

Calling letter



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

19 September 2025

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Dear Friends,

I am looking forward to seeing Friends at our residential weekend meeting at High Leigh and online.

As we have the luxury of more time together, we will be able to open up a couple of big topics for consideration: the theology of online and blended meetings, and the relationship between church and state. In both cases we will hear some prepared ministry before opening the matters for discernment.

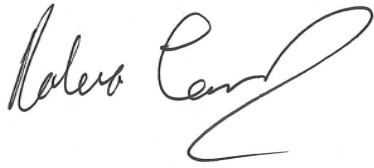
We will receive minutes from three area meetings in Scotland concerning proposed changes to their governance arrangements. We will hear the annual report on the work of Quaker World Relations Committee as well as an updating report from the Agenda Planning Committee of Yearly Meeting.

The Yearly Meeting Clerk nominate will tell us about plans for our next Yearly Meeting session in May 2026. We will receive the annual report and accounts for 2024 and we will also hear a report on the recent work of the Britain Yearly Meeting trustees. We will be able to feed back to them in relation to their ongoing review of the strategic priorities for the centrally managed work.

We will also be able to engage in the consultation process that is supporting the development of a new strategy for supporting Quaker communities. (So yes, we will be taking part in two different consultation processes – on the organisation-wide priorities presented to us by the trustees, and on the specific strategy being developed by Quaker Life.)

On this occasion we are not holding a preparation session in advance of the meeting so I look forward to seeing you at the venue or online on Friday 3 October. Please refer to the agenda for arrival/start times and the covering email for arrangements relating to the venue.

In Truth,



Robert Card
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

Papers enclosed with this mailing

Agenda

Minutes from MfS Arrangements Group

MfS 2025 10 04 Theological & community aspects of online & blended worship

MfS 2025 10 07 Quaker Recognised Bodies

MfS 2025 10 08 Prison and Court Register

MfS 2025 10 09 Minutes received from area meetings

MfS 2025 10 10 Quaker World Relations Committee annual report

MfS 2025 10 11 Yearly Meeting 2026

MfS 2025 10 12 BYM Trustees report

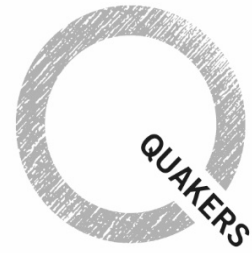
MfS 2025 10 13 Agenda Planning Committee

MfS 2025 10 15 Faithful relationship of church and state

MfS 2025 10 16 Faith, inclusion and growth

A reminder of how you can prepare for the meeting

- Read the agenda and papers in good time
- Contact the other representative/alternate from your area meeting or body
- Send any comments or questions to the clerks (sufferings@quaker.org.uk), before the meeting to be received by morning of **2 October**.



Yearly Meeting of the
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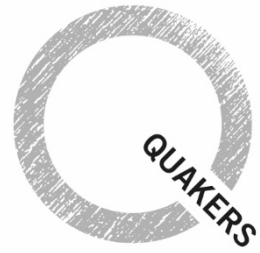
Agenda

Meeting for Sufferings – October 2025

Held over the weekend of 3-5 October at High Leigh and by video conference,
High Leigh Conference Centre, Lord Street, Hoddesdon, EN11 8SG

Time	Item	Paper
Friday		
16.00	Arrivals	
18.00 – 19.00	Evening meal	
19.30	Session 1	
1	Opening worship	
2	Welcome and introductions	
3	Agenda Adoption and acceptance of the agenda	
4	Theological & community aspects of online & blended worship: introduction We will hear some prepared ministry from Simonne Wood (a member of Woodbrooke staff) and Paul Hodgkin (a Yearly Meeting elder) to help us begin exploring this topic	MfS 2025 10 04
20.45 – 21.00	Epilogue	
Saturday		
08.00 – 09.00	Breakfast	
08.30 – 09.00	Optional morning worship	
09.15	Session 2	
	Worship	
5-8	Items to be taken on draft minute: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership of Meeting for Sufferings: paper 05 (to follow) • Appointments: paper 06 (to follow) • Quaker Recognised Bodies: paper 07 • Court & Prison Register: paper 08 	
9	Minutes from Area Meetings Minutes from East Scotland, North Scotland & West Scotland concerning the transition to Quakers in Scotland	MfS 2025 10 09

10	Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC) To receive an annual report on QWRC's work	MfS 2025 10 10
11	Yearly Meeting May 2026 The Yearly Meeting clerk nominate will introduce the draft agenda for YM in May 2026	MfS 2025 10 11
10.20 – 10.50	Break	
12	BYM trustees Report on the work of BYM trustees, including the annual report & accounts for 2024	MfS 2025 10 12
12.15 – 13.00	Lunch	
	Free Time	
14.45	Session 3	
13	Agenda Planning Committee To hear a report on the work so far of the new Agenda Planning Committee for Yearly Meeting	MfS 2025 10 13
15.30-16.00	Break	
14	Theological & community aspects of online & blended worship: cont'd We will work in small groups to explore the issues we started considering on Friday evening	
18.00 – 19.00	Evening Meal	
19.30	Session 4	
15	Faithful relation of church and state We will hear some prepared ministry from Stuart Masters (a member of Central England AM & Woodbrooke Associate Tutor) to help us begin exploring this topic	MfS 2025 10 15
20.45 – 21.00	Epilogue	
Sunday		
08.00 – 09.00	Breakfast	
08.30 – 09.00	Optional morning worship	
09.15	Session 5	
16	Faith, Inclusion & Growth An interactive workshop exploring the strategy for supporting Quaker communities from 2026 to 2030	MfS 2025 10 16
10.45	Break	
11.15	Meeting for Worship	
12.15	Lunch	
	Departures	



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held online via Zoom on 16 July 2025

Minutes

Present: Elizabeth Allen (Clerk), Charles Phillips, Mary Savage

Prevented: Robert Card, Lex Ryder

In attendance: Sarah Donaldson, Neil Jarvis

We began our meeting with a short period of worship.

