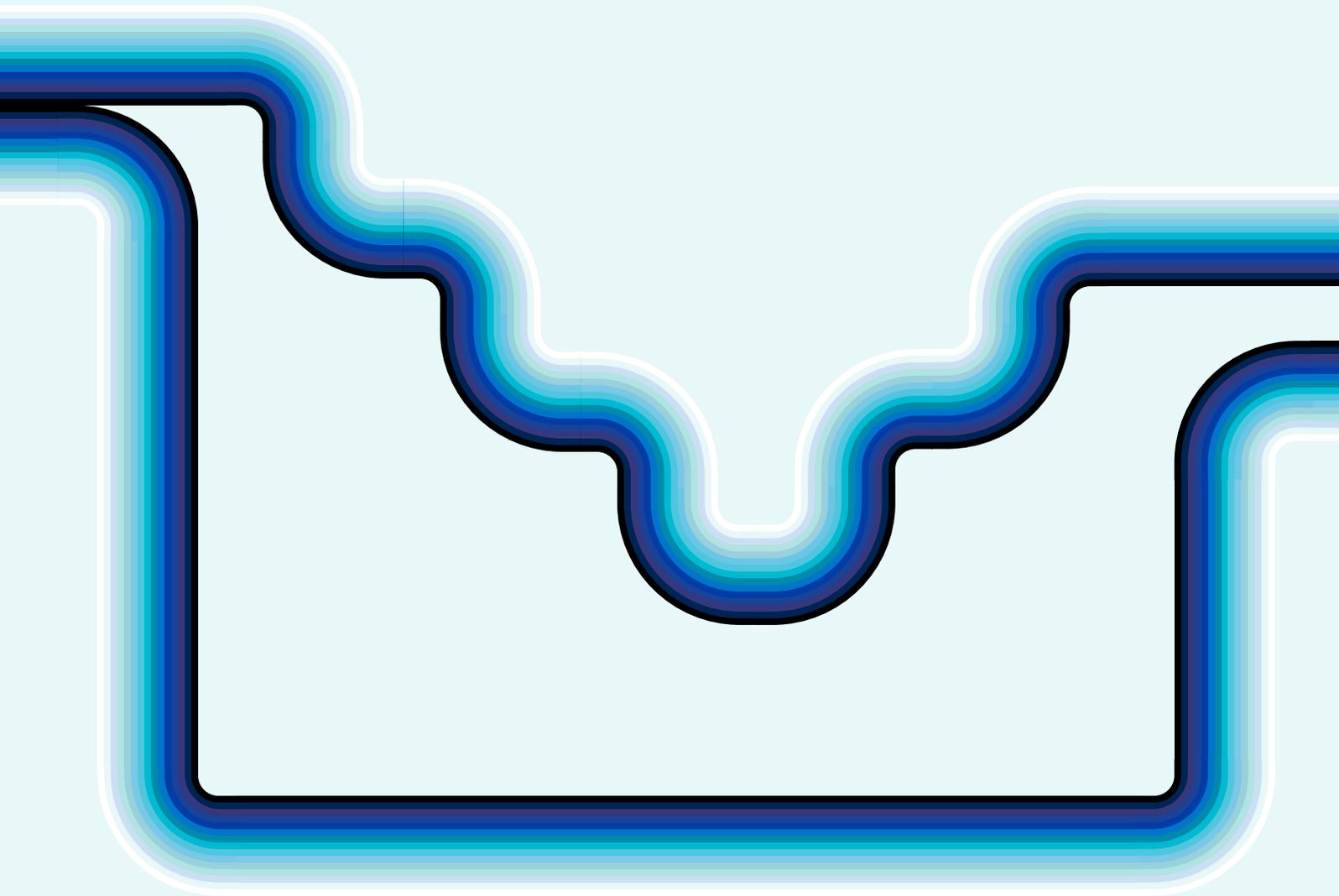


Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society
of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

Preparing for Yearly Meeting



Compiled for Yearly Meeting,
Friends House, London
4–7 May 2018





All photographs in this document by Mike Pinches for BYM

This booklet is part of 'Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers in Britain) 2018', a set of publications published for Yearly Meeting.

