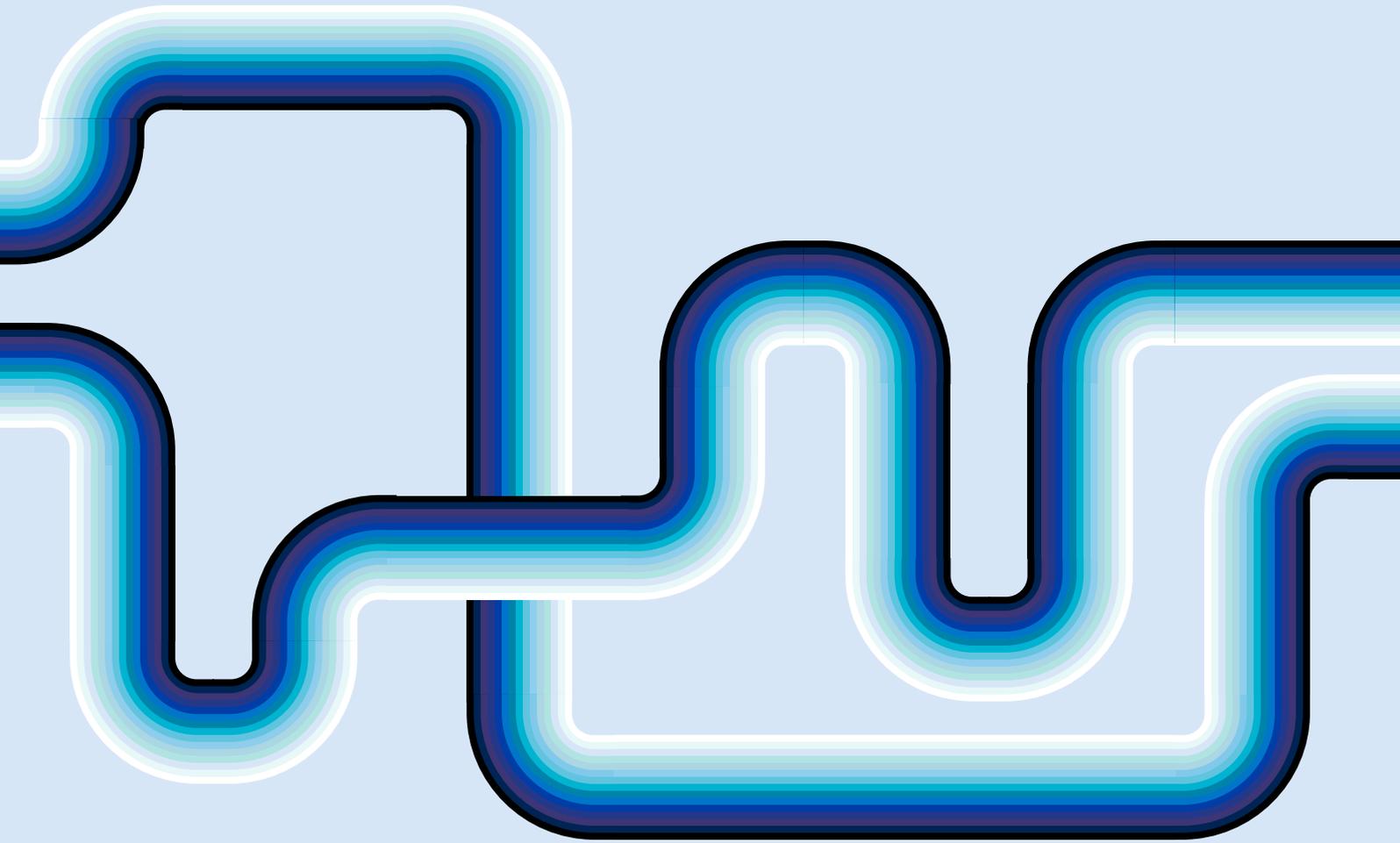


Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society  
of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

# Agenda & notes



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





Credit: 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](http://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](mailto:ym@quaker.org.uk).

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

All *Quaker faith & practice* references are to the online edition, which can be found at [www.quaker.org.uk/qfp](http://www.quaker.org.uk/qfp).

# 1 Introduction and information

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## 1.1 Introduction

Yearly Meeting is when Quakers in Britain come together to worship, make decisions and spend time as a community.

It's also when 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.

The purposes and functions of Yearly Meeting are described in *Quaker faith & practice* 6.02–6.11, which also gives the background to the business agenda.

You can send comments on the agenda and on Yearly Meeting sessions to Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee by writing c/o the Recording Clerk, by email to [arrangements@quaker.org.uk](mailto:arrangements@quaker.org.uk) or, during Yearly Meeting, through the box on the information desk.

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## 1.2 General contact details

Events & Committee Services, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. Telephone: 020 7663 1040. Email: [ym@quaker.org.uk](mailto:ym@quaker.org.uk).

Website: [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/bymevent](http://www.facebook.com/bymevent)

Twitter: [#ymevent\\_britain](https://twitter.com/@ymevent_britain) #YM2018

# 2 How does Yearly Meeting work?

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## 2.1 Discipline of Yearly Meeting sessions

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*.

“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. However, Friends are aware 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](mailto:ym@quaker.org.uk) and they will be in touch prior to Yearly Meeting.

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## 2.2 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. (eg. ‘x area meeting’ or ‘attending xx 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. Whilst 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; however, do not present fresh material at this point.

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## 2.3 Elders at Yearly Meeting

Yearly Meeting elders prayerfully support the meeting 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.

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## 2.4 Use of electronic devices

You can use electronic devices to access Yearly Meeting documents but please make sure you do not disturb others. Please ensure your device is on ‘silent’.

Resist the temptation to check emails or post on social networks while in sessions.

Outside session please think carefully about public posts to social networking sites. What stage have we reached in our discernment? Are you being tempted to anticipate a decision? Remember, ministry given in session has been offered in the context of a gathered meeting for worship and therefore might not be appropriate to share in a public forum.

# 3 Explanation of business to be taken at Yearly Meeting

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## 3.1 Amendments to *Quaker faith & practice*

Meeting for Sufferings suggest amendments to *Quaker faith & practice* as printed under item 12.

Comments and queries from Friends and meetings in advance of Yearly Meeting should be sent to Michael Booth, Church Government Adviser, at [qfp@quaker.org.uk](mailto:qfp@quaker.org.uk). Suggestions should relate only to the proposed changes. Any suggestions for further changes made as a result of comments received will be available at the time of Yearly Meeting.

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## 3.2 Nominations and Appointments

Each year, Yearly Meeting appoints Friends to serve in different capacities at that Yearly Meeting and to serve on committees and groups working throughout the year.

**Yearly Meeting itself** will nominate and appoint Friends to serve on:

- the Committee to Examine Minutes, which operates during Yearly Meeting and is responsible for checking the minutes at the close of each session and correcting any slight inaccuracies. Friends can be nominated to this Committee in advance of Yearly Meeting but must be present at Yearly Meeting to serve. Further information is on the website [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym). The deadline for nominations is 17:00 on 2 May. If we receive nominations for more than ten Friends, Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee will determine the names to be brought before Yearly Meeting on Friday evening,
- the Yearly Meeting Nominating Group (see *Q&P* 6.22). To nominate Friends to serve on this committee please complete the form available at the information desk. The form will need

to be signed by you and the Friend(s) you are nominating. You can only nominate Friends in membership who are present at Yearly Meeting. Completed forms should be put in the box at the Information Desk by 12:00 on Sunday 6 May. A list of Friends nominated, together with a map showing their geographic distribution, will be available on a notice board near the information desk. Objections to any of the nominations should be brought to the attention of Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee via the box on the information desk or by email at [arrangements@quaker.org.uk](mailto:arrangements@quaker.org.uk) as soon as possible and before the rise of session on Sunday afternoon. A meeting of all nominated Friends will be held on Sunday 6 May at 17:15 in the Kathleen Lonsdale Room to define the task and solve any problems of over-nomination and geographical spread. The nominations will then be brought before Yearly Meeting on Monday 7 May.

### **Nominations from nominating committees**

For the remaining vacancies, three different nominating committees will bring the names of Friends to Yearly Meeting: Committee on Clerks, Central Nominations Committee and Yearly Meeting Nominating Group.

These Friends have been identified after a careful and prayerful process of discernment. Their names will be published on our website [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym), before Yearly Meeting, and a full printed list of nominations and requests for release will be available at Yearly Meeting.

If you see a problem with the service of any of the Friends nominated, you should

- before Yearly Meeting contact Zoe Prosser either by email at [nominations@quaker.org.uk](mailto:nominations@quaker.org.uk) or telephone 0207 663 1115
- at Yearly Meeting, contact Arrangements Committee via email [arrangements@quaker.org.uk](mailto:arrangements@quaker.org.uk) or use the box at the information desk. This should happen as soon as possible and before the session involved.

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### 3.3 Receipt of annual reports

Yearly Meeting is the final constitutional authority of the Religious Society of Friends. Consequently Yearly Meeting receives the annual reports of the committees appointed to carry out its business between Yearly Meetings. These reports are from:

**Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees** are responsible to the Yearly Meeting for the right stewardship of the centrally managed work and the assets and property of the yearly meeting. See *Quaker faith & practice* 8.17–8.20. Trustees are accountable to both Yearly Meeting and the charity regulators.