1. Review of Meeting for Sufferings in July

We have reviewed the minutes from Meeting for Sufferings in July and reflected on continuing business:

- Minute 10 on the BYM Trustees report notes the review of the strategic priorities for centrally managed work, initiated by trustees. MfS was consulted on this review at the MfS Preparation Session, and will discuss it further at a later meeting.
- Minute 11 on new ways of belonging notes that formal proposals for Yearly Meeting will be shared in advance with MfS, if time allows.
- Minute 12 on changes to Quaker governance in Scotland asks General Meeting for Scotland to inform MfS when its transfer to Quakers in Scotland has been completed, so that we might ask Church Government Advisory Group to draft the necessary changes to Quaker faith and practice.

We have no formal report on MfS in July from our Support Group. We note that we attempted to have some Young Friends' participation at this meeting, but for several different reasons it didn't happen. We regret this.

2. Meeting for Sufferings in October

We have received Paper 2 giving an overview of current plans for our residential meeting in October.

We have reviewed the proposed pattern of the sessions for the weekend, and we are content with the plans for Friday and Sunday. On Saturday afternoon, we suggest an hour's free time after lunch, followed by an opportunity for informal discussion.

Reviewing the business for this meeting, items noted on our Forward Agenda for October are:

- The theology and community aspects of meeting online
- Church and state
- AM compliance report 2024
- Preparations for moving to a continuing Yearly Meeting

The theology and community aspects of meeting online

We have discussed what might help MfS explore the theology and community aspects of online meetings. We have already invited Woodbrooke staff to give prepared ministry on what is happening when we worship online. Others Friends are also working on blended meetings. To start drawing together the threads of the various strands of this work, Neil, Sarah and Elizabeth met with David Simpson and Paul Hodgkin, two Yearly Meeting Elders focusing on how eldership is working at large blended meetings and to what extent there might be an inequality of presence. During the meeting it was suggested that it might be useful for MfS in October to do small group work to reflect on what has been said, identify some of the issues, and perhaps do some threshing. We agree to this, and to invite Paul Hodgkin to MfS in October to give prepared ministry on eldership and participation at blended Yearly Meeting. Ideally, we will schedule this prepared ministry for Friday evening.

3. Amended dates of future MfS Arrangements Group meetings

We have agreed to amend the dates of two of our meetings: in November, to Thursday, 6th November, and in December, to Thursday 18th December.

4. Any other matters

There being no further business to conduct, we part planning to meet again on 3 September to plan Meeting for Sufferings on 3 to 5 October.

Signed in and on behalf of the meeting,

Elizabeth Allen
Clerk



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held online 3 September 2025

Minutes

Present: Elizabeth Allen, Robert Card, Charles Philips, Mary Savage

Prevented: Lex Ryder

In attendance: Sarah Donaldson

We began our meeting with a short period of worship.

1. Meetings attended and work completed by the Clerks and others

On behalf of Meeting for Sufferings, Elizabeth attended the July meeting of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, which was focused on discerning topics for Yearly Meeting May 2026.

2. Forward plan

We have reviewed our Forward Plan. Looking at our list of matters expected to return to MfS in December, and in due course, we have noted the following updates:

AM compliance

We are advised by Quaker Life staff that this matter will come to MfS in December.

Quaker Marriage declaration

Quaker Life Central Committee will consider the report of their working group on the Quaker marriage declaration at their meeting in September, and it is hoped that this will come to MfS in December.

Reports

The Book of Discipline Revision Committee will report to MfS in December.

Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations will report to MfS in March.

Quaker faith & practice amendments

We expect a report on this from the Church Government Advisory Group, in December.

MfS in March - commemoration/ celebration

Staff in the Library are working on creating an appropriate exhibition to celebrate the work of MfS over the years.

We ask our secretary to update the plan accordingly.

3. Meeting for Sufferings in October

We have considered potential business for Meeting for Sufferings in October.

In addition to required business and matters arising from preparation for continuing Yearly Meeting, we will hear from Trustees and the YM clerk designate, Fred Langridge will tell us about plans for the agenda of YM May 2026. We have an item on Church and State, which arose in response to minutes from YFGM and Pendle Hill AM. Stuart Masters will offer prepared ministry on this subject. In response to Yearly Meeting 2024's request that MfS explores the theology and community aspects to online meetings, we will hear prepared ministry on large blended meetings from Paul Hodgkin (YM Elder) and on online worship from Simonne Wood (Woodbrooke), and we will explore this topic further, in small groups. In an interactive session lead by Rachael Matthews, we will learn more about, and engage with, the review of Quaker Life strategy.

We have received the following minutes:

a. Retention of the name 'Meeting for Sufferings' from Agenda Planning Committee – 20-22 June 2025

This minute will be considered during the Agenda Planning Committee's report.

b. Online provision at October residential from West Sussex AM – 19 July 2025

We have considered this minute and note that staff have replied to it, and will contact West Sussex Area Meeting to provide further information about the provision for a blended meeting at High Leigh.

c. BYMT review of strategic priorities from Kingston & Wandsworth AM – 20 July 2025

We send this minute to BYM Trustees.

d. Minutes concerning contributions from invited visitors to YMAC's session focused on discerning topics for YM 2026 from YM Agenda Committee – 25-27 July 2025

We note these minutes.

e. Laying down West Scotland Area Meeting from West Scotland AM - 23 August 2025

We will bring this minute to MfS in October.

We ask the clerks to finalise the agenda in consultation with staff.

4. Preparation session

We discussed the preparation session on 24 September. We will make a decision about this by between-meetings procedure.

5. Any other matters

Following the recent protests against asylum seekers housed in hotels, and the Quaker response of visible and supportive witness for the asylum seekers under siege, to help MfS representatives respond to such hostility within their communities, Charles suggested inviting Peacebuilding in Britain to provide a workshop at MfS. We will add this to our December agenda.

Changes to MfSAG meeting dates

We have agreed to cancel our meeting scheduled for 15 October, and to shift our November meeting to Tuesday 4 November.

There being no further business to conduct, we part planning to meet again on 4 November to review Meeting for Sufferings in October and plan for MfS in December.

Signed in and on behalf of the meeting,

Elizabeth Allen,
Clerk

Theological & community aspects of online & blended worship

Overview

In 2024 Meeting for Sufferings reported to Yearly Meeting that we hoped to consider how to approach questions around the theological and community implications of meeting online and in blended ways.

At this meeting we will open the topic by hearing prepared ministry from Simonne Wood of Woodbrooke and from Paul Hodgkin, one of our YM elders. Simonne will concentrate on meetings for worship, particularly 'regular' sized meetings for worship in local meetings and online worshipping communities. Paul will look at meetings for worship for business, especially Yearly Meeting. He has shared his speaking notes in advance and they are below.

