



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

At the Yearly Meeting held at Friends House, London; Northampton and online,

1 - 4 May 2026

Substantive minutes

Saturday 2 May, 09.30–12.30: Yearly Meeting Session 2

Minute 17: Minute of Junior Yearly Meeting

We have received and heard read a minute of Junior Yearly Meeting held 3-7 April 2026 as follows:

Minute of Junior Yearly Meeting 2026 held at Pioneer Centre, Kidderminster from 3 to 7 April 2026

In a divided world, are we living our values to foster acceptance and belonging?

There is communal strength to be found in mutual vulnerability and openness. We feel that the key to openness is ignoring or deconstructing preconceptions, allowing oneself to listen free from judgement and with a sense of genuine curiosity for the experiences and wisdoms of others. By trusting the process of listening and talking, allowing the conversation itself to be the goal, being fully present in each discussion we have, and being willing for our minds to be changed, we can find ways to build bridges between communities, and foster a great sense of mutual respect. We were encouraged to look beyond our own prejudices and focus on the intent behind people's actions, rather than the actions themselves. We feel that moving through life with a general willingness to hear others fully is especially important in a world where people seem to have stopped listening to each other as it allows us to begin to overcome divisions, on small and large scales, and to have real empathy for everyone, including those with very different perspectives.

It is important to acknowledge the differences between acceptance and belonging. It is felt that acceptance is more easily found and can be more easily fostered through the simple act of living one's values fully, whereas belonging requires more effort to find, as it requires some shared values or experience. It is important to accept that not everyone can find a sense of belonging in every group or community, but that it is crucial for all individuals to have spaces where they do belong. It may be that these communities form naturally over time, but it is equally important to consider building spaces where belonging can be found to be an active choice, and that communities can be created with intention.

Within the community of Junior Yearly Meeting, we found hope in the small purposeful acts of acceptance, and the vulnerability that people were willing to show when sharing thoughts or personal experiences. It was greatly reassuring to many to see the act of a community being built, and to witness divisions and differences being overcome, even on a small scale. We believe that small acts of kindness are the foundation of building connections and community on a global scale.

Minute 18: Spirit-led community

In a divided world, how can we develop our Spirit-led connection at the heart and at the edges of our communities? We have been invited to explore how the Spirit can help us to connect more deeply with one another, and how a community with diverse perspectives can expand our experience of the divine.

...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23

When we are kind and we choose freely to be vulnerable, we can make space to connect to God, to other people and to our true selves. We are all embodied: when we are hurt or when we are treated kindly, we feel it in our bodies. To feel our own pain and happiness viscerally, and to remember that other people are the same, might help us. To be a loving community, we must truly listen to one another, be present with one another and accept one another. Being truly open to one another can help us to move from fear and increases our capacity for finding joy.

All our different ways of connecting to the Divine are important and are incomplete; God is impossible to define or contain. We can each experience a connection with spirit, and when we are able to share our experience with each other and the world, we are more complete as a community. Our relationship with divinity is an ongoing process which we can cultivate in and with community.

Our theological diversity also can bring pain. Some of us hunger for the things we can say together, without translation. We find unity in shared feeling and action; can we also find unity in a shared Quaker language and vocabulary to deepen our sense of connection? We want ways to describe our embodied experience of God, and to hear our

Friends' experience of being moved to share ministry that comes not from them but through them. Our hearts can be unbound by words from other mouths speaking our truth. Music and song can connect with our hearts and connect us with each other.

We are seeking to build our communities in a world of brokenness and pain. We are challenged to recognise as our neighbour people in whose words we hear hate and prejudice, to seek common ground there too.

Our truth testimony requires that we recognise power imbalances. In our society, some people are structurally more vulnerable than others. Although there is that of God in each of us, structurally that light in some may be blocked. If we learn to recognise this, we hope it can be unravelled.

Is there a time not only for a gentle breeze that calms but also for a wild wind that whips up a firestorm and burns down injustice, releasing seeds for new growth?

Our community can be strengthened and the spirit given space to move if, when wrestling with a difficult issue, we can hold our knowledge and let go of our certainties about the right answer. How can we unite in our Quaker way when we may feel individually led in different directions?

We are united in faithful waiting, holding our hearts, minds and souls open in the silence, listening together for where we as a community are led.

*Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm!*

*John Greenleaf Whittier
Quaker faith & practice 20:03*

Saturday 2 May, 14.30–17.30: Yearly Meeting Session 3

Minute 22: Report of Agenda Planning Committee

We receive a report from Agenda Planning Committee on its work in the past year, provided at Appendix D in *Agenda & notes*, and have heard from the Clerk of Agenda Planning Committee.

Agenda Planning Committee has considered which Quaker bodies should be able to communicate with it by minute, and how to season and test the minutes it receives to determine whether and when they might be ready to be taken to a Yearly Meeting session.

All those meetings and committees, which can currently send minutes to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee and to Meeting for Sufferings, will be able to send them to Agenda

Planning Committee. In addition, as an experiment, Agenda Planning Committee will accept minutes from any clerked Quaker meeting for worship for business in Britain, provided that the meeting or group sending the minute is able to correspond with Agenda Planning Committee on an ongoing basis. More details about the process for sending minutes and how Agenda Planning Committee will consider them will be available on the Yearly Meeting website.

Agenda Planning Committee was asked to consider whether we may lose something important by laying aside the name 'Meeting for Sufferings' when the current body is laid down. The committee spent much time on this and feels that it would not be helpful to retain this name, but rather that, from time to time, there should be a meeting for worship to uphold those suffering for our Quaker faith.

We have heard about plans for residential Yearly Meeting sessions to be held from 24-28 July 2027 at the University of Hull.

Minute 25: Laying down Meeting for Sufferings

By minute 37 of Yearly Meeting 2024, we agreed that new arrangements would be put in place for the holding of Yearly Meetings from July 2026 and that Meeting for Sufferings in its current form would be laid down.

The arrangements for this having been completed, we lay down Meeting for Sufferings. All its functions are hereby transferred to Yearly Meeting (being the ultimate decision-making body of Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (registered charity number 1127633)) unless otherwise delegated or recorded in *Quaker faith & practice*.

We give thanks for the work of Meeting for Sufferings over its long history.

We record the names of Friends who served as members and alternates on Meeting for Sufferings at the date of its last meeting in March 2026 as set out in table 6 in the *Schedule of nominations*.