**Central Nominations Committee** is responsible for bringing the names of Friends for service to both Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings. Consequently they have an overview of the number of Friends who have offered their service and are involved in encouraging Friends to consider service. See *Quaker faith & practice* 6.21.

**Friends Trusts Ltd** is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. It is the denominational trust corporation for the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain and in this capacity holds property and investments as custodian trustee or nominee for Meetings and other bodies within Britain Yearly Meeting.. It receives legacies which are to benefit some aspect of the Society or its work and manages a number of Quaker trusts. See *Quaker faith & practice* 14.45.

As a result of the early date of Yearly Meeting this year, Friends Trusts Ltd's audit will not take place until after Yearly Meeting, so no report is included in these documents. The report will be available on the website together with the company's Annual Report and Financial Statements when they have been approved by the Directors at their June meeting.

**Meeting for Sufferings** is the body entrusted with the general care of matters affecting Britain Yearly Meeting and, in the intervals between Yearly Meetings, the making of decisions and issuing of statements in the name of Britain Yearly Meeting. See *Quaker faith & practice* 7.02–7.06.

**Quaker Housing Trust** is the Yearly Meeting's own national housing charity. It makes grants and loans to social housing projects. Independent of BYM Funds, its income comes directly from Friends and meetings. See *Quaker faith & practice* 8.15.

**Quaker Stewardship Committee** gives help and guidance to area meetings in meeting the requirements of charity law in the stewardship of finance and property. They are also required to certify annually to Yearly Meeting that every part of Britain Yearly Meeting is producing proper financial accounts and property records. See *Quaker faith & practice* 14.36–14.42.

**Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee** is responsible for planning the agenda for and use of premises during for each Yearly Meeting. At the beginning of each Yearly Meeting, Agenda Committee reports on the planning of that Yearly Meeting and sets the agenda in context. See *Quaker faith & practice* 6.18.

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### 3.4 Yearly Meeting Epistle

The Yearly Meeting Epistle, also called the General Epistle, is the letter sent from this Yearly Meeting for Friends everywhere: to other Yearly Meetings worldwide and to local meetings in Britain. It is sent to all local meetings immediately after Yearly Meeting so that it can be read out at meeting for worship at the first available opportunity.

#### Procedure for Yearly Meeting epistle

*Quaker faith & practice* 6.23 outlines the process for creating the epistle. The details are as follows:

- Any Friend may give written advice on the content of the epistle by placing it in the box on the information desk before 17:30 on Sunday 6 May.
- Epistle Drafting Committee will then produce a draft epistle, which will be shared with the Children & Young People's Programme. Copies may be picked up from the information desk on Monday morning, 7 May. At 8:45 on Monday morning Friends can hear the draft epistle being read in Waldo Williams 2.
- Written comments on the content, text, style, grammar, language, etc. of the draft epistle should be placed in the box on the information desk no later than 15 minutes after the rise of the morning session on Monday 7 May.
- A revised draft epistle will be presented at the final session on Monday 7 May when no further revision (except perhaps excision) will be invited.

# 4 Agenda and notes

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Friday 4 May 2018

Before Yearly Meeting

12:30–14:00, Large Meeting House

**Quaker Socialist Society Salter Lecture: Diana Jeater**

Bearing witness or bearing whiteness? Britain, Africa and Quakers' - the complex historical relationship between Britain, Quakers and Africans.

Building the Yearly Meeting  
Community

15:00–15:45, Waldo Williams Suite

**Tea and cake with staff**

Staff and committee members would like to welcome Friends to Yearly Meeting with tea and cake and will be available for informal conversations about their work.

15:00–15:45, Sarah Fell Room

**It's still not too late to read *Quaker faith & practice***

How well do you know *Quaker faith & practice*? Whether you've never opened it or would like a refresher, this interactive session will provide a whistle-stop tour of our red book to help you understand what's there, what's not there, and what we are talking about as we consider whether or not this is the right time to revise it.

15:00–17:00, Large Meeting House

**Centrally managed work fair**

Come find out more about the work done by Britain Yearly Meeting. There will be displays and literature available and a chance to speak to staff and committee members. No centrally managed work tables will be at the Sunday evening Groups Fair. We realise that not everyone will be able to attend on Friday afternoon and therefore aspects of the work will also be displayed on the permanent BYM stand throughout the weekend.

15:00–21:00 Waldo Williams Room 1

**Community hub**

Yearly Meeting is a time when you can meet old F/friends and new. There will be space in the courtyard, bookshop, café and restaurant to meet and have a coffee. The Community Hub will be the place to go to enjoy meeting new friends around conversation tables, over art and craft activities, and by playing board games. There will even be a jigsaw! This is the place to go if you are on your own at Yearly Meeting and would like to get to know new people. The Hub will be open throughout Yearly Meeting and will normally have a host present. Full details will be in the events listing and on the website [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym).

16:00–16:45, Sarah Fell Room

**How does Yearly Meeting work?**

Is this your first time at Yearly Meeting? Have you been before but are still confused by what happens? In this session, Woodbrooke staff will guide you through the way a large Quaker business meeting works. They will also offer practical tips on getting the best from the weekend and provide a chance to ask any questions that are on your mind. There is no such thing as a silly question.

17:00–17:45, Sarah Fell Room

**It's still not too late to read *Quaker faith & practice***

See 15:00–15:45, Sarah Fell Room

18:00–18:45 Sarah Fell Room

**How does Yearly Meeting work?**

See 16:00–16:45, Sarah Fell Room.

<p><b>1. Appointment of clerks</b></p>	<p>The Yearly Meeting Committee on Clerks nominates the following Friends to serve as clerk and assistant clerks for Yearly Meeting 2018, serving until the first session of Yearly Meeting 2019:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Clerk</td> <td>Deborah Rowlands</td> <td>South Wales AM</td> </tr> <tr> <td>First assistant clerk</td> <td>Clare Scott Booth</td> <td>London West AM</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Second assistant clerk</td> <td>Gavin Burnell</td> <td>Leeds AM</td> </tr> </table>	Clerk	Deborah Rowlands	South Wales AM	First assistant clerk	Clare Scott Booth	London West AM	Second assistant clerk	Gavin Burnell	Leeds AM
Clerk	Deborah Rowlands	South Wales AM								
First assistant clerk	Clare Scott Booth	London West AM								
Second assistant clerk	Gavin Burnell	Leeds AM								
<p><b>2. Welcome to all</b></p>										
<p><b>3. Children &amp; Young People’s Programmes and Junior Yearly Meeting</b></p>	<p>The Clerk will refer to the age related programmes happening in parallel with main Yearly Meeting sessions and identify times when we will all come together.</p>									
<p><b>4. Appointment of Committee to Examine Minutes</b></p>	<p>The names of those nominated to serve on the committee will be read out and Yearly Meeting may approve them.</p>									
<p><b>5. Agenda introduction</b></p>	<p>The Clerk of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee will briefly introduce the report of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee.</p> <p>The report can be found at Appendix A and Friends should refer to page 7 for an explanation of the role of the committee.</p>									
<p><b>6. Explanation of practicalities</b></p>										
<p><b>7. Report of Central Nominations Committee</b></p>	<p>Further to minute 17 of Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017, Central Nominations Committee brings forward nominations to Yearly Meeting 2018 as specified in Table 1 of the Schedule of Nominations appended to these minutes.</p>									
<p><b>8. Central Nominations Committee – nominations required</b></p>	<p>We ask Central Nominations Committee to bring nominations to Yearly Meeting 2019 as specified in Table 2 of the Schedule of Nominations appended to these minutes.</p>									
<p><b>9. Report of Yearly Meeting Committee on Clerks</b></p>	<p>The Yearly Meeting Committee on Clerks brings forward nominations as specified in Table 3 of the Schedule of Nominations appended to these minutes.</p>									
<p><b>10. Report of Yearly Meeting Nominating Group (2017– 2018)</b></p>	<p>Further to minute 51 of Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017, the Nominating Group appointed at Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017 brings forward nominations as specified in Table 4 of the Schedule of Nominations appended to these minutes.</p>									
<p><b>11. Nominations to the Yearly Meeting Nominating Group (2018–2019)</b></p>										

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**12. Proposed amendments to  
*Quaker faith & practice***

Meeting for Sufferings propose amendments to *Quaker faith & practice*. These changes were considered by Meeting for Sufferings at a meeting held 2 December 2017 and their minute and the proposed amendments are as follows.

**MfS/17/12/11 Church Government Advisory Group**

We receive minutes CGAG 17/24 and CCAG 17/28 proposing amendments to the current book of Christian discipline of Britain Yearly Meeting (currently *Quaker faith & practice*).

Minute CGAG 17/24 proposes new text which takes account of the laying down of Six Weeks Meeting and the foundation of the London Quakers Property Trust (*Qfp* 5.09, 6.25, 7.01 and 7.04).