We expect there to be some session time for Friends to respond in a spirit of worship to what we hear. We will also return to the topic later in the weekend (Saturday afternoon) when we will be able to explore the issues together in small groups.

Thoughts from a YM elder

Online issues relating to the blended nature of Yearly Meeting

Online worship entails a systematic entry of technology into our deepest processes, and like any technology (including our traditional ‘technology’ of meeting together in one room) it makes some things easier and others harder. The large scale, blended nature of Yearly Meeting presents particular opportunities and challenges. We should not underestimate these – using Quaker business methods with 300 + people in Friends House and an equally large number online, to discern the Gaza Minute this year, was a significant work of discernment and the spirit.

In thinking about the blended nature of BYM meetings, YM Elders have found themselves increasingly uncomfortable: what does it mean to offer eldership to 300+ people online? What is the spiritual experience of those online at YM and in what ways does this differ from those physically present together? In what sense can we or should we be concerned if someone on screen 13 appears not to be giving ‘their whole attention to the matter before the meeting’ (*Qf&p* 3.10)?

As we move into a period of organisational change for YM, elders are concerned to support and uphold a spirit-led discipline in Meeting for Worship for Business and in doing this note that large blended meetings have particular characteristics:

- There is much evidence that blended meetings are more difficult to run than online-only or fully present-only meetings. This seems to be true in all settings and organisations.
- YM is an exceptionally large blended event. It is hard to think of any other organisation that attempts to come to decisions together at this scale without polling or voting.
- Zoom typically displays everyone’s image equally. When all online participants fit on one screen, this tends to reinforce the Quaker sense of equality because it is easy to see everyone and everyone has an equal presence¹. However any online meeting where the number of participants spills over onto more than one screen, regardless of whether it is blended or not, risks reducing the sense of a gathered community.
- Large blended meetings like YM generate a certain invisibility: Those who are physically present can only see a small fraction of those online, whilst online participants have at best a birds eye view of those present in the Friends House, and most online participants at BYM are invisible to each other, to clerks, and to those physically present together.
- Online participants usually log in from domestic settings. This encourages both informality and multi-tasking and, in some cases inappropriate backgrounds or settings.

¹ Assuming no cameras are turned off

- Most of these difficulties are arguably more severe in blended Business Meetings than blended Meetings for Worship because the worshipful elements of MfWfB are less salient than in ordinary MfW.
- This is taking place in the wider digital culture where engaging with people whilst simultaneously texting, reviewing emails or participating with others via WhatsApp, is commonplace. Norms that support centring down and a gathered silence come under pressure.

All this can make it harder for those participating online to give their worshipful attention to the matter before the meeting, and for those present at Friends House to be aware of the spiritual presence and support of those many online Friends. This could be summarised by saying that *whenever there is more than one screen-full of online participants, blended meetings risk creating an 'inequality of presence' where online participants feel, and indeed often are, less involved than those who are physically present.*

Why might an online inequality of presence matter?

In any meeting Friends will be variously present - some may be experiencing a gathered meeting, whilst others may be less engaged (or even asleep!). Large blended MfWfB like BYM are different because:

- If online participants, as a significant part of our community, consistently find that they are less able to be fully present, or feel less heard than those who are present face-to-face, then we think this should concern us deeply.
- All of this, is a data light area – we mostly do not know how Friends feel about these issues.
- There are some significant theological questions here: we do not know – and may never be able to know – whether the process of discerning the truth is affected by having say, 270 participants spread over 9 screens with most of them unseen by anyone. In what sense are we really gathered with other Friends at this scale? This begs the question of what it really means spiritually to participate in Meetings for Worship for Business? Where do the leadings of the spirit arise and what circumstances support or scatter our discernment? As we move towards CYM it may be time for us to consider collectively and more deeply what being 'gathered' in the 21st century really means for us. It may be that we have much more to learn.

Eldership issues

Over the last few years Yearly Meeting Elders have come to consider these issues more and more seriously. What does it mean to be elder for 300 people online? How can 'we nurture the spiritual life of the whole group as a whole' when the experience of those online is different and quite possibly consistently lesser, than those physically present together.

Since it is only five years since the start of online worship *Qf&p* is of little help in all this and indeed does not specifically refer to eldership in relation to either MfWfB or YM, let alone blended meetings. Perhaps its most central advice is 12.11:

*Traditionally the first concern of elders is for the nurture of the spiritual life of the group as a whole and of its individual members so that all may be brought closer to God and therefore to one another, thus enabling them to be more sensitive and obedient to the will of God.*²

Reflecting on our experience we have a range of suggestions. Some are technical fixes which staff are helping us to solve. Others can be thought of as new forms of traditional Quaker discipline: don't read emails or do pilates whilst participating in YM online. Such codes may need further discernment and perhaps inclusion in the new Book of Discipline.

But we also think it is important to experiment to see if we can lessen any inequality of presence and help us discern how best to proceed. We could for example:

- Try and mirror the chat and conversations available to Friends at Friends House by allowing Friends online to choose breakout rooms to meet with others of their choosing during lunch and other breaks.
- Encourage Friends who wished, to pair up for the duration of BYM so that there was one online Friend pairing with someone attending in person. We could then allocate time each day for them to individually Zoom each other and share their experience of what has been happening.
- After each session, the two on-line duty elders could remain on Zoom in the main 'room' for 15 or 20 minutes to receive comments and feedback on the session that's just finished.
- We could have at least one elder who attends all sessions digitally in order to experience the reality of online-only participation. These online elder(s) would take part in all the meetings of elders during BYM.
- YM could authorise someone – an elder? a Clerk? – to use Chat to post brief comments to those online to explain or add context to particularly fraught or complex events going on for those physically present.

² Other relevant advice includes:

12.12.a ...to guide those who share in our meetings towards a deeper experience of worship; to encourage preparation of mind and spirit, and study of the Bible and other writings that are spiritually helpful; to encourage individual and united prayer in the meeting

12.12 b. to promote the right holding of meetings for worship, remembering that responsibility for the meeting, including the fitness of the ministry, is shared among all the members of the worshipping group

12.12 e. to ensure that the basis and method of conducting meetings for church affairs are understood; to accept responsibility for their right ordering (see chapter 3).

