role in the structure. As the body responsible for ensuring that staff fulfil the will of the Yearly Meeting through the centrally managed work, for safeguarding against

reputational risks to the organisation, agreeing policies as to the use of our facilities, and for employment, Trustees have the following concerns about this application:

- **Realising Yearly Meeting commitments**
 - As trustees we have the responsibility to deliver on Yearly Meeting's commitments in every aspect of the work that comes under our governance.
 - Sustaining our national church is one of our charitable purposes, but this only works if we act on the decisions taken at national level. The principles and practices of Sex Matters to Quakers are in contradiction to the will of the Yearly Meeting expressed in minute 31/2021, and other pronouncements of the Yearly Meeting in session.
- **Organisational reputational risk**
 - Our inclusive policies, which enjoy the overwhelming support of Friends who gave feedback after Yearly Meeting 2025, have been complained about by this group, alleging that the Religious Society of Friends "has been infiltrated by trans activists" and being trans inclusive "would damage the reputation of Quakers and could be the thing that finally destroys them." Our public support for trans inclusion has led to a number of religious and civil society groups citing us as an example of steadfast solidarity at a time that many feel constrained in their ability to be open about their desire to be trans inclusive. Granting Quaker Recognised Body status to this group would undermine the leadership role that Quakers enjoy on inclusion, and indeed the work we are doing to make the Religious Society and society as a whole a safe place for trans and non-binary people. Promoting Quakerism and putting faith into action are two more of our four charitable purposes, and we believe our ability to do effective outreach with young people especially would be affected. Many Quakers are working locally to be more trans-inclusive, and the recognition of this body sends a message that is likely to undermine that.
- **Employment**
 - We have committed to being a trans-inclusive employer (a commitment that was criticised by people involved in Sex Matters to Quakers). We have had in the past, have currently, and are likely to have in future employees undergoing social and/or medical transition. The people we employ may have close family or Friends who are transgender, non-binary or intersex. We have a duty of care towards them, and towards communications staff who have to moderate social media spaces where transphobic discourse is posted. Granting Quaker Recognised Body status to this group will give it a legitimacy which would be deeply troubling to a considerable number of our employees and could cause confusion in others who may feel entitled to disregard our inclusive policies.

Within the text of the application the group describes itself as condemning hostility, exclusion, and harassment, as well as upholding equality and integrity. As a body this is not our experience. This group's public social media presence does not align with its self-description and Trustees, as a body and as individuals, have experienced very hostile interactions with group members.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings and ask that our concerns be considered.

BYMT/25/11/23 Reviewing the meeting

We have reviewed the meeting.

BYMT/25/11/24 Time with the Recording Clerk

We have spent time with the Recording Clerk.

We have heard a proposal for a process to review Management Meeting.

BYMT/25/11/25 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

BYMT/25/11/26 Clerks' offering

Due to the nature of our lives outside of our service as Trustees being busy, we had to split our meeting over two evenings and a morning. Despite the challenges that come with this, the strength of our community enables us to work in alternative ways and the prayerful upholding of one another was felt by all of us, wherever in the world we joined the meeting from.

In the spring of 1683, the Elders and faithful Brethren of Philadelphia wrote the following to Friends in Britain:

*Oh, remember us, for we cannot forget you:
Many waters cannot quench our love,
Nor distance wear out the deep remembrance
of you in the heavenly Truth:
We pray God preserve you in faithfulness,
That, discharging your places and stewardships,
You may be honoured and crowned
with the reward of them that endure to the end.
And though the Lord has been pleased
to remove us far away from you,
as to the other end of the earth,
Yet we are present with you,
Your exercises are ours;
Our hearts are dissolved
in the remembrance of you,
Dear brethren and sisters in this heavenly love.*

*And the Lord of heaven and earth
who is the father of our family,
Keep us in His love and power,
and unite, comfort and build us all,
More and more,
To His eternal praise, and our rejoicing*

Marisa Johnson
Clerk

Kit King
Assistant Clerk

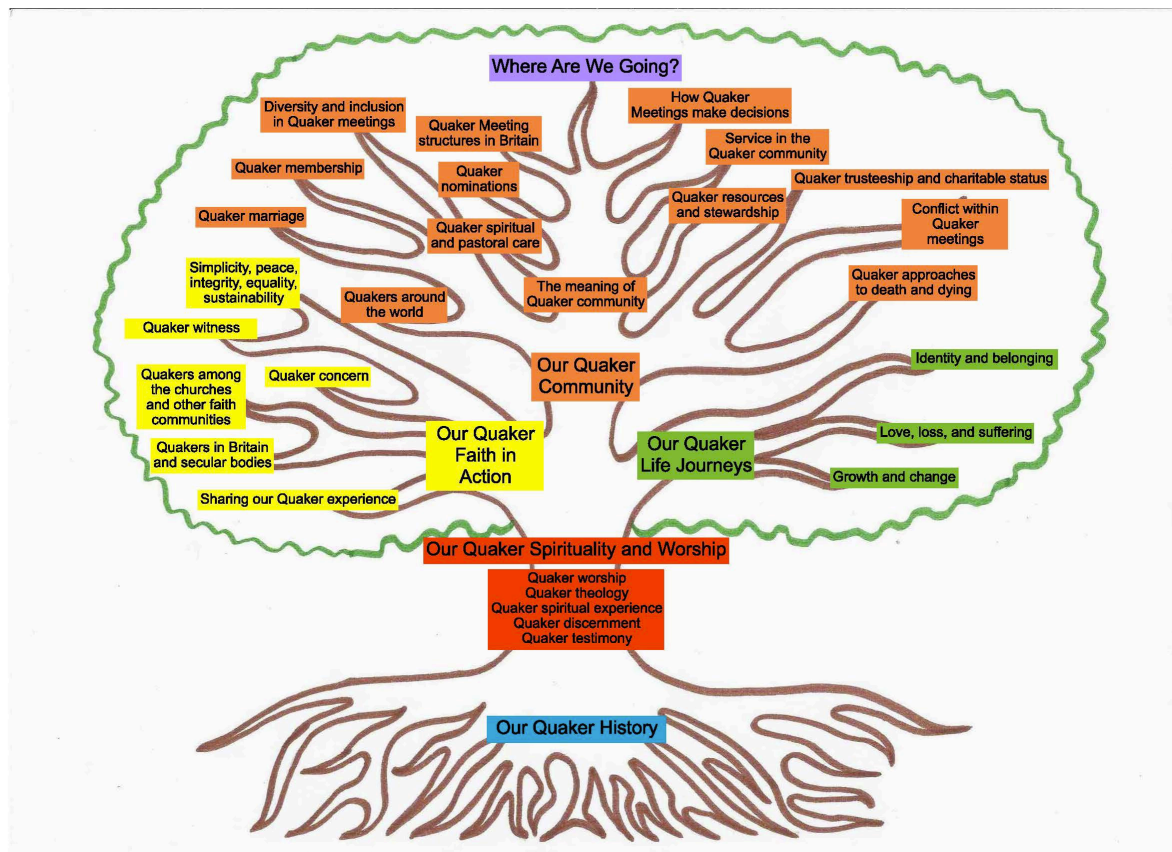
Book of Discipline Revision Committee Sixth report to Meeting for Sufferings:

Introduction

1. This is the sixth annual progress report from the Book of Discipline Revision Committee to Meeting for Sufferings. It is also our last report to you, as future reports will be directly to Yearly Meeting in place of Meeting for Sufferings. We are very grateful to Meeting for Sufferings for all its support to us during our work over the past six years.

Our work so far

2. BDRC is tasked to bring to Yearly Meeting draft text for adoption as BYM's book of discipline, together with proposals for its publication. We are a diverse committee of 24 members now (listed at the end of this report). Since last year's report, two of our members have been released: one following her appointment to a BYM staff role (though we will continue to enjoy her help through that role), and one for health reasons. Two other members have temporarily stepped back from BDRC work. To date we have held 24 meetings of the full committee in person or online, as well as working individually and in small groups.
3. Earlier this year we finished the initial drafting of all the 30 or so discrete major topics to be included as core material in the new book of discipline. We have provisionally structured them in accordance with our vision below of a tree – with spiritual roots nourishing a strong trunk of faith and experience from which grow branches of living communities that can worship, witness and work together. (The detail and layout of this tree structure might change as we complete the editing of the whole book.)



4. During the latter part of 2025 we have been reviewing and refining this overall text to identify gaps, duplication, inconsistencies in content and style, and scope for shortening. Following a recruitment process, an external reader – Craig Barnett (Sheffield & Balby Area Meeting) - was appointed in September under contract for a time-limited period to help us in taking this work forward.

Our next steps

5. Early in 2026, resulting from that work, we anticipate that the Committee will agree a complete first draft of the new book. We will then hand this over to the BYM Publications Team staff (with whom we have been liaising closely) for copy editing and typesetting, ready for publication around the end of 2026. We have, after an extended period of discernment, given the book the working title “Our Quaker Way”, with the sub-title “the spiritual discipline of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain”.
6. This timescale should allow for thorough reading and discussion in preparation for Yearly Meeting in July 2027. We will be asking Friends to “read, reflect and respond”. We are working with the Agenda Planning Committee for YM, Woodbrooke and BYM staff on how this will be supported, which might entail providing various resources, study guides, webinars etc. We expect to share further details of this later in 2026. The text itself should be accompanied by explanatory material on why the book is as it is, the

processes for familiarisation and eventual decision, and proposed arrangements for the separate preparation and authorisation of supplementary material. We envisage that the complete first draft might initially be made available in versions that can be accessed by computer or mobile device, on paper, and (for some parts) to be listened to. Work is in hand on the details of how to achieve this at reasonable cost. We do not expect the complete first draft to be perfect, but we hope it will be good enough to offer to the yearly meeting for your help in improving it.

7. We intend to present:

- a. to YM in July 2027 the complete first draft text of the new Book of Discipline for the start of the process of corporate discernment, engaging Friends with the text and our approach to the book, resulting in clear guidance to BDRC on the next steps; and
- b. (after a period of further revision and engagement in the light of feedback from YM in 2027), to a YM in 2030 a complete final text for adoption.

8. We would like YM in 2027 to give BDRC clear guidance on

- the “voice of the book” (the tone and style of the narrative and explanatory text written by the Committee, alongside anthology quotations from other writers);
- its accessibility;
- whether we have correctly identified the “core” content (the spiritual basis of what we do and why) that must be in the book, and the detail to be published separately as “supplementary material” which can be updated when necessary;
- any gaps needing to be filled or unnecessary material to be removed.

We would then hope to work with Agenda Planning Committee and others on managing the further revision and engagement process after YM in 2027, leading up to preparation of revised text for preparatory consideration by Friends throughout Britain, and eventual presentation of a complete final text and design to a YM in 2030 for adoption and publication. At this point we expect the final version to be available as a website or through other media platforms, as a printed book, as a downloadable pdf or ebook, and as an audio version.

How can Friends get involved?

9. As always you can:

- pray for and uphold the Committee
- look at our webpage at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/resources/quaker-faith-and-practice/revising-quaker-faith-practice>

- contribute to our online creative project “Open to New Light”
<https://padlet.com/bdrc/OpenToNewLight>
- still share ideas for the new book, including telling us of inspirational and helpful pieces of writing. These can be offered using an online form (<https://forms.quaker.org.uk/qfp-idea/>) or by contacting the Committee Secretary by email (qfp@quaker.org.uk) or writing to Friends House
- engage with our social media accounts via Revising Quaker faith & practice pages on
 - facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/revisingqfp/>
 - instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/revisingqfp>

Conclusion

- 10.** We remain hugely grateful to our Secretary and other BYM staff and external consultants for all their work and support for us. We ask Meeting for Sufferings and Friends generally to continue to uphold us.

Rosie Carnall and Catherine Brewer (Co-Clerks), Michael Phipps (Assistant Clerk)
Michael S Booth: Committee Secretary

Other members of the Committee during 2025: Tas Cooper, Ben Pink Dandelion, Joycelin Dawes, Lucy Faulkner-Gawlinski, Rhiannon Grant [released April 2025], Jessica Hubbard-Bailey, Catherine James, Pearl Johns, Jennifer Kavanagh, Sally Kikaya, Stevie Krayner, Michael Long [released October 2025], Matt Moore, Rachel Muers, Anya Nanning Ramamurthy, Finola O'Sullivan, Alastair Reid, Antonia Swinson, Judith Thompson, Nuala Watt, Marcie White, Andrew Williams, Mary Woodward.

Quaker recognised bodies

Introduction

This paper covers a review of an existing QRB for continuing registration

Background

The guidelines for groups that would like to be a Quaker recognised body are on the BYM website www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups. That page also contains a list of current QRBs with their contact details and brief description.

A QRB is an independent group where concerned Friends explore a common interest, seek affirmation, or carry out witness. It wishes to be recognised as a Quaker body because its Quaker roots are an important part of its identity or constitution.

Each QRB is allocated a BYM link staff member.

Review of existing QRB

When Meeting for Sufferings grants QRB status, it asks for each organisation to be reviewed in due course.

For each of review an update from the staff link about recent activities and key information from the original application to Meeting for Sufferings is included.

There is one review submitted this time:

Peace Works Zimbabwe

Action required

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to renew the registration this organisation as a Quaker recognised body to be reviewed during 2030 (that is in five years' time).

Peace Works Zimbabwe

Initial recognition 2023, review due 2025, externally regulated group. Staff link: Isabel Cartwright, Peace Education Programme Manager, QPSW

PWZ is a voluntary fund-raising committee set up with the aim of ensuring that the two peace-building projects have continuing support.

Staff link Report

Peace Works Zimbabwe (PWZ) continues to be active raising funds for, and supporting, Alternatives to Violence Project Zimbabwe (AVPZ)'s community peace building courses, and school Peace Clubs. At the end of 2024, the PWZ committee agreed that it was not the right time to lay down this work. Funds had been boosted by a large 'reparations' grant from Sheringham Friends (with QPSW making the

connection between the concerns of Sheringham Meeting and work of PWZ) and the number of courses delivered in Zimbabwe was continuing to increase.

An AVPZ hub in Harare has been consolidated and another being established in the South East of the country. In addition to the number of trainers increasing, there are plans to expand the type of target group for courses, to include groups such as sex workers and workers from the mines.

Two PWZ members went out to Zimbabwe in March 2025, and committed to conducting a ten-year impact study of AVPZ's work and also carry out an evaluation of the use of the PWZ Peace Club's school's manual. A new PWZ website has been created, and there are plans to build a website for AVPZ in Zimbabwe.

Peace Clubs continue to increase and in October a march featuring hundreds of students linked peace building with the fight against drug and alcohol abuse which fuels violence. It was supported by Zimta the major teachers' union and the local education authority. PWZ considers this a major break-through.

Good relations have been established with the Mennonite Committee in Bulawayo and a convention for all the church schools in Matabeleland South encouraged them all to set up Peace Clubs.

The PWZ clerk keeps in touch with the QPSW's Peace Education Programme Manager, attends occasional skill-shares and they support each other's Special Interest Meetings at Yearly Meeting.

PWZ will continue until the end of 2026 during which time the committee will try to find new members willing to take over.

Isabel Cartwright,
Peace Education Programme Manager, Quaker Peace & Social Witness
October, 2025

Current contact: peaceworkszim@gmail.com

Website: www.peaceworkszimbabwe.org

Michael S Booth
Church Government Adviser
Quaker Church Affairs
November 2025

Quaker recognised bodies

Introduction

This paper covers:

- **Part A:** one application for registration as a new Quaker recognised body (QRB)

Background

The guidelines for groups that would like to be a Quaker recognised body are on the BYM website www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups. That page also contains a list of current QRBs with their contact details and brief description.

A QRB is an independent group where concerned Friends explore a common interest, seek affirmation, or carry out witness. It wishes to be recognised as a Quaker body because its Quaker roots are an important part of its identity or constitution.

Each QRB is allocated a BYM link staff member.

A: New application

One application for registration as a Quaker Recognised Body is ready to come to Meeting for Sufferings this time.

Sex Matters to Quakers

Action required:

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to approve this organisation as a Quaker Recognised Body

Name of Organisation: Sex matters to Quakers

Sex Matters to Quakers (SMtQ) unequivocally condemns prejudice and unfair discrimination against any person. As Friends, we are committed to upholding equality and integrity in our words and actions, and to ensuring that all people are treated with dignity and respect. We affirm that no one should be subject to hostility, harassment or exclusion on the basis of their identity, whether actual or perceived.

In this spirit, we endorse [Stonewall's definition of transphobia, published in early 2025](#): "Prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about trans people. This can include the fear or dislike of someone based on the fact they are, or are perceived to be, trans."

Sex Matters to Quakers (SMtQ) is a free-standing Quaker group for Friends in Britain who believe that biological sex is important in social and moral contexts. This is our

second application for registration as a QRB. Our first was submitted under our current name by MaryFaith Autumn on or about 12 October 2021. The earliest date we know of when our concerns were first raised with the Recording Clerk and QPSW was 29 August 2018, which was in a letter from Diane Brewster of Lewes Meeting on behalf of a similar, informal group known as Gender Critical Quakers.

We meet for worshipful discussion on Zoom and have been meeting like this once a month since at least 2022 (and before that, but less frequently). We meet on Zoom because we are dispersed across Britain.

All are welcome to attend our meetings who seek to bear witness to the social, moral and political realities of biological sex and who are members or attenders of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) or any other national Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. Those who are questioning gender ideology are also warmly invited to seek discernment and pastoral support through SMtQ.

We confirm that our clerk(s) are Quaker members. We keep minutes according to Quaker practice. We hold at least one business meeting annually. See below for further details of our Aims and Activities.

Publications & activities:

- Zoom meetings (typically monthly) for worshipful discussion
- website
- occasional blogs,
- private discussion groups on Facebook and WhatsApp
- X posts
- working with a group of London Quakers for four years on the 'To thine own self be true' (TTOSBT) Epistle, which was approved at a Meeting at Friends House in February 2024, and ensuing follow-up activities in the same spirit.

Archives: on Dropbox and Google Drive

Winding-up provision: Funds, if any, to be donated to a like-minded charity, e.g. sex

Year group established: 2021

Membership: fifty (50)

Constitution: in preparation

Governance: in preparation

Finance & approximate annual budget: None

Current contact details: Robbie Spence, Co-clerk

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Website:

Staff link: TBC

Who can join this group: Any member/attender of any national Yearly Meeting.

Type of Group: Free-standing (independent from BYM governance structures, not externally regulated)

Aims and Activities We aim to bring Friends together to study and witness on issues relating to biological sex, especially where it affects the safety and equality of gay, lesbian and bisexual people, of women and of children and young people.

Our aims include the following, which are in alignment with the suggested QRB objectives laid out in [Quaker recognised bodies: an overview](#) –

- “providing a discerned Quaker voice and action on a topic” (namely, that sex matters in life and law and is important in social and moral contexts)
- “offering Friends an opportunity to develop a Quaker perspective” (namely, a Spirit-led process of communal decision-making that is committed to the Quaker testimonies to equality and truth)
- “providing practical and spiritual support to Friends” (namely, to those Friends and attenders who share our wish to study and witness on issues relating to biological sex but have not found anyone in their local or area meetings to support them with this.

In practice we do this by, among other things:

- holding regular meetings for worship and study on topics like single-sex spaces, women’s sports, childcare and safeguarding
- issuing epistles or statements to Quaker gatherings to speak “truth to power” on the reality of sex, as part of a Quaker witness to social justice
- sharing information (e.g. legal, medical) so that Friends can discern how UK laws (such as the Equality Act 2010) define sex and how this affects Quaker practice
- providing pastoral and prayerful support to any Friend navigating questions of gender identity or sex-based rights.

These activities are grounded in Quaker values and we aim to:

- express integrity and truth by encouraging open discussion and honest discernment

- live out equality by serving all Friends with care, echoing the Quaker conviction that all people are equal and each of us is a unique, precious “child of god”
- act in accordance with the responsibilities set out in [Quaker recognised bodies: an overview](#) to
 - “uphold a Quaker ethos”
 - follow the [Meeting for Sufferings Quakers Speaking Out Policy](#)
 - inform, respond to and liaise with our Area Meeting clerks and BYM staff-link as required

Inclusivity and Welcome: We are explicitly open and welcoming to all Friends, regardless of gender identity or history, who seek to bear witness to the social and political realities of biological sex. In keeping with BYM 2021 Minute 31, we welcome trans/non-binary identifying and gender-diverse Friends. As Minute 31 states, Quakers are called to “provide places of worship and community that are welcoming and supportive to trans and non-binary people”, and SMtQ fully supports this commitment. We hold that everyone - including Friends who identify as transgender, non-binary, gender non-conforming, gender-questioning, or de-transitioned - is valued in our meetings.

Quaker practice teaches us that all can “equally access the divine” regardless of sexuality or gender identity and we maintain an inclusive space where everyone can worship and share in our community. As we said in the Membership section of our 2021 QRB application, SMtQ “welcomes ALL Friends and attenders, women, and men to join our group, including those many trans identified women and men who bear witness to the social and political consequences of biological sex.”

Intentions and Scope: We seek to add a voice to discussions and discernments on issues of biological sex where they interact with equality and safety. We believe that the reality of sex is important in life, in law and society, and this matters with regard to, for example, policies and practices on the rights and safety of women and children and young people. This emphasis reflects Quaker testimonies to truth and integrity.