Minute CGAG 17/28 proposes three changes to references to data protection (*Qfp* 8.21, 11.06 and 11.25):

- 8.21 Change the second to last paragraph to: 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)
- 11.06 and 11.25: change “the Data Protection Act” to “data protection legislation” in both cases.

We agree the proposed changes and forward them to Yearly Meeting.

Subsequent to Meeting for Sufferings, the proposed changes were seen by the Yearly Meeting Publications Group, who have editorial control of *Quaker faith & practice*. The following amendments are those agreed by Meeting for Sufferings as edited by Yearly Meeting Publications Group.

**Changes consequent upon the laying down of Six Weeks Meeting**

The text offered is based upon the premise that the same group of Friends forms the new organisation so no change of relationships with other parts of the yearly meeting are suggested.

5.09 Delete existing text and replace with:

**London Quakers Property Trust**

London Quakers Property Trust is the successor body to Six Weeks Meeting, which dated back to 1671. Its main objective is to maintain, repair, preserve and insure the places of worship of its member area meetings, and their contents.

London Quakers Property Trust, a registered charity, is a company whose founding members are seven London area meetings: Kingston & Wandsworth, London West, North East Thames, North London, North West London, South East London, and South London. The company board is made up of representatives appointed by each of the member area meetings and is accountable to these area meetings for the use, maintenance and stewardship of the assets and pooled funds that the company owns on their behalf. Quaker meeting houses within these area meetings are assets of London Quakers Property Trust.

London Quakers Property Trust may communicate formally by minute with Meeting for Sufferings, and with Yearly Meeting through its agenda committee.

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**12. Proposed amendments  
to *Quaker faith & practice*  
(continued)**

6.25 (paragraph 1) Delete existing text and insert:

Any communication to the Yearly Meeting from an area meeting, from General Meeting for Scotland, Meeting of Friends in Wales, London Quakers Property Trust or Young Friends General Meeting shall be in the form of a minute signed by their clerk, as shall communications from Meeting for Sufferings and from committees of the Yearly Meeting.

7.04 Delete existing text and insert:

Area meetings, General Meeting for Scotland, the Meeting of Friends in Wales, London Quakers Property Trust, Young Friends General Meeting, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and the standing committees appointed by Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings may communicate with Meeting for Sufferings by minute signed by or on behalf of their clerk. These bodies may request that Friends other than members of Meeting for Sufferings be allowed to speak to such minutes.

**Changes consequent upon a change to data protection legislation**

New data protection legislation and regulations will come into force in May 2018. In consequence of these changes the following amendments are suggested.

8.21 The Recording Clerk

Delete penultimate paragraph and replace with:

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).

11.06 (second sentence) and 11.25 (final sentence)

Delete “the Data Protection Act” and insert “data protection legislation”

*Note: all numbering refers to the updated Qf&P online, not the printed edition.*

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<b>13. Receipt of annual report from Quaker Stewardship Committee</b>	The report can be found at Appendix B and Friends should refer to page 7 for an explanation of the role of the committee.
<b>14. Review of Terms of Reference for Quaker Stewardship Committee</b>	Minute 22 of Yearly Meeting 2013 accepted revised Terms of Reference for Quaker Stewardship Committee and asked for them to be reviewed again in 2018.
<b>15. Receipt of annual report from Meeting for Sufferings</b>	The report can be found at Appendix C and Friends should refer to page 7 for an explanation of the role of the committee.

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16. **Is it time to revise *Quaker faith & practice*, our book of discipline? Part 1**

We will receive from Meeting for Sufferings, minute MfS/17/12/12 – Revision of the book of discipline.

Yearly Meeting Gathering 2014 considered a recommendation from Meeting for Sufferings, that it was time to revise *Quaker faith & practice*, beginning with a period of preparation and threshing. Yearly Meeting Gathering was unable to reach unity on whether to start the process of revision but by Minute 42, encouraged Meeting for Sufferings to engage the yearly meeting in a period of preparation and threshing and to bring the matter back to Yearly Meeting when it felt the time was right. At a meeting of Meeting for Sufferings held 2 December 2017, the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group presented its final report and Meeting for Sufferings minuted as follows:

**MfS/17/12/12 Revision of the book of discipline**

Lesley Richards, Clerk to the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group, has spoken to a report from the group recommending that the Yearly Meeting revises our book of discipline. The report lays out the reasons why the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group (BODRPG) is making this recommendation, and explores some of the recommendation's main implications. Several members of the group are with us today and we have heard a summary of the work and the 'journey' that has been taken by the group both individually and together.

They have focussed on listening to Friends throughout the yearly meeting and have gathered feedback from many who followed the Reading *Qf&P* programme. They have been interested in 'how it has felt' and especially in the context of religious difference. General conclusions are that Friends find that the church government sections need revision, that we are listening more to each other in our expression of faith and that we feel more involved in the process of revision.

We feel that the time is right to start a revision of our book of discipline. We also agree:

- The revision should begin with, but not be limited to church government, namely the sections which focus on our procedures and corporate discipline.
- The revision should divide material between that in the main body of the book, which lays out principles, and supplementary material, which gives details.
- The revision should draw on the richness of theological thought in our yearly meeting, now and historically, seeing diversity as fundamental to our community, not as a flaw.
- The Revision Committee be given the freedom to be creative, while remaining in close contact with the yearly meeting.

If the Yearly Meeting agrees the recommendation, MfS will be ready to support the process. We have today considered the draft terms of reference prepared by the BODRPG that could support the Revision Committee, and we have shared some initial thoughts.

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| <p><b>16. Is it time to revise <i>Quaker faith &amp; practice</i>, our book of discipline? Part 1 (continued)</b></p> | <p>We rejoice that the work of the BODRPG has enriched Britain Yearly Meeting and enabled Friends to grow in their spiritual and theological understanding.</p> <p>We thank the group for their work and for their report.</p> <p>We forward this minute to Yearly Meeting and ask the BODRPG to work with YMAC in preparing materials.</p> <p>An edited version of the report of the Revision Preparation Group to Meeting for Sufferings can be found at Appendix D.</p> |
| <p><b>17. Meeting for Sufferings – appointment for new triennium</b></p>  | <p>Further to minute 31 of Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017, nominations from area meetings for representatives and alternates to serve on Meeting for Sufferings are listed in Table 5 of the Schedule of Nominations appended to these minutes.</p>   |

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## Saturday 5 May 2018

08:45–09:15, Sarah Fell Room

### Early morning worship

Yearly Meeting session 2, 9:30–12:00

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| <p><b>18. Eldership and pastoral care at Yearly Meeting</b></p>  | <p>We will hear from the conveners of Yearly Meeting Elders and the Yearly Meeting Pastoral Care group.</p>  |
| <p><b>19. Is it time to revise <i>Quaker faith &amp; practice</i>, our book of discipline? Part 2: introduction to our consideration</b></p> | <p>We will hear more from the clerk of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee about the thinking behind the planning of Yearly Meeting sessions, and we will hear from members of the Revision Preparation Group about their work and the journey they have taken, both as individuals and as a group.</p> <p>How is your heart responding to the challenge before us this weekend?</p> <p>Friends should refer back to item 16 on the agenda and Appendix D.</p> |
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**20. Is it time to revise *Quaker faith & practice*, our book of discipline? Part 3: parallel sessions**

Following the morning session we will hold a number of parallel sessions

These sessions will be as follows:

1. A conversation in The Light. Come to hear a respectful, open-hearted conversation about religious difference between Jan Arriens, Craig Barnet and Marisa Johnson, facilitated by Helen Rowlands. There will also be time for contributions from Friends present.
2. Religious difference workshop: explore religious difference through activities and conversation.
3. Church government: an opportunity to discuss with members of the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group their recommendations for how church government material could be handled in a revision.
4. Missing identities? Diversity, inclusion and privilege are live topics for Quakers in Britain today. How does this relate to the possibility of revising our book of discipline? There are many dimensions to diversity: race, class, age, (dis)ability, gender and sexuality to name a few. Do you see yourself in *Quaker faith & practice*?
5. Dance: explore your response to the possibility of revising our book of discipline through dance.
6. Art: explore your response to the possibility of revising our book of discipline through graphic art – materials provided.

Friends should refer back to item 14 on the agenda and minute MfS/17/12/12 Revision of the book of discipline, from Meeting for Sufferings.

The location of each session will be given in the *Events listing*, as well as on noticeboards at Friends House.

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**21. Is it time to revise *Quaker faith & practice*, our book of discipline? Part 4: what canst thou say? Listening and learning from each other**

Each generation has had its own experiences of the life of faith which over time have been reflected in our book of discipline. Not everyone's Quaker experience can be found in the present book. This is a time of rapid change in the world around us, where diversity and difference are often seen as threats, whereas we want them to be an opportunity for spiritual growth and understanding.

In this session we hope to find ways to make our religious differences and our varied expressions of our faith a source of strength and richness.

In worship, we will consider:

- what have religious differences shown you in your Quaker community?
- how has your faith and practice been enriched by these differences?
- how can we find a way to get beyond potentially divisive words?

Friends should refer back to item 16 on the agenda and Appendix D.

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## Associated events

19:00–20:30, Large Meeting House

### **Swarthmore Lecture: Chris Alton**

Changing ourselves, changing the world

21:00–21:30, Large Meeting House

Opportunity for worship and reflection on the events of the day and on the Swarthmore Lecture.