- We could try having a Clerk be present online for some sessions. All Clerks would then come together in person at the Table to draft the minute. The aim of this would be for Clerks to 'live' a little more with those online. At the very least this would mean that Clerks knew more about when in-person events appeared confusing or chaotic to those witnessing them online.
- We could invest in more cameras that can be directed to show those watching online a better physical image of proceedings at Friends House.

Possible ways forward

We feel that we are in a new situation and that discernment, flexibility and experimentation is called for, especially in the light of the move to continuing Yearly Meeting sessions when increasing numbers of Friends may choose to be involved remotely.

It may be that there is much to learn from Friends around the world, many of whom are likely facing similar challenges.

Our sense is that we need to proceed gently and in an inquiring frame of mind, by testing out two or possibly three, of these suggestions at BYM 2026 and then with Clerks, reflect and offer these reflections to the Agenda Planning Committee and the wider community for further discernment.

Quaker recognised bodies

Introduction

This paper covers:

- **Part A:** two applications for registration as new Quaker recognised bodies (QRB)
- **Part B:** three reviews of existing QRBs for continuing registration

Background

The guidelines for groups that would like to be a Quaker recognised body are on the BYM website www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups. That page also contains a list of current QRBs with their contact details and brief description.

A QRB is an independent group where concerned Friends explore a common interest, seek affirmation, or carry out witness. It wishes to be recognised as a Quaker body because its Quaker roots are an important part of its identity or constitution.

Each QRB is allocated a BYM link staff member.

A: New applications

Two applications for registration as a Quaker Recognised Body are ready to come to Meeting for Sufferings this time.

- **George Gorman Memorial Fund**
- **Glenthorne Quaker Centre**

Action required

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to approve this organisation as a Quaker recognised body for a period of five years, as it is a well-established group.

Name of Organisation: George Gorman Memorial Fund

Aims: Providing financial support for young adults associated with the Religious Society of Friends to develop their Quakerism by engaging in travel/ activities that develop their understanding of spirituality or witness work. To be eligible for a grant, applicants must be: Aged 16-35/ Be an active attender or member of a Quaker community / Be resident in a country within the Europe and Middle East Section (EMES) of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC).

Governance: Managed by a committee of trustees who are appointed and conduct their business in accordance with Quaker Practice. The time commitment for being a

trustee is limited to attending trustee meetings, and undertaking any tasks agreed upon at these meetings. Trustees aim to meet (in person or online) four times a year.

Constitution: A registered charity (number 286250)

Type of Group: Externally regulated.

Foundation: The Fund was set up in 1982 in the UK by Friends wanting to continue the service of George Gorman in supporting further generations of Quakers.

Publications and activities: Dear George by Joolz Saunders/ Leaflet for students advertising the fund and how to access grants

Membership: There are five trustees.

Finance: The George Gorman Fund doesn't have a fixed budget. Its investments generate around £6000 annually. The grants awarded range between £6,000 and £8,000 each year.

Winding up: When the group has fewer than three trustees, and no other trustee can be found, the fund would be wound up and any remaining funds transferred to BYM.

Archives: N/A

Current contact details use the contact page on the Fund's website:

<https://ggmf.weebly.com/>

Staff link: Mel Cook National Development Worker - Children, Families and Young Adults melc@quaker.org.uk

Name of Quaker Recognised Body: Glenthorne Quaker Centre

Aims: Glenthorne is a residential Quaker centre and guest house that runs a variety of education programmes, is a location for Local and Area Meeting retreats and provides a quiet space for relaxation, recovery and rest. About one third of the courses are Quaker focussed. There are four courses run by Woodbrooke each year.

Bursaries are available for courses and stays and the Welcome project provides holidays for asylum, refugees and their families from groups in the north of England

Governance: Management Committee of 12 trustees, four nominated by Quakers in Yorkshire, four drawn from Lancashire Central and North Area Quaker Meeting, Swarthmoor (South West Cumbria) Area Quaker Meeting, and Kendal and Sedbergh Area Quaker Meeting and up to four co-opted plus manager and Friend in residence. Half to be in membership and at least one of the three officer positions to be a member.

Constitution: Registered Charity number 232575

Type of Group: External

Foundation: Founded 1961, charitable status since 2009.

Publications and activities: Around 30 special interest courses each year with a mixed focus.

Membership: 8 trustees and up to 4 co-opted members. Half to be in membership of the Religious Society of Friends.

Finance: Funded by course fees and accommodation charges, donations and legacies and a small amount from the trading company. Income is currently about £650,000 per year and normally shows a small surplus that is reinvested into the buildings and work.

Winding up: One half of net proceeds to Quakers in Yorkshire and the other half to be divided equally among Lancashire Central and North Area Quaker Meeting, Swarthmoor (South West Cumbria) Area Quaker Meeting, and Kendal and Sedbergh Area Quaker Meeting.

Archives: Some information on website.

Current contact details: Terry Winterton, Resident Friend: info@glenthorne.org

Phone: 015394 35389

Website: <https://glenthorne.org/>

Staff link: Craig Barnett. Local Development Worker, Yorkshire

B. Reviews of existing QRBs

When Meeting for Sufferings grants QRB status, it asks for each organisation to be reviewed in due course.

For each of review an update from the staff link about recent activities and key information from the original application to Meeting for Sufferings is included.

There are three reviews submitted this time:

- Rookhow
- Conflict Minerals Campaign
- RJ Working

Action required

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to renew the registration of these organisations as Quaker recognised bodies to be reviewed during 2030 (that is in five years' time).

Rookhow

Initial recognition 2023, review due 2025, externally regulated group. Staff link: originally Wendy Hampton, now Ellie McCarthy

Rookhow is a Quaker charity in the Lake District with a Grade II* listed Quaker Meeting House, 16 bed Bunkbarn and 12 acres of oak woodland. Rookhow has for 300 years has been a meeting place for the 'scattered communities of the Society of Friends'. In 2020 Rookhow, which until then had been the responsibility of Swarthmoor (South West Cumbria) Area Meeting, became a separate CIO and since then has flourished into a vibrant growing community with many volunteers and supporters.