[We uphold the discernment in BYM 2021 Minute 31](#) about ‘Acknowledging and Welcoming Gender Diverse People’ and we:

- uphold that our ‘testimony of equality stems from the religious conviction that all people are of equal spiritual worth, that each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God’.
- acknowledge that our ‘discussions and reflections [on gender diversity] have not always been easy’ and that ‘the associated conflict has been reflected among Friends in our yearly meeting’.

- ‘recognise that we need to keep listening and searching together. In an atmosphere of trust, we need to listen, to share our journeys, in silent worship, and in prayer’.

We seek to add a voice to discussions and discernments on these issues is by supporting and promoting [Quakerology](#), a YouTube channel launched in 2025 where Emma Roberts interviews Quakers about their faith.

We endorse the [Cass Review](#) (in 2024 of NHS gender identity services) inasmuch as it emphasised caution in medical approaches for youth, which was due in part to findings that many gender-questioning children would go on to identify as gay or lesbian.

We recognise safeguarding obligations. For example, when Quaker events for children and young people treat declared gender identity as equivalent to physical sex, this may complicate safeguarding concerns for any Quaker community committed to the well-being of those children and young people. Our group’s work will include pastoral and educational work to ensure all Friends are supported and to encourage meetings to follow BYM safeguarding policies and support young people’s journeys.

Distinctively Quaker: SMtQ is rooted in Quaker history and testimony. Quakers have a long legacy of protecting the vulnerable and seeking justice. For example, Elizabeth Fry’s tireless efforts to improve conditions for female prisoners led to the Gaols Act 1823, which mandated sex-segregated prisons and female warders for female inmates to protect them from sexual exploitation. Her work modelled the Quaker testimony to equality (that all lives are sacred) and peace (protecting women from violence). We see our advocacy of fairness for and protection of women as following in that tradition.

We are guided by Quaker procedures of collective discernment: decisions in our group are made in expectant worship and minuted according to the [Quaker business method](#). We have no creed beyond our shared values, just as Quakers do not impose doctrinal tests.

Our practice reflects Quaker inclusivity. [Quakers in Britain are officially an “LGBTQ+ affirming faith group”](#), and we uphold that commitment even as we question some prevailing cultural assumptions. We uphold the Quaker testimony to equality, which insists that women and men of every background and belief are of equal worth. We also uphold the Quaker testimony to truth by encouraging open and honest worshipful conversation, trusting that “the deepest truth we know” will be revealed in love.

As stated in Aims above, we aim to be ‘distinctively Quaker’ by ‘providing practical and spiritual support to Friends’ who share our concerns relating to biological sex but have not found anyone in their local or area meetings to support them with this.

In summary, our Quaker distinctiveness lies in our reliance on the Spirit-led process of communal decision-making, our commitment to testimonies of equality and truth, and our focus on caring for those at risk and we are grounded in the faith and practice of the Religious Society of Friends of the Truth, and inspired by historic Quaker figures like Elizabeth Fry and by current Quaker discernment (for example, BYM 2021 Minute 31).

Inclusivity of Name and Perspective: We reaffirm that the name “Sex Matters to Quakers” remains the same. It reflects our sincere belief that [sex matters in life and in law \(to quote the charity, Sex Matters\)](#). Just as BYM 2021 Minute 31 rejoiced ‘in recognising God’s creation in one another’, our name recognises our belief in the immutable, binary, sexed reality of human life.

Our internal governance is simple and transparent. Our clerk or co-clerks are Quaker members of Area Meetings as per BYM expectations. We anticipate working with any Friend with a liaison role that our staff link or Meeting for Sufferings suggest. We will ensure that our members’ voices are heard through Quaker business methods.

Overview: In answering the concerns raised by QLCC with respect to our previous QRB application of 2021, we emphasise that SMtQ is a spiritual fellowship grounded in Quaker values of integrity, equality, simplicity, and loving discernment. We fully respect BYM policy (including safeguarding of children), and pledge to follow all relevant Quaker guidelines and communication processes. We seek to contribute to Quaker discernment by bringing attention to how the biological reality of sex interacts with Quaker testimonies.

We therefore request re-consideration of our application for QRB registration that was begun in 2021. We remain committed to Quaker processes and the Quaker community. We trust that QRB status will help the Society know of our existence so that Friends can join us if they wish. Our group is dedicated to upholding the Society’s testimonies: as stated in BYM 2021 Minute 31, differences of outlook need not divide us but can draw us together in greater understanding.

We look forward to continuing our Quaker witness in the spirit of truth and equality. Please return to groups@quaker.org.uk or send to Michael S Booth, Friends House, Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ.

Quaker Life Central Committee

Separated minute from an online meeting held on Zoom 20 September 2025

QLCC 25.56 Marriage declaration

We receive paper **QLCC 2025 09 07** – a report from the small group to consider the wording of the Quaker marriage declaration.

We were pleased to hear from Klaus Huber and Seren Wildwood about their joy in doing this work and the sense of spirit they felt in their meetings. We acknowledged the deep sense of Quaker worship and process their report relays.

The proposed new version of *Quaker faith & practice* 16.52 reads:

When the meeting for worship is gathered, the couple at a convenient time shall stand, if able, and, taking each other by the hand, declare in an audible and solemn manner, the one after the other in either order, each saying:

Friends, I take this my friend [full name] to be my spouse, promising, through divine assistance, to be unto [pronoun] / [commonly used name] a loving and faithful spouse, so long as we both on earth shall live.

The declaration may be prefaced by ‘In the presence of God and this assembly’. The word ‘spouse’ may be replaced by ‘wife’ or ‘husband’ as appropriate or by ‘partner in marriage’. The phrase ‘so long as we both on earth shall live’ may be replaced by the words ‘until it shall please the Lord by death to separate us’. The phrase ‘through divine assistance’ may be replaced by the words ‘with God’s help’ or the words ‘upheld by the Light of Love’. If it feels appropriate to the couple, each may choose the phrase that most closely expresses their understanding of the source of strength and support they draw on in making their declaration; they need not choose the same phrase as each other. No other changes to the wording may be made. The choice of alternatives shall be agreed in advance by the couple and the registering officer. In any case, both must make their declarations in identical or corresponding terms, as noted; their promises must be equal and reciprocal.

We offer deep thanks to this group for their work. We uphold this group’s recommendations and send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings along with the report.

Martin Wall, Co-clerk

Rachael Swancott, Co-clerk

Report from the small group to consider the wording of the Quaker marriage declaration

Our main task was to look at the wording of the Quaker marriage declaration to see if we can make any changes that will allow non-theist Friends to have a Quaker wedding without having to refer to God's help or divine assistance, while also satisfying those Friends for whom it is important that the religious character of a Quaker wedding remains explicit in the Quaker marriage declaration. Our work was informed by the 52-page-document of consultation responses (see [marriage-declaration-responses-to-consultation-mfs-oct-2024](#)) and guided by Meeting for Sufferings minute MfS/24/10/11 (see Appendix 1).

Our group held two online meetings. For the first of these, we were joined by our staff support, Sophie Smith (Quaker Life).

Our discernment was underpinned by periods of silent worship. We started by reading through the current Quaker marriage declaration, followed by a long period of silence, before sharing what had come up for us. We had a clear sense that any alternative phrase to “through divine assistance” or “with God's help” needs to convey the sense of being helped by someone or something bigger than ourselves.

We also had a clear sense that the word ‘Love’ should be in there. The term ‘Light of Love’ came to two of us independently. Other expressions offered were ‘promptings of love and truth’, ‘upheld by Love/the Light’, and ‘power of love’.

The following recommendation for a revised wording for *Quaker faith & practice* 16.52 evolved by testing and amending drafts through periods of silence at our second meeting, followed by correspondence that resulted in further amendments:

Proposed new version of *Quaker faith & practice* 16.52

When the meeting for worship is gathered, the couple at a convenient time shall stand, if able, and, taking each other by the hand, declare in an audible and solemn manner, the one after the other in either order, each saying:

Friends, I take this my friend [full name] to be my spouse, promising, through divine assistance, to be unto [pronoun] / [commonly used name] a loving and faithful spouse, so long as we both on earth shall live.

The declaration may be prefaced by ‘In the presence of God and this assembly’. The word ‘spouse’ may be replaced by ‘wife’ or ‘husband’ as appropriate or by ‘partner in marriage’. The phrase ‘so long as we both on earth shall live’ may be replaced by the words ‘until it shall please the Lord by death to separate us’. The phrase ‘through divine assistance’ may be replaced by the words ‘with God’s help’ or the words ‘upheld by the Light of Love’. If it feels appropriate to the couple, each may choose the phrase that most closely expresses their understanding of the source of strength and

support they draw on in making their declaration; they need not choose the same phrase as each other. No other changes to the wording may be made. The choice of alternatives shall be agreed in advance by the couple and the registering officer. In any case, both must make their declarations in identical or corresponding terms, as noted; their promises must be equal and reciprocal.

We offer this report to Friends for your consideration.

Klaus Huber, Seren Wildwood, Lucy-Anne Holmes
July 2025

Appendix 1. Meeting for Sufferings minute 24/10/11

Last December, Meeting for Sufferings received a paper from the Book of Discipline Revision Committee asking us to consider the wording of the marriage declaration (minute MfS/23/12/07). We receive over 50 minutes and contributions from area meetings, central committees and other bodies, and from individual Friends.

From the responses, it is clear that we are not yet of one mind on this matter, but that Friends have welcomed the opportunity to engage with it. We value the discernment so far.

We are not in a position to resolve this matter at this meeting, but it seems clear that there is a will take this forward.

We are clear that marriage, in Quaker understanding, is a commitment of the couple held in the Light witnessed by the supporting meeting.

We ask that a working group be formed under the auspices of QLCC to work further on the matter of wording and we will return to this matter at a later date.

We send this minute to QLCC.

Appendix 2. Current wording of *Quaker faith & practice* 16.52

When the meeting for worship is gathered, the couple at a convenient time shall stand, if able, and, taking each other by the hand, declare in an audible and solemn manner, the one after the other in either order, each saying:

Friends, I take this my friend [full name] to be my spouse, promising, through divine assistance, to be unto [pronoun] / [commonly used name] a loving and faithful spouse, so long as we both on earth shall live.

The declaration may be prefaced by 'In the presence of God' or 'In the fear of the Lord and in the presence of this assembly'. The word 'spouse' may be replaced by 'wife' or 'husband' as appropriate or by 'partner in marriage'. The phrase 'through divine assistance' may be replaced by the words 'with God's help'. The phrase 'so

long as we both on earth shall live' may be replaced by the words 'until it shall please the Lord by death to separate us'. No other changes to the wording may be made.

The choice of alternatives shall be agreed in advance by the couple and the registering officer. In any case, both must make their declarations in identical terms (or corresponding terms in the case of 'husband' and 'wife'); their promises must be equal and reciprocal.

Proposed changes to *Quaker faith & practice* by Church Government Advisory Group

Action

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to consider changes to *Quaker faith & practice* to reflect recent changes to our Church Government and prepare for changes due to take effect in May 2026.

In particular, Meeting for Sufferings is asked:

1. If the proposed changes to chapters 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 13 can be approved by Meeting for Sufferings as minor amendments to *Quaker faith & practice*. This process was agreed by Yearly Meeting in 2019 (Minute 21). Meeting for Sufferings may decide that some of these changes need to go to Yearly Meeting for consideration and approval.
2. If the proposed text of Chapter 6 is ready to be submitted to Yearly Meeting for consideration and approval.

Introduction

Yearly Meeting, held in London from 26 - 30 July 2024, decided to lay down Meeting for Sufferings and to hold several sessions of Yearly Meeting during each year, commencing from May 2026. In minute 37, Yearly Meeting asked various groups to take preparatory steps to enable this change. Part of that minute read:

Constitutional matters

We note that functions currently performed by Meeting for Sufferings will need to be transferred to Yearly Meeting or formally delegated to another committee.

We ask Meeting for Sufferings, through its Church Government Advisory Group, to bring forward new draft constitutional text, working with the Book of Discipline Revision Committee and the Group to Review Central Structures established by BYM Trustees, as required.

This work should include defining more clearly how representation from area meetings and other bodies, including groupings not currently represented at Meeting for Sufferings, will work, and the role of the representatives so appointed.

This report sets out the areas where the Church Government Advisory Group has identified change as being required. We have taken account of the decisions minuted by Yearly Meeting in 2024 and 2025 and consulted with Meeting for Sufferings on various matters. Michael Phipps from the Book of Discipline Revision

Committee and representatives of the Recording Clerk have attended most of our meetings and guided us on work being undertaken elsewhere.

While the decisions already taken by Yearly Meeting define the broad parameters of the new structure, we have inevitably encountered some detailed aspects of implementation and wording where we have had to interpret what is intended to the best of our ability. Some details remain unclear (such as the appeals process described in 4.25) and experience in the first years of the new structure may lead to modifications to the initial arrangements. What we are offering is therefore what we consider to be a workable constitutional basis, but we are very conscious there will need to be further refinement to anything that is agreed at this stage.

The main part of this report sets out the new wording of Church Government that we are proposing. More detailed papers are available showing how this relates to the existing text and the detailed reasons for changes. In the remainder of this introduction, we explain the general approach we have taken to this task and outline the most significant changes.

General approach

We are very aware that from 2030 there will in all probability be a substantially revised edition of Church Government. Our task has therefore been to amend the current edition of *Quaker faith & practice* to enable it to remain a serviceable document for the next five years. We have concentrated on necessary amendments and have not sought to 'improve' the wording on a more general basis. Thus we agreed early on that we would try to use gender neutral language in any sections we were drafting afresh but we would not seek to identify every use of outdated language.

In general, we have removed references to Meeting for Sufferings as an ongoing body, we have amended references to 'standing committees' as use of this term was inconsistent and confusing.

Chapter 3 General counsel on church affairs contains minor changes to remove reference to Meeting for Sufferings.

Chapters 4 Area meetings and local meetings and **5 Other Quaker groupings** have references to Meeting for Sufferings removed, and includes the appointment of area meeting representatives to Yearly Meeting. We know that further work will be required to take account of the formation of Quakers in Scotland.

Two chapters required very substantial amendment.

Chapter 6 Yearly Meeting sets out the history and functions of Yearly Meeting and has been extensively revised. We have updated paragraph 6.01 on the history of Yearly Meeting to include the changes currently in progress. In what may appear to be a deviation from the principle of only making essential changes, we are also suggesting some additions to the history of Yearly Meeting in the twentieth century to

provide a better balance with the detail provided on previous centuries, feeling that this was necessary to understand what has led up to the current situation.

We have also taken advantage of the very substantial revisions required to chapter 6 to adopt the approach which we understand is being taken by the Book of Discipline Revision Committee of including in Church Government only the main religious and structural principles by which Yearly Meeting operates, moving many of the detailed operational arrangements to supplementary material. We have attached wording edited from the existing chapter 6 which we suggest could form part of supplementary material noting that this would only form part of the full range of supplementary documentation that may eventually exist.

We have added suggested text on the appointment of representatives to Yearly Meeting but are proposing that much of the detail of this should go in supplementary material.

Chapter 7 Meeting for Sufferings sets out the history and functions of Meeting for Sufferings. This chapter could have been deleted entirely, but we felt that at least for the next five years, and because Meeting for Sufferings has played such an important role in the history of the Society of Friends, we should retain, with only very minor amendment, that part of the chapter that explains the role Meeting for Sufferings has held historically. It will be up to the Book of Discipline Revision Committee to recommend how much of that history should be carried forward to the new Book.

Chapters 8 The centrally managed work of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain and **9 Beyond Britain Yearly Meeting** describe our current committee structure.

In general, we have removed references to Meeting for Sufferings as an ongoing body, we have amended references to 'standing committees' as use of this term was inconsistent and confusing. We have updated the diagram that shows the Yearly Meeting organisational structure in chapter 8, and recognised that many staff are no longer based in Friends House. In chapter 9 we have also included the agreed change of lines of responsibility for Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) and Quaker world relations Committee (QWRC), who will in future report to Yearly Meeting, rather than BYM Trustees.

In **chapter 13 Varieties of religious service** we are proposing the removal of references to Minutes of Liberation in the first part of 13.28 since this provision has become obsolete. We are unclear if this is a minor amendment, that could be agreed by Meeting for Sufferings, or a major one, requiring the approval of Yearly Meeting.

Although most of the amendments we have proposed to *Quaker faith & practice* follow necessarily from decisions already taken and can be agreed by Meeting for

Sufferings, we suggest that the whole of Chapter 6 will need to be formally agreed by Yearly Meeting in view of the extent of amendments proposed and the central role of Yearly Meeting.

We are happy to receive comments and suggestions for further corrections and improvement to our proposed text, and will highlight at Meeting for Sufferings any that we suggest should be included in these revisions to *Quaker faith & practice*. Please send any ideas to our Secretary, Michael Booth gfp@quaker.org.uk

We look forward to hearing the views of Meeting for Sufferings on the wording we have proposed and will undertake any further necessary work on this prior to Yearly Meeting 2026.

Martin Burnell
Convener

Proposed changes to *Quaker faith & practice*

These contains the suggested changes to *Quaker faith & practice* that are being brought to Meeting for Sufferings in December 2025. Changes are being suggested to chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 13.

This document just contains the proposed text.

Headings are shown directly above the paragraph to which they relate.

Available on request from sufferings@quaker.org.uk or gfp@quaker.org.uk are two further documents which may be of interest.

Document 1: This contains the existing and proposed text side by side.

Document 2: This contains side-by-side the existing text, changes highlighted, and proposed text.

Any observations, or suggestions for improvements to the text can be sent to the Church Government Advisory Group secretary, Michael S Booth at gfp@quaker.org.uk

Qf&p section	Proposed text
	Practice
3.28	<p>Yearly Meeting statements issued on behalf of Friends in Britain require the full discernment of Yearly Meeting in session and will be recognised as carrying the full authority of the yearly meeting. Other public statements or comments may be called for at short notice in response to current events using the full range of media. In such cases, the Recording Clerk, in consultation with appropriate clerks of Yearly Meeting or Trustees, is authorised by yearly meeting to issue such a message, as long as it is in line with an established and discerned Quaker position. Press releases publicising the yearly meeting's core work are authorised by the Recording Clerk. At area and local meeting level it should be made clear whenever local initiatives relate solely to area or local meetings. Individual Friends or groups, such as those referred to in 13.19, must be careful not to claim to speak for Friends as a whole, but just for themselves or their group, unless specifically authorised to do so. Other forms of public action undertaken in the name of Friends should similarly be authorised by the appropriate meeting for church affairs.</p> <p>Friends should be sensitive when participating in vigils or demonstrations to the possibility that they may be heard as speaking on behalf of Quakers, and should take care how they respond.</p> <p>On occasion it may be necessary for the clerk of a meeting, or another appointed Friend, to take urgent action to correct misleading reports in the press or other misunderstandings in the public domain. This section is not</p>

Qf&p section	Proposed text
	<p>intended to hamper such necessary action undertaken responsibly in the interests of a meeting or group.</p> <p>Full guidelines and details of procedures, originally agreed by Meeting for Sufferings, are available from the Recording Clerk or online at www.quaker.org.uk/qfp. These cover the yearly meeting, area and local meetings, matters delegated to Crynwyr Cymru – Quakers in Wales (5.04–5.05) or to Quakers in Scotland (5.03), as well as other Quaker groups. A summary policy document for meetings and groups is also available. Additional support or guidance can be obtained from the Recording Clerk (offsite link).</p>
4.09	<p>Area meetings will from time to time have to consider minutes or papers from Yearly Meeting, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees or the committees through which they work. Other new area meeting business will normally come through a local meeting or through an area meeting committee or a representative of the area meeting on another body. It will usually be appropriate for an individual Friend with a concern to bring that concern to their own local meeting before approaching the area meeting. If the local meeting recognises the concern, it should forward a minute to the area meeting (see 13.09–13.18).</p>
	<p>Relationship to other meetings for church affairs</p>
4.16	<p>An area meeting shall provide Britain Yearly Meeting and any general meeting or Quaker gathering (see 5.02) to which it belongs, with such nominations, appointments or information as may from time to time be required.</p>
4.17	<p>An area meeting is required to appoint Friends to serve, normally for a period of 3 years, as representatives at yearly meeting sessions to provide continuity of representation and help keep the work flowing smoothly. (See 6.16). Area meeting business should give a high priority to preparation of its representatives and receiving reports from them. Another opportunity for regular involvement with the wider work of Britain Yearly Meeting is provided by the appointment of area meeting representatives to Quaker Life Representative Council (8.09). The functions of this body and Yearly Meeting and the duties of the area meeting representatives to provide an effective two-way channel of communication should be made clear to those being appointed. Conferences and other occasional gatherings which provide further opportunities for wider communication and fellowship will benefit from a wide representation from area meetings.</p>
4.18	<p>An area meeting may communicate formally by minute with its constituent local meetings, with any general meeting or Quaker gathering (5.02) to which it belongs (including Crynwyr Cymru – Quakers in Wales (5.04–5.05) or Quakers in Scotland (5.03) where appropriate), with Yearly Meeting (6.06.a, 6.25) and with meetings with which it does business through its representatives appointed to joint committees. The area meeting has an</p>