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## Sunday 6 May 2018

08:45–09:15, Sarah Fell Room

### **Early morning worship**

Yearly Meeting session 4, 09:30–12:00

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| <b>22. Meeting for worship with those participating in the children's programme</b>                                   | We will have the opportunity to worship together. The doors will remain open so that parents and carers can move in and out of this as is necessary. Further information will be available nearer Yearly Meeting.  |
| <b>23. Is it time to revise <i>Quaker faith &amp; practice</i>, our book of discipline? Part 5: reflections</b>       | Friends should refer back to item 16 on the agenda and Appendix D.   |
| <b>24. Is it time to revise <i>Quaker faith &amp; practice</i>, our book of discipline? Part 6: church government</b> | Friends should refer back to item 16 on the agenda and Appendix D.<br><br>The church government sections of <i>Quaker faith &amp; practice</i> (sections 3–17) tell us how things should be done within our local, area, and Yearly Meetings. Are these sections still helpful, or do they impose burdens we cannot easily bear? The Revision Preparation Group will introduce the specific issues around the church government sections of <i>Quaker faith &amp; practice</i> . Friends will have an opportunity to consider the proposed format for this part of the book.<br><br>Friends should refer back to item 16 on the agenda and Appendix D. |
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Yearly Meeting session 5, 14:00–17:00

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| <b>25. Is it time to revise <i>Quaker faith &amp; practice</i>, our book of discipline? Part 7</b> | We will continue our consideration of the recommendation from Meeting for Sufferings that now is the time to revise <i>Quaker faith &amp; practice</i> .<br><br>Friends should refer back to item 16 on the agenda and Appendix D. |
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Associated events

18:00–20:30, Large Meeting House and  
Ada Salter Room

**Groups fair**

20:00–21:00, Small Meeting House

**Opportunity for worship**

“Keep your meetings in the power of God...  
And when Friends have finished their business,  
sit down and wait a while quietly and wait  
upon the Lord to feel him.”

George Fox, 1658, *Quaker faith & practice* 3.31

We may not have quite finished our Yearly Meeting  
business but as we pause at the end of the day this  
opportunity for worship gives us a time to wait  
quietly. Come and join a period of worship, drop  
in and stay for as long as you can.

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## Monday 7 May 2018

08:45–09:15, Sarah Fell Room

**Early morning worship**

Yearly Meeting session 6, 09:30–12:00

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<b>26. Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees Report 2017</b>	The report is printed in a separate document. Friends should refer to page 7 for an explanation of the role of trustees.
<b>27. Review of Terms of Reference of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees</b>	Minute 27 of Yearly Meeting 2016 accepted revised Terms of Reference for Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees asking that they be reviewed every three years.
<b>28. Receipt of other reports</b>	The reports can be found at Appendices E and F. Friends should refer to page 7 for an explanation of the role of the committees.
<b>29. As led</b>	
<b>30. Looking forward</b>	Friends at previous Yearly Meetings have been clear that further work is needed on sustainability. At Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017 Friends also expressed their concern about the lack of inclusivity and diversity in our Quaker communities and structures. In this session we will hear some examples of inspiring work by Friends already working on both these matters. We expect to have a deeper consideration of both at Yearly Meeting 2019 and Yearly Meeting Gathering 2020.

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**31. Receipt of the Yearly Meeting  
draft epistle**

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**32. Receipt of Tabular Statement**

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**33. Minute of record: Epistles**

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**34. Minute of record: Testimonies**

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**35. Minute of record: Friends  
from other yearly meetings**

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**36. Minute of record: Inter-church  
and interfaith visitors**

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**37. Formal acceptance of reports  
and accounts**

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**38. Yearly Meeting Nominating  
Group 2018–2019**

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**39. Any other business which may  
properly be taken**

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**40. Receipt of minutes from the  
Children and Young People's  
programmes**

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**41. Receipt of Junior Yearly  
Meeting epistle**

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**42. Reading and signing of the  
Yearly Meeting epistle**

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**43. Naming of clerks for Yearly  
Meeting 2019**

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# 5 Appendices

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## Appendix A: Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee report to Yearly Meeting 2018

“The planning of the agenda for, and the use of the premises during, Yearly Meeting shall be in the hands of the Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, which shall consult as may be necessary...”.

*Quaker faith & practice* 6.18

The work of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee follows a regular annual cycle:

- reviewing what can be learnt from experience of the Yearly Meeting just held and other past experience (Manner of Holding) and using that learning to shape future planning
- meeting with representatives of standing committees and other bodies to share together current areas of work and of interest and to consider what may be helpful and/or necessary to bring before Yearly Meeting
- discernment of session topics and introducers and detailed planning
- consideration of the order of business, worship, welcomes and activities outside business sessions that help to build the Yearly Meeting as a worshipping community.

Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017 concluded a three-year consideration of ‘Living out our faith in the world’. Agenda Committee felt at this time that it was not right to launch immediately into another three-year theme. Over the same three-year period the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group has been working to help the Yearly Meeting prepare to take a decision on whether to revise *Quaker faith & practice* culminating in a report to Meeting for Sufferings.

Meeting for Sufferings by minute asked Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee to work with the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group to prepare materials to aid Yearly Meeting’s decision, and we have been delighted to work closely with that group over the course of this cycle. Our aim has been to plan an agenda that leaves plenty of room for detailed exploration and explanation prior to making a decision on whether to revise at this time. We have particularly welcomed the enthusiasm of Young Friends and Young Adult Friends to be fully engaged in the process, and we have taken particular care to start to consider ways to enable a wider range of people to be engaged in our decision making.

We have been reviewing the ways in which we communicate information about Yearly Meeting to reach as many people in the Quaker community as possible, whether or not they attend Yearly Meeting sessions, and to make the business easier to follow, particularly for those new to Yearly Meeting. We have made some changes to the format and content of our documents and communications as a result, and will continue to review these in the light of Friends’ feedback.

Agenda Committee has also continued to look to future Yearly Meetings. We heard clear calls of urgency for further work on diversity and on sustainability. We expect to end this Yearly Meeting by hearing stories of ongoing work which will begin our preparation for Yearly Meeting 2019 and Yearly Meeting Gathering 2020.

*Quaker faith & practice* also says that the Agenda Committee “keeps under review the longer-term evolution of the institution of Yearly Meeting in session and the pattern of its gatherings over time, in relation to organisational and spiritual development in the life of the Society.” We have started to ask ourselves whether more attention to this longer term evolution is needed now, and will continue to keep this under review.

Clare Scott Booth, Clerk  
January 2018

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## Appendix B: Annual Report of Quaker Stewardship Committee 2017 (including compliance report)

### Role and purpose

Quaker Stewardship Committee is a standing committee of Yearly Meeting.

The purpose of Quaker Stewardship Committee (QSC) is to support area meetings in their stewardship and co-ordinate the relationship between (all parts of) the yearly meeting and those administering charity law (*Quaker faith & practice* 14.36). It exists to give help and guidance to meetings to enable them to meet the requirements of charity law in the stewardship of their finance and property; encouraging openness, accountability, transparency and integrity in all our affairs (*Quaker faith & practice* 14.38).

It also provides advice on property matter and runs conferences for treasurers and trustees through Quaker Stewardship Annual Conference Committee (QSACC). This new committee combines the work of the Annual Conference of Treasurers Arrangements Committee and the direct organisation of the trustees conference.

The Committee has met five times during the year; once by telephone conference and four times at Friends House. During the year, we reorganised our method of working to form teams with responsibility for the various strands of our current work: area meeting support, trustees' annual reports, governance, and property.

In April 2017, QSC sent a report and made a presentation to Meeting for Sufferings outlining its work and the help that it offers to area meetings, setting out its objectives and priorities for the period 2017-2020, and flagging up long term issues that may require a radical rethink of Quaker governance structures. This was well received and has stimulated dialogue between the committee and area meetings.

The Responsibilities of Quaker Stewardship Committee are given in *Quaker faith & practice* 14.39

These responsibilities have been undertaken as follows:

### Support for trustees

QSC reached a formal agreement with Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) on how to work together to support trustees, treasurers and, through them, area meetings. QSC takes primary responsibility for the support of trustees, though the work is shared with QLCC and carried out through a number of groups of BYM staff.

The national Trustees' Conference took place at Woodbrooke on 17–19 February 2017. The theme was 'Spinning the plates: juggling the joys and challenges of trusteeship' and the main speaker was Linda Craig 'Both Mary and Martha: trusteeship and spirituality'.

### Provide property advice and guidance

The Quaker Life Network Property Advice Cluster has continued to provide support for meetings and can be contacted through Helen Griffith at Friends House. We welcome more offers of service to this cluster from Friends with appropriate skills or expertise on property matters.

We met with representatives of the Vibrancy programme to explore how we can work with them, particularly around property support.

### Support for treasurers

To help ensure every part of Britain Yearly Meeting is producing proper annual reports and property registers, the Committee has continued to review the reports and accounts of area meetings. and has offered guidance and support to meetings in their production.

QSC has produced guidance for area meeting treasurers on the development of reserves policies and on the use of excessive reserves.