Staff link Report

Rookhow is a thriving Quaker community in the heart of the Lake District. Public open days happen every 1st and 3rd Friday of the month and include a lunchtime meeting for worship. Rookhow staff host an online epilogue twice a month. A dedicated group of locals, Quakers and non-Quakers, gather for the weekly volunteering session, which is vital for the management of the woodland and site. I joined a volunteering session in March and was struck by the strong sense of community that has been created in this rural setting, largely through the work of Sue Nicholls, Development Manager. The success and growth of Rookhow is evident through the creation of a new Assistant Development Worker role, taken up in April by Kath Becker. Rookhow models positive connections with the local community, supportive trustee and employment structures, and sustainable use of a historic Quaker building for Quaker worship and faith-led activities. I intend to use and share lessons from Rookhow in my work with other Quaker communities and colleagues in Quaker Life.

Current contact: contactrookhow@gmail.com

Website: <https://rookhow.org.uk>

Conflict Minerals Campaign

Initial recognition 2023, review due 2025, externally regulated group. Staff link Lyndsay Burtonshaw

The Conflict Minerals Campaign campaigns for the people of Congo (DRC) to benefit from their mineral wealth. It has close links with Quaker Congo Partnership, including some overlapping membership.

Staff link Report

BYM have a historic relationship with the Conflict Minerals Campaign. Lyndsay Burtonshaw, Faith in Action Coordinator, met online regularly, supporting with strategy and volunteer capacity. Joe Holtaway (covering Lyndsay's sabbatical) picked up this accompaniment in 2024 and met a couple of times with key members

of the group. Due to a period of illness from one member, activities of the group have paused and therefore, so has contact/support from BYM. Contact and support will be revisited dependent on recovery and activity resuming.

Current contact: conflictmineralscampaign@gmail.com

Website: <https://conflictmineralscampaign.org.uk/>

R J Working

Initial recognition 2021, review due 2025/6, externally regulated group. Staff link: originally Ellis Brooks, now Ben Harper

RJ Working promotes Restorative practice to benefit the UK public, using interactive training and education for reconciliation and conflict resolution, to increase knowledge, and to develop emotional intelligence and skills for problem-solving and communication. The activities engage young people, schools, workplaces and local communities, in particular economically and socially vulnerable groups.

It became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in January 2022.

Staff link Report

Based in Cornwall, RJ Working do amazing work rooted explicitly in Quaker values. The organisation is an active ally of the national work, and it is useful to be connected with them as a QRB. RJ Working intersects with Quakers in Britain work in a few ways. RJ Working develops restorative practice with young people in schools, complementing the national efforts of the Peace Education team, with particular commonalities around developing youth-led responses to conflict in 11-18 education. This is why it makes sense for the link person to be in the Peace Education team. Likewise their work amplifying a youth voice around issues climate justice in collaboration with local government links to national Quaker priorities. RJ Working leadership also infuses energy into the world of young Quakers, contributing to outreach for Quakers. RJ Working use restorative practice as an apparatus to engage young people's civic engagement in an equitable way, mindful of identity and marginalisation.

Current contact: deborah@rjworking.co.uk

Website: <https://rjworking.co.uk/>

Michael S Booth
Church Government Adviser
Quaker Church Affairs
September 2

Court and prison register

Introduction

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) was established in 1676, to consider the sufferings experienced by Quakers for their faith. Gradually the practice of recording Friends' names in the 'Great book of Sufferings' lapsed; but in 1997 MfS decided to maintain a register of Friends before the courts or imprisoned for matters of conscience. This enables us to record events, as well as to uphold the Friends concerned and to share information about their witness.

In 2019 MfS was asked to reconsider the criteria for inclusion in the current register. In particular, Friends wished to re-examine what would constitute 'suffering'. Following that discernment, minute **MfS/2019/10/09** reads in part:

We confirm that the purposes of recording an entry in the court and prison register are:

1. To enter the details of the matter into the permanent records of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), acknowledging Friends' witness and their willingness to face its consequences
2. To remind ourselves that being a Quaker does not come without cost
3. To record the Society's prayerful upholding of Friends who are suffering for their faith, and
4. To serve as a record of the actions of the State in restricting our freedom to worship and witness.

Inclusion of information in the court and prison register does not imply that Meeting for Sufferings itself has tested the Friend's concern and necessarily agrees with or condones their action.

Consequently we will continue to maintain a register of the names of Friends who have been before the courts for matters of conscience, i.e. Friends who come into conflict with the law when acting under concern and bearing witness to the truth as revealed to them.

Meetings often also inform MfS about Friends who have been arrested without charge. The general practice has been for MfS to receive such notifications, but not to name in its own minutes any Friends who have not appeared in court.

Minute from Brighouse West Yorkshire Area Meeting

Huddersfield local meeting has sent a minute to Brighouse West Yorkshire Area Meeting naming several members and attenders from their meeting who have been arrested in connection with their attendance at peaceful protests against the proscription of the direct-action protest organisation Palestine Action. Brighouse West Yorkshire AM has made its own minute. Both have been sent to MfS.

Since Palestine Action has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation it has become a criminal offence to invite support for the organisation, or to express an opinion or belief that is supportive of it. Carrying or displaying anything (such as a sign) that would create a reasonable suspicion that you support the organisation is also a criminal offence.

Huddersfield Friends were arrested for peacefully displaying placards. Clare Walters, an attender, was charged and has a date to appear in court. Huddersfield Local Meeting upholds those Friends in their faithful witness.

Sarah Donaldson
Secretary to Meeting for Sufferings

Quaker governance developments in Scotland

Introduction

In July we heard from General Meeting for Scotland of its intention to lay itself down and approved its plan to transition to become Quakers in Scotland. We expect that by the time we meet, General Meeting for Scotland will have held its final meeting.

Since our last meeting we have received minutes from East Scotland, North Scotland and West Scotland Area Meetings explaining their wish to become part of Quakers in Scotland. In accordance with *Quaker faith & practice* 4.12 they are presenting their proposals for reorganisation to Meeting for Sufferings for endorsement.

East Scotland Area Quaker Meeting

East Scotland Area Meeting held 3 September 2025

25.09.03 Request to Meeting for Sufferings re transfer of responsibilities

On 12 April 2025 we minuted our wish to lay down East Scotland Area Meeting when possible later this year (Min 25.04.05) and transfer our functions to the new body Quakers in Scotland. Since then Trustees have requested permission from OSCR to transfer our assets and charitable functions to Quakers in Scotland, and this permission has been granted.