Q&A section	Proposed text
	obligation to receive minutes from those bodies. There may occasionally be circumstances in which it will be helpful to circulate other minutes for information only.
4.19	In considering concerns which their members may bring before them, area meetings should exercise care to ensure that their own consideration is adequate and that in forwarding the matter to another meeting they are truly recognising a leading that the subject be considered further. Area meetings should also consider what action they themselves could take before forwarding the concern to another meeting. Area meetings must beware of evading their own responsibility for reaching a united judgment. This responsibility may involve consideration at more than one session of the area meeting. It is essential that before forwarding a concern the area meeting should consult at an early stage with the relevant committee or department (see 8.08 ; 8.11–8.13) in order to find out what facts and experience can be offered to its consideration of a concern. (See 13.09–13.18 .)
4.20	<p>The relationships between area meetings Britain Yearly Meeting, Trustees and committees can be delicate and complex.</p> <p>If there is sometimes tension in the relationships this is not necessarily unhealthy. It is unhealthy when a matter is shunted from one body to another because a group of Friends lack the spiritual energy and courage to wrestle with a matter which they know may result in uncomfortable plain speaking to a fellow member whose concern, however deeply held, is not shared by the meeting. It is equally unhealthy when any individual or meeting is preoccupied with status, with 'getting things through', with efforts to predetermine how another body shall act. We can only be delivered from these dangers by a constant relearning of the nature of true concern.</p> <p>Meeting for Sufferings, 1978</p>
	Right of appeal against decisions
4.25	<no proposals ready to be submitted>
4.40	<p>It is advised that the following be preserved in Friends' ownership or custodianship:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> minute books or signed minutes of yearly, general, area and local meetings; minute books or signed minutes of elders and pastoral care teams and of committees of meetings for church affairs; official registers of members (11.37), printed lists of members and attenders (11.39), marriage registers (16.62), registers of burials (17.12), burial ground plans (14.31), registers of properties and trusts (15.18);

Qf&p section	Proposed text
	<p>d. such other documents as it is reasonable to expect may be needed for future reference.</p> <p>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.</p>
5.08	<p>Young Friends General Meeting is open to Quakers and attenders between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. Area meetings may appoint representatives to Young Friends General Meeting. At its meetings for business three times a year it organises a range of other events for young people. It may communicate formally by minute with area meetings, Yearly Meeting through its Agenda Planning Committee, and the committees of Yearly Meeting.</p> <p>Young Friends General Meeting appoints representatives to Yearly Meeting (see 6.16).</p>
	Yearly Meeting
	Introduction
6.01	<p>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.</p> <p>Yearly Meeting in London, 1668</p>
6.02	<p>Yearly Meeting is now an occasion when the concerns of Friends can be shared with the whole community of Quakers in Britain, as it seeks God's guidance and relates each particular insight or service to the others brought before it. At different stages of its history the agenda and pattern of Yearly Meeting have been built up in different ways.</p>
	History
6.03 Para 1	<p>In the seventeenth century our yearly meeting grew out of a series of conferences of ministering Friends, some regional, some national. Early examples include the meetings at Swannington in 1654 and at Balby in 1656 (remembered more for the postscript to its lengthy letter of counsel than the letter itself), and the meeting at Skipton the same year. The general meeting for the whole nation held at Beckerings Park, Bedfordshire, for three days in May 1658, was attended by several thousand Friends. This might be considered as the first Yearly Meeting although no annual continuity followed in the 1660s due to persecution by the authorities and outbreaks of contagious disease. The meeting in May 1668 was followed by one at Christmastime which lasted into 1669, since when Yearly Meeting has been held annually. 1668 is the traditional date of establishment of London Yearly Meeting, which became the national Yearly Meeting in 1672.</p>

Qf&p section	Proposed text
6.03 Para 2	<p>The main exercise of Yearly Meeting related to ‘the state of the Society’ as revealed by the answers to the Queries (a set of questions about the “right ordering” of local Meetings) or, after written replies were discontinued, by triennial reports from quarterly meetings. Many (though not all) of the meetings up to 1677 were ‘select’, that is, confined to ‘publick’ or ministering men Friends; but from 1678 Yearly Meetings became representative rather than select in character. Minutes are preserved from 1672.</p>
6.03 Para 3	<p>Until the mid-nineteenth century the life of the yearly meeting continued to centre on the answers from quarterly meetings to Friends’ queries and the ‘Epistles Foreign and Domestick’. Epistles and travelling ministers between them made the Atlantic community of Friends a reality; smuggling in Cornwall or dissension in Nantucket received equal thought and attention. The education of Friends’ children was a recurring theme, and with the establishment of Ackworth (1779) and Sidcot (1808) the reports from Friends’ boarding schools made increasing claims on the time of the meetings. The predictable answers to queries, lengthy reports and other documents read aloud, long-winded Friends, the narrow range of interests and the minutiae of procedure must have been stifling to the rebels. ‘And now for about an hour,’ wrote a young Friend in 1858, ‘the YM talked to points of order. When 5 or 6 courses are mentioned and a good many friends speak to each, it does not seem difficult to spend an hour or more in this way.’ ‘It is difficult,’ he added charitably, ‘to see how this is altogether to be avoided.’</p>
6.03 Para 4	<p>In reality Yearly Meeting may not have been as parochial as the cautious minutes show. These can point to certain outstanding sessions – that of 1783 on the slave trade, for instance, or that from 1818 on capital punishment. Yearly Meeting was not merely preoccupied with introspective consideration of the state of the Society: it sought to awaken the public conscience. A statement in 1856 on liberty of conscience was translated into half a dozen languages and taken by deputations of concerned Friends to ecclesiastics and statesmen from Madrid to St Petersburg. Petitions to parliament and memorials to the monarch covered a wide range of concern. When in 1842 Caroline Fox with her brother and father called on the philosopher Thomas Carlyle, ‘he wanted to know what we were doing at the Yearly Meeting, and what were its objects and functions, and remarked on the deepening observable amongst Friends; but when we told of the letter to the Queen commendatory of peace in Afghanistan, he was terribly amused. “Poor little Queen! She’d be glad enough to live in peace and quietness if the Afghans would but submit to her conditions.”’</p>
6.03 Para 5	<p>‘Every Quakeress,’ wrote Charles Lamb in 1823, ‘is a lily; and when they come up in bands to their Whitsun-conferences, whitening the easterly streets of the metropolis, from all parts of the United Kingdom, they show like troops of the Shining Ones.’ From 1656 Women’s Meetings and Women’s Monthly Meetings had been held, but it was not until 1784 that a Women’s Yearly Meeting was established, with the right to communicate with women’s quarterly meetings. From the 1880s some joint sessions of men and women</p>

Qf&p section	Proposed text
	<p>Friends were held, and in 1896 Yearly Meeting decided that 'in future women Friends are to be recognised as forming a constituent part of all our meetings for church affairs equally with their brethren.' Some separate sessions still continued but the Women's Yearly Meeting was laid down in 1907.</p>
<p>6.03 Para 6</p>	<p>After the Yearly Meeting was constituted on a representative basis in 1678 ministering Friends, and later elders, met with members of London's Second Day Morning Meeting (the weekly gathering of 'ministering Friends in and about the city') at the beginning and the close of Yearly Meeting. This gathering assumed a measure of national authority – it issued, for instance, in 1702 'A brief memorial of some necessary things', which was the basis of the advices on ministry – and in 1754 it was constituted as the Yearly Meeting of Ministers & Elders. In 1876 the meeting was enlarged in membership and renamed the Yearly Meeting on Ministry & Oversight, but as part of the egalitarian movement of the late nineteenth century it was decided to discontinue the separate hierarchy of preparative, monthly and quarterly meetings on ministry and oversight, and, in consequence, the Yearly Meeting on Ministry & Oversight last met in 1906. Elders and overseers subsequently met separately for conference.</p>
<p>6.03 Para 7</p>	<p>Until as recently as 1861 Yearly Meeting was in theory attended only by representatives, together with 'such ministering Friends as may be in town, and the correspondents or members of the Meeting for Sufferings'. From the mid eighteenth century (if not earlier) the doors were in fact open to any man Friend, and much business was in consequence referred to the Large Committee, which was confined to those constitutionally entitled to be there. When at length the Yearly Meeting sessions were opened to all men Friends as a right some felt that the Yearly Meeting would degenerate into mere conversation and lose its essentially religious and deliberative purpose.</p>
<p>6.03 Para 8</p>	<p>In almost every generation there has been a Right Holding of Yearly Meeting Committee, though its title varies from one occasion to another. Such a group has the opportunity of deciding whether we need to direct our attention to constitutional change, or to the shortcomings of our human nature. In 1902 John Wilhelm Rowntree and Edward Worsdell applied their minds to the conduct of Yearly Meeting with devastating remarks: 'Discussion confused and futile', 'discussion disproportionate and prolix', 'a demonstration not a conference'. It was two years before this outburst that the first memorandum of agenda had been issued, and it had been agreed to print some reports in advance.</p>
<p>6.03 Para 9</p>	<p>In 1905 Yearly Meeting was held for the first time out of London. Meeting at Leeds it received at its opening session a message from the venerable patriarch J Bevan Braithwaite, who, after sixty-four years of unbroken attendance, felt the journey inadvisable. 'Coming together as we do', wrote the Yearly Meeting in its response, 'amid such new surroundings, the thought of the faithful lives of service which have been given in the past to the work of our Society comes with peculiar power and helpfulness to us, and as we</p>

Qf&p section	Proposed text
	<p>listened to thy letter and thought of the long years in which thou wast present during the sittings of the yearly meeting, the desire arose that we might be more faithful in giving ourselves to the work.' We too may re-echo the desire that we may be inspired by those who have gone before us in our yearly meeting but not fettered by their procedures.</p>
<p>6.03 Para 10</p>	<p>In 1918 Mary Jane Godlee was the first woman to act as Yearly Meeting Clerk when John H Barlow, a member of Friends Service Committee, was called to attend the High Court for publishing a pacifist leaflet without submitting it to the censor. He was serving as Clerk to Yearly Meeting that day so left the meeting to go to court, and Mary Jane Godlee took his place at the table. The first woman to be appointed as Yearly Meeting Clerk was W Maud Brayshaw who served from 1943 - 1948.</p>
<p>6.03 Para 11</p>	<p>The organisational reforms of the late nineteenth century continued into the 1920s. In 1924 Yearly Meeting ceased the practice of recording ministers, a response to Friends' disquiet about giving 'undue prominence to the ministry of a restricted body of Friends', which was felt to 'discourage ministry from many who might otherwise feel moved to offer it.' In 1926 London Yearly Meeting moved from Devonshire House in Bishopsgate to the purpose-built Friends House opposite Euston Station.</p>
<p>6.03 Para 12</p>	<p>The twentieth century witnessed a considerable growth in the number of standing committees of the Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings, and in their scope of work. Increasingly, the agenda of Yearly Meeting was built up round concerns brought through these committees.</p>
<p>6.03 Para 13</p>	<p>During the 1970s and 1980s residential Yearly Meetings (6.22) were becoming increasingly popular, with Friends appreciating the events alongside the sessions as much as the business. Hence it was decided to try out a gathering without the formal Yearly Meeting business, answering the needs of Friends to live together in community and to explore issues and activities for which there was little programmed time at a meeting for church affairs. The first such Summer Gathering was held in Bradford in 1991. Further Summer Gatherings were held at four-yearly intervals, all different and all successful. Subsequently, the administrative pressures of organising these events led to the holding of two experimental combined residential Yearly Meetings and Summer Gatherings. The first such Yearly Meeting Gathering was held at York in 2009.</p>
<p>6.03 Para 14</p>	<p>In 1994 London Yearly Meeting agreed to change its name to the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, or in short form, Britain Yearly Meeting. This decision followed a recommendation by Meeting for Sufferings after a consultation with monthly meetings. The new name was chosen to express the identity of the yearly meeting in a more inclusive way, so that Friends who were physically distant from London could feel more fully part of the whole. It also reflects more accurately the geographical area which is covered: England, Scotland, Wales, the Channel</p>

Qf&p section	Proposed text
	Islands and the Isle of Man. The new name came into effect on 1 January 1995.
6.03 Para 15	The Covid-19 pandemic spread around the world in early 2020. A series of restrictions on travel and meeting were imposed from March 2020. A residential Yearly Meeting had already been planned to take place in Bath in the summer but this was not possible due to these restrictions. By this time most Friends had access to the internet, so Yearly Meeting was moved online using business conferencing technology for remote meetings and took place in November. ‘Not since 1668 has anything – not even world wars – prevented Yearly Meeting, a time for Quakers to gather in stillness to listen to the promptings of love and truth.’ The final part of the concluding minute – ‘There being no further business for the Yearly Meeting, we separate, hoping to meet again from 31 July – 5 August 2021, should nothing occur to prevent’ – felt very powerful, holding much emotion and learned experience.
6.03 Para 16	In 2021 Yearly Meeting Gathering was held online because of continuing Covid-19 restrictions. The need to take care of each other meant that all events were held virtually for this three-week festival of faith and friendship, including activities for children & families, young people and Junior Yearly Meeting. In 2022 Yearly Meeting returned to Friends House in London, with a continuing substantial attendance online. Such blended Yearly Meetings have become the norm ever since.
6.03 Para 17	In 2024 Yearly Meeting agreed to alter its structure. Following the conclusion of the four-day meeting in London in 2026, Yearly Meeting would cease to be a single annual gathering and would become a more flexible series of linked sessions lasting one day or longer and taking place throughout the year at different locations: a continuing Yearly Meeting. Meeting for Sufferings – the representative body which had dealt with all matters affecting Britain Yearly Meeting between formal sessions – was laid down so that more discernment and decision-making could be done by a wider group of Friends meeting more frequently than once a year.
6.03 Para 18	Yearly Meeting continues to receive reports from Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and other committees. It provides an opportunity to scrutinise and affirm the work done in the name of Friends in our meetings and by our committees and staff. It lays matters of concern before a gathered session of Yearly Meeting for divine guidance, discernment testing or decision. It informs and educates us, as a meeting for learning. It agrees constitutional changes and amendments to our book of discipline. It strengthens our witness as a religious society and encourages us in our living of the testimonies. It inspires us to action, corporately in our meetings or individually and in groups. It searches our spiritual depths and refreshes our spiritual life as individuals and corporately. It reinforces the sense of community in our meetings and in Britain Yearly Meeting as a whole. It praises, gives thanks to God, and celebrates.

Q&P section	Proposed text
	Purposes and functions
6.04	<p>The intent and holy design of our annual assemblies, in their first constitution, were for a great and weighty oversight and Christian care of the affairs of the churches pertaining to our holy profession and Christian communion; that good order, true love, unity and concord may be faithfully followed and maintained among all of us.</p> <p>Yearly Meeting in London, 1718</p>
6.05	<p>The “Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain” in session is the final constitutional authority of this Society. It is commonly known as Britain Yearly Meeting. Geographically it covers England, Scotland, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. Its membership consists of all who belong to the area meetings in those places. All members of the Yearly Meeting have the right to attend and to take part in its deliberations, whether at the physical location or online. (See 6.16 and 6.17)</p>
6.06	<p>The primary purpose of the Yearly Meeting, continuing in its several sessions throughout each year, is to discern the leadings of the Spirit for the spiritual life, work and witness of Quakers in Britain. It does this by gathering Friends together for learning, worshipping, and discerning. Through that discernment, it seeks to make decisions, issue public statements, and respond to calls for action.</p>
6.07	<p>To fulfil that purpose, the deliberations of yearly meeting in session may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. fostering the individual and corporate spiritual life of Quakers in Britain, furthering the development of its visionary and prophetic role; b. supporting and encouraging individual and corporate witness of faith in action; c. ensuring appropriate arrangements for keeping under review, testing and seasoning existing and new concerns referred to it by area meetings and other bodies; d. receiving minutes from area meetings and other eligible bodies as appropriate, and arranging for them to be considered; e. receiving reports and advice from Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees (including their annual report and audited financial statements), giving guidance to them and holding them to account; f. receiving reports and advice from other committees and bodies appointed by the yearly meeting, giving guidance to them and holding them to account; g. deciding long-term strategy and priorities for the centrally-managed work and witness; h. appointing Friends to serve the yearly meeting in various capacities, including as representatives to other yearly meetings, following nomination by the relevant nominating bodies; i. making or authorising public statements, in accordance with its approved policy on speaking out, on behalf of the yearly meeting;

Qf&p section	Proposed text
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> j. ensuring that appropriate entries are made in the prison and court register; k. ensuring that communication throughout the yearly meeting is fostered; l. making decisions on constitutional matters, including recognising area meetings and recording changes in their composition; m. determining, on the recommendation of the Agenda Planning Committee, the dates and venues of future sessions of the yearly meeting and arrangements for summoning a special yearly meeting if required.
6.08	<p>The agenda may comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. minutes from area meetings, Crynwyr Cymru – Quakers in Wales, Quakers in Scotland or Young Friends General Meeting, and minutes or memoranda from committees sharing with the yearly meeting as a whole some concern which has their united support; b. proposals for amendments to our book of discipline forwarded by the Agenda Planning Committee in accordance with the process currently approved; details of this process may be obtained on application to the Recording Clerk; c. certification that every part of Britain Yearly Meeting is producing proper financial accounts and property records (14.36); d. the annual report of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and audited financial statements for the preceding year (6.25); e. the tabular statement (6.09); f. the report of the Agenda Planning Committee; g. testimonies to the grace of God in the lives of deceased Friends, forwarded by area and general meetings; h. epistles received from other yearly meetings and other Friends' bodies, reminding us of our membership in a world family of Friends; i. subjects initiated by the Agenda Planning Committee <p>Items b, c, d and e are presented for consideration and acceptance, the Trustees' annual report and financial statements having been approved and forwarded by Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees (8.03).</p>
6.09	<p>The tabular statement is a factual account of changes over the preceding year in the status and membership of the constituent meetings of the yearly meeting, together with other information on the membership of the yearly meeting, compiled by the Recording Clerk from information supplied by area meetings (4.10.h, 11.37).</p>
6.10	<p><i>In 1999 the Agenda Committee wrote:</i></p>

Q&P section	Proposed text
	<p>We see Yearly Meetings as events in the life of the institution of Britain Yearly Meeting which can involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • constitutional decision-making; • annually overseeing and guiding the stewardship exercised between Yearly Meetings; • settling policy on major areas of work or witness; • promoting teaching and learning; • offering inspiration and leadership; • celebrating together; • re-dedicating ourselves; • calling us to action; • creating and sustaining a community, including those both under and over nineteen. <p>Yearly Meetings are also occasions in which we can learn, practise, improve, and take back to our local meetings ways of conducting business which are rooted in Quaker tradition and our own experience yet also meet contemporary challenges. They should be a focus for every facet of Quakerism, constantly reminding us of what it means to be a Quaker today.</p> <p>We are aware that we do not always achieve these purposes in our Yearly Meetings as well as we might; and indeed that it may not be possible to fulfil all the purposes to an equal extent at an individual Yearly Meeting. Seeking the right balance at any one Yearly Meeting is a necessary though difficult task. Our experience is that Yearly Meeting is most fruitful when its programme includes some decision-making and ‘doing together’, alongside more reflective sessions; and when it focuses on doing what only Yearly Meeting can do.</p>
6.11	<p>In the course of reflecting on his experience as secretary from 1940 to 1945 of Friends War Victims Relief Committee and Friends Relief Service, Roger Wilson wrote in 1949:</p> <p>Yearly Meeting is not, in the last resort, made up of a body of experts. People who know a great deal about the matter in hand may do most of the talking, central committee members familiar with the complexities of translating convictions into practical terms may appear to be leading the meeting. But a few halting yet sincere hesitations, uttered by a Friend from a small meeting in a distant county may, in fact, be of more significance in revealing a matter in its true setting than all the sophistication of the committee worthies. Again and again on deep issues it is reality as known and experienced by the simple and single-minded meeting, that does not know too much to have lost its simple faith, that guides the Society; and the central committee or its administrator who knows that its service is, in the end, related to the life of the local meetings in the country, will have a deep respect for the weight of Yearly Meeting.</p>

Q&P section	Proposed text
6.12	<p>No organisation or planning can produce a good Yearly Meeting if those who attend come for an inadequate reason. When the Religious Society of Friends gathers for its annual assembly, it does so because it seeks to come to know the mind of God on the various affairs to be brought forward... We are ordinary people, with the shortcomings of ordinary people, and there is laid upon us the necessity of patience with one another in all our gatherings, and especially in Yearly Meeting, and the willingness to accept the imperfect arising from our human limitations. When therefore we find our Yearly Meeting falling short of the standard which it should reach, whether in worship or in deliberation, it behoves each of us to listen more intently for the voice of the Spirit, and to seek the more earnestly that every contribution, be it by spoken word or in silence, is that which is in accord with the divine leading. In our worship at Yearly Meeting, it is laid upon us with special weight to listen. It is not our ministry that is required in worship, nor our inspiration in deliberations, but we seek to hear the true word of God speaking through our frail humanity and leading us to the place where he would have us be. This is the right holding of Yearly Meeting.</p> <p>Right Holding of Yearly Meeting Committee, 1960</p>
6.13	<p><i>The service and counsel of John Morland (1837–1934):</i></p> <p>His attendance at Yearly Meeting was increasingly prized, and his personality felt to be a permeating influence. To the last his judgment retained its acuteness. How frequently in a few trenchant sentences he has cut through a problem or re-stated confused issues... The precepts laid down by him whilst clerk of Yearly Meeting (1899–1903) were scrupulously observed by himself: ‘Do not speak without a sense of the imperative ought; speak audibly, not loudly but clearly; speak shortly.’</p> <p>Testimony of Mid-Somerset Monthly Meeting, 1934</p>
6.14	<p><i>Mary Hughes (1860–1941) comes with heart and mind prepared:</i></p> <p>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’. For weeks beforehand it came into her prayers in the morning, at meal times and with friends. She wished that God’s power would be in the meetings, that people would go forth from them with a new vision of God’s work for them, a new sensitiveness towards their fellows, especially the distressed.</p> <p>Rosa Hobhouse, 1949</p>
	Clerks
6.15	<p>The Yearly Meeting shall appoint clerks for a specified term of service, on the nomination of Central Nominations Committee (6.26).</p>
	Representatives
6.16	<p>All Friends are encouraged to attend Yearly Meeting online or at the venue. Yearly Meeting has agreed that area meetings, specified Yearly Meeting</p>

