



# Our Community Agreement

## Quaker practice at Yearly Meeting 2023

“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.”

*Advices & queries 22*

Yearly Meeting 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. We need to continue to practice listening and speaking to one another with care. Quakers are not immune to the bad behaviour that 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 Yearly Meeting.

Throughout Yearly Meeting and beforehand, whether meeting online or in person:

- Follow the guidance on safeguarding and online security provided for events.
- When talking or writing to other participants about the Yearly Meeting topics please take care over how you communicate. Use inclusive language and behaviour to avoid hurt. Pause before communicating (especially online) and carefully 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 Quaker faith & practice 3.04). Do not assume that Friends who are closely involved will always be available to discuss a topic with you; people might need time off from the discernment between Yearly Meeting sessions.

Page 1 | 2

- Do not claim to speak on behalf of others when expressing your own view.

**In Yearly Meeting and preparatory sessions:**

- Follow the general counsel on church affairs set out in Quaker faith & practice 3.01–3.07. Friends are encouraged to speak clearly and briefly, and stand to speak if able to do so. Our experience is that Friends online may not sense as quickly as Friends present in person that their Ministry has been heard. Clerks may say when a Friend has ministered at sufficient length and it is time to make space for others' contributions so that a wide range of voices can be heard. If this message is not received it may occasionally be necessary to disconnect an online contribution.
- Yearly Meeting sessions are meetings for worship, so give your full attention to the matter before the meeting. Do not carry on a parallel discussion on social media, just as you would not chat to neighbours during a face-to-face session.

Interactions between Friends (online or in person) can result in pain and distress. Be mindful of your own words and actions, and careful that you do not cause inadvertent hurt.

Behaviour such as bullying, harassment or 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.