We also need to notify Meeting for Sufferings of this intention, and seek their approval.

We therefore now ask Meeting for Sufferings to endorse the plan to transfer our Quaker responsibilities (listed in *Quaker faith & practice* 4.01-4.11) to Quakers in Scotland. We would then ask their approval to lay down East Scotland Area Meeting.

Robin Waterston
Clerk

North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting

Pluscarden Village Hall – 30 & 31st August 2025

Area Meeting convened for business at 9.15am on the Saturday and 9.30am on the Sunday. Friends from Inverness, Nairn, Forres and Aberdeen were present.

Minute 32/25 We ask Meeting for Sufferings to approve the proposed laying down of North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting and for members (and attenders) to become part of Quakers in Scotland.

For information NSAQM current responsibilities as set out in *Quaker Faith & Practice* 4.01 to 4.11 will become responsibilities of Quakers in Scotland.

We expect the decision to lay down North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting to be made at our Area Meeting on 25th October 2025.

The AM Clerk will send this minute on to MfS promptly after this Meeting.

With reference to our minute 22/25 from May this year, which reads: "We encourage our trustees to continue working towards enabling our transition from North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting to Quakers in Scotland.."

It may still be helpful to be specific about what we are asking them to do as the opportunity arises and so that Friends are kept up-to-date with the stages and process.

Piers Voysey
Clerk

John Hitchen
Assistant Clerk

West Scotland Area Quaker Meeting

Meeting for Worship for Church Affairs held 23rd August 2025 In Ardrishaig Public Hall and by Video Conference

065/24 Request to Meeting for Sufferings to transfer to Quakers in Scotland

We ask Meeting for Sufferings to approve the laying down of West Scotland Area Meeting and the transition of its responsibilities to Quakers in Scotland.

In Friendship

Kate Gulliver
Clerk

Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC) annual report 2025 to Meeting for Sufferings

The role of Quaker World Relations Committee is to be a link between the life and work of Quakers in Britain and that of Quakers worldwide.

We are charged with a dual remit:

- Enriching understanding between British Friends and Friends worldwide;
- Engaging Quakers in Britain with Quaker issues and concerns around the globe.

QWRC committee members are Britain Yearly Meeting's representatives to **Friends World Committee for Consultation – European and Middle East Section (FWCC-EMES)**. We meet four times a year, three times online and for a single residential weekend meeting. One member serves on the **BYM Reparations Working Group** and one on **Meeting for Sufferings**.

A. Overview

In 2025 we have worked to keep the Spirit among British Friends alive following last year's FWCC World Plenary Meeting that was held in South Africa and online. One immediate outcome has been our work along with the FWCC World Office this year to invite four Young Adult Friends who participated in South Africa to Britain in May 2025. QWRC Clerks and our Secretary gave many hours of their time to its effective planning and implementation which all involved deem to have been a worthwhile exercise.

We have also continued our active participation in the more regular events and activities hosted within FWCC's Europe and the Middle East Section. This included the Annual Meeting in Warsaw in Poland June 2025.

B. QWRC in 2025

Our activities included:

a. Visit of 4 Young Adult Friends to Britain in May 2025.

This was hosted jointly by BYM /QWRC and FWCC World Office, with further support by a BYM Elder, BYM Safeguarding Officer, BYM Recording Clerk, BYM Deputing Recording Clerk and FWCC General Secretary. The visits of Hazel Guindon, Costa Rica Worship Group, Isaac Kofia Tawai, Chevaywa Yearly Meeting (Kenya), Mercy Miroya, East Africa Yearly Meeting of Friends North Quakers (Kenya) and Sikhupukile Nare, Southern Africa Yearly Meeting, (Zimbabwe took place.

Two of these Friends arrived in early May on time to participate in the Young Friends' General Meeting in Bristol. Throughout the month all four were hosted

individually in the homes of Friends in Milton Keynes, Oxford, Bournville and Cambridge. Three of them enjoyed a trip to Swarthmoor Hall that included a talk by Clitheroe Friends ahead of a walk-up Pendle Hill and hospitality by local Friends. All four attended Britain Yearly Meeting in London, during which they led a semi-programmed worship session, gave ministry, and engaged with local Friends. FWCC recorded interviews with all four visitors to capture their experiences here and these are available on their Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/globalquakers>

QWRC are grateful for the service given by many British Friends throughout May 2025 in support of this visit.

b. Representation on Europe & Middle East Section (EMES-FWCC)

We continue to interact online with Friends from EMES-FWCC and other Sections through regular events such as EMES representatives' meetings, EMES peace & service network meetings, and through online worship opportunities.

This year EMES held its annual meeting in person in Warsaw and online with four members of QWRC travelling to Warsaw and the other 2 joining online. The theme of the meeting was **How Do We Live Together as a Community of Friends in Europe and the Middle East?** It seemed good to us, having come to one accord Acts 15:25.

Eighty Friends attended from twenty countries in Europe and with visitors from Kenya and the USA but the absence of Friends from the Middle East was particularly felt, although we were glad to hear of a pastoral visit by the EMES Clerk and Secretary to Ramallah and Brummana. The wars in Ukraine and the Middle East provided a sombre backdrop for our gathering.

Emily Provance gave an insightful presentation on Acts 15 looking at it as a story of discernment and how we can find unity in the midst of cultural and theological diversity. Interpretation for Russian and Polish speakers enabled fuller participation in the proceedings.

See <https://fwccemes.org/news/emes-annual-meeting-2025-epistle>

c. Guests and worship at Britain Yearly Meeting 2025

We provided an online welcome session for Quakers from other yearly meetings and an informal get together at Friends House in person on the Friday afternoon. We also facilitated two semi-programmed morning worship sessions during Yearly Meeting. The Saturday morning one was led by the Young Adult visitors as mentioned above. The second one was led on the Monday morning by an American Friend, Ellerie Brownfain of Lake Erie YM. QWRC also facilitated an informal gathering in the courtyard at lunchtime on Saturday. We also ensured that there were two showings of the FWCC World Plenary Film, the first as part of QWRC preparation in advance session and the second during BYM.

d. Supporting BYM representatives to European Yearly Meetings

We usually organise an online session for representatives from BYM who are preparing to attend Yearly Meetings across Europe but did not do so this year as nominations for several meetings had not been made. We read and discuss the reports from BYM representatives and epistles from EMES YMs

Jenny Tipping, our newest QWRC member, attended Central European Yearly Meeting's second Yearly Meeting in Terezín in Czechia.

e. Co-operation with other BYM Committees and Quaker Agencies in Europe

We continue to be updated about the priorities of **Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA)** in Brussels in Belgium. One of co-clerks attended the in-person joint QCEA/Quaker Peace & Social Witness Conference there in June on the theme of faith in action at a time of permacrisis.