Q&P section	Proposed text
	<p>committees and certain other bodies should appoint representatives to attend Yearly Meeting.</p> <p>Representatives to Yearly Meeting should be appointed by the body that will send them through their usual nominations process.</p> <p>Representatives normally serve for three calendar years, up to a maximum of six. This ensures that continuity of experience is balanced with opportunities for other Friends to participate in Yearly Meeting.</p> <p>Attendees may be appointed to serve as Yearly Meeting representatives. However, Yearly Meeting may close any part of the meeting to non-members if it feels the need to do so.</p> <p>Britain Yearly Meeting staff should not be appointed as representatives to Yearly Meeting.</p>
6.17	<p>Appointing bodies are encouraged to consider these aspects of the role when discerning the names of representatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The discernment of Yearly Meeting is strengthened by perspectives from its different parts, so representatives should reflect the physical, spiritual, geographical and cultural variety among British Friends. • Each area meeting is asked to appoint one representative. Additional representatives may be appointed according to a formula agreed by YM, where circumstances such as the size or geographical spread of the area meeting warrant this • Crynwyr Cymru – Quakers in Wales, Quakers in Scotland, and Young Friends General Meeting are asked to appoint representatives to Yearly Meeting sessions. • Appointed representatives should expect to be able to attend most of the Yearly Meeting sessions during their term of service. This will help continuity and ensure a reasonable minimum attendance at all sessions for Yearly Meeting business. <p>All Quaker communities should consider how they can ensure that their members know about Yearly Meeting and encourage them to attend</p>
6.18	<p>The Agenda Planning Committee may invite any Yearly Meeting committee to send a member to a Yearly Meeting session when it feels that their attendance would be of particular assistance to the discernment of Yearly Meeting as a whole.</p> <p>The clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting trustees, the Yearly Meeting treasurer or a representative of trustees, should be present at all Yearly Meeting sessions. A Clerk or a member of Central Nominations Committee should be present whenever nominations are requested or brought forward.</p> <p>When committees feel that more than one of their members should be present at Yearly Meeting they might consider the option of online attendance to reduce the costs of travel</p>

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	Visiting Friends
6.19	Members of the Society not belonging to Britain Yearly Meeting may attend the sessions of the Yearly Meeting on producing a minute or letter of introduction signed by the clerk of their own meeting or otherwise satisfying the clerk of their membership. However, Friends in sojourning membership of an area meeting (11.27) are exempt from this requirement.
	Permission to non-members
6.20	<p>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 in accordance with the process set out in the Yearly Meeting registration documents on each occasion. Last-minute requests should not be made. Non-members should receive suitable support and guidance to enable their contribution to be of service and for them 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.</p> <p>Non-members attending Yearly Meeting sessions must be aware that they may be asked to leave during consideration of certain sensitive business at the discretion of the clerks.</p>
	Time of meeting
6.21	<p>From 2026, the Yearly Meeting gathers in session more often than once a year. These sessions are responsible for continuing deliberation, discernment and the oversight of our corporate religious life and witness. There may be a longer gathering over several days, and several shorter further gatherings during the year. From time to time there may be longer residential Yearly Meetings as needed. All these gatherings have the same constitutional authority, purpose, agenda preparation, decision-making processes, and attendance arrangements. [see 5.02 and 5.05].</p> <p>The dates and locations of future Yearly Meeting sessions and of any residential Yearly Meetings are agreed in advance by Yearly Meeting in session on the recommendation of its agenda planning committee.</p>
6.22	<p>The purpose of occasional residential gatherings, in addition to considering normal yearly meeting business, is</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> to strengthen and support the witness and activity of Friends by continuing the personal friendships, spiritual inspiration and momentum that residential gatherings provide; to provide time, at a more leisurely pace than is normally possible during regular Yearly Meeting sessions, for the exploration of those issues and concerns which by their nature require such time;

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	<p>c. to provide the space for exploration of issues and concerns in groups or other diverse ways;</p> <p>d. to provide the time and facilities for study and real learning;</p> <p>e. to involve as many Quakers of all ages as possible in active participation; this should include activities for all ages.</p>
	Proceedings
6.23	<p>The <i>Proceedings</i> of the Yearly Meeting comprise documents in advance, the Trustees' annual report and financial statements for the preceding year, the tabular statement, the report of the Agenda Planning Committee, testimonies to the grace of God in the lives of deceased Friends, the final minutes of Yearly Meeting and any other documents as directed by Yearly Meeting.</p>
	Yearly Meeting committees
6.24	<p>Yearly Meeting may appoint committees or other bodies to carry out or oversee, among other things, the following functions before, during or after its sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agenda planning • nominations • drafting of a Yearly Meeting epistle • examining Yearly Meeting minutes and correcting inaccuracies • spiritual and pastoral care • other practical arrangements for holding Yearly Meeting including issue of documents in advance. • right conduct of sessions <p>Details of the names, roles, terms of reference, nomination and appointment processes, composition, membership, clerking, terms of service, and consultation and reporting arrangements of these committees and other bodies are set out in supplementary material approved by the Yearly Meeting [reference].</p>
	Yearly Meeting committees and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees
6.25	<p>Yearly Meeting appoints members of its committees and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees.</p> <p>Yearly Meeting entrusts to Trustees the organisation and periodic revision of the structure of certain committees (8.06, 8.17). However, it reserves to itself decisions affecting the existence and basic functions of Quaker Life and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committees (8.07, 8.08, 8.11). The work they represent may not be altered without the approval of Yearly Meeting in session. In such cases any proposed amendments to our church government must, after due consideration, be forwarded to Yearly Meeting for decision (8.17).</p>

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	Central Nominations Committee
6.26	Central Nominations Committee is responsible for finding names for appointments as required by Yearly Meeting and for overseeing and developing nominations procedures It is appointed by Yearly Meeting on the nomination of Yearly Meeting Nominating Group. Members are appointed on a rotating triennial basis. Terms of reference for the committee are agreed by Yearly Meeting
6.27	<i>Omitted</i>
6.28	<i>Omitted</i>
	History of the central organisation of the Yearly Meeting
	Meeting for Sufferings
7.01 Para 1	For many years until Yearly Meeting May 2026, Meeting for Sufferings was the standing representative body entrusted with the general care of matters affecting Britain Yearly Meeting and, in the intervals between Yearly Meetings, the making of decisions and the issuing of statements in the name of Britain Yearly Meeting. Within our church government it exercised discernment on priorities and received regular interim reports for information and consultation on the Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees' work. It played a part in developing a visionary and prophetic role for the whole yearly meeting and in fostering communication throughout the yearly meeting.
7.01 Para 2	Yearly Meeting in July 2024 accepted proposals brought by a Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings that with effect from Yearly Meeting 2026, Meeting for Sufferings should be laid down and that Yearly Meeting should thenceforward meet several times a year. The functions of Meeting for Sufferings would from that date be undertaken by the Yearly Meeting unless delegated elsewhere. The arrangements for the yearly meeting are set out in Chapter 6.
7.01 Para 3	The remaining paragraphs of this chapter set out the historical development of the central organisation of the yearly meeting within which Meeting for Sufferings played such an important role.
7.01 Para 4	The yearly meeting's local organisation was settled in the years 1667–9. The 1670s saw the development of central organisation. Apart from Yearly Meeting (1668), three bodies deserve special mention – Six Weeks Meeting (1671), Morning Meeting (1673) and Meeting for Sufferings (1675). All were basically meetings of London Friends; all, to a greater or lesser extent, undertook national responsibilities. Six Weeks Meeting was the most metropolitan of the three, though even it engaged on occasion in such national business as the wording of the marriage certificate. The Morning Meeting may have had its origin in the 'meeting of ancient Friends' said to have started about 1656 or the general meeting of ministering Friends in and about the city, established in 1661. It comprised men 'publick' (or ministering) Friends in and about the city, and when, later, elders were appointed, men

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	elders became eligible for membership of the Morning Meeting, which met each Monday.
7.01 Para 5	It was the Morning Meeting which took the initiative in calling a conference in October 1675 to consider what steps could be taken to secure redress from sufferings. At that meeting it was agreed ‘that certaine friends of this Citty be heere nominated to keep a Constant Meeting about Sufferings 4 times a year, with the day and time of each meeting here fixed and settled’. Twelve Friends, two from each of the London monthly meetings, were then listed with ‘as many as are free of the Second dayes morning meeting of publick Friends to meet togeather as aforesaid’, and that ‘at least one friend of each County be appointed by the quarterly meeting thereof to be in readiness to repaire to any of the same meetings at this Citty, at such times as their urgent occasions or sufferings shall require’. The constitution of Meeting for Sufferings agreed by Yearly Meeting 1702 was set forth as: ‘Publick Friends and such that are appointed or approved by the severall Quarterly Meetings of the Countyes & other Countrys that Correspond with this meeting in all Places, and are entred as such in the Correspondent Book.’
7.01 Para 6	The full Meeting for Sufferings was to meet at the beginning of each law term and one quarter of the membership was to meet weekly (each Friday) until the next full meeting. The minutes begin on 22 June 1676. At the outset some eight to ten Friends attended the weekly meetings and the speed with which, backed by information from the quarterly meeting correspondents, the meeting was able to put Friends’ case to good effect before members of both Houses of Parliament is indeed impressive. The meeting was not restricted to the efforts to obtain redress in particular ‘Cases of Suffering’ (though this was the first item in the minutes until about 1750). Yearly Meeting entrusted it with the task of trying to obtain relief from the oath, in which it was successful under the Affirmation Acts of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Yearly Meeting likewise asked it to try to secure a reduction of the burden suffered under tithes, which the meeting attempted by the promotion of successive Quakers Tithe Bills in the 1730s. It was the same closely-knit relationship of county quarterly meeting correspondents and London members of Meeting for Sufferings that enabled Friends to campaign with such success in the movement towards the abolition of the slave trade. Meeting for Sufferings, meeting weekly (as it continued to do until 1798), was able with great effect to carry out Yearly Meeting’s instructions. So swift and smooth had its organisation become that it would be tempting to describe it as highly efficient parliamentary lobbying. Although it was primarily a London body its effective correspondent system enabled it to speak with an authoritative national voice.
7.01 Para 7	The nineteenth century saw a steady increase in the work of Meeting for Sufferings and a corresponding growth of its committees. The Parliamentary Committee had existed from the early eighteenth century. The Slave Trade Committee of 1783–92 was followed by other and more permanent committees – the 1817 Minden & Pyrmont Committee became the Continental Committee, serving for over 100 years as a link between Friends

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	in Great Britain and small groups on the continent of Europe, in Australasia, in Calcutta, southern Africa and other places; the administrative committees charged with the care of the premises and with printing were supplemented by others responsible for the library and for finance; other committees took up particular concerns of Friends – several undertook successive efforts at relief work, an anti- slavery committee was re-established, in 1888 the Peace Committee was formed, and subsequent committees were set up to express Friends' views on the opium traffic and on betting and gambling.
7.01 Para 8	Alongside this steadily widening stream of interests, the constitution of the meeting was changing. The era of railway travel made it increasingly easy for Friends to attend, and the system of London and country correspondents gave place to that of quarterly meeting representatives. This was reflected in revised constitutions of 1856 and 1883. In 1884 the meeting had an appointed membership of ninety-eight with representatives from all but six quarterly meetings. In 1898 (following a decision of Yearly Meeting 1896) the first women Friends took their seats in Meeting for Sufferings. Anna Littleboy, one of those then appointed, recalled thirty years later that 'while kindly and courteously received, it was evident that the presence of women was not exactly welcomed by most of the older members, and the clerk impressed upon them that the meeting was for the conduct of business and not for speeches'.
7.01 Para 9	Another change was the laying down in 1901 of the Morning Meeting and the transference of its functions to Meeting for Sufferings. Henceforward the consideration of personal concerns for service overseas and the welcoming of travelling Friends from other yearly meetings was added to already increasing business. Preoccupation with relief work, and still greater growth of the range of Friends' concern, added to the length of agenda. The days of the meeting which began at eleven o'clock and was over by late lunchtime had passed.
7.01 Para 10	The twentieth century therefore witnessed a steady trend of delegation of routine matters to subcommittees, but it also saw a gradual growth in the meeting's function in drawing together and relating to one another the different strands in the yearly meeting's life and service. This process was helped as some of the nineteenth-century 'independent associations' (the Friends Foreign Mission Association and the Friends Tract Association for example) became or were merged with official committees of the yearly meeting, gradually accepting the responsibilities and discipline that this involved. It also became increasingly clear that the distinction between committees of Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings had outlived its usefulness, and Special Yearly Meeting 1965 agreed that all standing committees should be appointed by Meeting for Sufferings which, in periodic review of their work, would be enabled 'to become more sensitive to the insights of the committees and thus ... promote that knowledge and understanding by means of which both the meeting and the committees should be able more effectively to enter into and to discharge their responsibilities'.

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7.01 Para 11	The additional tasks laid on Meeting for Sufferings as 'a central body which can act on behalf of the Society between Yearly Meetings' necessitated, in the words of Special Yearly Meeting 1965, that 'such a body must be representative of Friends both geographically and as to diversity of our membership'. This led to representation from monthly meetings rather than quarterly meetings, to three-year appointments rather than annual, to a change in the day of meeting from Friday to Saturday and, in 1974, to the withdrawal of the automatic right of elders to attend. In furtherance of 'the essential unity of the work undertaken in the name of the Yearly Meeting', staff employed by the yearly meeting and by seven separate employing committees were unified and became employees of Meeting for Sufferings. The anomaly remained that while the yearly meeting's essential central services were funded by means of a 'quota' contributed by monthly meetings, central committees were issuing separate financial appeals which had the effect of competing one with another. The financing of all the central work was unified between 1986 and 1988, placing further responsibility on Meeting for Sufferings for the testing of concern and for the allocation of available resources to the wide variety of religious service undertaken in the name of the yearly meeting.
7.01 Para 12	In 1984 Meeting for Sufferings revived the practice of maintaining a register of Friends before the courts or imprisoned for matters of conscience.
7.01 Para 13	In 2006 Yearly Meeting confirmed the setting up of a body of trustees (8.17) separately from Meeting for Sufferings for the centrally managed work. Meeting for Sufferings had previously exercised the trusteeship function. The role of Meeting for Sufferings was seen as being freed up to develop the vision for the future for the whole of Britain Yearly Meeting and develop this in long-term plans. An expanded role for Meeting for Sufferings as a representative body in communication with meetings was also envisaged. After review of the new roles of trustees and Meeting for Sufferings in 2011, Yearly Meeting further agreed to reduce the size of this representative body to one representative (and an alternate) from each area meeting.
7.01 Para 14	Thus, albeit in different circumstances, Meeting for Sufferings sought to fulfil its functions as defined by Yearly Meeting 1833: 'A standing committee of this meeting ... entrusted with a general care of whatever may arise during the intervals of this meeting, affecting our religious society and requiring immediate attention'. This role is no longer required now that Yearly Meeting meets more frequently, arrangements for which are set out in Chapter 6.
	(no heading)
7.02	Omitted
7.03	Omitted
7.04	Omitted
	(no heading)
7.05	Omitted
	(no heading)

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7.06	Omitted
	(no heading)
7.07	Omitted
	(no heading)
7.08	Omitted
	(no heading)
7.09	Omitted
	(no heading)
7.10	Omitted
8.02	<p>Discernment and decision-making are crucial aspects of our life as a Quaker community, not least in relation to the work carried out centrally by Britain Yearly Meeting through its committees and staff. All our committees act as gathered meetings for worship, a discipline which continues throughout the governance and management of the work.</p> <p>The centrally managed work of Quakers in Britain has three elements: first discernment and decision-making; secondly governance; thirdly management.</p> <p>Friends in local meetings, area meetings and at Yearly Meeting in session are responsible for the discernment and decisions about the work that needs to be carried out (1.02.14; 13.05–13.07). Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees (8.17–8.18) and the committees appointed by and accountable to Britain Yearly Meeting or BYM Trustees (8.04–8.08, 8.11–8.13) are responsible for the governance and oversight of this work: this includes both strategic decisions arising from Yearly Meeting and elsewhere and the monitoring of their implementation. Staff are responsible for the management of this work (8.19–8.23).</p> <p>Britain Yearly Meeting in session is the body with ultimate authority for church affairs for Quakers in Britain (6.12). The term ‘Britain Yearly Meeting’ refers also to the combined membership of the seventy or so area meetings that make up the Religious Society of Friends in Britain and it is used as well in its governing document to refer to the work carried out centrally on behalf of the membership. Whilst much of the work of the yearly meeting takes place in any of its constituent meetings, some work is more appropriately organised centrally, and it is that which is described in this chapter.</p> <p>In the governing document (covering the centrally held and managed policy, property, employment and work adopted by Yearly Meeting), the charitable 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’. The full governing document and explanatory notes are available from the Recording Clerk and the BYM website (new window).</p>
	Oversight of the centrally managed work
	Types of committee
8.04	Oversight of the centrally managed work of Britain Yearly Meeting is in large part entrusted to committees.

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	<p>There are different types of committee: committees, which are established for an unlimited duration, and other committees, which may be set up for a specific purpose as occasion requires and are usually expected to complete their task by a set date. A smaller committee with a very specific task may be called a group.</p> <p>All committees and groups have terms of reference, which are available from the Recording Clerk.</p>
	Standing committees
8.05	<p>Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees appoints standing committees which are accountable to Trustees;</p> <p>Yearly Meeting appoints standing committees some of which are directly accountable to Yearly Meeting in session (6.17) and some of which are accountable to Yearly Meeting in session through Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees (8.06);</p> <p>The diagram shows a simplified governance and committee structure of Britain Yearly Meeting at the beginning of 2026, indicating the relationships between units.</p>
8.05	
8.05	<p>Friends accepting service on committees might usefully share with their area meeting the interests and concerns which are claiming their committee's attention. Clerks might encourage the sensitive sharing of experience, rather than mere reporting.</p>
8.06	<p>The two central committees</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Quaker Life Central Committee (8.08)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (8.11)</p> <p>are appointed by Yearly Meeting in session and are accountable to Yearly Meeting through Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, with terms of reference agreed by Trustees.</p> <p>Two further committees</p>

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	<p>Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations (8.12; 9.13) Quaker World Relations Committee (8.13; 9.06).</p> <p>are appointed by and accountable to Britain Yearly Meeting in session.</p> <p>These four committees are responsible for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. formulating and presenting policy for their areas of work in accordance with the priorities identified for the centrally managed work. Quaker Life Central Committee and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee both carry responsibility for substantial programmes of work largely managed by staff. b. appointing subsidiary committees and working groups and determining their respective terms of reference and membership within the overall guidance on nominations (see c. below & 3.23–3.25 & 7.07); c. establishing an effective nominations committee, working closely with the Central Nominations Committee (6.21) as appropriate; d. reporting as appropriate to the body to which they are accountable e. considering any matters that Yearly Meeting for Sufferings or Trustees refer to it for urgent attention and action. (See also 8.23). <p>Terms of reference for all committees may be obtained on application to the Recording Clerk.</p>
	<remove the heading>
8.07	Omitted
	Quaker Life Central Committee
8.08	<p>Quaker Life Central Committee's purpose is to support and strengthen Quaker life throughout the yearly meeting, a remit which covers faith and practice: both spiritual nurture and the practical tasks required for the running of our Quaker meetings. It is responsible to Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees for support, advice and training in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the right holding of meeting for worship and meetings for church affairs, including for those taking special responsibilities as clerks, for eldership, oversight and pastoral care; b. other aspects of support for meetings, such as for meeting employees and trustees on compliance and good practice in Quaker employment, for librarians, for registering officers, for nominations work or in other ways; c. spiritual development and religious learning, both with and for adults and children and young people, including membership matters, publications and providing opportunities to empower meetings and individual Quakers so as to deepen their spiritual lives and refresh their sense of vitality;

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	<p>d. the outreach activities of Friends in their meetings, and for those seeking information about Quakers.</p> <p>Where appropriate, it responds to meetings' requests to work with them directly. It seeks to build the wider Quaker community by involving as many Friends as possible directly in its processes, working through the staff of the Quaker Life Department, its functional committees and working groups, its Representative Council and the Quaker Life Network. It is responsible for the holding of Junior Yearly Meeting.</p>
	Representative council
8.10	<p>Representative Council membership comprises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the appointed representative, or appointed deputy, of each area meeting within Britain Yearly Meeting; b. two representatives of each of Crynwyr Cymru – Quakers in Wales, Quakers in Scotland and Young Friends General Meeting; c. the members of Quaker Life Central Committee; d. the clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting and the clerk of–Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees-ex officio; e. up to ten co-opted members. <p>The membership is reviewed triennially.</p> <p>The representatives' role is to strengthen the links between meetings and the central committee. They should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. attend (or arrange for their deputy to attend) each meeting of the representative council – the area meeting or other appointing body will pay participation fees and reasonable travel expenses; b. bring news of meetings' activities or needs to provide feedback to central committee and each other, helping to share good practice and to contribute to the discernment of priorities, ensuring that the centrally managed work is relevant and appropriate; c. take back and share with their meetings a deeper knowledge and commitment to the wider Quaker community and the breadth and depth of Quaker Life's work; d. help to support the fundraising effort necessary to sustain Quaker Life's work by increasing local and area meetings' understanding and enthusiasm for it; e. keep in touch with any local members of the central committee.
	Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations
8.12	<p>Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations is responsible for keeping Quakers in Britain informed of the various movements towards co-</p>