The committee has surveyed the use of BYM's group subscription for local and area meeting treasurers to the Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers (ACAT). This showed that the ACAT's online handbook and other services are increasingly being used and are well received. In particular, treasurers appreciate ACAT's one day courses delivered across the country and its annual conference.

### Ensure education and training are available

The committee continues to work with Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre to provide relevant and accessible training for Friends involved in finance and property matters. During 2017 training was available on trusteeship, treasurership, financial stewardship and property.

We have worked with Woodbrooke to develop a new online course for area meeting trustees entitled 'Writing brilliant reports'.

### Enable meetings to act within the law

The committee has updated and expanded the agreed checklist for trustees annual reports and accounts to bring it into line with current Charity Commission and Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator requirements.

### Disseminate good practice

*Trustees & Treasurers News* continues to be published on a regular basis to provide news of changes in the regulatory framework and to share good practice.

The committee have responded to queries from meetings on a variety of topics, including the right use of funds, meeting house hirings and appointment of trustees.

### Future work

Over the coming year the committee will:

- continue to encourage and support area meetings in improving practice in writing annual reports and timely completion of the annual report and accounts
- work on further guidance to meetings on avoiding online fraud
- complete additional advice sheets for treasurers to complement the ACAT handbook.

### Compliance report

As a standing committee of Britain Yearly Meeting, QSC reports to Yearly Meeting in session (*Quaker faith & practice* 14.37). QSC are asked to certify that every part of Britain Yearly Meeting is producing proper financial accounts and property registers that have been professionally audited or examined as defined in *Quaker faith & practice* 14.39e). This task is carried out using an agreed checklist that has been sent to all area meetings.

The 2016 reports mainly met the basic requirements of the checklist but the quality was variable.

All registered Quaker charities have submitted their accounts to the Charity Commission for England and Wales or the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

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## Appendix C: Annual Report of Meeting for Sufferings

Facing turbulent times, Quakers in Britain seek a future where Quaker values are active in the world

Meeting for Sufferings is Yearly Meeting's national representative body. Its 100 or so members are drawn from the wide geographical and demographic spread of all 70 area meetings, Young Friends General Meeting, General Meeting for Scotland, and Meeting of Friends in Wales. Representatives also come from: Quaker World Relations, Quaker Life, Quaker Peace & Social Witness, Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations, and from Central Nominations Committee. BYM trustees, senior staff and the Yearly Meeting clerk are all ex officio members. In December we were delighted to welcome 13-21 year olds from the Young People's Participation Day. They joined us for worship in the Large Meeting House at the start and the close of the day, and also participated in the sessions devoted to the possible revision of the book of discipline and the Sanctuary Everywhere Manifesto.

We gather in worship. The meeting is a place to which area meetings can bring their concerns and Sufferings may test these by its own consideration or by seeking the advice of others. It can be the place where new thinking from 'Friends on the bench' finds its way to Yearly Meeting and spreads across the Society, coming back into local Quaker lives.

Reports from groups and committees are essential elements, so it is a place to learn about work done in our name and how central committees determine their priorities; it is a channel by which information and ideas flow back to Friends in their local and area meetings, and a place where Friends from across Britain Yearly Meeting meet and get to know one another; above all it should be a place of listening and discernment.

In 2017 we gave consideration, amongst other topics, to the following concerns of area meetings:

- fracking. This led to a widely used public statement
- the role of a meeting in supporting vulnerable adults, which has been passed to Quaker Life
- transgender and non-binary inclusion. This is now being discussed across the YM
- the decision-making process at Sufferings and in BYM around the setting of priorities. After initial consideration in June we expect to return to this matter in 2018.

In October we received Minute 38 of Yearly Meeting 2017 entitled 'Living out our faith in the world: working with others to make a difference.' Part of this minute challenges us at Sufferings to look at how we can remove barriers and actively seek wider participation in the full life of our meetings, paying particular attention to race and age diversity. This has started off a process of consultation in area meetings. We are asking Friends to consider three things: the ways in which their meeting, committee or group is already diverse, how it could be more diverse, and what help might be needed to overcome any barriers to increased diversity. Friends are invited to respond to Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group via the Deputy Recording Clerk. The results of this consultation will be shared with Sufferings in due course.

We hear regularly from Britain Yearly Meeting trustees throughout the year, and receive annual reports from all the central committees. Quaker Stewardship Committee's first report to us in June was very warmly received. We have encouraged all these committees to link their reports with the aspirations of the vision document 'Our Faith in the Future' adopted by Sufferings in 2015. Leeds AM told us, at an inspiring session in June, that they had used this document to challenge Friends locally to think about how their meetings could aspire to the same goals through their shared ministry and the way in which they use their resources.

Meeting for Sufferings, at the Yearly Meeting's request, was responsible for the setting up of two working groups, the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group and Britain Yearly Meeting Sustainability Group. The Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group is reporting separately to Yearly Meeting in 2018 and details of its recommendations, which were endorsed by MfS in December, will be given there.

With regard to the Sustainability Group, we were delighted to hear of heart-warming and exemplary progress and practice in some areas but recognised that the more radical changes we all need to make will come only from our own spiritual discernment. There is a considerable sense of urgency over this as we continue to work for climate justice in our lives and in our meetings. We need to be more faithful to what love requires of us.

Meeting for Sufferings is entrusted with the general care of matters affecting Britain Yearly Meeting and is empowered to act on behalf of the Society between Yearly Meetings. This happens, for example, when making appointments, carrying out routine tasks such as the registration of Quaker recognised bodies, or issuing public statements. During 2017 we met five times, four times in London and once in Manchester. We were able to invite Friends from the North West to join us both socially and for the business on this occasion, and valued this opportunity for getting to know each other and one another's concerns better.

Early on every agenda is the Court and Prison Register. This represents a link with our history – the name 'Sufferings' comes from the practice of recording the sufferings of Friends for their faith in the early days of Quakerism. We continue to hear about Friends who are being prosecuted or imprisoned when acting under concern and demonstrating against injustice. We endeavour to uphold them.

The Recording Clerk makes public statements and responds on our behalf as and when necessary; such statements will draw on already-discerned positions of the yearly meeting. Sometimes events call us to consider something new. At February's meeting we agreed the text of a letter to American Friends and others worldwide, in response to political developments such as the new administration's ban on Muslims entering the US.

Holding our October meeting in Manchester gave us an opportunity to invite Friends from the nearby area meetings to both the business and social aspects of our meeting. It was exciting to meet so many and to hear of their local work and concerns. We received the Quaker Peace & Social Witness report, and a request to endorse the Sanctuary Everywhere Manifesto. QPSW's work on Forced Migration, which developed out of Friends' concerns about the refugee crisis and was made possible by the use of legacy funding, has been extended for a further two years. This manifesto is one result of the work, and its six points grew out of recent statements made by Britain Yearly Meeting. We minuted our appreciation of the work that has gone into developing the manifesto and our support for the underlying principles in it, but recognise the difficulties that may be encountered in practice. We referred it back to QPSW to make more explicit the Quaker basis behind the manifesto, and a revised version was accepted at our December meeting in London.

We endeavour over the course of every year to bring Friends, their concerns and our central work together; to share our knowledge and our gifts; to encourage and prayerfully support all who act in our name; and above all to seek to know one another in the things that are eternal.

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# Appendix D: Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group Report to Meeting for Sufferings (edited)

## Summary

This report recommends that Meeting for Sufferings recommend to Yearly Meeting 2018 that the time is right for a revision of our book of discipline, starting with the church government sections. It lays out the reasons why the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group is making that recommendation, and explores some of the recommendation's main implications.

## Contents

What is this all about?  
The range of options  
Approaching a full revision  
Recommendation

### Supplements:

- Final statement from theology think tank group
- Church government conclusions paper

## What is this all about?

*Quaker faith & practice*, our current book of discipline, was approved by Yearly Meeting in 1994, and minor changes have been made to it in most years since then. These changes cluster in the 'church government' sections of the book – those chapters which lay out how things should be done within our local, area, and Yearly Meetings. The other chapters, including those which describe our history, testimony, and faith, and the one containing Advices & queries, remain unchanged.

In 2014, Meeting for Sufferings, following a consultation with area meetings, recommended to Yearly Meeting that the time was right to begin a revision of the book of discipline, Yearly Meeting considered the question, but was unable to reach a decision in 2014. It was clear that the matter needed to be returned to them in the future, but not when that should be. The two major stumbling blocks seemed to be fear that work on a revision would exacerbate religious differences among Friends and a sense that our priorities should lie in the problems in our world not the problems in our book. This is the context in which the Revision Preparation Group started their work, including a more detailed exploration of some of the issues raised in the consultation. The group's insight was that Friends lacked familiarity with our book, including its dustier corners, and so set up our 'Reading *Quaker faith & practice*' project. It is the result of this group's process and its recommendations which are summarised in this report.