The full set comprises:

1. The *Agenda & notes*, with introductory material for Yearly Meeting 2018 and annual reports of Meeting for Sufferings, Quaker Stewardship Committee and other related bodies
2. *Epistles & testimonies*
3. *Minutes*, to be distributed after the conclusion of Yearly Meeting
4. The formal *Trustees' annual report* including financial statements for the year ended December 2017
5. *Tabular statement*.

All documents are available online at www.quaker.org.uk/ym. If these do not meet your accessibility needs, or the needs of someone you know, please email ym@quaker.org.uk.

Printed copies of all documents will be available at Yearly Meeting.

All *Quaker faith & practice* references are to the printed fifth edition, which can also be found online at www.quaker.org.uk/qfp.

Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to help you to prepare for Yearly Meeting, both practically and spiritually.

Yearly Meeting is important to the life of our Quaker community in Britain because when in session it holds the final constitutional authority for the Religious Society of Friends in England, Scotland, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Yearly Meeting is for everyone – members and attenders, people able to come and those upholding Yearly Meeting in their local Quaker communities. It follows that preparation of hearts and minds is also for everyone. You can prepare as an individual or with your local or area meeting.

Information about Yearly Meeting can be found in *Quaker faith & practice* Chapter 6. For further information contact Events & Committee Services, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. Telephone: 020 7663 1040. Email: ym@quaker.org.uk. Website: www.quaker.org.uk/ym.

How to use this booklet

You may want to read this booklet from cover to cover. Or you may want to find out about something specific. Below we indicate what is in each section.

Section 1

Page 4

How does Yearly Meeting work?

The principles of the Quaker business method are the same for Yearly Meeting as for area and local meetings. Please read the guidance found in Chapter 3 of *Quaker faith & practice*. More information about how Yearly Meeting is clerked, and how you can contribute to the right holding of the meeting, can be found in Section 1 of this brochure.

Section 2

Page 6

What will we be doing?

See this section for information about the business of the meeting.

Section 3

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Particular focus for Yearly Meeting 2018

This year Yearly Meeting will be considering whether it is time to revise *Quaker faith & practice*, the book of discipline for Britain Yearly Meeting. Everyone, whether attending in person or upholding Yearly Meeting at home in local Quaker communities, is asked to help the discernment of Yearly Meeting by doing the preparation set out in Section 3.

Section 4

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Practicalities

There are a number of practical issues that you will need to think about before you come to Yearly Meeting. You will find some information here; further details will be emailed to those coming and placed on our website www.quaker.org.uk over the next few months.

1. How does Yearly Meeting work?

1.1 Discipline of Yearly Meeting sessions

“In our meetings for worship we seek through the stillness to know God’s will for ourselves and for the gathered group. Our meetings for church affairs, in which we conduct our business, are also meetings for worship based on silence, and they carry the same expectation that God’s guidance can be discerned if we are truly listening together and to each other and are not blinkered by preconceived opinions.”

Quaker faith & practice 3.02

In Yearly Meeting, which has a large number of Friends present, it is usually the case that not everyone who stands to give spoken ministry is called. It is useful to remember this:

“Not all who attend a meeting for church affairs will necessarily speak: those who are silent can help to develop the sense of the meeting if they listen in a spirit of worship.”

Quaker faith & practice 3.05

The agenda gives the timings of sessions. Published starting times indicate when the clerk will formally open the sessions; please aim to arrive before that time, so the meeting can gather in silence beforehand. The clerk will aim to conclude sessions by published closing times, but if it is necessary to extend sessions, the clerk will indicate when those who need to meet participants in the children’s programme, or who have other pressing matters, can leave.

Entering late or leaving early can disturb other Friends. If you need to do so, please wait for a shuffle break or, if necessary, leave at the end of an item of business. Please avoid leaving or entering when the clerk is standing or a Friend is ministering.

One door only will be used for latecomers so please follow the directions of doorkeepers and wait quietly until a doorkeeper indicates you can enter.

Friends will be reminded at regular intervals to turn off mobile phones. Please do so. Even a phone set to ‘vibrate’ can be distracting to Friends sitting near you. The exception to this rule will be parents with children in the Children and Young People’s programmes who need to be contactable in case of emergency.