Another of our members, Susan Seymour, sits on BYM's **Reparations Working Group (RWG)** and we have a standing agenda item about their work at every QWRC committee meeting.

Opportunities and Challenges in 2026

As already outlined, we are keenly aware that the ripple effects of the World Plenary Meeting in 2024 will continue for some years ahead. In this regard, QWRC will continue work to maintain and extend the engagement of Friends in Britain with its thematic strands.

Opportunities:

You can encourage members of your meeting to watch the video of the FWCC World Plenary Meeting to learn more about world Quakerism: See <https://fwcc.world/2024-world-plenary-meeting-documentary-premiere-living-into-the-spirit-of-ubuntu/>

We will welcome members of the FWCC Central Executive Committee in person to Britain Yearly Meeting in May 2026.

There will be an All Age Gathering of Friends in Europe and the Middle East in Cologne, Germany in August 2026 to which all Friends are welcome.

<https://fwccemes.org/calendar/emes-all-age-gathering-2026>

Challenges:

How can we keep the three threads from the World Plenary Meeting in 2024 alive?

One of our ongoing challenges will be learning and relearning the history of British Quakerism and our role in colonialism. This history was, and continues to be, experienced differently by Friends in other parts of the world.

Queries for Meeting for Sufferings

How can we encourage and enable the community of Quakers in Britain to engage

more with the concerns of our neighbouring Yearly Meetings across the FWCC Europe and Middle East Section?

The theme of this year's World Quaker Day on 5 October is "Love Your Neighbour".

We are asked: In times when conflict, untruths and unfairness seem to dominate, join us in exploring what Love can do.

Ruth Homer and Finola O'Sullivan
Co-clerks to Quaker World Relations Committee
September 2025

At a meeting of

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee

Held In person and via Zoom video conferencing 25-27 July 2025

Separated minute to Meeting for Sufferings

YMAC 2025-7-16 Welcoming visitors

We welcome the following representatives from committees and other bodies, and relevant staff who have joined us for our discernment:

Elizabeth Allen - Meeting for Sufferings

Simon Best - Woodbrooke L&R

Mark Bitel - Quaker Housing Trust

Lis Burch - BYM Trustees

Sue Curd - Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee

Elaine Green - Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations

Ingrid Greenhow - Agenda Planning Committee

Ruth Homer - Quaker World Relations Committee

Michael Hutchinson - GM Scotland

Juno Lee - Quaker Rainbow

Will Reed - Young Friends General Meeting

Martin Wall - Quaker Life Central Committee

YMAC 2025-7-17 Contributions to our discernment

We have received papers from the following groups and committees that are included in paper YMAC 2025-7-16 and unnumbered paper "Youth Voice for YMAC", and we have heard from representatives of these groups. Our visitors have introduced themselves and their papers, including sharing objects, images or metaphors.

Quaker Housing Trust

YP@YM Arrangements Committee

Young People at Yearly Meeting

Young Friends General Meeting

Quaker Life Central Committee

Crynwyr Cymru - Quakers in Wales

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations

Black, Brown, People of Colour Fellowship

BYM Trustees

Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee

General Meeting for Scotland

Quaker World Relations Committee

Quaker Disability Equality Group

Meeting for Sufferings

Quaker Rainbow

Woodbrooke Learning and Research

YMAC 2025-7-18 Discernment of Agenda topics for Yearly Meeting

We give thanks for the representatives of committees and other bodies who have shared in our discernment today.

We have reflected on the reports given and considered the following questions:

- Are there common themes?
- What spoke most to you?
- What did you hear that felt most pressing for Yearly Meeting?
- What did you hear that felt most important for Yearly Meeting?

At this stage we feel led to explore further the following possible broad topics as part of our discernment about what might come to Yearly Meeting in May 2026:

- Equality, diversity, inclusion - building on past commitments and going beyond them to reflect on equity and justice
- Community and connections - who we are as a people, membership and belonging,
- Conflict - handling conflict well in a way that builds connections, nurtures community and creates safe spaces, overcoming divisiveness and polarisation
- Change - our change journey looking backwards and forwards: what can we learn, what can we celebrate, what are the opportunities, keeping in mind where YM May 2026 sits in the pattern of our meetings and upcoming discernment on the revision of our book of discipline.

We recognise all these issues could be explored in relation to Quaker communities and the wider world and will reflect on this in our further discernment.

We send minutes YMAC 2025-7-16 to YMAC 2025-7-18 to the committees and other bodies represented today.

Mary Aiston
Clerk

BYM Trustees report for Meeting for Sufferings in October 2025

Trustees met on 5/6 September since we last reported to Meeting for Sufferings in July.

The main item of interest to Meeting for Sufferings from this meeting is the acceptance of the Annual Report and Accounts for 2024 (**BYMT/25/09/05**). You will hear more about this from the Treasurer, who is prepared to take your questions. To note is the very positive assessment by the auditors.

We are currently considering changes to our Investment Governance (**BYMT/25/09/06c**). We are committed to remaining at the forefront of good practice in investing in line with our Quaker values as well as ensuring we use our investments to support our Quaker work, and are exploring the best way to do this in light of changing market conditions. Some of the advice we have received would lead to a significant departure from existing practice and we need more time to explore the options before making any decisions.

There are other matters we would like to highlight from the minutes of our meeting, which are attached to this paper, and available on the [Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees page of the Quakers in Britain website](#).

Work continues on refreshing BYM's strategic priorities for the centrally managed work (**BYMT/25/09/12**). These are the priorities for the whole of BYM's centrally managed work. One aspect of this is the work of Quaker Life, where we are being careful to harmonise this process with the current Quaker Life review Radical Hearts, Open Minds – you have an item on this elsewhere on your agenda. This may cause the timetable of our own review of the overarching priorities to be moved a little to await its outcome. We spent time at our September meeting reviewing a first draft, which we will now be consulting Central Committees about. It is in your papers for this Meeting for Sufferings, and your comments and suggestions will be welcome.