Our journey to these recommendations has required patience and openness. We have sought to be in contact with the length and breadth of the Yearly Meeting through casual conversations, meetings and formal consultations. Our work on church government topics has been informed by meetings with Church Government Advisory Group, a survey about who uses these sections of the book and how, as well as general feedback from other sources. Our work on the book as a whole has been hugely supported by the extensive take up of the 'Reading *Quaker faith & practice*' project, and by the feedback we gathered through a survey at the end. Throughout, the process of Reading Qf&p prompted a wide range of reflections on the beauties, usefulness, and shortcomings of our current book of discipline. We heard these from individuals, local, regional and area meetings and from Young Friends General Meeting.

Another significant process was the convening of the Theology Think Tank, a group of about twenty people who explored the nature and implications of our religious diversity. The resulting book, *God, words and us*, gives a full

report. The key finding, reflected in our recommendations is that sharing experience honestly in our own words can lead to friendship and mutual understanding without a need to force either agreement or division.

## The range of options

The group's terms of reference asked for a consideration of the pros and cons of three options for the book of discipline:

- future full revision
- interim or partial revision to serve for a number of years
- no substantive revision in the foreseeable future.

Having reviewed all three options and considered the pros and cons in detail, the group's conclusion is that the full revision is the best option. In particular, a full revision should start with work on 'church government' chapters, such as those dealing with the organisation of local and area meetings.

The drawbacks of avoiding a revision at all are very serious. Although it has some superficial benefits, such as lower costs and less work, these decrease over time as the problems with the church government sections increase. At present, these sections continue to need annual revision by Yearly Meeting in session, a difficult, dull and inefficient process which could take up more and more time as they become more outdated and previous patches have to be patched up.

The group was highly aware throughout our work of the difficulties presented by the possibility of the potential loss of Christian language, the risks of damaging division over theological issues, and a desire in some parts to avoid this discussion. However, through a 'think tank' process in which we faced head-on the questions raised by nontheism and other forms of theological diversity in our yearly meeting, we have become confident that these risks can be managed, and clear that there are also benefits to the process of dialogue.

Although the urgency of the church government work makes a partial revision appealing in some ways, the group concluded that it cannot be done in parts. Our processes are not arbitrary, but arise from our spiritual experience and convictions. Our marriage regulations, for example, cannot be separated from our experiences of close relationships, and the new version of chapter 16 (Quaker marriage procedure) produced under our current procedures needed to draw in material which might have sat more comfortably in chapter 22 (Close relationships). If we are to revise, and if that revision is to be coherent and read well, the whole book needs to fall within the scope of the Revision Committee.

In our consideration, we tried to get a sense of the likely visceral and emotional reactions of Friends. There is a sense of safety about not revising, and the experience of the previous revision shows that there will inevitably be a sense of loss if changes are made. The feedback from the Reading Project suggests that once Friends had actually read more sections of the present book, they both understood more clearly why a revision was needed and deepened their affection for certain parts of the book's current text. In any process of change, it is important to stress that the current book is not taken away from us, but a new book added. Not revising carries some risks as well – in particular, that Friends who perceive that their experience and theology is not reflected in the current book may feel alienated. The process of revision also brings benefits: opening conversations about our faith and practice involves making ourselves vulnerable, but this can be a source of great strength.

Taking all these elements into account, the group concluded that a full revision is appropriate. We therefore turned our attention to the details of a possible full revision, which are outlined in the next section.

## Approaching a full revision

The group's recommendation is that a full revision begins with a focus on the procedural or church government sections of the book of discipline. There are many ways in which it could be approached, but the current continual need for minor points of church government to return to Yearly Meeting in session seems to us to

be a poor use of time and results in a lack of stylistic unity, confusion about the latest version, older and newer sections awkwardly juxtaposed and sometimes the preservation of accidental errors.

Our proposal is that a Revision Committee rewrite the church government sections entirely, as the starting point to a revision of the entire book. We propose a new model for organising this text. We recommend that these sections contain descriptions of the principles which inform our practice together with extracts describing related examples of Friends' experience. Much current detailed material would be contained in supplementary texts which give the latest guidance and talk Friends through everything they need to know. This supplementary text would be approved at an appropriate level - Meeting for Sufferings, another committee, or entirely by staff - but would not require session time at Yearly Meeting.

The book of discipline would focus on statements of principles and extracts from Friends' experience. The statements of principles would explain in a readable way the basics of what we do but also why our discipline is as it is. They would say, for example, how to hold a meeting for worship for business and why we hold meetings for worship for business as we do. Extracts on what it is like to be a clerk could accompany these statements. Detailed advice for clerks about how to write a minute, however, might be moved to a handbook for clerks, which could also contain up-to-date best practice around topics like data protection and archiving.

This model – core text and supplementary material – has already been tested by the group on several key chapters. In the example of marriage, most of the text included in *Quaker faith & practice* chapter 16 now would move to a handbook and the core text would focus more on the basics of and the principles underlying our marriage procedures, such as the fact that we hold a special meeting for worship for marriage. In another example, the current text about trusteeship is already modelled in such a way that detail is included in the trustee handbook with principles in the book of discipline. The chapters that don't focus so much on church government, for example those focused on the Peace Testimony, could start with extracts from Friends' experience and go on to provide statements of principle that arise from these.

This proposal was outlined in our report to Yearly Meeting 2017. It was noticeable that before the report was given there was feedback from quite a number of Friends about the structure of a revised book of discipline, with some Friends favouring one book, others arguing for a return to two books. After our proposal had been described in a Yearly Meeting session, the conversation about whether to have one book or two largely stopped. We interpret this as meaning that our proposal answers the points made by both groups of Friends.

## Recommendation

The Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group recommends that the time is right to begin a revision of our book of discipline.

This revision should:

- begin with, but not be limited to, church government, namely the sections which focus on our procedures and corporate discipline.
- divide material between that in the main body of the book, which lays out principles, and supplementary material, which gives details.
- draw on the richness of theological thought in our yearly meeting, now and historically, seeing diversity as fundamental to our community, not as a flaw
- give a Revision Committee the freedom to be creative while remaining in close contact with the yearly meeting.

Lesley Richards, Clerk  
November 2017

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## Appendix D supplement 1: Final statement from theology think tank group

Theology think-tank: where we've got to as a group

We agree that the Religious Society of Friends is a community centred on the practice of waiting, listening Meeting for Worship. We agree that differences of understanding about what it is we listen to or worship do not prevent us from practising meeting for worship together.

We agree that the community can benefit from the presence of a diversity of spiritual paths. We have used the image of a caravan travelling together through the desert – some in the centre, carrying luggage and supplies; others scouting the way or exploring nearby routes; all visibly travelling as part of the same body. Open and honest discussion of our understandings and the things which help and harm us has brought the group closer, and we have found that it is better to be direct rather than evasive about our differences. In particular, we have become clearer that labels people claim for themselves can sometimes be helpful, although they are not always necessary, while labels applied to other people can be hurtful and misleading. We have heard that in general, 'nontheist' is a label people claim for themselves, while 'theist' is applied by others to those who are not nontheists.

The use of any binary pairs of terms or opposing categories seems to us to misrepresent a much more complex situation. Within our Society, there is a kaleidoscope of experiences and expressions, of presence, of absence, connections, separation, within, outwith, beyond, past, present, future. To reduce this marvellous collection of shifting shapes and colours to a simplistic 'black and white' model of two possible positions is to lose or disguise much which is potentially enriching. Instead, we can consider the range of spiritualities within our Religious Society using other, richer models. Within the group, we have explored via positiva, experiencing connection; via negativa, letting go of assertions and assumptions; via creativa, gaining insight through creative activity; and via transformativa, a surrender to the process. These can be understood as different forms of consciousness, apparently contradictory but not in fact antithetical. We have also heard about a third, second or first person experience of the divine, in which God can be spoken of as It, Thou, and I; fictional, personal and impersonal understanding of God; God as a verb as well as a noun; focusing on our shared story and practice, or other dimensions of religion besides belief; and many other possibilities.

Our experience as a group is that we can be helped and at times transformed by deep listening to one another. Even where we continue to disagree, which we certainly do, we have been able to understand one another better through listening and ourselves better through the challenges others provide.

Agreed by think-tank group via e-mail, August 2016

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## Appendix D supplement 2: Church government conclusions paper

### Church government group report about core and supplementary material

This paper aims to briefly and accessibly collate and summarise the position that we have reached as a committee. Our thinking is set out in greater detail in our minutes and other supporting papers. For simplicity, references here are to a 'book' but this should be read as referring to all future formats in which our book of discipline may be available.

### Need for a holistic revision

The Book of Discipline Revision Preparation group has considered the role of church government in our current book, and how it might work in any future revision. The committee has explored this topic through full committee work, through a sub-group, and through consultation with Church Government Advisory Group.

Church government text was, by conscious choice, not significantly revised in the 1994 revision process. Although care and effort has been taken to update particular parts of the text in response to our changing corporate discipline (for example on marriage equality, and stewardship) and changes in the law, there has been no holistic revision since 1967. We have now come to the considered view that the church government text in the current book of discipline is no longer fit for purpose.

“Some church government sections do not serve our meetings large or small. Where meetings try to follow it, they too often fail and are demotivated. Our church government is at odds with our practice and is both overwhelming and inadequate. Written for a generation for whom much was implicit and part of a shared culture, it has become a burden rather than a support for our yearly meeting now.” (RPG 16/09/16).

