

Our Community Agreement – Quaker Practice at an online YMG

“Respect the wide diversity among us in our lives and relationships. Refrain from making prejudiced judgments about the life journeys of others. Do you foster the spirit of mutual understanding and forgiveness which our discipleship asks of us? Remember that each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God.”

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Yearly Meeting Gathering aims to be a spiritually enriching experience where Friends build a loving and inclusive community. It is important for us all to consider what impact our behaviour and words might have on others. During the coronavirus pandemic many of us have been through a difficult time. We may be out of practice at listening and speaking to one another with care. Quakers are not immune from the bad behaviour which seems to occur more often online than in person. We need to maintain our discipline of coming together to 'know God's will for the gathered group' despite the challenges of meeting remotely.

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee asks you to share responsibility for creating a safe and loving community by upholding Quaker discipline at this online Yearly Meeting Gathering.

Throughout Yearly Meeting Gathering and beforehand:

- Follow the guidance on safeguarding and online security provided for events.
- When talking or writing to other participants about the subjects before Gathering take care how you communicate, using inclusive language and behaviour to avoid hurt. Pause before pressing 'send'; consider whether you might be about to say something you would later regret.
- Be mindful of how important or sensitive the subject may be when discussing views and beliefs you or others may hold. Respect the experiences and opinions of others even if they differ from your own. Be open to change.
- Do not lobby clerks, introducers, staff or other servants of the meeting regarding the agenda (see Qf&p 3.04) Do not assume Friends who are closely involved will always be available to discuss a topic with you; people might need time off from the discernment in between sessions of YMG.
- Do not claim to speak on behalf of others when expressing your own view.

In YM and preparatory sessions:

- Follow the general counsel on church affairs set out in Quaker faith & practice 3.01 – 3.07.

- YM sessions are meetings for worship, therefore give your whole attention to the matter before the meeting. Do not carry on a parallel discussion by social media, just as you would not chat to neighbours during a face-to-face session.

Interactions between Friends can result in pain and distress (online or in person). This may arise from unconscious patterns of behaviour or may be deliberate. Behaviour such as bullying, harassment and verbal abuse is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. If you experience or witness unacceptable behaviour by anyone in our community, for the well-being of everyone concerned, please let an elder or a member of the Pastoral Care Team know.

Yearly Meeting Clerks and Elders may decide, exceptionally, to block access to the event for anyone who does not abide by these guidelines.