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	<p>operation within the Christian church and opportunities for interfaith dialogue. Its work and constitution are described in 9.13.</p> <p>Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations is appointed by and is accountable to Britain Yearly Meeting in session. Paragraph 8.06 gives a guide to the responsibilities of this committee.</p>
	Quaker World Relations Committee
8.13	<p>Quaker World Relations Committee maintains contact with other yearly meetings and with Friends World Committee for Consultation and its Europe & Middle East Section to which Britain Yearly Meeting is affiliated. Its work and constitution are described in 9.06.</p> <p>Quaker World Relations Committee is appointed by and is accountable to Britain Yearly Meeting in session. Paragraph 8.06 gives a guide to the responsibilities of this committee.</p>
	Quaker Housing Trust Limited
8.15	<p>Quaker Housing Trust Limited was formed in 1967 in response to Friends' concern about the provision of adequate and appropriate housing. The trust makes grants and loans, and offers advice to charitable organisations providing accommodation, particularly to vulnerable people. Independent of the Britain Yearly Meeting Funds, it is a channel whereby Friends may give or lend money for such provision. It is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.</p> <p>Quaker Housing Trust Limited has between seven and twelve trustees appointed for terms of three years by Yearly Meeting on the nomination of Central Nominations Committee, to form its council of management.</p>
	Governance and management of the centrally managed work
	Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees
	Constitution and purpose
8.17	<p>Yearly Meeting appoints trustees to act on its behalf as managing trustees of the work, assets and property held directly by Britain Yearly Meeting.</p> <p>Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees are responsible to the yearly meeting for the right stewardship of its work, assets and property; as charity trustees, they are also legally defined as responsible for the general control and management of the administration of the affairs of Britain Yearly Meeting.</p> <p>The powers and responsibilities of Trustees, as set out in the Britain Yearly Meeting governing document, are grounded in service. Trustees have a duty to account to the outside world for the conduct of their trust. Gathered meetings, both of the Trustees and of other bodies, provide the religious discernment that guides our actions in the world. Trustees recognise and listen carefully to the discernment of Yearly Meeting, and the committees</p>

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	<p>appointed by and accountable to Yearly Meeting or BYM Trustees and ensure that it is followed, within legal and financial constraints.</p> <p>Trustees undertake, on behalf of Yearly Meeting, legal compliance, monitoring and scrutiny functions. They also ensure that the centrally managed work is being properly governed and managed in accordance with the religious and charitable objects of Britain Yearly Meeting (see 8.03), set out in the governing document approved by Yearly Meeting which is available on the Britain Yearly Meeting website or on application to the Recording Clerk. They oversee the work of Management Meeting (8.22) and are the employers of Britain Yearly Meeting staff (8.20).</p> <p>Trustees approve annually an operational plan and budget for the forthcoming year. They are responsible for the Trustees' annual report and financial statements for the past year, which are submitted to Yearly Meeting and to the charity regulators in due course.</p> <p>The membership, responsibilities and duties of Trustees are set out in detail in terms of reference to be approved and revised from time to time by Yearly Meeting. A copy is available from the Recording Clerk and the BYM website (new window).</p> <p>Trustees are appointed by Yearly Meeting on the nomination of Central Nominations Committee (6.21) as set out in the Trustees' terms of reference. In making nominations for service as trustees, Central Nominations Committee ensures that the Friends approached are aware of the legal responsibilities of trustees and of the legal position on eligibility (see 15.04). No trustee shall serve on any of the committees listed in 8.06. The clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and the Yearly Meeting Treasurer are appointed by Yearly Meeting on the nomination of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees. The Yearly Meeting Treasurer serves as a trustee ex officio because of the Treasurer's role in relation to the centrally managed work as a whole. The Assistant Clerk is appointed by Trustees from amongst their number.</p>
8.18	<p>Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees are responsible for the work, assets and property of the yearly meeting. The two central committees appointed by Yearly Meeting as defined in 8.06 report to them.</p> <p>Yearly Meeting also entrusts to Trustees the organisation and periodic revision of the structure of the committees which oversee particular areas of the centrally managed work. However, it reserves to itself decisions affecting the existence and basic functions of Trustees, and of Quaker Life Central Committee (8.08) and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (8.11).</p> <p>Trustees must report to Yearly Meeting any other changes in the structure of the committees specified in 8.06 through which they work; in such cases, any amendments to our church government reflect decisions already taken, and it</p>

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	<p>is for Yearly Meeting in session to decide whether the proposed textual changes to our book of discipline accurately describe the new structure.</p> <p>Trustees may delegate any of their powers to a committee that includes two or more of their number. Trustee appointed committees may cover, for example, areas of finance and property, employment, and audit.</p> <p>Trustees are accountable to Yearly Meeting (chapter 6) and the charity regulators (chapters 14 & 15). Trustees and Yearly Meeting committees may communicate by minute with the Agenda Planning Committee for Yearly Meeting, and with each other. Yearly Meeting committees may also communicate with Crynwyr Cymru – Quakers in Wales, Quakers in Scotland and area meetings on specific delegated matters; they should ensure that this is done in co-ordination with Trustees and other Yearly Meeting committees, liaising as required</p>
	Employment of staff
8.20	<p>Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees employ staff in order to service the centrally managed work. The staff provide many of the resources and much of the expertise required to carry out Britain Yearly Meeting's work effectively in a manner consistent with Friends' testimonies and beliefs. Much preparatory, ongoing and follow-up work falls to the staff, and they need the full support of all Friends.</p> <p>Trustees ensure that staff working for Britain Yearly Meeting and committee members are treated fairly and do not experience unjust discrimination. Staff and committee members should strive to 'answer that of God in everyone' by working as a community which fosters a spirit of toleration and mutual concern for each other. In carrying out the work of Britain Yearly Meeting, respect for truth and integrity should be paramount so that high ethical standards are maintained.</p> <p>A description of the departmental structure can be obtained from the Recording Clerk.</p>
	The Recording Clerk
8.21	<p>The office of Recording Clerk has widened considerably since it was first established in about 1657. In those early days, the role was largely concerned with the sufferings of Friends, and up to 1703 included serving the Yearly Meeting as clerk. In more recent times, oversight of the management of the departments has become an important function of the Recording Clerk.</p> <p>The Recording Clerk, as secretary to Yearly Meeting-and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, is responsible for servicing these bodies, and for ensuring that their work is carried out</p> <p>As the senior member of staff employed by Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, the Recording Clerk's main tasks include maintaining contact with meetings throughout the yearly meeting, leading Management Meeting (8.22), being line manager of the other members of Management Meeting and certain senior</p>

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	<p>staff, acting as ‘keeper and interpreter’ of the regulations laid down in our church government, and representing Britain Yearly Meeting to, and fostering good relations with, outside bodies. The Recording Clerk is responsible for ensuring that the recording and processing of data held by the yearly meeting conforms with the law (4.45). The Deputy Recording Clerk deputises for the Recording Clerk in any aspect of their work as required.</p>
	<p>Management Meeting</p>
<p>8.22</p>	<p>Management Meeting is responsible for co-ordinating the management and overseeing the implementation of the work of Britain Yearly Meeting. It is accountable to Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, whom it advises on practical and technical aspects of the work and to whom it reports regularly and submits its minutes. Management Meeting is responsible for the cohesion and consistency of the management of the centrally managed work, through the co-ordination of the work of individual managers, working to the vision and policies discerned by Britain Yearly Meeting in session and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and following the operational plan agreed by Trustees.</p> <p>The meeting is composed of the Recording Clerk and other members of the senior staff designated by Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees on the recommendation of the Recording Clerk. It meets as required under the leadership of the Recording Clerk (8.21). Members are collectively responsible for all its decisions, acting for Britain Yearly Meeting as a whole as well as the particular area for which they are responsible.</p>
	<p>The work of committees and staff</p>
<p>8.23</p>	<p>It is the role of the standing committees, particularly the central committees, to use their leadings and discernment to advise Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees on policies and priorities for their work. In so doing they should draw on the experience, knowledge and concerns of area meetings and, where appropriate, representative councils so that local Friends are involved in the process.</p> <p>Committees need to be aware of the different roles they may play in responding to items on their agendas. Central committees determine policies and priorities for their areas of responsibility within the limits described in 7.03. Their role is to determine the work to be done and ensure that it is manageable without attempting to do it themselves.</p> <p>Those who carry out the work may be functional committees, working groups, volunteers or staff, or combinations of these. Central committees primarily delegate work to staff, whose responsibility is to undertake the work under the co-ordination of Management Meeting. Other standing committees, functional committees, ad hoc committees and working groups may do more of their own work without much direct staff involvement. Committees that do undertake work themselves need to ensure it is done in partnership with staff, who have the responsibility to co-ordinate its management.</p>

Q&P section	Proposed text
	<p>The close working partnership between staff and committee members brings a wide range of talents and experience to bear on our work. Committee members need to remain free of routine administrative tasks if they are to have the time to exercise their important decision-making functions. However, committee members also need to be aware of how their decisions might affect, unsettle or fulfil staff members involved. In turn, members of staff have to be aware of the delicate tension of being in a position of knowledge and ensuring that their committees benefit from their experience and preparation whilst leaving committees in a position to make consequent decisions freely.</p>
	Conclusion
8.24	<p>Each committee has arisen and developed in response to a particular need. Each generation of Friends has been faced with a structure in some respects untidy, and we may be thankful for the clear-minded among us who help us, from time to time, to set our house in better order. But order without life does not work, and our continual task is to ensure that our structures are in harmony with the changing tides of life in Britain Yearly Meeting.</p> <p>It is neither possible nor desirable for every Friend to take a detailed interest in the work of every committee. We are, however, called to a broad sympathy with, and understanding of, the extent of the work entrusted to the committees under the guidance of Yearly Meeting and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees in the name of the whole yearly meeting</p>
8.26	<p>Our committees do not live to themselves, individual pieces of work of different committees must be seen in the context of the total work and witness of the Yearly Meeting. Their appointment by and reporting through Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees to Yearly Meeting reflect the responsibility and accountability of these committees.</p>
	Quaker Council for European Affairs
9.07	<p>The European yearly meetings support the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA), which aims to bring Quaker influence to bear on the institutions of Europe and maintains representatives and support staff in Quaker House, Brussels. A British Committee of QCEA works to increase awareness and to raise funds. Local meetings are encouraged to appoint a British Committee correspondent. Britain Yearly Meeting is committed to the support of QCEA.</p> <p>Yearly Meeting, on the recommendation of the Central Nominations Committee, appoints one representative, with an alternate, to serve on QCEA for three years. There will often be value in considering re-appointment for a second three-year term.</p>
9.12	<p>Yearly Meeting appoints representatives to CTBI and CTE Forum. The Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations (9.13) appoints to CTE Enabling Group and other CTE bodies.</p>

Qf&p section	Proposed text
	<p>The committee has agreed in principle that Britain Yearly Meeting should be represented at CTBI as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. at the Senior Representative Forum by the Recording Clerk (new window) or a Quaker member of staff delegated by her or him; b. at the biennial Summit of Church Leaders by one or two Friends appointed on the basis of their relevant experience on the nomination of Central Nominations Committee. <p>Crynwyr Cymru – Quakers in Wales makes appointments to Cytûn; Quakers in Scotland makes appointments to appropriate Scottish organisations.</p> <p>Representatives report to the appointing body and the Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations maintains contact with any reference group set up to support them.</p>
	Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations
9.13	<p>The Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) is appointed by Yearly Meeting. At least one member is appointed from Crynwyr Cymru – Quakers in Wales and least one is appointed from Quakers in Scotland. Ireland Yearly Meeting is invited to nominate a representative through Britain Yearly Meeting’s Central Nominations Committee. Additional members may be co-opted to assist with particular issues.</p> <p>QCCIR is responsible for keeping Britain Yearly Meeting informed of relevant issues and movements which emerge from the interchurch and interfaith life of Britain, and of opportunities for dialogue and co-operation between churches, between faiths, and between faiths and churches. It liaises with other churches and communities of faith, keeping them informed of developments in the life of the yearly meeting and responding on behalf of the yearly meeting so that Friends’ views on issues of faith and order are represented. QCCIR supports members of Britain Yearly Meeting, both nationally and locally, in raising awareness and understanding of the interchurch and interfaith dimension of religious and spiritual life.</p>
13.13	<p>Where they are clear that they have recognised a concern, Friends in the meeting will turn their attention to the practical details of its implementation and consequences. It may happen that a meeting recognises a Friend’s concern but can see no way in which it can be taken forward or given practical effect at this time. It is then appropriate to hold it over for further consideration when the circumstances are more favourable.</p> <p>If a concern relates to the corporate life of Britain Yearly Meeting it should be sent forward by the area meeting to Yearly Meeting (see 4.19).</p> <p>When service abroad in any capacity is proposed, early consultation with the relevant committees of Britain Yearly Meeting is imperative. Consultation with the Friends World Committee for Consultation and appropriate yearly meetings may also be necessary.</p>

Qf&p section	Proposed text
	<p>It has already been noted that meetings that support a Friend's concern will sometimes assume the financial responsibility for the concern. Whether or not this is so, they may also consider offering other forms of help such as the use of a car, offers of childcare or the setting up of a support group of people close to the Friend or concern (see 12.27).</p> <p>When a concern has run its course, consideration should be given to how this may be recognised and acknowledged. A meeting that has supported a concern should be informed when it is seen to be right to lay that concern down. Celebration for the right ending of what was rightly begun may be appropriate.</p> <p>See also 4.09 & 4.19–4.20</p>
13.15	Omitted
	Quaker recognised bodies
13.19	<p>Quakers in Britain, both individually and as a yearly meeting, have long benefitted from the many formal and informal groups which allow and encourage Friends to develop concerns and interests arising from, and strengthening, their experience of Quaker faith. At different times in the past, some of these have been known as special interest groups, or listed informal groups. These, together with many other Quaker trusts and charities, are now known as Quaker recognised bodies.</p> <p>A Quaker recognised body is an autonomous group through which concerned Friends may share a common interest, seek affirmation or carry out witness. The bodies are seen as arising from Quaker faith, and provide a way in which conviction and witness can be explored and developed outside our formal structures. Being independent, Quaker recognised bodies generally have no right of communication by minute with structures such as central committees or the Agenda Planning Committee for Yearly Meeting.</p> <p>All groups or bodies using the name 'Quaker' or 'Friends' in their title are reminded of the responsibility to uphold our testimonies, and that care is needed in case the work or witness of the group is understood to be part of the yearly meeting's corporate activity when it is not.</p> <p>Details of the following may be obtained from the Recording Clerk: the criteria for and process of recognition, the benefits and responsibilities, and periodic review.</p>
	Types of minutes
13.28	<p>A Friend travelling on Friends' business, or to perform a particular, limited service is provided with a travelling minute. This may be provided either by their area meeting, committee or other worshipping community. Such a minute may be endorsed by the welcoming meeting. Guidance on the writing, receipt and endorsement of travelling minutes can be obtained from Recording Clerk.</p>

Quaker faith & practice (Qf&p): Chapter 6 supplementary material

Church Government Advisory Group has prepared a new version of chapter 6, to take account of the changes that will come into effect in May 2026.

The Group has removed some of the detail that is currently in that chapter. The removed material is not being discarded, instead, we suggest that this material becomes supplementary to the text of Quaker faith & practice.

This proposal fits well with the decision of Yearly Meeting in 2018 that the next book, to replace Quaker faith & practice, should contain core material, which is less likely to change. Additional supplementary material which is likely to change will not form part of the core book.

As we had to completely rewrite Chapter 6 of the current book to reflect the changed arrangements for Yearly Meeting, we have taken the opportunity to organise the material according to this new approach. This section therefore contains information which is in Quaker faith & practice at present but which we consider could be relegated to a supplementary document.

Other material that could be included here would be reference to the circumstances in which area meetings would have more than one representative funded, which other bodies will have funded representatives, and details of which committees should send representatives.

This is a trial. The current expectation is that Agenda Planning Committee would have responsibility for keeping the text current, and for adding any extra material that would be useful or helpful.

In the rest of the document Text in square brackets below each section [] is included to explain the source of the preceding text.

Michael S Booth
Secretary, Church Government Advisory Group
October 2025

Proposed extra information

Yearly Meeting

Yearly Meeting committees

[Expanding on the proposed text of 6.24]

Agenda Planning Committee

1. Summary of purpose

Agenda Planning Committee:

- receives minutes and other communications from meetings, Quaker communities and other bodies;
- pays attention to the Spirit moving through Britain Yearly Meeting, noting which issues may need discernment by the Yearly Meeting in session;
- liaises with committees and other groups to understand their work and how it may relate to current or potential Yearly Meeting business;
- tests potential items of business to discern whether they are ready to come to Yearly Meeting and suggests further testing if they are not yet ready;
- discerns and plans the agenda for every session of Yearly Meeting;
- ensures appropriate information about Yearly Meeting sessions is made available to Friends in advance;
- recommends dates and venues for Yearly Meeting sessions, including residential sessions, to Yearly Meeting (which will make the final decision);
- supports the right holding of Yearly Meeting sessions, including by ensuring that there are adequate arrangements for eldership and pastoral care;
- does anything that Yearly Meeting in session may from time to time ask it to do.
- will at any one time aim to keep an overview of the next few years, looking beyond the immediately upcoming Yearly Meeting and noting in outline what might come to future sessions of Yearly Meeting.

2. Membership

Agenda Planning Committee shall consist of the following members appointed by Yearly Meeting on the nomination of Central Nominations Committee:

- a clerk
- an assistant clerk
- nine other members

In addition, all serving and nominated clerks and assistant clerks of Yearly Meeting may attend Agenda Planning Committee. The clerks of Yearly Meeting shall between them ensure that at least one of their number is present for each meeting of Agenda Planning Committee.

The normal term of service for the clerks of Agenda Planning Committee shall be three years. The maximum possible total term of service as clerk and/ or assistant clerk without a break shall be six years.

The normal term of service for appointed members of Agenda Planning Committee shall be two years. Reappointment up to two times is possible, giving a maximum possible total term of service of six years. A member who has served for six years may exceptionally be appointed to further service as clerk or assistant clerk.

3. Operation

Agenda Planning Committee will liaise as required, normally through the Recording Clerk, with Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, who will ensure an appropriate budget for Yearly Meeting is in place and who will address and be responsible for all aspects of legal compliance (including safeguarding, health and safety, data protection, employment issues and risk).

The Committee shall meet as frequently as needed, with meetings fitting in the calendar agreed with the Recording Clerk. In general, it shall meet at least once between every Yearly Meeting session.

Agenda Planning Committee may set up and lay down subcommittees and working groups, which shall report to Agenda Planning Committee regularly and shall have terms of reference and membership determined by Agenda Planning Committee. Where appropriate, Agenda Planning Committee may appoint Friends from outside its own membership to serve on such groups.

Agenda Planning Committee is accountable to Yearly Meeting in session.

[In drafting this CGAG has drawn on the full terms of reference contained in: [yearly-meeting-2025-agenda-and-notes](#)]

Central Nominations Committee

Central Nominations Committee is responsible for finding names for appointments as required by Yearly Meeting (See Qfp 6.26) Members are appointed on a rotating triennial basis.

Central Nominations Committee should keep records of appointments that are made as a result of their nominations, and start to search in good time for successors to be appointed.

Central Nominations Committee consults with the committees and other bodies for which it is seeking names and ensures that up-to-date terms of reference and other information required are obtained in good time. The committee seeks nominations on the basis of its own discernment and in line with the general guidance on nominations set out in 3.22–3.25.

[There is an entry for Central Nominations Committee proposed to be section 6.26 in Q&P chapter 6. This is the detail from the current original section 6.21 which we consider should be included in supplementary material.]

Yearly Meeting Nominating Group

Yearly Meeting Nominating Group is responsible for nominating to Yearly Meeting names of those to serve on Central Nominations Committee.

Yearly Meeting Nominating Group is appointed annually by Yearly Meeting from those attending Yearly Meeting. The convener is nominated by the previous Nominating Group.

Yearly Meeting Nominating Group consults as necessary and brings names to Yearly Meeting as required. The group also offers nominations to fill any vacancies.

Generally, the Yearly Meeting Nominating Group is appointed at the first session of Yearly Meeting in the year and reports to the final sessions of Yearly Meeting in the same year, except where interim appointments are required.

[Based upon current 6.22]

Epistle Drafting Committee

The Yearly Meeting shall issue an epistle after such of its meetings as it sees fit, but at least once a year. At the first session of a relevant meeting it should appoint, on the nomination of the Central Nominations Committee an Epistle Drafting Committee of which one member will be named as convener.

The draft of the epistle shall be made available to Friends for comment and shall be submitted to Yearly Meeting in session for approval. The epistle as approved shall be read in Yearly Meeting and signed by the clerk.