The Revision Preparation Group has also concluded that church government text should be comprehensively revised, rather than simply updated.

We see this comprehensive revision of church government as being an integral part of a wider revision of the book of discipline. “However, we see the greatest urgency of revision in church government and we think that a revision group might start its work with church government – while not being constrained to confine itself to this area – and sequence the work on the anthology sections later in its work programme.” (RPG 16/09/09)

### Separating principles and detail

We recommend that a future book of discipline should focus on describing and explaining the enduring principles of our church government, together with anthology examples of our practice.

“Friends today – many of whom are new to Quakers – have greater need than previous generations to articulate why we do things as we do and the theological base for them. This will be challenging, but we see it as exciting and necessary.” (RPG 16/09/09)

We envisage that this church government text in a new book of discipline would be text that could be changed only by the Yearly Meeting in session and would be expected to serve for the life of the version of the book, so that new editions would not be required.

Detailed material, such as current legal requirements and practical guidance, would not be in the main book of discipline, but instead be contained in handbooks and other texts. The process of producing handbooks needs to be planned and resourced in parallel with producing a revised book of discipline. Further work would be needed on the authority, maintenance and presentation of this supplementary information, so that it has visibility and credibility with Friends.

We appreciate that church government has many aspects – historical, constitutional, local and national. Work on each chapter would present different challenges. The structure of the overall book would be different from now.

The text that will be needed for this new structure will not necessarily exist. The terms of reference should enable the revision group to draft, or commission, new material as well as collating what already exists.

## Advantages and challenges

The advantages of such a model include:

- such a book would not normally need to be changed between full revisions
- the handbooks could be kept up to date much more easily so that we could be sure that regulatory information was accurate
- the book would be more accessible to read if it concentrated on principles and lived experience without detail.

We recognise possible risks in that

- the book might become stale if it were changed less often (though the next generation of Friends would still be able to revise when led)
- Friends might ignore the handbooks, or be unable to find them, as they would have a lower status.

We also do not underestimate that such a comprehensive revision will entail a huge commitment of time, money and people. The writing and editing process to make the material current, coherent and relevant to a range of meetings is difficult in itself. There are also certain issues within church government (for example membership) which are likely to require consideration of our underlying corporate understanding and discipline.

We see this as the task that is required.

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## Appendix E: Annual Report of Central Nominations Committee (CNC)

“Our ability to discern the gifts of others is not perfect and we will recognise an element of God’s grace in our deliberations. Be bold; welcome the chance to give opportunities to younger Friends and those more recently arrived, and encourage those who underestimate their own potential for service”.

General counsel on church affairs, *Qfēp* 3.25

Central Nominations Committee (CNC) follows the Terms of Reference set by Britain Yearly Meeting. Its main responsibility is finding Friends for appointment by Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings to serve on our central committees and other bodies. We do this using the Quaker discernment process asking Friends for service in Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM).

The Committee also advises Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings by suggesting changes or reviews to the way committees work. This way we can best use the gifts of those Friends who are available to serve.

As a committee of 16 we meet about five times a year, four Saturday meetings and one Friday/Saturday meeting. In between meetings we work generally in small search groups of about 3 members communicating by telephone, emails and using a secure discussion site on the BYM web.

This report outlines the work of CNC over the past year in finding Friends for nomination. It also suggests some issues which need to be considered if we wish to find the number of Friends necessary to continue to with the current number and structure of central appointments.

### Friends who have been appointed during the year

Between Yearly Meeting 2017 and Yearly Meeting 2018, CNC sought the names of Friends for the following annual nominations:

- 8 BYM representatives to other Yearly Meetings
- 2 BYM Sustainability Group
- 4 BYM Trustees
- 4 Epistle Drafters
- 2 Friends in Residence at Pendle Hill, Pennsylvania.
- 3 Friends Trusts Ltd
- 5 Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations
- 4 Quaker Housing Trust
- 4 Quaker Life Central Committee
- 5 Quaker Peace and Social Witness Committee
- 4 Quaker Stewardship Committee
- 6 Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee
- 2 Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee
- 3 Yearly Meeting Elders
- 2 Yearly Meeting Pastoral Care Group

In addition to this total of 59 nominations, CNC was asked to find a significant number of Friends for service on several other central committees and special groups.

## How we find people for the appointments

### **1 Reappointment**

Some Friends already serving on a committee agree to accept re-appointment (most committees allow Friends to serve for up to six years).

When recommending this, CNC, tries to balance the needs of a committee for continuity and expertise with an awareness that too much should not be demanded from individual Friends. We want to use the gifts of a wider pool of Friends in our central work.

### **2. Using Quaker Service Information forms, contacting area meeting and local meeting clerks and suggestions from Friends**

CNC search groups make use of the approximately 600 Quaker Service Information Forms (QSIF). These have been filled in by Friends wishing to offer their services (a blank QSIF can be found at <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/qsif> or contact 020 7663 1121).

We also use information from many sources about Friends who might be willing to offer their gifts, experience and interests in central work. Search groups sometimes approach Supporting Friends about many names before identifying someone who they discern should be asked to consider nomination. Helpful and plain speaking from Supporting Friends enables this to happen.

### **3 Finding Friends by advertising**

CNC is also conscious that there are Friends who may be unknown beyond their Local and area meetings, and who would find central service valuable and enriching. For the first time this year, when considering how we might reach such Friends, and as part of the wider BYM Communications Strategy, CNC has advertised (in *The Friend*) to encourage more Friends to consider offering service for specific roles. It is perhaps too early to say how successful this approach has been.

## How can we increase diversity?

It has been encouraging to learn from some of our central committees, that they would welcome nominations from a more diverse selection of members of Britain Yearly Meeting. As well as younger Friends, CNC would like to find ways of making it more possible for Friends to serve who have work or family commitments, those who need more flexibility or who are apprehensive about having to attend too many lengthy meetings.

As part of its exploration about how our Society can use the gifts and interests of a wider group of Friends, CNC believes that our Society may need to consider how, why and where our central committees work.

The Society needs to ask the following questions:

- is it always essential to make three-year appointments?
- could we have a system of intern appointments to enable Friends to experience service before making a longer commitment?
- as more people are becoming IT users, could better use be made of electronic ways of communication? For every Friend who is ill at ease with the internet and social media, there is probably another who prefers this way of accessing information and working
- are all committees needed?
- do committees have to be the same size as they are now? Could they be smaller?

## What if special gifts are needed

Where specific gifts, such as fund raising, financial or property law or particular expertise is needed, could a Committee seek help from Friends House staff or even buy in a resource?

## The future

Our Quaker nomination process is not just about recruitment for vacancies. CNC does not wish to be seen as a committee which only finds people to fill existing roles. It is however sometimes a struggle to find the Friends to serve. And so, CNC would like to use this report to remind Friends across BYM that the work of our central committees is what we have asked to be done on our behalf. It can only be delivered if together we provide the resources to make this happen.

These resources include not just money. More importantly it is the time, commitment and spiritual richness from individual Friends and Meetings. If we cannot readily find enough diversity of Friends able to give their commitment, should we be led to explore new ways of delivering what our Society expects to be done in its name.

From a leaflet produced by Quaker Life in 2013:

“If we find people who will help the community to grow in spirit, we will be working in a way that is true to our faith. If we can't find anyone for whom the job is right and seen to be right, then we need to ask not 'who can we get for this job?', but 'why do we have this job when there's nobody to do it?' We need to be creative with our community and the way we run it.”

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## Appendix F: Annual Report of Quaker Housing Trust 2017

“We need both to examine our own lives and to seek to influence public policy to support equality. The problem is not an insoluble one and our voices can be heard.”

Minute 25, Yearly Meeting 2015

Quaker Housing Trust (QHT) is Britain Yearly Meeting’s own housing charity. It was created in 1967 as a national channel through which Friends can help charitable projects creating homes. Our income is directly from Friends and meetings. We make grants and interest-free loans to charitable social housing projects in Britain. The QHT trustees are appointed by Meeting for Sufferings. (See *Quaker faith & practice* 8.15.)

As a small charity we try always to use QHT’s very limited resources where they can make a genuine and positive difference. Often our funding helps a project enhance the quality of their housing provision or create new homes. We specialise in supporting small, local housing projects meeting a wide range of housing needs, particularly those overlooked by other funders. Such projects can transform the lives of people who would otherwise be badly housed or homeless. In the context of housing and its place in society, we also express Quakers’ wider concerns such as care for the environment and ethical use of both money and property.

Government policy, economic difficulties, and social attitudes are all contributing to the continued shrinkage of housing choices. More people are being pushed and kept at the margins of society, and more denied access to any housing at all. This affects all our lives, in our towns, cities, villages and rural areas. In QHT we are powerfully reminded of this as we consider the applications from projects, whether in inner cities or rural Scottish islands.

Quakers have long been clear about the importance of a home to the personal and spiritual development of individuals and thus the health of wider community. The public discourse is increasingly on numbers not people, and seeing housing primarily as a financial asset. Using our own personal and collective Quaker resources – including and beyond land, building, money, homes – we can challenge that attitude.