Sunday 3 May, 9.30–12.30: Yearly Meeting Session 4

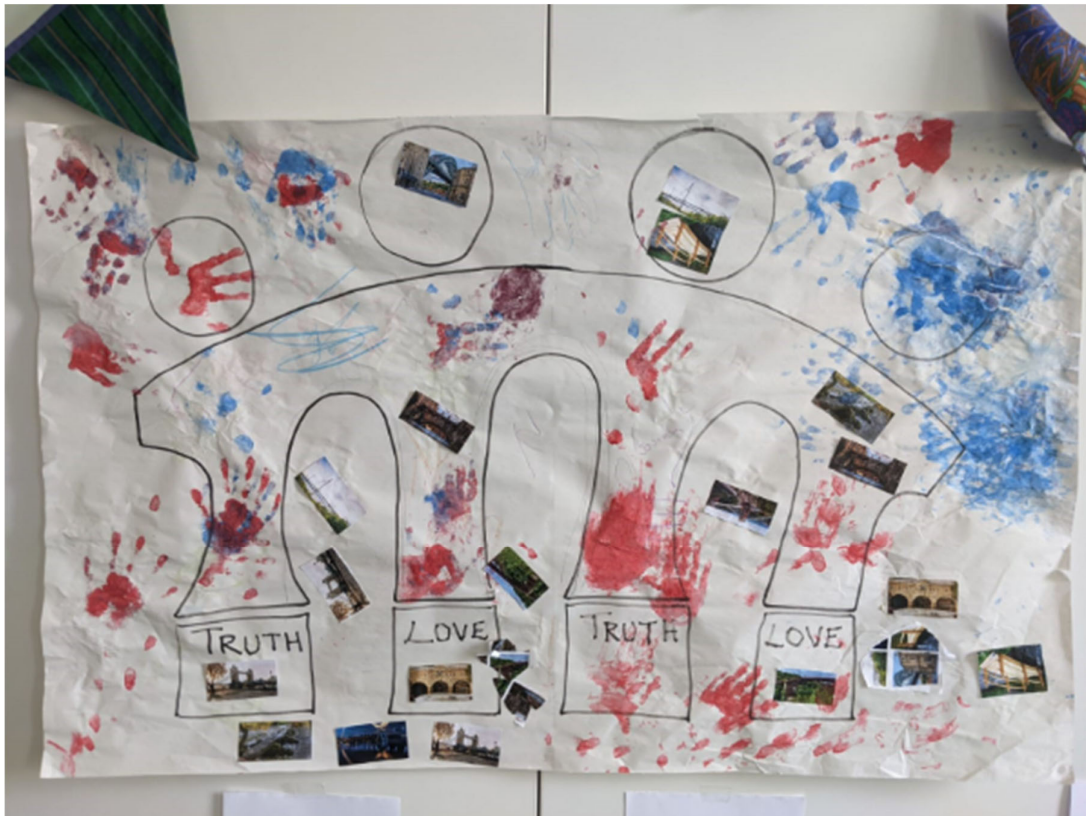
Minute 33: New Shoots minute

We have received and heard read a minute from the New Shoots (Friends aged 0-2½):

Our Light is like a rainbow. We see it when we play.

Minute 34: Fox Cubs minute

We have received minutes in the form of art from the Fox Cubs (Friends aged 2½-4):



Minute 35: Light Explorers minute

We have received and heard read a minute from the Light Explorers (Friends aged 5-8):

We have spent a lot of time thinking about building bridges and how challenging but important this can be. Building bridges is important to help us cross rivers, both literal and metaphorical. It helps us to make friends, be happy and play together. Building bridges also lets us get to know people we don't like and make the world a better place.

Minute 36: Spiritual Adventurers minute

We have received and heard read a minute from the Spiritual Adventurers (Friends aged 8-11):

Spiritual Adventurers met with visiting Friends from America, Switzerland and the Philippines and shared stories to Bridge our differences. In our epilogue we shared what we had learnt on the petals of a flower.



Monday 4 May, 09.30–12.30: Yearly Meeting Session 6**Minute 40: Handling conflict well (continued)**

In a divided world, as a Spirit-led community, how can we handle conflict well? How do we let the Spirit guide us to peaceful resolution of the conflicts within our Quaker meetings and our communities?

We spent time together yesterday afternoon in worship with attention to these questions. Practicing peace starts with ourselves and in our Quaker communities. We heard rich and personal ministry, expressing vulnerability, sharing Friends' experiences of conflict and of seeking ways forward within our communities and as communities.

In our Quaker communities, too often, we sweep tensions and conflicts under the carpet. This can lead to conflict emerging in different ways, or can hold us back from being fully present with each other.

Where conflict arises in the open, our response to it can feel physical – jarring or jangling – and can make it difficult to meet others calmly. It is important to acknowledge that we are sometimes actively participating in a conflict, rather than a conflict happening to us. Awareness that we are, or are seen as, the problem in a conflict can be acutely painful and we can feel stigmatised.

Sometimes when we have a sense of community, we build a protective wall around ourselves. It feels risky to be open to newcomers and what they bring to us. When we look for who is missing from our communities, are they absent because we have failed to reach out or to be welcoming?

Conflict is one of the Light's ways of showing us our darkness and bringing us to new life. Sometimes, in reflecting on how the other person is perceiving me, I might recognise that I'm not responding in a way that meets their needs.

There is no one recipe that fixes everything, but we have resources to call upon, skills and knowledge available, meetings for clearness, non-violent communication, peer mediation, Quaker writings, gifted Friends and Quaker groups. These can help us seek together the will of God and may bring healing and growth.

As Quakers we are accustomed to feeling that we are good at addressing conflict. We need to unlearn some of what we think we know, to unlearn our institutional and structural bias, and be willing to learn from others.

In a spirit-led community, love for each other is foundational. We need to feel confident and safe enough to name disagreement. We need to listen with curiosity and be willing to let go of our own opinions. We can practice and become familiar with talking lovingly and listening attentively. Empathy can be cultivated.

God can speak through the earthquake, wind and fire as well as through the still small voice of calm. We can learn the skill of staying with the intensity of others' expression, not shutting it down because it is uncomfortable.

Only if we have practised facing conflict close to home, holding differences in a loving, constructive way, making a community where we can be our full selves, can we truly hope to help our neighbourhoods and the wider world.

Minute 48: Receipt of minutes from the Youth, Children and Families Programmes

In our all-age worship yesterday, we sang songs with lyrics written by Friends in the Children's Programme.