The Quaker business method is a discipline in which all present should be focusing on worship and discernment of the matter at hand. Please avoid any activity that detracts from this discipline. This includes knitting and unsuitable use of electronic devices. Friends are aware, however, that some people with particular needs will find it easier to concentrate if using their hands. If this is the case, please let elders know by emailing ym@quaker.org.uk and they will be in touch prior to Yearly Meeting.

1.2 Spoken ministry

We meet in large venues, and therefore rely on the use of microphones. If you feel called to minister please stand, or if unable to stand please raise your hand and wait for a microphone.

If you rise, and another is called, please sit down.

If you are called, please tell everyone who you are and where you worship before you begin your ministry (e.g. “X area meeting” or “attending X local meeting or worshipping community”).

When offering spoken ministry, “try to sum up what you have to say in as few words as possible. Speak simply and audibly, but do not speak for effect.” (*Qf&P* 3.10)

Each contribution should be heard in silence. Audible indications of approval or disapproval of spoken ministry are not part of the discipline of Britain Yearly Meeting.

After each contribution, there will be a pause to allow reflection. Please do not stand at this time. When the clerk feels the time is right for a further contribution, they will say so. If you have tested your ministry and feel that the meeting needs to hear it in order to reach unity, you should stand at this point.

When the clerk discerns that the time is right, they will say they are ready to draft a minute. At this point, any Friend standing should sit down. While the minute is being drafted, please uphold the clerks in prayerful silence.

When the clerk asks if a minute is acceptable Friends can answer “I hope so”, or stand to be called. Please reflect on whether the minute is good enough. If you are clear that an amendment is necessary, stand and wait to be called; but do not present fresh material at this point.

1.3 Elders at Yearly Meeting

Yearly Meeting elders support the meeting prayerfully and take responsibility for the right holding of meetings for worship, including those for church affairs. They also support individual Friends as required.

Elders uphold the clerks in worship immediately before each session, and are available to Friends between sessions.

1.4 Further information

Quaker faith & practice Chapter 3.



2. What will we be doing?

2.1 Required business

Each Yearly Meeting will have a particular focus and a large part of our time is devoted to this. But we also have regular ‘required business’ to do. Yearly Meeting is when the committees appointed to do work on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting give an account of how they have carried out that work. These reports are given as ministry and received prayerfully in worship. Look out for the booklet *Agenda and notes* coming out in March 2018 as this will have the text of the reports. The *Trustees’ annual report, including financial statements* of Britain Yearly Meeting should be available in April 2018.

Reading the reports is part of the spiritual preparation for Yearly Meeting.

2.2 Appointments

Yearly Meeting also appoints people to carry out work at Yearly Meeting and throughout the year. These nominations will be available on the website in advance of Yearly Meeting.

Being aware of the nominations is part of the spiritual preparation for Yearly Meeting.

2.3 Further information

‘Business to be taken at Yearly Meeting’, *Quaker faith & practice* Chapter 6.

Annual reports of committees can be found in the appendices to *Agenda and notes* published in March 2017.

Britain Yearly Meeting *Trustees’ annual report, including financial statements*, published in April 2017.

For nominations to committees made by Central Nominations Committee, Committee on Clerks and Yearly Meeting Nominating Group, see www.quaker.org.uk/ym from April 2017.



3. Particular focus for Yearly Meeting 2018

This year we will be considering whether it is time to revise *Quaker faith & practice*, our book of discipline.

3.1 Knowing our book

To be ready to make a decision about the book of discipline, we need to know our current book well. We can also ask what the book could be like, knowing that our community and the world have changed since *Quaker faith & practice* was compiled in 1994.

This next section contains some ideas and resources to help you do that before Yearly Meeting, as an individual or with a group, whether you are planning to attend in person or not.

3.2 Reading *Quaker faith & practice*

Many people have already read some or all of *Quaker faith & practice*, either on their own or with a local meeting group. If you haven't, it would be helpful to do so. You could use 'Not too late', a short version of the reading calendar. Try to read some passages from the chapters on church government (about our structures and procedures) and some from the anthology chapters (insights from a range of voices).