Here are brief details of the 17 projects to whom we gave or offered funding during 2017:

### **1. Action Foundation, Newcastle-upon-Tyne**

Capital Costs Grant of £21,700 to refurbish and furnish a property they are buying to provide safe housing for 22 additional newly granted refugees in Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland.

### **2. Afghan Association Paiwand, Harrow, Middlesex**

Capital Costs Grant of £12,763 to upgrade and furnish two more properties to house a further 12 unaccompanied refugee minors aged between 16 and 21 who have come from a variety of countries, escaping war and/or persecution.

### **3. Calder Valley Community Land Trust, Hebden Bridge**

Capital Costs Grant of £20,000 towards the costs of building four new dwellings for people aged 60 upwards, currently living in the Calder Valley, with a defined housing need and limited financial means.

### **4. Coventry Migrant Women’s Houses**

Capital Costs Grant of £7,100 to install photovoltaic panels with inverter and storage battery at this group house for homeless forced migrant women with no income and in need of support.

### **5. Dundee Friends Property Trust**

Capital Costs Grant of £7,638 to upgrade a three-bedroom flat to give a home to a Syrian refugee family at present in a refugee camp.

## **6. Emmaus North East, Newcastle-upon-Tyne**

Capital Costs Grant of £8,000 towards the cost of setting up an laundry and utility room, plus common room, to serve the 15 Companions at this new Emmaus Community.

## **7. The Foxton Centre, Preston**

Capital Costs Grant of £20,000 towards buying a property to provide supported accommodation for rough sleepers and women sex workers, all with multiple and complex needs.

## **8. Hope Projects (West Midlands)**

Environmental Assessment Grant to assess their nine Birmingham-based properties accommodating asylum seekers in order to provide a list of costed recommendations for reducing the environmental impact and running costs of the houses.

## **9. Lighthouse Homes, Rotherham, South Yorkshire**

Capital Costs Grant of £22,800 for redecorating and furnishing 20 of the 35 flats in a newly acquired property to house 38 vulnerable homeless men and women needing intermediate homes when moving from the organisation's community housing.

## **10. Norman Almshouses Charity, Norfolk**

Capital Costs of £25,000 grant and £25,000 loan offered to convert of five bedsits into four one-bedroom dwellings to house local people on low incomes.

## **11. Northamptonshire Area Quaker Meeting**

Capital Costs Grant of £22,000 to buy a house for a new project run by Northamptonshire Domestic Abuse Service for male victims of domestic abuse.

## **12. Open Door (North East), Middlesbrough**

Capital Costs Grant of £39,500 for renovating, decorating and furnishing two terraced houses they are buying to provide housing for refugees and destitute asylum seekers.

## **13. Pairc Trust, Isle of Lewis**

Capital Costs of £34,000 grant and loan agreed for additional energy efficiency measure in a property bought to provide suitable housing for a specific family with a disabled child who would otherwise be unable to stay in the community. (A subsequent change in circumstances led Pairc Trust to re-think this project and return the funds.)

## **14. Quaker Social Action, East London**

Capital Costs Grant of £20,000 to decorate, furnish and equip four houses, turning them into real homes for young adult carers in transition from living at home to an independent adult life, in QSA's innovative and unique Move on Up Project.

## **15. St Hilda's Almshouses Trust, Saltburn, North Yorkshire**

£20,000 Capital Costs Loan for help with further renovation of derelict property to provide two new affordable dwellings for low income local people.

## **16. Street Connect, Glasgow**

Health Check Service Grant. Street Connect gives help and support to people who are street homeless, and with help from QHT has just bought its first property to provide move-on accommodation for people who have successfully completed a residential rehabilitation programme. The Health Check Service is to help them consolidate this expansion in their services.

## **17. Whitebeam Homes, Arran**

Capital Costs Grant of £5,802.53 for improving energy efficiency in a three-bedroom former council house bought by Whitebeam Homes and let to a family on a low income.

QHT is a separately registered charity [no. 254704] and a company limited by guarantee registered in England [no. 00924311]. It operates throughout the Britain Yearly Meeting area of England, Scotland, Wales, Channel

Islands and Isle of Man. The 2.5 days/week staff time to administer it is provided by Quaker Peace & Social Witness and paid for by Britain Yearly Meeting as a reflection of the yearly meeting's concern for housing issues in its corporate work.

Audited accounts, more information about QHT and copies of all our materials are freely available from our Secretary at [paulah@quaker.org.uk](mailto:paulah@quaker.org.uk) | [involvme@qht.org.uk](mailto:involvme@qht.org.uk) | 020 7663 1036 | [www.qht.org.uk](http://www.qht.org.uk).



**2 Second floor**

- Elizabeth Fry (1 and 2)
- Margaret Fell
- George Fox
- William Penn (1 and 2)

**1 First floor**

- Marjorie Sykes
- Hilda Clark (1, 2 and 3)
- Abraham Darby
- Kathleen Lonsdale
- George Bradshaw
- Sarah Fell

**THE LIGHT** The Light (Upper Level)

**G Ground floor**

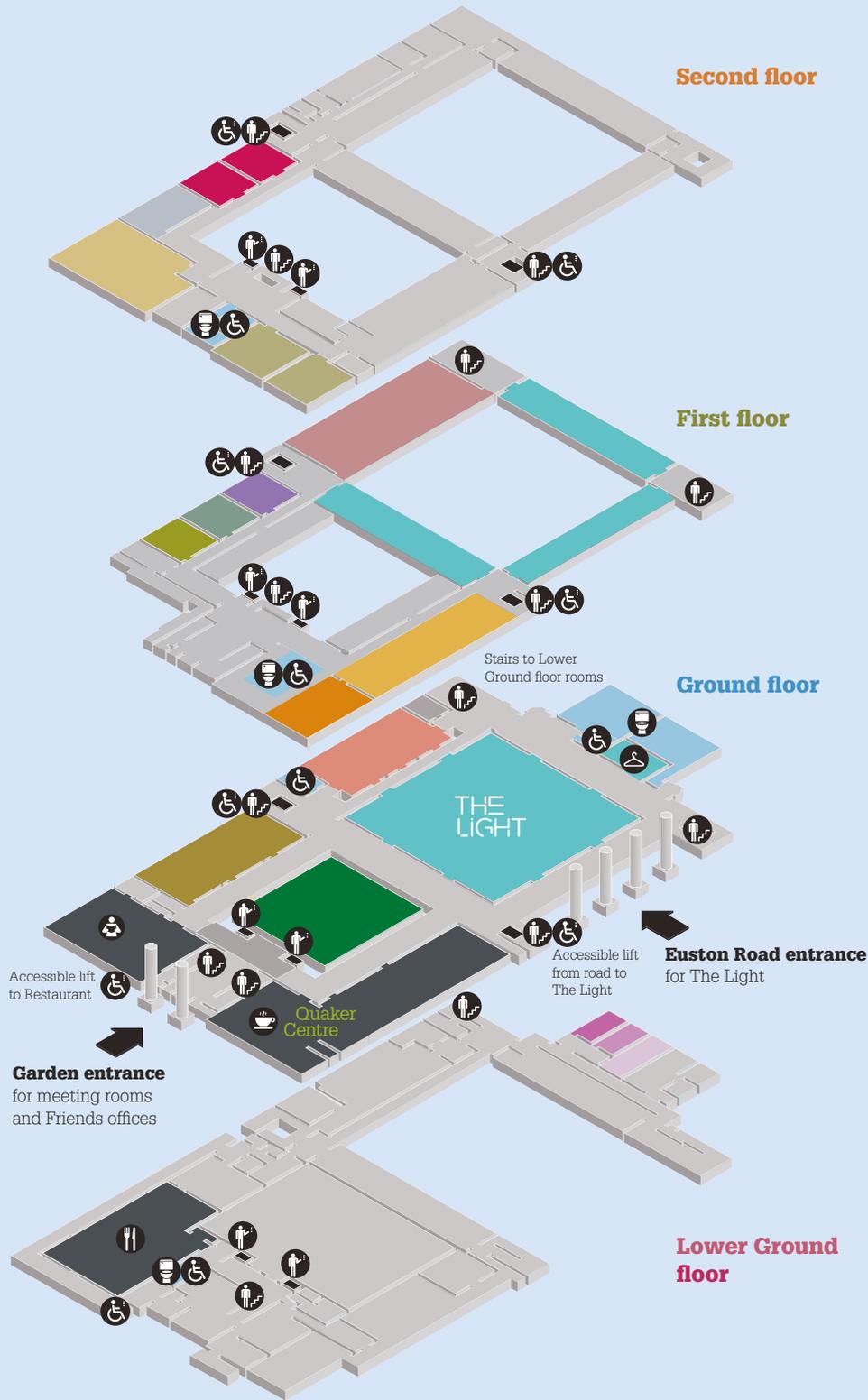
- Waldo Williams (1 and 2)
- Ada Salter (1, 2 and 3)
- THE LIGHT** The Light
- Courtyard
- Café and Bookshop

**LG Lower Ground floor**

- Bayard Rustin
- Lucretia Mott
- John Woolman

**Key**

- Toilets
- Accessible toilets
- Stairs
- Lifts
- Accessible lift
- Restaurant
- Café
- Cloakroom (The Light)
- Library



Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)  
 Registered charity number 1127633

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[www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk)