



Attending and participating in Yearly Meeting: some Advices and Queries

How might we encourage ministry that is faithful, loving, and deeply rooted in the Spirit's gathering and guiding presence among us? Clerks and elders have worked with Woodbrooke to draw together the following Advices & Queries for Yearly Meeting:

1. Have you explored the preparation material? This includes the agenda and community agreement as well as content about the themes of this year's sessions. Could you spend time with the preparation material in silent prayer? Could you join or organise a study group?
2. Have you taken care of your physical and practical needs for the event? Whether you are attending at Friends House or online, it is useful to consider in advance what you will do for food, rest, quiet spaces, social contact, exercise, any medications, and other needs.
3. Are you familiar with the context for the questions which will be put before us at this Yearly Meeting? The topics raised at Yearly Meeting are connected with the previous work of many groups, including our committees, local and area meetings, and Recognised Quaker Bodies. Without expecting to know everything, it is useful to refresh our memories and explore recent developments.
4. In Spirit-led discernment, everyone attending is equally a participant in the process. How do you make sure to value everyone, respecting our differences and connecting with the Divine within us all? This includes people of all ages, from all backgrounds, of all genders, sexualities, and ethnicities, with and without disabilities, of all neurotypes, and participating online or at Friends House. Does your behaviour and speech reflect this commitment to justice?
5. How can you help to deepen and strengthen our worship? Our meeting for worship for business relies on our prayerful listening and openness. You can help maintain the quality of our worship by:
 - a) Joining our community in worship, both in the main sessions and at other times
 - b) Connecting informally with others in the community, remembering to include those who participate in different ways
 - c) Holding everyone in our community in the Light, especially those who find it hard to participate and those who are serving us in a nominated or paid role

- d) Making sure you are deeply in worship. This might include reducing distractions (for example, turning off notifications or devices not in use, closing doors or asking people not to disturb you, and caring for your physical needs before entering worship), and centering down.

6. Are you ready for uncertainty and surprises? In the experience of Britain Yearly Meeting, we have sometimes been led to go further than expected, to make clear commitments or to agree changes. We can support the process of discovering a right way forward by setting aside our expectations and being ready to embrace the sense of the meeting.

7. Do you have ministry to offer the meeting during a business session? It is important to be sensitive to the moment and to the movements of Love in our community and in your own heart in discerning whether to offer ministry or not. The following queries may help.

- a) Is this the right time for anyone to offer a contribution? For example, if the clerks have not called for ministry or are working on a minute, the time may not be right.
- b) Is my message relevant to the question before the meeting? If not, it may be better shared in another setting.
- c) Has the central part of this message already been shared? Because we listen carefully to every contribution, a point which has already been made does not need to be repeated even if you can add examples or articulate it more elegantly.
- d) What is the source of this message? Is it shaped by my experience or personal knowledge, by abstract concepts, by fear or anger, or by love? If I'm prompted to speak without yet knowing what I will say, am I sure that the urge to speak is in the service of the Light and the community rather than myself?

8. Give thanks for our community and the way in which we are able to come together in worship and discernment. We are thankful that you are able to join us. Could you share a moment of appreciation, gratitude, or joy with someone else at Yearly Meeting?

9. As you arrive to Meeting for Worship for Business, consider if you are prepared to step or log in to a space of worship. Once occupying the space of Meeting for Worship for Business, how will you settle in to worship? Do you concentrate on your breathing? Or notice the people around you, read a little from *Advices & Queries*, or picture God's presence in the form of light or warmth??

10. If you feel you have ministry to share, are you prepared to not be called by the clerks? They discern between the many people who may be indicating that they have ministry to offer. Remember to retest your ministry if you have not been called, before indicating for a second time that you have ministry to share. It is not customary to indicate you have ministry to share if you have already been called to speak.

11. Are you respectful of the point we are at in the process? Are the clerks writing a minute? If so, uphold them, now is not the time for more ministry. If you indicate you would like to minister after a minute has been shared have you considered if your ministry is about the content of the minute? You should try not to make further contributions on the matter for discernment at this point and rather focus on the content of the minute.