3.3 *God, words and us: Quakers in conversation about religious difference*

This short book is about how some Quakers with different religious views – agnostic, Christian, nontheist, universalist, and more – came together to have an honest, respectful and open-hearted discussion about their beliefs. By reading it and using the session plan in the back, you and your meeting can participate in this conversation.

3.4 Questions for reflection

The following questions are offered as suggestions. You could reflect on them on your own or with others. Consider responding in different ways: in silence or worship sharing, by keeping a journal, with a creative activity, or through social media.

- What is my relationship with *Quaker faith & practice*?
- Do I read some parts more than others? Which parts do I find helpful?
- Does it reflect the rich store of experience and wisdom of the Religious Society of Friends and the diversity of our spiritual journeys? Are there any gaps?
- What would worry me about revising our book of discipline? What would excite me about revising it?

3.5 Further resources

Quaker faith & practice: <http://qfp.quaker.org.uk>.

'Not too late': <http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/reading/not-too-late>.

Reading *Qf&P* on Facebook: www.facebook.com/readingqfp. And on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ReadingQfp>.

God, words and us: http://bookshop.quaker.org.uk/God-words-and-us_9781999726928.

Journeys in the Spirit materials offer those working with children and young people approaches to encourage the reading of *Quaker Faith & Practice*. For those related to children: http://together.woodbrooke.org.uk/resource.php?r=JC#step_ref_261; numbers 104–110. For those related to young people: <http://together.woodbrooke.org.uk/resource.php?r=JY>; numbers 29 and 30.



4. Practicalities

4.1 Can I come?

Yes. Everyone in our Quaker community is welcome whether in membership or not.

4.2 What do I need to do?

Register – you can do this online at www.quaker.org.uk/ym. For those over 18 there is no charge to attend Yearly Meeting, but we ask you to register in advance so that we can send you all the information you need beforehand and help you with any particular access or other requirements you might have. It also helps Friends House to know how many people to expect, and prepare for this.

If you are an attender, ask someone from your worshipping community who knows you well to email the Yearly Meeting clerk at ym@quaker.org.uk to say that you would like to come and why. Ask them to help you prepare and understand what will happen at Yearly Meeting. We hope this document will help you in this.

If you are unable to attend in person, you can still participate. You can find more information and follow updates online at www.quaker.org.uk/ym, through Facebook at www.facebook.com/bymevent or Twitter [@ymevent_britain](https://twitter.com/ymevent_britain) (#YM2018).

4.3 Is there a minimum age?

Yearly Meeting is an all-age event. Running alongside the main Yearly Meeting sessions there will be three age-related programmes. Full information, including costs, can be found at www.quaker.org.uk/ym.

Booking is required for all children and young people's programmes. The booking deadlines are:

- Junior Yearly Meeting (15 to 18-year-olds): 23 February
- Children & Young People's programmes (0 to 14-year-olds): 18 March

The 'Young Adults at Yearly Meeting' programme runs at each Yearly Meeting. It offers you a way of being part of Yearly Meeting sessions and of being in a smaller community. It will give you a chance to prepare for and reflect on your experience of Yearly Meeting. To find out more visit www.quaker.org.uk/ym.

4.4 What do I do if I have access needs?

We want anyone who wants to come to Yearly Meeting to be able to do so. But this means that if you have accessibility needs you have to tell us so that we can support any necessary arrangements. We will ask you to think carefully about your ability to be part of a busy, crowded, noisy environment and how you will travel to and from your accommodation. We encourage you to consider whether there is anyone else attending who may be able to give you some support.

You should first speak to Friends in your meeting to see what help and support they can provide. If they cannot help, the Pastoral Care Group will try to do so but there may be a limit to what can be done.

General accessibility information for Friends House is at www.friendshouse.co.uk/access-arrangements.

For all Yearly Meeting sessions, there will be speech-to-text reporting, providing a verbatim real-time transcript on a screen just below the stage in the Large Meeting House. We also hope to be able to transmit the transcript directly to phones/tablets. To let us know your access needs, or discuss concerns, including the need for accessible documentation, please email access@quaker.org.uk or call Gary Mitchell on 0207 663 1006.