We have received and heard read minutes from the Children's Programme of this Yearly Meeting as follows, and have seen ministry from these Friends in the form of artwork:

New Shoots

(Friends aged 0-2½)

Seven New Shoots have been getting to know each other, learning names, exploring sharing, helping each other and eating together. It takes time to build bridges and now we know each other better.

Fox Cubs

(Friends aged 2½-4)

We are the Fox Cubs aged 2 ½ to 4 and we made a garden on the window, played and worshipped together.

We explored our similarities and differences, practised sharing, playing with trains and the kitchen, looking after each other and our dollies, and doing silly things. Sometimes it was difficult but we practised solving our problems.

We really enjoyed building bridges and learning about the importance of firm foundations, truth and love. We learnt about the story of cooperative donkeys during our visit to the library (as well as the fun of the slidey floor and echoey sounds).

Stories were really important for us to explore our theme of building bridges and laughing together. We are going home happy but tired and hope to see each other again.

Light Explorers

(Friends aged 5-8½)

We came together on Saturday morning feeling nervous, happy and excited. We started with some name games to help us remember everyone new and old. Then, we practiced our communication and cooperation skills by silently getting into a birthday line. Then, we thought about some statements, such as "we should always tell the truth", by standing on a spectrum from yes to no. We then thought about what makes a good friend and wrote this on paper bricks to make a Friendship Bridge. We finished the morning by learning about worship and came together for silent worship.

After lunch, we sang with Tim Gee and the Spiritual Adventurers. We thought about when and where our Light shines, such as when the sky is grey, and used this to make new lyrics. Then, we worshipped together as the Light Explorers and started collecting ideas for our minute and thinking about nominations.

On Sunday, some of us enjoyed attending All Age Worship. We were excited to see people we know outside Yearly Meeting and to see the lyrics we made with Tim being used. We then went to the library and heard the Tale of The Two Mules and learnt that, if we work together, it becomes a win-win story, rather than lose-lose. We also thought about what is needed for cooperation and community, to make a cooperation bridge.

Ailish joined us on Monday morning to help us think about the life cycle of a conflict. We learnt that conflict can start from something very small, such as confusion, but can become huge. We talked about how we might feel when we have conflict: confused, frustrated and angry. Explaining how we feel can help us stop confusion and resolve the conflict, but can take a very long time. There might be some people we really disagree with, who might not want to make a bridge, but it's still important we try to build bridges with them.

We have enjoyed playing games together this weekend and building a community by snacking together.

Spiritual Adventurers

(Friends aged 8½-11)

At the start of our time together we read about building a story bridge between communities by sharing stories, signs and picnics. Afterwards we decorated kites with our stories. It was wonderful sharing afternoon tea and cakes with visiting adults Friends from USA, the Philippines and Switzerland and got to know each other and found out about Quakers in their countries.

We glued ourselves and lollipop stick bridges together.

With Tim Gee and the Light Explorers, we sang lots of songs. When some children were upset, other children comforted them. Later another Friend, Summer, helped us learn to sign Building Bridges.

Whilst playing hospitals we had a few injuries, but our talented doctors fixed them all before the parents arrived.

When it was too busy and noisy, some people read stories. We found a wonderful book about Elizabeth Fry where she realised, "I'm sad because I am not being kind enough to people." We also tried to practice this as everyone helped each other without being asked.

At the park we had fun playing netball and then football, without having arguments. We also made tree dens and played with parachutes and skipping ropes. We washed a few children in a parachute washer-machine.

In our session with Ailish, after helping two Friends resolve their argument about fracking we had a wedding.

The Spiritual Adventurers' sessions were full of fun, friendship and hope for the future. We look forward to meeting again soon.

We have received and heard read a minute from Young People @ Yearly Meeting (YP@YM) (Friends aged 11-15) as follows:

YP @ YM minute

On the 1st to 4th May 2026, 32 young people and 7 adults joined together at the Frontier Centre in Northamptonshire to explore the theme: "Connecting Across Divisions: How can we overcome our prejudices and understand people we disagree with".

During the weekend away we connected with each other through communal games, and centre activities. These included High Ropes, which led to some of us "swingling", and rafting, where some had a drenching in murky smelly water! Some of us also watched the Swarthmore lecture which provoked many thoughts about inclusivity in Quaker history.

We enjoyed time in our more closely knit Base Groups where we got to know each other through smaller games, discussions, and collective creative works.

We welcomed 2 adult volunteers and 2 guest speakers to lead us in understanding historical, social and personal prejudices which impact how we connect with others, as well as discussing our unanswered questions in open space chatrooms.

Till Geiger told us about the Quaker activist Bayard Rustin and we explored his ideas more deeply through exploring some quotations.

We enjoyed Emily Provance's engaging session where she combined anecdotes with shared questions, enabling us to share our own experiences.

Throughout the weekend we explored different styles of worship, both programmed and unprogrammed. We created a tree-like structure where we reflected on qualities we want to grow, and prejudices we want to drop like autumn leaves.

Our last Epilogue of the weekend took place around a massive campfire where we shared as a group our reflections and gratitude for the wonderful experiences we had together, and especially for the community we have built. We finished our last evening with songs and stories.

As well as singing "Building Bridges" many times during the weekend, we learnt that in order to build them, we need to acknowledge our differences, be open to listening, and actively reach out to help us coexist as one.

Minute 49: Epistle of Junior Yearly Meeting

We have received and heard read the epistle from Junior Yearly Meeting held 3-7 April 2026 as follows:

Epistle of Junior Yearly Meeting 2026 held at Pioneer Centre, Kidderminster from 3 to 7 April 2026

To all Friends everywhere,

We send greetings from the community of Junior Yearly Meeting 2026, held at The Pioneer Centre in Kidderminster from the 3rd to 7th of April. During our time together, we gathered as a community of 49 young Friends and 9 adults to explore the theme of:

“In a divided world, are we living our values to foster acceptance and belonging?”

We opened and closed each day in worship, using a variety of tools to help inspire our reflections. These included drawing, lights, music, poetry and a bonfire. Worshipping together allowed us to grow more comfortable sitting with uncertainty around open questions.

Sasha Lawson-Frost spoke to us about ministry and its many forms, encouraging us to reflect on what ministry truly is, where it comes from, and how it is expressed. We were challenged to think about whether ministry could ever feel angry or unsettling—if words come through us as vessels, is it still ministry when it carries anger, or does it become something else? We recognised that the deep ministry of young Friends can sometimes be overlooked by adults.

Our adult Friends shared their life experiences alongside the theme, offering a diverse range of talks that were both engaging and thought-provoking, grounded in community and our shared humanity. They encouraged us to be unapologetically passionate about what we love, reminding us that the ridiculous is something to be embraced—for our communities are richer when we bring our full, authentic selves, a fact that became evident in the community built at JYM.

We had plenty of opportunities to unwind throughout the weekend. The Pioneer Centre offered a range of outward-bound activities, including high ropes, abseiling, an aerial runway, indoor caving, and archery—and even the soggy raft builders found plenty of joy in the experience.

Free time was equally enjoyable and gave us space to relax and be ourselves. Our spaces were filled with games, music, singing, and even a dinosaur themed jigsaw. Alongside laughter, free time created opportunities for deeper conversations—moments that might not have found space within the main sessions, but were incredibly rewarding, both intellectually and spiritually.

A creative session run by Lorna McNeill allowed us to reflect on the theme in a more indirect way and the glass paint art was appreciated in the evening using light to

project the artwork. This brought us together and united us using art as an expression of our core values.

Through telling stories, last year's Swarthmore lecturer, Emily Provance, challenged us to consider how two communities with the same core values can experience conflict - prompting us to question our preconceptions and listen more openly. We thought deeply about the concepts of love and empathy, recognising their differences, and considering how we could extend love and empathy to all people in the world. We struggled with the impossibility of meaningfully loving the entire population of the world but concluded that we should still strive to have this love, perhaps in a way that manifests as simply loving the humanity in people.

Paul Ingram reminded us that working for meaningful change is often not about the outcome, but about the process. It's about breaking down barriers that prevent meaningful conversations from happening. It struck us how much experience Paul has in bridging divisions. This inspired us to open up to other people and allow ourselves to be vulnerable, especially where there is a vast difference of opinion to overcome.

In our minute, we claim that "there is communal strength to be found in mutual vulnerability and openness". By sharing our ideas freely, being open to having meaningful conversations and being vulnerable with each other, we were able to develop an overwhelming sense of connection between the Friends present at JYM.

This strong sense of belonging let us hope for a less divided world.

In friendship and peace,

Signed on behalf of Junior Yearly Meeting,

Ryn, Izzo, Rose

Fred Langridge

Clerk