[Based upon current 6.23]

Committee to Examine Minutes

If the clerks request, then the Yearly Meeting shall appoint Friends, who shall arrange a rota whereby they shall examine the minutes of the meeting at the close of each session and correct any slight inaccuracies that may be found. If any substantial alterations appear to be required they are to be proposed at the next session prior to any other business.

[Based upon current 6.24 – amended to take account that some recent online Yearly Meetings have not had this committee.]

Communication

Any communication to the Yearly Meeting from an area meeting, from Crynwyr Cymru – Quakers in Wales, Quakers in Scotland, or Young Friends General Meeting shall be in the form of a minute signed by their clerk, as shall communications from committees of the Yearly Meeting.

[Based upon current 6.25 The second paragraph of the original section is now under Agenda Planning Committee - Operations. The third paragraph is now in 6.23 of Qf&p chapter 6.]

End of proposed supplementary material

Epistles and reports from BYM representatives attending other European Yearly Meetings in 2025

- Belgium & Luxembourg YM – Suzanne Eade Roberts, Hampshire & Islands AM
- Central Europe YM – Jenny Tipping, Bournemouth Coastal AM
- Finland YM – Mary Woodward, South East Scotland AM
- France YM – Joe Warren, Luton & Leighton AM
- German YM – Martin Harnor, Cambridgeshire AM
- Ireland YM – Gordon Benson, Pendle Hill AM & Kate Arnot, South East Scotland AM
- Netherlands YM – Jasmine Piercy, West Somerset AM
- Nordic YM – Ingrid Greenhow, Luton & Leighton AM
- Switzerland YM – Joe Warren, Luton & Leighton AM

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting (BLYM)

2-4 May 2025

Venue: Chant d'Oiseau, Brussels

Theme: Freedom in a Fearful World

a) Was there anything that struck you about the manner of business or other activities at the YM, whether familiar or different?

I was impressed by the fact that nearly all members of the YM were involved in some capacity in the YM's functioning, whether over the weekend or more generally. This made for a very inclusive, involved community. However, it has come about by necessity. For example, the main piece of business for the Meeting for Worship for Business on the Sunday was finding a solution for nominations. After much discernment, a search group was constituted to create a whole new Nominations Committee. Two members of the new search group described the YM membership as "a small pond" or even as "a puddle"!

I was interested that several people had only been attending a local meeting for one or two years but were already attending their YM and, in some cases, taking on a responsibility such as epistle writing. It is always difficult to know when to ask newcomers to get more involved, but I felt the YM was doing well at nurturing its attenders in a gentle way.

Another particular difference to BYM is the trilingual nature of business and all other activities in BLYM. While the dominant language was English, it was always fine for people to contribute to business or discussions in French or Dutch (Flemish) and to

ask for interpreting. The principal speaker on the Saturday gave her talk in Dutch and pre-prepared translations in English and French were distributed.

Another difference is that the BYM guidelines for representatives to other YMs specifically ask us to undertake “active engagement in the Yearly Meeting - both engagement with Friends, and with the business in the YM being visited”. It turns out that the equivalent BLYM guidelines advise their reps not to participate in business. Given the guidelines I had received, and when it was appropriate, I did participate in the MfW for Business (as did the EMES rep; the Irish rep joined in epistle writing). One of the elders came to see me later in the weekend to thank me for my words, but also to express surprise that I had spoken. We identified this difference and he said he would suggest that BLYM reconsidered its own guidelines on a blanket ban on participation in another YM’s business.

b) What particular items or activities on the programme stood out for you?

On the first evening, Emmanuelle, a BLYM Quaker and gifted facilitator, read out one thought-provoking question at a time from their collection of cards for us to go and ask someone in the room we did not know. It was a great way to go straight into real conversations, making connections with people “in the things that are eternal”.

Antoinette Van Mossevelde, a Catholic and lay Dominican from Ghent, gave an inspiring talk on her work with refugees and the socially excluded. It linked with the broader question of the weekend on how to achieve the right balance between activism and contemplation.

I also enjoyed the “embodied” activities such as qi gong in the garden, which gave us a way to be together without talking.

c) Have you had, or do you plan to have, follow-up contact of any kind?

I have decided to attend the NW Europe Border Meeting in Lille in September this year to see again some of the people I met at BLYM.

d) What is your overall experience as a BYM representative at this YM?

My overall experience was one of joy! The atmosphere was really lovely and friendly, and in a such a small YM, it was possible to speak to most people in the course of the weekend. There was a sense of community which expanded easily to include those of us who were representatives from other YMs or Quaker bodies (Ireland YM, Germany YM, Europe & Middle East Section, Quaker United Nations Office and me).

I have warm and nourishing memories of attending BLYM. Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

e) How have you shared your experience with your community of Friends?

I am going to send a report to Hants & Islands ‘News and Views’ newsletter. In

addition, I have sent the epistle to France YM clerks, since there was not a France YM representative on this occasion (apparently due to the last-minute invitations).

Suzanne Eade Roberts

Epistle of Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting, 2nd to 4th May 2025

To Friends everywhere, greetings!

We met in the peaceful surroundings of Chant d'Oiseau, Brussels on Friday evening and felt welcomed into a safe place that allowed us to explore the theme of our Yearly Meeting, which was: "Freedom in a fearful world".

We welcomed representatives from the Yearly Meetings of Britain, Ireland, Germany, and also from Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), Europe & Middle East Section (EMES) and Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO).

Any worries over unfamiliarity that we may have brought with us were quickly dissolved by the carefully planned friendly opening activities and the way in which our linguistic differences were attended to by giving translations, both spoken and written.

On Saturday, after a short Meeting for Worship, Antoinette Van Mossevelde, a teacher and engaged Christian who has worked in different parts of the world, told us of her rich experiences. She distinguished rational fear, which alerts us to real threats; and deep emotional fear, which can be used by the powers that be; and two different dimensions of freedom, both of which Jesus showed us: "freedom from" and "freedom for". We do well to be free from the restrictions of tradition and from inner conditioning; and thus free for the possibly unexpected actions to which the spirit leads us.

A mindful sharing session opened up space to speak of our fears, and the meditative movements of ZhiNeng Qigong helped our awareness of our mind-body-spirit relationship. Friends from Ghent, part of our Yearly Meeting, introduced their active concern around our Peace Testimony. They wish to raise consciousness, and support others particularly in Eastern Europe, around such themes as freedom for conscientious objection. Different embodiments of the testimony were expressed, and new avenues for action were opened for future consideration. For example, "Walking the second mile" can be understood as more than just being patient or forgiving.

We participated in an activity called "Deep Democracy", which involved hearing many voices and perspectives. There was much lively conversation around how we might use this technique.

Later on, we experienced a session around "embodied worship sharing" practised in German Yearly Meeting. Seated silent worship was mixed in with gentle standing movements. This reminded us that we bring our bodies as well as our hearts and minds to our worship.

We leave with a renewed sense of the importance of embodiment for understanding both our fearfulness, and our freedom to act compassionately towards ourselves and other beings.

Signed: Jeremy Lester, Stefanie De Koker, Nick Rendle, Clerking Circle, 4th May 2025, Brussels

Submitted by epistle drafting committee: Simon Grant, Carmel O'Hara and Antoine Habiyambere

Central European Yearly Meeting

5-8 June 2025 Terezín, Czechia

Report for Britain Yearly Meeting by Jenny Tipping

Around 30 Friends met in the small town of Terezín in Czechia for the second Central European Yearly Meeting. The Yearly Meeting itself includes Friends who live in Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Germany, Austria and Ukraine, and it welcomed supporters and reps from yearly meetings around Europe. While the technology, the room and the discipline were sometimes challenging, it was beautiful to be a part of the energy and commitment of this new yearly meeting.

Membership, in both a practical and spiritual sense, was high on the agenda and the CEYM formally welcomed its first Friends as members of the society. Some of these were completely new, many had transferred from international membership and a couple had transferred from another yearly meeting within the region. It was clear that these new members had a sense of belonging to the yearly meeting and it has an identity which is deepening and strengthening.

The location provided a powerful context for the gathering as Terezín, known as Theresienstadt in German, was taken over during the 1940s by the Nazis. Several buildings in the small town were used as concentration camps and Jews were often held there before being transported to Auschwitz. We visited the museums and saw the exhibitions of art created by the people in the camps and this brought into sharp focus how this yearly meeting sits at the faultlines of European history. For me this deepened the worship and the desire to support a group bringing a commitment to peace to this part of Europe.

As the formal structures of this meeting take shape, questions were asked about how CEYM can sustainably fund itself. The role holders are few in number but deeply committed and learning fast. There is trust in the process and out of the

muddle of voices, languages and histories, beauty is growing. I commend Friends to support this new meeting in any way they can.

Jenny Tipping
Bournemouth Coastal AM

Central European Yearly Meeting Epistle

5-8 June 2025 Terezín, Czechia

To Friends everywhere,

Ahoj, Witajcie, Welcome!

We send you greetings of love and hope from the gathering of the Central European Yearly Meeting, held in Terezín (Theresienstadt), Czechia, both in person and online, from the 5th to the 8th of June 2025.

We met in times that are heavy with uncertainty for Europe and the world. The place where we met - Terezín - carries the memory of great suffering but also is a testament to the endurance of the human spirit.

In this atmosphere, we gathered not in despair, but in search of hope, peace and spiritual fulfilment.

This is still a young Yearly Meeting - and we rejoice in its growth. We welcomed our first 17 Friends into membership this year. This brought a sense of new energy and excitement. With this joy also came a need to explore together how we welcome and accompany those who are new to the Quaker way. What makes someone a Friend? How do we faithfully discern membership in ways that are open and rooted in our tradition?

We turned to early Friends for wisdom, including the example of Margaret Fell, who spoke of the inward experience that makes one a Quaker - not outward signs, but the transformation that comes from hearing and following the voice of the Living Spirit. Her words helped guide our reflections, and we were deeply grateful for the voices of Friends who shared their experience and questions with openness and insight.

We also asked: What helps someone stay after their first Quaker meeting? This led us into conversations about welcome, about clarity of identity, and about how we live our testimonies in ways that are visible and invitational. We continue to seek ways to introduce newcomers to the essence of Quakerism: its stillness, its trust in the inward Light, its commitment to peace, justice, and equality.

The presence of families and young people brought joy and depth to our gathering. Children playing and young people engaging with curiosity reminded us of the life and future of our meetings.

We watched a film about a pianist who lived in the Terezín ghetto. We were moved by the testimony of those who sought to preserve dignity and joy through music even in the darkest of times. We had the opportunity to visit sites of the ghetto memorial and then had time for deep sharing, during which our minds and hearts inevitably turned to the current situation in Gaza and the wider Middle East. We prayerfully uphold the leadership in the region and the world.

Russian aggression against Ukraine and persecution of conscientious objectors in both countries is a great darkness, requiring a great labour of love to overcome. We were pleased to hear a report about the pastoral visit of EMES and CEYM to Ukraine and growing interest in Quakerism in the country. We hope to build closer spiritual relations and with time welcome new Ukrainian members.

Throughout our time together, there was a quiet strength in our worship, deep sharing in our discernment, and moments of Spirit-led ministry that held us together across languages and backgrounds.

We leave Terezín with a renewed sense of responsibility: to live faithfully as Friends in our countries and communities, and to be signs of hope wherever we are.

In Friendship and the Light, Liz Coling and Paweł Milka Clerks, Central European Yearly Meeting

France Yearly Meeting

France Yearly Meeting / Assemblée annuelle des Quakers en France
24th – 26th October 2025 Gentilly, Paris

a) Was there anything that struck you about the manner of business or other activities at the YM, whether familiar or different?

I attended France Yearly Meeting for the second time in two years. I appreciated this unexpected opportunity. It was lovely to reconnect with a community where I had already met many of the people.

The Yearly Meeting was held in the meeting room of a hostel near to the new Quaker meeting house in the Gentilly district of Paris, just outside the Boulevard Périphérique ring road. The meeting was in close proximity to the vibrant activities of the hostel which was occasionally a noisy contrast to our peaceful calm.

I was struck by all the places people had travelled from (or connected from online), including France, the UK, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany and the Czech Republic.

b) What particular items or activities on or off the programme stood out for you?

I particularly enjoyed the theme, “Welcoming and waiting for the unexpected” which was developed over the two days through a series of worship sharing sessions, workshops and business meetings. Our first worship sharing was a good start to this

theme. We considered that sometimes we want what is familiar and comfortable but that pushing ourselves outside our comfort zone into unexpected environments can open new light. Sometimes discomfort can be a blessing; even if it something we don't want on the surface it can lead to new light that we can appreciate. Drawing from a base within ourselves can give us the strength to deal with the unexpected and support us in welcoming others.

On Saturday we heard from speakers about the act of welcoming, in various and interesting settings – at Congenies, at Woodbrooke, at a refugee support centre in Calais (which is being developed by Quakers), and in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We also heard a talk about disability and neurodiversity and the importance of welcoming others who have different needs which may not be obvious on the surface. The speakers highlighted both the practical aspects of welcoming people but also the spiritual aspects: expectant waiting with an attentive and sensitive presence. We remembered George Fox's instruction to "answer that of god in everyone". The initiative in Calais is to help support the most vulnerable refugees there, typically women and children. The work in the Democratic Republic of Congo, supported by French Quakers and others, provides refuge for those who have been affected by the conflict there.

We reflected on these themes in workshop sessions. I enjoyed listening to others' experience of welcoming the unexpected and sharing my own experience. It was clear that welcoming in this way requires energy and we must also look after our own needs to be in a good state to welcome others.

In the business meeting we discerned to further support the work in Calais practically and spiritually. The Calais group will be fundraising in the next 12 months to establish a centre to support vulnerable women and children.

As the programme at French Yearly Meeting was shorter this year we were treated to a whistlestop tour of the news of the French local meetings and the international visitor reports. We heard from Paris, Nantes, Congenies, Toulouse and the Online Friends (Ami(e)s Eloigné(e)s) groups about the activities of French Friends. This included acting on concerns for peace and the environment, different forms of spiritual worship including meeting for worship and worship sharing face to face and on-line, and lots more besides. Quakers in Paris purchased a new meeting house more than a year ago, which opened this year after a lot of work. It was nice to visit the new Maison Quaker which has a space for worship, a kitchen and accommodation for the warden. We also heard from Swiss Yearly Meeting, EMES, QCEA, CQI, and I gave my report. Finally, we heard an interesting report from the Safeguarding Group. French Quakers are helping to bring best practice in safeguarding from the UK to France both within the Quakers and potentially more widely.

The Yearly Meeting ended at lunchtime on Sunday to dovetail with the Centre International des Quaker (CQI) symposium, celebrating its centenary. I was able to attend the first session of the symposium which was very interesting, covering the history of the Quaker International Centres founded by Carl Heath and information from the archives of the quaker centres in Geneva and Paris which brought the history of CQI to life. I had not appreciated that history of the Quaker International Centres with creation (originally) of centres in Berlin, Nurnburg, Frankfurt, Geneva, Paris, Warsaw and Moscow in the 1920s. Of these, the Paris centre survives as the CQI and the Geneva centre has since become the QUNO office.

c) Have you had, or do you plan to have, follow up contact of any kind?

Since my last visit I have met with several French friends socially, at Britain Yearly meeting and at other events such as a QPSW/QCEA conference in Brussels. I feel well connected and hope to continue this kind of contact in future.

d) How have you shared your experience with your community of Friends?

Last year I shared my experience of going to France Yearly Meeting with my local group of Friends and I expect I will do so again in the next 12 months. At Britain Yearly Meeting this year I also shared dinner with the visiting French Yearly Meeting representative and friends from my Area Meeting which was a pleasure.

e) What is your overall experience as a BYM representative at this YM?

While it was unexpected, I really enjoyed being the representative for a second time. I felt the theme particularly spoke to me. I enjoyed the deepening of relationships which comes with more time spent together and I hope to see many of these friends again in the future.

Joe Warren, Luton and Leighton Area Meeting, Harpenden Local Meeting

France Yearly Meeting 2025 Epistle

Dear Friends,

The theme of this year's Annual Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in France was "Welcoming (expecting the unexpected)".

Matthew 25:35: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

This epistle is the result of collective discernment using the technique of building on our short spoken ministries, each ministry spinning off one or more words of a preceding ministry.

We gathered at the Jo&Joe youth hostel in Gentilly, a working-class neighbourhood a few steps from the new Quaker House in Paris. Some may have been surprised by the contrast between our silent worship and the throbbing music in the background, while others adapted more quickly: a wonderful opportunity to put the theme of this assembly into practice as soon as we arrived.

What is welcome? We were surprised by the diversity of the theme.

We discovered that the word "welcome" can take on different meanings.

There is a very profound spiritual practice in hospitality. The resident Friend at the Quaker House in Congénies reminded us that the spirit of worship can be present even in everyday tasks such as cooking. Every encounter is an invitation to be present. To welcome is to open oneself to others. An open mind, listening and patience are necessary to give a real welcome. Opening one's door to others is opening the door to the presence of God in each of us. When we welcome others, we welcome the spirit of God within them.

Welcoming means never letting anyone feel excluded. We heard testimonies from our Friends who are seeking to establish a Quaker Centre for migrant women and children in Calais, as well as from our Friend Olo, who presented the work of the Community Support Centre in the Democratic Republic of Congo for women and children affected by the war that has been raging in his country for 30 years. These women and children are healing through sport and by forging bonds.

Yes, welcoming also means offering a place where people feel safe. We heard the report from the Safeguarding Committee. We discerned the importance of welcoming everyone, especially the most vulnerable, in safety.

After hearing from our Friends on the ground in Calais, the French Assembly discerned the need to support the Quaker Centre for Migrants in Calais.

Another Friend shared her testimony about disability, reminding us that welcoming can, unintentionally, be discriminatory.

Welcoming is a choice, it is not a question of financial means.

With each encounter, there is an opportunity to receive (with curiosity) by listening and responding with love, without taking refuge in "Quaker silence". A silence behind which we can sometimes hide to escape the difficult choices we must make in our personal approach to welcoming others.

Can we and should we welcome everyone?

If it is the other person I must welcome, should I welcome them without any limits?

The limits I set help me to welcome others and protect myself, because diversity is inevitable. The path is not a straight line but a winding road that brings us back to ourselves.

Welcoming others is a process that allows us to get to know them without prejudice. Our places of worship are spaces that allow us to welcome the emotions of our Friends with kindness and respect.

We must try not to judge and practice listening even if we do not understand. Rejection causes suffering. We must welcome suffering in the world: that of migrants, physical victims and displaced persons. Welcoming people's suffering means showing empathy, but we do not necessarily have to feel another person's suffering to understand it. We do not necessarily have to resolve another person's suffering in order to welcome them. Understanding another person's suffering requires a great deal of love.

Love is paying attention to the other. Accepting others in their differences is a deep and powerful form of love. And love requires us to accept others and walk together on the path of life in search of peace.

Without trust, we could not welcome others, nor could we be welcomed ourselves.

Trust is not certainty, it is about allowing others to help us grow, and their differences are a source of richness.

What brings us together draws us into our spark of light. And it also encourages us to welcome others on the path, together.

Our young people have enjoyed being with us this year. They have brought us creativity and curiosity. They are our light.

The other who welcomes us can help us find a better path in life.

We are not the other; we become the other in the eyes and mind of another person.

Curiosity and power allow us to avoid remaining locked in dogma and to remain open.

German Yearly Meeting

German Yearly Meeting held in Bad Pyrmont from 16-19 October 2025

Topic: "Rooted in the Light - Discernment and Spirit led Living"

I, Martin Harnor joined as the representative of Britain Yearly Meeting. I am a member of Cambridge Jesus Lane Local Meeting and Cambridgeshire Area Meeting. I will share this experience with Cambridge Friends and also with Cambridgeshire Area Meeting.

Some 200 Adult Friends and their accompanying children from Germany and other European countries met at 'Quakerhaus' in Bad Pyrmont from 16-19 October 2025, with up to 20 attendees joining online. Those attending included delegates from other Yearly Meetings and there was a meeting at the start of the weekend to welcome delegates and those at Yearly Meeting for the first time.. There were also some 16 accompanying children. Other Yearly Meetings in Europe and the Americas

sent greetings. There was signposting of a significant All-Age Gathering of European Young Friends in the Summer of 2026.

The Topic for this Yearly Meeting was: “Rooted in the Light - Discernment and Spirit led Living”. The first session, entitled “Walking cheerfully over the World”, began with a Quaker couple in typical 18th Century dress with a humorous explanation of the history of Quakers around Bad Pyrmont. This was accompanied by some operatic singing. During the last two years, there has been substantial refurbishment of Quakerhaus and it was a privilege to meet again in this historic venue.

There were Worship sessions each day for Friends to consider the spiritual aspects of this “journey”. Ministry was mostly in German but was sometimes in English.

A centrepiece of this Gathering was the Richard Cary Lecture given by Christopher Hatton and entitled “Quake, Rattle and Roll”. Christopher spoke about various aspects of his life and of his use of ‘Meetings for Clearness’ by Quakers at key points where he considered an active role in war zones as well as roles to mitigate the effects of climate change. He described himself as ‘trembling physically’ as part of the discernment. He used the phrase ‘Living Adventurously’ and this was vividly described in this talk.