4.5 What if I need financial help to come?

No Friend should be prevented from attending Yearly Meeting because they can't afford it.

If you need some financial help please speak to Friends in your local or area meeting or your worshipping community as these meetings may be able to help. If they can't, you can apply for a bursary for help towards travel and accommodation costs. You will need to give a brief explanation of your reasons for applying to the fund and have your form countersigned by your local overseer or by someone from your local worshipping community with responsibility for pastoral care.

To request a bursary application form, please contact Gary Mitchell, garym@quaker.org.uk, telephone 020 7663 1006.

Donations to the bursary fund are very welcome. Details of how to give can be found on www.quaker.org.uk/ym or you can contact Ann Pfeiffer (annp@quaker.org.uk or telephone 0207 663 1053).

4.6 Where can I stay?

Hotel accommodation near to Friends House

Many Friends are likely to stay in one of the hotels belonging to the Imperial Group. These hotels offer special rates for weekend stays particularly aimed at those wanting single rooms, and with the option to extend to a Sunday night stay. Please visit their website at www.imperialhotels.co.uk/en/special-offers and look at the 'Capital Weekend 2-night package – Friday & Saturday'. If you are sharing a room you are advised to book at the hotel's standard rate as this will be cheaper. The Melia White House Hotel has offered Friends special rates over Yearly Meeting. Please see their website (www.melia.com/en/hotels/united-kingdom/london/melia-white-house/index.html) or ring reservations and ask for the Friends House rate.

The St Athans B&B is an eco-friendly hotel and is about a ten-minute walk from Friends House. Please read the important information on their website before booking as facilities are limited: www.stathanshotel.com/green-hotel.

Other hotels are nearby and can be found via www.booking.com (search for hotels around Bloomsbury).

Staying with local Friends

Alternatively you may request to stay with London-based Friends on a B&B basis, at a nominal cost of £15 per person per night.

We hope to find accommodation for those Friends who need it, including visitors from other Yearly Meetings, those who need to stay close to Friends House, or those who require less expensive accommodation.

To apply for this scheme, please contact ymhosp@quaker.org.uk.

If you are a London Friend able to help by offering a spare bed, please contact ymhosp@quaker.org.uk as soon as possible, and by Sunday 1 April 2018 at the latest.

Meeting houses

Muswell Hill meeting lets Friends sleep on the floor of their meeting house. Accommodation is basic and only suitable for those physically able to camp on the floor. There is a toilet and shower and breakfast can be provided. The cost is £5 per person per night.

4.7 What happens when I get to Yearly Meeting?

The reception desk will be open from noon until 20:00 in the Garden Entrance of Friends House. Luggage can be left in the cloakroom from 09:30 to 21:30.

4.8 How can I help?

Yearly Meeting wouldn't be as rich without help from Friends attending – and many Friends find it rewarding to help make this event happen and support our community by giving service. Volunteers take on a variety of roles – doorkeepers, elders, pastoral care providers, welcomers, microphone stewards – or help with the children's programme or registration desk.

If you are able to offer service, please sign up at www.quaker.org.uk/ym.

If you are not coming to Yearly Meeting you can still give service by helping local Friends keep up to date by monitoring the website or email updates and passing on new information.

4.9 Can I get food and drink at Friends House?

Throughout Yearly Meeting Friends House will be offering a variety of food options at all mealtimes including breakfast. Meals and snacks will be available in the restaurant, courtyard and Quaker Centre café. Full details and prices will be available on our website at www.quaker.org.uk/ym.

In addition there are a number of supermarkets and cafés around Friends House where food and drink can be bought.



Quakers share a way of life, not a set of beliefs. Quaker unity is based on shared understanding and a shared practice of silent worship – a communal stillness.

Quakers seek to experience God directly – internally, in relationships with others, and with the world. Local meetings for worship are open to all who wish to attend.

Quakers try to live with honesty and integrity. This means speaking truth to all, including people in positions of power. The Quaker commitment to peace arises from the conviction that love is at the heart of existence and that all human beings are unique and equal.

This leads Quakers to put faith into action by working locally and globally to change the systems that cause injustice and violent conflict.

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

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