Christopher also described moments of mysticism where sometimes humbly waiting on God would encourage him to leave the comfort of worship to encounter difficulties in visits to Israel, Palestine, Russia and China, just as the early Quakers faced prison and death. He described a very powerful experience where he helped to save a young woman from drowning near the island of Lesbos, and how this experience has stayed with him until now. His lecture raises questions about how we deal with issues of poverty, violence and injustice and also how we can also be open to inner transformation.

A Reports of Gatherings session included the monthly meetings of FWCC EMES with illustrative photos. A special Interest session led by members of QCEA briefed us on the launch of their latest Booklet entitled “Moving with Dignity”. This is available from them as a hard copy or else can be downloaded as a pdf from their website. Other Interest Groups focused on Gaza and our role as Peace-makers at times of war.

In Yearly Meeting Business Sessions, the German Yearly Meeting Finances were introduced, together with those of the charity ‘Quaker Hilfe’. The 2026 Budget was presented and agreed. Later Business Sessions considered an appointment of a person to organise work on ‘Conscientious Objection’. They also considered how to strengthen the ‘Literature Committee’ for titles that are held at ‘Quakerhaus’ and also at their office in Berlin. The Epistle was read and the final version is attached to this report (translated into English for ease of reading). In the last Business Session, the severe situation for climate activists was described. There are around 5000 court

cases being tried between 2024 and 2027. The issue of Gaza was discussed and a minute produced supporting the request from other organisations for a ceasefire.

On the Social side there was a singing session each morning and many opportunities to engage with Adult and Young Friends during breaks and meal times. On Saturday evening, Young Friends organised a superb entertainment with contributions from all ages. This featured a “shadow play” from the youngest children, together with performances of music, poetry and comedy, greatly appreciated by the audience.

Overall it was a very positive and valuable experience spending this time with German speaking Friends. This included great friendliness extended to me personally and to all those attending which made me feel really welcome. There was a powerful feeling of community that extended throughout the weekend as Friends met and caught up with each other during this residential setting. The next German Yearly Meeting will take place in October 2026.

German YM Epistle

Epistle of the 95th German Annual Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Bad Pyrmont and online, October 16-19, 2025

In keeping with the centenary year of our existence, our Annual Meeting was opened with operatic singing and a short historical theatrical scene, fresh from the 18th century. A German Quaker couple from Friedenstal near Bad Pyrmont humorously recounted their lives. Thanks to the act of tolerance then and the determined efforts to preserve the Quaker House today, we were able to gather here again in a large circle of about 220 friends (of which about 20 were online and about 16 children and juniors). For the birthday celebration, we sang a Quaker-inspired version of the lyrics:

Much courage and much blessing on all your paths. Live simply and joyfully, always be with us.

Also present were delegates from the Yearly Meetings in Ireland, Great Britain, Switzerland, Belgium and Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the Central European Yearly Meeting (CEYM), and the European and Middle East Section (EMES), as well as several international guests.

We encountered the themes of challenge, courage, and humility in many places: the challenge, disturbance, or provocation as an impetus for courageous action. Our youngest members jumped off walls together and joyfully climbed the tavern tower—which they enjoyed more than coming back down.

In the Cary lecture, "Quake, rattle and roll—Living life as a challenge in the spirit of Jesus," we were reminded of the importance of humility in relying on and utilizing Quaker processes (such as the Meeting for Clearness). We were privileged to learn

about the courage to confront our own shadows in order to grow – as individuals and as a community: practicing peace.

We want to find more courage to overcome the perceived darkness in the world and our fear. Supported by our peace coordinators, we are also in the midst of a constructive process exploring how to put our witness to peace into practice. Do we examine our consciences to see if it requires civil disobedience to stand up for peace, justice, and the preservation of creation? Do we support those who work nonviolently for these causes?

Like the spiral of colorful autumn leaves into which we moved in and out of prayer, we came together to encounter one another and return to the world strengthened and with joyful courage. After the prayer, the service begins with wonders and action.

Epistle of the Children and Juniors

We children and juniors say, “Moin, Hi, Hello!” We were so happy to see our friends again, jumped off walls together, ate gingerbread, made colorful wooden Quaker puppets, and performed a play for our last evening together. Hiking up to the Spelunkenturm (a local landmark) was more fun than hiking back down, and we were able to help our young friends out at the Wunderbar (a local bar).

Warmest regards from Bad Pyrmont!

Ireland Yearly Meeting reports

Kate Arnot

I was very pleased to be able to attend Ireland Yearly Meeting 2025, having had that opportunity in 2024. This took place over a weekend at Lisburn Quaker School, quite near Belfast and just past Hillsborough. Registration was on Friday morning from 9.30 to 10.45 so that meant travelling on the Thursday. I was delighted to be offered accommodation in the home of Northern Irish Friends (as was the other representative from BYM). We were met at the ferry from Cairnryan, Scotland and had a very pleasant evening.

During the weekend, there was a full and rich programme. The theme of the weekend was A Learning Community (If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. John 8: 31-32).

Friday's morning session was mainly to do with administration, including the Treasurer's report and acceptance of the Accounts which are not quite finalised but IYM seems to be financially healthy. But challenges ahead. The afternoon session was Learning with our Schools which did not really speak to me as Scotland has never had, and will never have, a Quaker school. The latter part of the afternoon was a most engaging session with Alison Tarpey-Black of BYM, with BYM employing local development workers to aid Meetings to thrive. This also enabled BYM to

decentralise and be more local. Friday's evening session was the public lecture, available world wide on zoom, given by James Nelson on "Quakers, learning and education – using the future to rethink the present." We are all both teachers and learners. We need to listen to each other. Education can be transformative whether in our Quaker meetings or in our schools, asserting the power of education to make a difference in people and communities. This was a very deep experience.

Saturday's sessions were the most interesting for me, mainly focussing on the work of IYM, Irish Friends living their Faith in Action. We heard from Quaker Service whose work is well known about the changes they are making and their valuable continuing work. We heard of Bloomfield Hospital which now specialises in work with those living with Huntingdon's Disease, and Irish Quaker Faith in Action (there were stalls fundraising for the latter). We also during the two morning sessions heard from a Friend from Georgia speaking of what is happening in Georgia, Russian and Ukraine and the work around conscientious objectors, and from Michael Eccles who spoke of his recent visit to the West Bank, including Ramallah, plus Lebanon. We also heard from Emily Provence from the USA who is travelling in the ministry with minimal belongings. A memorable quote was "We cannot do separately what we cannot in conscience do together." Finally in the morning sessions there were accounts of Quaker Council of European Affairs and QUNO. The diverse histories in Ireland enable significant contributions to Europe, not least that Southern Ireland remains an integral part of the European Union. The first session on Saturday afternoon was led by Young Friends entitled "Dame Skittles, Green Octopus and Petunia Emporium" They led us in movement which was much appreciated after so much sitting and listening. A real, fun session. I was a bit limited as I can't sit on the floor but Young Friends were aware of mobility difficulties and there were two separate events taking account of such difficulties. The final part of Saturday afternoon offered 3 sessions, all of which I would have liked to have attended. I chose to go to A Quaker experience of volunteering in the West Bank but it would have been a better choice to go to either "Meet the Public Lecturer" or Discussion with Alison Tarpey-Black on how to help Meetings flourish (although my Meeting is growing with new Friends who are younger or in their sixties, both groups seeking). Saturday evening was mainly a quiz, at which I was at some disadvantage and didn't help the group I was in as it was very focussed on Ireland (2025 there seemed to be fewer representatives than in 2024 from other Yearly Meetings).

Sunday: Highlights were Meeting for Worship, a very gathered Meeting and the reading of the Epistle. Also agreed was a sustainable policy which will have future benefits.

Practical Matters: The food throughout the weekend was excellent. I found the pews quite uncomfortable, even with cushions and wonder how previously Friends could sit on hard pews for considerable time. Microphones were a great help in hearing what was said. On Sunday afternoon, (IYM finished after lunch) I was delighted to be given a tour of Belfast which greatly impressed me. Some amazing

architecture and history. A great benefit of staying with Friends who were so hospitable and gave us so much time driving us to their home in the countryside. It was delightful to look out onto greenery and see sheep. (Strangely not many cows).

Before and After: I attended one of the preparative Meetings on “Outward Mission for Growth” at which Oliver Robertson and others spoke. I learned much more about the history of Friends in Ireland and of similar blessings and limitations to BYM but a much smaller YM with advantages and disadvantages. The other Preparative Meeting was on Quaker schools in Ireland which did not speak to me.

I had thought I would be unable to attend IYM's next learning session on Saturday 25th October but a residential weekend in Scotland has been moved so I hope to attend that session. (However, I have discovered that this learning session has been moved to 1st November and my local Meeting is hosting our Area Meeting that day, so despite, two changes, I am still unable to attend, must to my disappointment). IYM was shorter than 2024 to enable more sessions at different times.

Gordon Benson

This was my third time as Britain Yearly Meeting's representative, This year, Ireland's Yearly Meeting was held at the Friends' School in Lisburn between the 25th and 27th of April and was celebrating its 250th anniversary.

IYM is the second largest Yearly Meeting in Europe though it has only 1300 members. The various meetings are wide in their spiritual inspiration which was reflected in the early morning worship which included Bible study or worship sharing.

The theme for the Meeting was ‘A learning community’ which was fitting for the venue.

The YM started with Meeting for Worship, and a reading was given in Gaelic and English of a letter of condolence on the passing of Pope Francis to Eamon Martin the Archbishop of Ireland. The Clerk welcomed guests, including representatives from other early meetings, visitors from Quaker communities, the Quaker United Nations office and representatives of other faiths including the Presbyterian Church, Bahia faith, the Church of Ireland and the Methodists.

The opening session was on Friday the 25th in the morning and covered the administration of the Yearly Meeting, the appointment of Friends to various posts and other governance issues

Rachel Flynn of Hillsborough presented a summary of epistles received from the Yearly meetings. Three themes were identified

- a) international perspectives including concern of world affairs and our global connection through Ubuntu
- b) issues within countries such as traumas of the past inflicted by first nation

peoples.

c) issues around individual meetings, for example, offering blending meetings and dealing with shrinking numbers

The treasurer gave a report that "the accounts were in good health" and a draft budget for 2025/26 was accepted. Whilst IYM is the second largest Yearly Meeting in Europe and has only 1300 members it has sufficient resources for their current plans.

One new item in the budget was a grant to offer financial support for events for young people. 'A risk register has been put in place for IYM and we have provided a generic risk register for other charities within IYM to consider'

Session 2 learning with our schools.

We heard from Principles of Friends School in Lisburn and Newtown School Waterford, plus representatives staff from Dogheda Grammar School. Common themes as speakers described the Quaker ethos where an emphasis on Quaker values. A strong sense of whole school community, care for the individual, an emphasis on that of God in each person. The schools thanked Friends for the help and support they have received. Suggestions were made on how further support could be given. The schools are within the state system but are selective on ability. Many Friends thought that this went against our testimony of equality.

Session 3 Learning in our Meetings.

Allison Tarpay Black is one of the 15 local development workers across Britain employed by BYM to support Area and Local meetings. She explained how the LDW helped Local and Area meetings and she gave a number of examples.

A talk on what we can learn from the experience of other Quakers around the world was given by Emily Provence of New York Yearly Meeting

Public lecture by James Nelson

James Nelson, a member of South Belfast Preparative Meeting is a senior lecturer at the School for Social Sciences and Education and Social Work at Queens University. He reminded us that education is a responsibility of all and suggested that the readiness to think differently about the future open each one of us to transformative learning releasing us from previous assumptions and freeing us to think and act in new ways.

Bloomfield Hospital Governance

The future of Quakers Governance of Bloomfield hospital was discussed. There is a lack of people coming forward with relevant skills to be governors. There was a major concern on the increasing bureaucracy around institutions and it made the management of Bloomfield difficult. The question was raised, "should Quakers continue to run Bloomfield" Very few facilities for dealing with mental health issues

were still run by the voluntary and faith sector.

Mikheil Elizbarashvili from Georgia Worship group, spoke by zoom of the problem that conscientious objectives and deserters face in seeking refuge in Georgia.

A talk was given by Michael Echoes from FWCC EMS who spoke mainly about the Quaker school in Ramallah and the problems it was experiencing because of the war in Palestine.

Learning how to live our faith

We heard from four Quaker organisations about how they are addressing the future and how Yearly Meeting may support them. They were Shane Whelehan Quaker service, David Gamble convenor of Irish Quaker Faith in Action spoke of the IQFA which gives financial support to small projects. Sophie Naeye explained the work of Quaker United Nations office in Geneva and Loretta O'Brien of the Quaker Council for European affairs stressed how its activities exemplified faith expressed in action.

Learning with young friends

Young friends presented an epistle from their Easter weekend JYM event.

IYM sustainability.

Sustainability policy was adopted by IYM. I felt the Ireland Churches needed an equivalence of the Eco Church model to help them to enact policies on sustainability and the environment that were robust. I felt that present policy was quite weak.

Learning Day 2025

There is to be a learning day on the 1st of November in Dublin on the concern that has been expressed about dwindling numbers. This will include a session that will bring forward ideas from the Allison Tarpey Black session on how we can support our meetings to thrive.

Ireland YM Epistle

To Friends Everywhere

It is with uplifted hearts and minds that we send our greetings from Ireland Yearly Meeting 2025. Given the theme of our gathering: 'A Learning Community', it was apt that Friends' School Lisburn, celebrating its 250th anniversary as a community of learners, should be the location for Friends from across Ireland and beyond, in person and online, to meet and share together.

James Nelson, who gave our Public Lecture on the subject 'Quakers, learning and education – using the future to rethink the present', reminded us that we are all teachers, and we are all learners. And, over the three days of our gathering, from

25th to 27th April, through listening, activity and discussion, we discovered just how much scope there really is for us to learn from each other.

That learning takes many different forms but what emerged over Yearly Meeting was a number of common threads. Listening to others' voices was seen as key. Michael Eccles, Executive Secretary of Friends World Committee for Consultation, Europe and Middle East Section, told us how over the course of a week's visit to the Friends' School in Ramallah it was by listening that trust was gradually built up and he was able to learn first hand of the devastating impact of the war in Gaza. There are fears over how children's education is being disrupted and Michael described the lengths that teachers go to in order to ensure that pupils have a safe learning environment.

The 2025 Swarthmore lecturer, Emily Provance, speaking from her 6 years' experience as a Travelling Friend demonstrated how the resolution of conflict surrounding a Kenyan woman accused of financial impropriety only took place after all involved had taken the time to listen to the woman's life story. Only by deep and long listening were understanding and a just resolution possible.

Shane Whelehan of Quaker Service illustrated the listening and collaboration the charity is involved in as it looks to develop service in North Belfast, using the voices in the local community to help discern where there is unmet need. In Geneva, the Quaker United Nations Office provides a space where Diplomats from many countries can engage in off the record over dinner conversations, listening and learning from each other in a quiet, nonjudgemental space.

Over the course of the weekend, we were called upon to listen as well. We had asked representatives from the Quaker Schools in Ireland about what we could do to support their schools and in a practical session they identified a number of steps that we can take to support and promote the Quaker outreach that our schools provide. What we have learned through listening we now need to put into action.

Our focus in our session with Alison Tarpey-Black from Britain Yearly Meeting was on how we can support our Meetings to thrive. We were uplifted listening to the positive story that Alison told, considering how we might make ourselves more visible and be more flexible in our practices to, for instance, attract young families who have so many calls on their time on a Sunday morning.

Alison reminded us that this period of global disruption really is the time to reach out to the many young people who are looking for answers and to show them that this is not the world that we wish them to inherit. The Society of Friends, she told us, is as unique today as it was 400 years ago; a group of both contemplation and action.

There was a large and vibrant gathering of Young Friends at Yearly Meeting and we were reminded of how much we can gain when we create space for their guidance and leadership. They prompted all of us to action with a Meeting for Worship for Movement and an interactive session in which we played games, got competitive,

tried to collaborate, engaged in inspiring debate on topics from pacifism to the death penalty and simply had fun. Young Friends also led a candlelit Epilogue raingame on the first night. It was with delight that we partook in this shared exuberance!

As we listened and learned from each other, what was produced was a sense of encouragement and hope as we look forward. It was appropriate that James Nelson should have focused in his public lecture on how we think about the future. James suggested that the readiness to think differently as we look ahead opens each one of us to transformative learning, releasing us from our previous assumptions and freeing us all to think and act in new ways.

As a learning community we are guided by these words: 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free' John 8:31-32

Signed on behalf of Ireland Yearly Meeting,
William Haire, Clerk
Elizabeth Dickson, Walsh, Assistant Clerk
Clodagh Davis, Assistant Clerk
Susie Harty, assistant in writing the Epistle

Netherlands Yearly Meeting

Netherlands YM held at Bosbookhuis, Bennekom 16-18 May 2025

Theme: Light and Airy

a) Was there anything that struck you about the manner of business or other activities at the YM, whether familiar or different?

I was struck by the ease with which some business items went through smoothly, eg, the decision to write to the embassy about Gaza, whereas internal business decisions took much longer. The principle example of this was regarding the sale of the two Meeting Houses, which has been an on-going discernment for over ten years.

Despite a minute to the effect being written at last year's YM, this issue continued to take prominence. One of my contributions was to explain the possibility for Friends to stand aside from a decision, if not in unity. This was received with interest and gratitude.

An area that Netherlands Friends are exploring is having standing elders. These were appointed for the first time this year but there is an awareness for the need to develop a role description. I was glad to learn they have a Light Committee which is available to support the above two issues, as required.

b) What particular items or activities on the programme stood out for you?

One of the traditions of the YM is to bring unwanted items for resale to a trust stall available throughout the event. This year the generous collection went to the Calais Camp.

The Saturday evening entertainment was lively and varied, including clowning, upside down por-traiture, a humorous telling of a bible story, and everybody joining in with music-making and danc-ing – wonderful!

Singing in the sunshine and the early morning bird walk were lovely gentle accompaniments to the focussed business sessions.

c) Have you had, or do you plan to have, follow up contact of any kind?

I have kept in touch with one new fFriend and hope to follow up with others. Another couple, whom I have a long-standing friendship with, welcomed me to their home for the night before the YM commenced. So I am feeling well connected.

d) What is your overall experience as a BYM representative at this YM?

Probably due in part to its relatively small size, currently around 70 members across 7 Meetings, Dutch Friends all seem to know each other quite well and despite their different opinions on crucial business matters, seek to be a peaceful community. I was surprised though, when on more than one occasion, individual Friends appeared to threaten to resign their membership if a decision didn't go their way. I hope and pray that this was just in the heat of the moment, and possibly that something, for me anyway, may have been lost in translation!

It is deep gratitude that remains with me more than anything else – Dutch Friends made me feel so welcomed and included, through Friends offering English interpretation, wonderful vegan fare and space in the programme to simply be together. A lovely Light-filled, hopeful all-age gathering.

Finally, my offer to run a workshop was accepted and several Friends attended. I felt supported with my calling and a genuine warmth and openness to learn together.

e) How have you shared your experience with your community of Friends?

I have shared my experience with an online Quaker group I am part of, but not yet with my Local Meeting, as I won't be with them until the autumn.

Jasmine Piercy

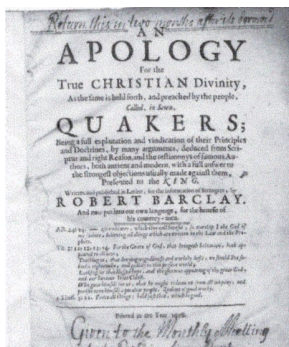
Netherlands Yearly Meeting Epistle 2025



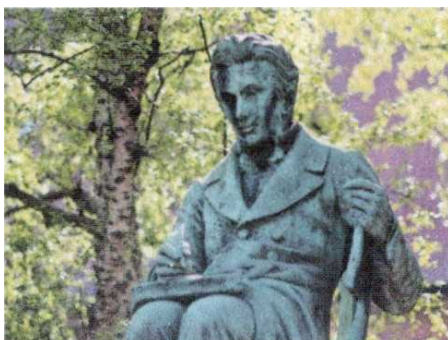
From 16 - 18 May we met for our Yearly Meeting gathering in De Bosbeek in Bennekom. As a true community of Friends, we shared the silence, words and the Presence. We were about 55 to 60 Friends, including 7 children. We welcomed new Friends to our meeting and commemorated those who passed away in the past year. We remember their names and are grateful for the grace of God shown in their lives.

The meeting was opened by the clerk with a quote from Robert Barclay. Barclay believed that one is not led to accept the Truth by reasoning, but by the heart and the emotions.

He said: "And so I became more and more intimately connected and united with them and hungered more and more for an increase in this power and this Life."



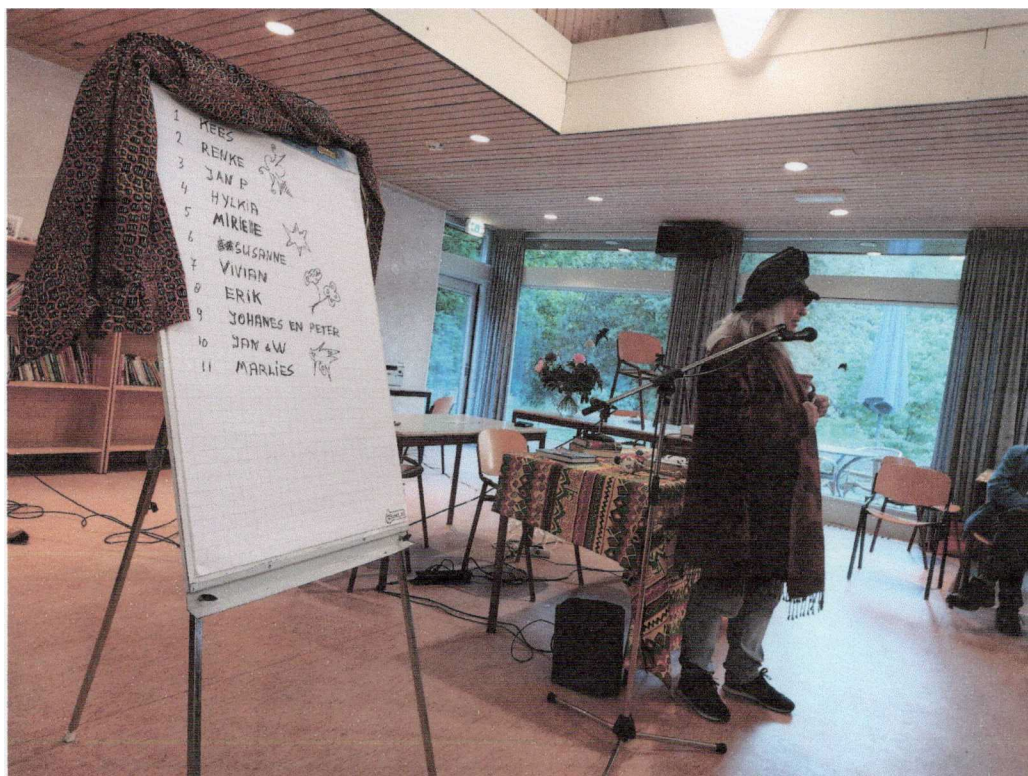
Perhaps this is what his words convey to us today: When we truly meet one another — in silence, in vulnerability, in love — something grows in us that is stronger than our disagreements. Then our hearts become truly united, and together we find strength, clarity and truth. In this way we can move on and find new life. The theme of this year's Yearly Meeting was Light and Airiness. We asked ourselves: how do



we find lightness when there is heaviness around us? How do we hold on to the Light - the Inward Light or Inner Light that comes from God—in the face of division and uncertainty? Can we find a way to listen with the heart, even when the head is full of opinions?

The first epilogue by Gerard van den Dool was about Soren Kierkegaard's story about a wood pigeon that knew no immediate need, but was nevertheless overwhelmed by fear of what might go wrong. It was not the present conditions that led to the dove's tragedy, but the fear of a possible future disaster. So this story reminded us how important it is to live in the present, in trust and openness.

Emily Provance inspired us with the keynote speech on her book *Before the Resurrection*. She spoke about ageing Quaker communities, about change and letting go, but also about hope and new growth. Her message was similar to the story of the wood pigeon: we are called not to dwell on fear, but to make room for the unknown — and to encounter life anew in it. We should be guided by hope and solidarity.



Seeking to be led by that spirit we spoke about our calling to peace and justice. We decided, as Dutch Quakers, to publicly raise our voice about the violence and suffering in Palestine. With sorrow, we witness the destruction and the suffering that is taking place. In keeping with our Testimony of Equality and Peace, we speak out against the genocide being carried out by Israel. Israel must immediately stop starving and killing innocent people. We do not wish to remain silent where compassion and justice are called for. On Saturday evening there were three interest

groups that Friends could choose from. Jasmine Piercy led us in a workshop on the relationship between people and animals. Martine Kuipers led the Sacred Dance interest group and Wils't Hart organized the Concertina (creative paper folding) group. The 'lightness' was especially expressed during the variety evening that took place after the interest groups. Several people surprised us with their creativity and talents.

The variety evening was very appropriately concluded with the second epilogue by Marlies Tjallingii as clown.

The proceeds of the collection and the sales table are to support the refugees in Calais, France.

Let us continue to seek the Light, in lightness but sometimes also in seriousness. In our Quaker community, in our daily lives, and in the world in which we are called to bear witness to another way that leads to life. This is the way we can overcome the fear of the unknown.



In Friendship and unity

On behalf of Netherlands Yearly Meeting
Peter Spreij (Clerk)

Nordic Yearly Meeting

Solborg Folkhøgskole, Stavanger, Norway 3-6 July 2025

If I thought that my journey by car, two trains two flights and the bus to get to Stavanger was a lot, I was put to shame by the efforts that other Friends had made to avoid travelling by air (not an option for me due to time constraints). The general secretary of EMES travelled from the UK by train and ferry, a good 48 hour journey each way.

Some 80 Friends from 12 different countries gathered at Solberg Folk High School in Stavanger for the Nordic Yearly Meeting. The Nordic countries comprise Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Iceland and all bar Iceland were represented at the meeting. Nordic Yearly Meeting is a triennial gathering and has the feel of a large

family reunion where nearly everybody knows everybody else.

Having been a member of Norway Yearly Meeting it was a pleasure to meet Friends from Norway whom I have known for many years, and to get to know Swedish, Finnish and Danish Friends. The three clerks conducted the business in impeccable English. Each Yearly Meeting held its own business meeting, while some of the workshops were run in Scandinavian languages.

The theme of the meeting was How can we strengthen the Nordic Quaker community? The main speakers were Michael Eccles, executive secretary to EMES, and Julia Ryberg, a Swedish-American Quaker, accompanied by her parrot Arturo (not good for people like me with ornithophobia!)

On the first full day there was an opportunity to go down into Stavanger to celebrate "Crossing 200" where a replica of the Restauration, which sailed from Stavanger to America two hundred years ago with two Quakers on board, was setting sail for America, via Falmouth where she would be greeted by Come-to-Good Friends.. I chose instead to go to the Stavanger Art Gallery where the paintings included works by Lars Hertervig, who had strong Quaker roots. I had intended to go to the Norwegian meeting for business later that day but unfortunately missed this due to a timetable mix-up. However, there were plenty of Friends to talk to, and practice my Norwegian, and plenty of books to read.

The evening session took the form of a conversation between Michael and Julia on strengthening the Nordic Quaker community and the work of EMES. We learned that teaching and learning have been central to Quakerism in the Nordic countries including a Quaker school in Stavanger up until the early C20, the Hanna school in Denmark and Svartbäcken in Sweden, with current opportunities for learning through Woodbrooke's online provision. We were reminded of peace work in Norway, the reconstruction work in Finland and northern Norway by Quakers following the Second World War, and the welcome given to refugees in the 1970s and 1980s.

There is one Quaker in Iceland, some 50 in Denmark, 90 in Sweden and 150 in Norway. Friends demonstrated a keen appetite for inter-visitation and for linking meetings across national borders, as is already happening with Copenhagen in Denmark and Malmo in Sweden (largely thanks to the infamous Bridge). This despite the distances involved: 160 miles between Östersund in Sweden and Trondheim in Norway, or 170 miles between Oslo and Gothenburg.

On Saturday afternoon there was an opportunity to join a variety of workshops and I chose early Quaker history led by Eivind Bryne, which was largely about Quakers in Stavanger; and then secondly Revising Faith and Practice led by Mary Woodward of the Book of Discipline Revision Group. This was a lively session, with a lot of interest in Britain Yearly Meeting's new pattern of holding Yearly Meeting four times a year.

Nordic Friends are interested to know when and where these will be and when to attend.

We gathered again in the evening for a lively social event, including Hardanger fiddle music, poetry, song and a Nordic Eurovision song contest where the aim was to guess the name and origin of Nordic entries to the Eurovision song test. Hitherto quite reserved Friends were observed dashing to the front and joining in the dancing with vigour!

We gathered in worship on Sunday morning before departing on our long and varied journeys home. It was a privilege to attend Nordic Yearly Meeting and to meet old Friends and new but it was also uncomfortable in the awareness of what is going on in the rest of the world; Gaza, Ukraine, and the climate crisis.

Ingrid Greenhow

Nordic Yearly Meeting Gathering Epistle

Epistle from the Nordic Yearly Meeting Gathering held in Stavanger, Norway, from the 3rd to the 6th of July 2025

Dear Friends everywhere, kjære Venner over alt, kära Vänner över allt, kære Venner over alt, rakkaat Ystävät kaikkialla, we send you our love and greetings.

From the 3rd to the 6th of July, 88 participants from 12 countries gathered at Solborg Folk High School, Stavanger, Norway, for the Nordic Yearly Meeting Gathering 2025 where Friends from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden Yearly Meetings as well as visitors from other countries met. This year we centred ourselves around the question of “How can we strengthen the Nordic Quaker Community”. We also observed the fact that this year the Swedish society of Friends can celebrate its 90th and the Danish Society its 150th anniversary.

We started our extended weekend together contemplating the history of Quakers in Western Norway. Some of us visited the 150 year old Quaker house at Stakland and worshipped there. Many of us went into Stavanger bay to join the big public event commemorating the 200 years since the ship Restauration left with emigrants across the Atlantic. Some of them were Quakers persecuted for their faith and looking for a life in religious freedom. In the ceremony downtown, with the royal family present, the role of Quakers in the first emigration from Norway was emphasised. This also showed us an example of how Quakers since long back have built and nurtured community across borders and with a global reach. Many of us carry family stories where travels, meetings and connections internationally play a significant role.

Our main speakers, Julia Ryberg and Michael Eccles, reminded us of taking note of the particularities of our community as Nordic Quakers and the characteristics of each our Yearly Meetings. We were challenged to reflect on what we can be relevant

and contribute to a wider community. We were organized in small groups to discuss how we in practice can collaborate across borders. We came to understand how we are interconnected and interdependent on each other; just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12).

The strong tradition of Quakers' work for peace, nonviolence and development was visible in many ways. In the vestibule colourful posters illustrated the projects of Kvekerhjelp (Quaker Service Norway) in Gaza and Africa, and in its Annual Meeting we learned that a new psycho-social support project for traumatized children and their mothers finally had been implemented in Gaza in spite of the cruel war. In the Swedish meeting of worship for business, the Swedish sister organization, Kväkarhjälpen, was an equally important topic.

All sessions were held in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. In a moving period of silence in the opening session we commemorated friends who have died these past years. We give thanks for their work and inspiration.

During our gathering, our experiences have been manifold, ranging from the nurturing experience of silent worship to a lively social evening. We have enjoyed each other's company in different ways, and a special programme was set up for the children and youth. We have been able to explore how the spirit moves in our life and among us in our community. We have shared testimonies of the importance of truth, a basic need to be shared with all.

Taken together this Nordic Yearly Meeting Gathering has strengthened the bonds between Quakers in Nordic countries in line with the motto for the meeting and we look forward to further develop the Nordic community of Friends.

In peace and gratitude,

Nordic Yearly Meeting Gathering
3-6 July 2025
Solborg folkehøgskole, Stavanger, Norway

Switzerland Yearly Meeting

6-9 June 2025
Hertzberg, Switzerland

Theme: Inspiration from our Quaker Legacy

- a) **Was there anything that struck you about the manner of business or other activities at the YM, whether familiar or different?**

Swiss Yearly Meeting was held in a beautiful setting in Herzberg in the hills in Switzerland with approximately 30 people coming together from all over Switzerland and further afield. This was an all-age event with the youngest less than a year old, a number of children, families and adult Quakers. I received a very warm welcome and managed to speak to everyone during the weekend.

Coming to the meeting from the outside, what struck me was the highly international and multilingual nature of Swiss Yearly Meeting. I soon felt part of a lively international community of Quakers. This year, Swiss Yearly Meeting business was mostly conducted in English with occasional French or German interventions although there were calls to do more sessions in French and German at future meetings. All three languages were spoken in between sessions and it was possible for me to get by with my English and French. There were also Friends from many different countries and several of the Swiss meetings are on the border between Switzerland, France and Germany. In addition to representatives from international yearly meetings, EMES and QUNO were also represented and there were clear links to other international organizations based in Geneva. It was interesting to be able to discuss Quakerism with Friends from Switzerland, Germany and the United States. The Geneva meeting has links to international interfaith groups including the Platform Inter-religieuse where it actively participates.

Meeting for worship was immediately familiar and the business meeting considered similar concerns to those back home. Workshops exploring the theme of the YM and socialising at break times provided a good opportunity to get to know other attendees.

b) What particular items or activities on or off the programme stood out for you?

Last year Swiss Quakers had discerned three key concerns for action and had set up groups to address them. These were “peace, not war”, “friendly economics” and “ecology”. In this year’s meeting we sought to discern new ways forward for the “friendly economics” and “peace, not war” groups, leaning on our Quaker legacy.

We started with a worship sharing centring on a mystical reading about the guidance of inner light by Thomas Kelly. I appreciated this opening activity which was chosen as a spiritual counterbalance to the more witness / action-oriented agenda.

We had an interesting talk about the life of William Penn, by historian Steve Angell, Professor at the Earlham Institute of Religion in the United States. Steve painted a balanced portrait of Penn covering both positive and negative aspects of his life. We heard about Penn’s links to Europe – having spent time studying in Saumur and making early proposals for European and wider international cooperation. The historical stories about Penn’s time also highlighted the extent to which early Quakers were willing to put their lives on the line and we wondered if we would be willing to do the same. However, we also heard about Penn and early Quakers’ active participation in, and lack of concern about owning enslaved people. This

reminded us to consider historical blindspots and think about how future Quakers might look back differently at what we are doing today.

In workshops we split into groups to discuss two of the key concerns of SYM : “peace, not war” and “friendly economics”. We looked at the history of Quaker witness in these areas to seek inspiration from our Quaker legacy. We also heard about what is happening now, and considered what we could do in the future.

The Swiss Yearly Meeting “friendly economics” group is quite small and so work internationally with other groups who share their concern including the Wellbeing Economy Alliance and Donut Economics researchers. They have met online including with Quakers in other countries. We considered problems with the current economic system, which it was felt might underpin other concerns such as peace, the environment and equality. By working with other faith groups and quaker groups the “friendly economics” group hopes to make progress on these concerns.

With the “peace, not war” group, we explored Quaker approaches to peace and conciliation work, for example historical peace work in Northern Ireland. There were also concerns for modern peace such as concern for increased militarisation against a worsening backdrop of international events. Swiss Quakers are well connected to other regional groups doing peace work including a group advocating the abolition of the army. SYM considered BYM’s minute on Gaza and were moved to write their own minute about Palestine and Yemen which will be discerned at a future meeting. The potential breakdown of the established international order is a concern of Quakers involved in international NGO work but could also create new opportunities. We thought Quakers might have some unique perspectives, positions or skills to bring to peace. We could work more with young friends and do more work to support Conscientious Objectors.

The Business Meeting included a review of the finances, which are well managed. SYM is keen to support other charitable organisations with grants and has built some relationships in this way. Overall, there are around 100 Friends registered with SYM and we heard interesting reports from five worshipping groups in Switzerland, in Zurich, Geneva, Bern, the Three Country Group (currently based in Basel), and the Friendly Families group based in the Geneva / Lausanne Riviera region. The groups meet on a variety of schedules to suit their numbers, including weekly, monthly and bi-monthly.

Some groups are hybrid meetings with a zoom link, some are not. The Friendly Families group has met every few months for about two years and brings together Quaker families for events and worship. The Three Country meeting is currently based in Basel but has met in Germany previously and people attend from Switzerland, Germany and France. Some Quakers travel from France to worship in Geneva meeting. Swiss Quakers manage an interesting archive of historical,

regional Quaker material. The business meeting reviewed SYM's approach to communication through its website and newsletters.

It was interesting to hear about the work of QUNO, in particular the environmental work. It is also noteworthy that QUNO highlighted the work of environmental protesters from Britain Yearly Meeting to a UN special rapporteur collecting evidence about environmental human rights defenders. Swiss Quakers are well connected to the international NGO community in Geneva which is currently facing turmoil resulting from the reduction in international aid funding. We heard about the work of EMES and also of the European Network of Young Friends (EMEYF) which are well regarded. It feels that there is a strong sense of community and interconnectedness between European meetings.

c) Have you had, or do you plan to have, follow up contact of any kind?

I have made several contacts who are interested in sharing information and building international links. I have asked to join the "Friendly Economics" mailing list and I hope that I will be able to join some of their online meetings and perhaps find ways to network with them to put them in touch with other friends internationally who share their concern. I have already seen some Swiss friends at other international events and hope this will happen again in future.

d) How have you shared your experience with your community of Friends?

I plan to make a presentation to my community of Friends about Swiss Yearly Meeting. I recently made such a presentation regarding a visit to another YM last year and it was met with interest.

e) What is your overall experience as a BYM representative at this YM?

I had a fantastic time in Switzerland at SYM. The friendly welcome and international nature of the yearly meeting really made me feel a part of an international community of friends. I have picked up some new ideas about approaches to peace work and social justice. I have made new contacts. I learnt more about Swiss culture, the nature of Quakerism in Switzerland, Quakers in other countries, and international Quaker structures and work. I have appreciated the deep worship with Friends from Switzerland.

Joe Warren, Luton and Leighton Area Meeting, Harpenden Local Meeting
June 2025

Switzerland Yearly Meeting Epistle

Dear Friends Everywhere,

Greetings from Switzerland Yearly Meeting of 2025. We gathered at Herzberg, the home of our gatherings since 2012. Nestled in the serene hills above Aarau, this tranquil place is the backdrop of many shared memories as a community.

Friends began arriving on Friday evening of Pentecost weekend. After a shared meal, we reflected on the words of the mystic Thomas Kelly's "Testament of Devotion". His words set the tone for a challenging weekend of deep reflection and spiritual growth.

Throughout the weekend, we engaged in worship, workshops, and discussions centered around our theme, "Learning from our Legacy." We reflected on lessons from our Quaker heritage and considered how we can apply these lessons to our lives today. We were reminded particularly of the importance of living our testimonies of peace, community, and equality.

To kick us off, our keynote speaker, Stephen (Steve) Angell, Professor of Quaker Studies at Earlham School of Religion in Indiana, USA, spoke of William Penn's life and contributions, focusing on Penn's imprisonment and the ensuing trials that paved the way to the establishment of freedom of religious expression. While Steve underscored Penn's enduring positive impact, he also addressed our present-day reconsideration of Penn as a Quaker hero. In particular acknowledging that he and many Quakers of the time, owned enslaved African people. We pondered afterwards if our monuments should honor actions rather than heroes.

Our weekend group discussions started with "Peace, not war" and "Friendly Economics". In the centuries following Penn, Quaker capitalists like Cadbury built fortunes that were considered socially responsible for the time. Our Friendly Economics group emphasized shifting focus to stakeholders over shareholders, advocating for ethical investments and fair-trade practices. As Quakers, we are called to consider our planet as a key stakeholder in economic decisions.

In parallel, our "Peace, not war" group delved into the origins and development of the Quaker movement. We explored our foundational beliefs and practices, emphasizing the importance of the Inner Light and silent worship. We concluded with reflections on how these historical insights inform, inspire, and challenge us to:

- Be true to ourselves
- See that of God in everyone
- Commit to our own self-improvement
- Be a model for change

Few people embody these challenges better than Emily Provance. We enjoyed a social evening watching her Swarthmore lecture. Emily recounted following the call to leave everything behind to take on the ministry of meeting people around the world, finding the "sense of the meeting" in all encounters, and embracing community in every situation. She shared minutes from her amazing distillation of 38 Quaker Faith and Practices.

Inspired by Emily's action, we endeavored to apply learnings from our legacy to three key topics: "Peace, not War", "Friendly Economics", and the "Environment".

These groups provided a space for Friends to delve deeply into these critical issues, share insights, and develop actions. The "Peace, not War" group emphasized strategic collaborations, conflict zone advocacy, and active involvement in ongoing efforts for a more peaceful world. The "Friendly Economics" group focused on prioritizing community, promoting ethical trade, addressing inequality, and collaborating with other faith-based initiatives to build an economic system that reflects our core values. Of course no good Quaker weekend is complete without a wet and windy walk. Our "Environment" group walk focused our minds on the importance of taking care of what we care about; nature's beauty and our responsibility to address the climate crisis.

We enjoyed the company of visitors from Britain, USA, Germany, and our own Quaker United Nations Office, who enriched our gathering with their perspectives and experiences. We also received recorded reports from our representatives to EMES, Britain Yearly Meeting, and EMEYF. Their physical and virtual presence reminded us of the global nature of our Quaker community and the strength we draw from our connections with Friends around the world. They shared experiences on peace-building initiatives, the development of the BYM minute on Palestine, provided insights into work on social justice and environmental sustainability, and provided updates about ongoing efforts to promote peace and justice at the international level. Their contributions were invaluable and added new perspectives to our discussions.

Our business meeting was a time of discernment and decision-making. We considered various concerns and made decisions that will guide our Yearly Meeting in the coming year. Notably, we decided to send a letter to the Swiss Federal Council about reducing the army, sign the "Law Not War" petition to support the International Court of Justice, and launch a new SYM website. With each decision, we were reminded of the importance of listening deeply to the Spirit and to each other as we seek to discern the way forward.

We started the weekend considering the guidance of the Light within, what would become the legal basis for religious freedom, were inspired by how following an inner calling can allow us to experience the divine in others despite differences, and ultimately trying to together determine where we might be led in our Quaker work as a community.

As we closed our weekend and move forward, we carried with us the wisdom and insights gained from our time together. We are grateful for Friendship in all things eternal. We leave Herzberg with a renewed commitment to our values, particularly within our working groups.

We look forward to meeting at Montmirail next year during the 1st of May weekend and returning to Herzberg in 2027.

In Friendship,

Yearly Meeting Clerk
Switzerland Yearly Meeting
June 2024 at Hertzberg, Switzerland