We had a helpful discussion with Woodbrooke's Mandy Cooper, Chief Executive Officer and one of their trustees, Val Brittin (**BYMT/25/09/10**). It was good to hear that Woodbrooke is doing well in its new form and we are excited about the new and developing programmes and delivery methods that Mandy and Val discussed. We look forward to signing a new memorandum of understanding to guide the future relationship between Woodbrooke and BYM.

We are looking forward to the publication by Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) of their paper on the theology of trans inclusion (**BYMT/25/09/11**). This work is similar to the helpful publication *We are but witnesses* which the committee produced in 2009, following the Yearly Meeting's decision to

recognise same-sex marriage. Also, by way of follow up to your minute MfS/25/07/09 you may be interested in seeing and sharing with your Meetings our response to the issues raised concerning our arrangements for toilet facilities at Friends House : [re-statement-of-policy-on-provision-of-trans-inclusive-facilities](#)

During our meeting in September, we heard from the Recording Clerk of a proposal to make an “intervention” in the Judicial Review process over the proscription of Palestine Action. We united very firmly with this proposal, and an application was then made to the Court. Disappointingly, Justice Chamberlain refused our application on the grounds that our arguments about Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (freedom of religion) would be adequately covered by the arguments to be raised by the parties and other interveners on Articles 10 & 11. We will continue to publicise the adverse effects that current legislation has on our ability to witness to our faith through peaceful protest and civil disobedience.

Marisa Johnson
Clerk

Kit King
Assistant Clerk

At a meeting of

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Held by videoconference

Friday 5 and Saturday 6 September 2025

BYMT/25/09/12 Strategic Priorities

Following our consideration of this topic at our June Meeting, and introduction of the process to Meeting for Sufferings in July, we receive the report of progress from Jo Hills, Chris Jardine, Paul Parker and Siobhán Haire.

We have offered our suggestions on the draft, noting that text concerning support for Quaker meetings may not be finalised until Quaker Life Central Committee's work on their own strategy in this area is further advanced. We ask for a version including our comments to be circulated to QPSWCC and QLCC for their comments and agree to share this version as a working draft with Meeting for Sufferings in October.

We send this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee, Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee, and Meeting for Sufferings.

Marisa Johnson
Clerk

Kit King
Assistant Clerk

To: Quaker Life Central Committee; Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee; Meeting for Sufferings

Towards new strategic priorities for BYM

Siobhán Haire, Jo Hills, Chris Jardine, Paul Parker

September 2025

Background

The current strategic priorities for Britain Yearly Meeting were agreed in 2019. In February 2025 BYM Trustees agreed to a 'light-touch' review. Two Trustees, Chris Jardine and Jo Hills, were appointed to work with senior staff to conduct the review. An initial discussion took place at the June BYM Trustees meeting. In July a preparation session was offered to representatives to Meeting for Sufferings, in which around 50 Friends took part. A first draft was presented to BYM Trustees in September; Trustees agreed to share this draft, with their comments incorporated, with Meeting for Sufferings so that further guidance can be offered.

Our approach

We began by identifying the distinctive gifts we see the organisation bringing, and some key drivers from our context at this point of time in 2025 – from the external context, the Quaker context in Britain and the internal context of the organisation. These are set out on the first two pages,

We also decided at an early stage that it would make sense to align the strategic priorities closely with the charitable purposes of Britain Yearly Meeting as set out Quaker faith & practice 8.03. That led us to look at priorities for development under each of the four headings set out there.

One of those headings – Supporting Quaker communities – is principally the work of Quaker Life. Quaker Life Central Committee is currently conducting its own review of its integrated strategy for Quaker communities, through a process led by Rachel Matthews. You can read more about that process, Approaches for the future 2026-2030, [here](#), and will have a session on it at the October Meeting for Sufferings. We have therefore not attempted to populate this section of our document, pending more insights from that review.

Two other areas have also benefited from recent attention elsewhere in the committee structure. Quaker Life Central Committee recently agreed an Outreach Strategy which forms the backbone of our section on Promoting Quakerism; and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee agreed a strategy, in place until 2027, which informs the focus of our section on Faith in action.

We expect to add more detail under each of these headings as the work on the strategic priorities continues, and to invite relevant committees to add their own insights where necessary.

What happens now?

This document is still at quite an early point in its development and more work is

clearly needed to refine it, narrow the focus of some sections, and ensure it meets the purposes Trustees identified for it in June. These were:

- Enables consultation with Friends about their priorities for the work they support and fund
- Informs decision-making on programmes and resourcing
- Provides a clear statement of purpose for staff
- Enables good communication with Quakers about BYM's work
- Provides a framework for reporting
- Cross-cutting themes guide the approach to be taken
- Supports change processes over time

We anticipate adding a further layer of detail, including some description of what success would look like.

It would be helpful at this meeting to have guidance from Meeting for Sufferings on the following:

- Do the sections on contribution, context and commitments adequately capture the current position?
- How might we sharpen the focus of the four headings in the chart? Is anything missing? Is there anything there we should not be doing in the next five years?
- Does the document have enough to say about change, or does it focus too much on the status quo? Is there more to say about the direction of travel?

Next steps

Trustees are currently consulting Quaker Life and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committees on this draft, as well as Meeting for Sufferings and other Friends more widely. They will also take into account the outcomes of the Quaker Life review of its strategy for supporting Quaker communities. A final draft will then be prepared and brought to Meeting for Sufferings, probably in March 2026.

DRAFT

Strategic priorities 2026-2030

Contribution

What gifts do Quakers have to offer? We bring:

- a radical faith perspective.
- a discerned ethical and spiritual position on many issues.
- a network of committed and concerned individuals willing to pray, take action, contribute time & money and speak out.
- good levels of recognition and a respected moral voice.
- a long, valued and well-documented history both as a faith community and a force for positive social change through our work on peace, justice and equality.
- longevity and a willingness to stick with people, communities and concerns over the long term.

Context

What are the drivers for these strategic priorities?

- The **demographics** of the Quaker community are changing: an experienced, well-networked generation is ageing out; meanwhile younger Quakers have different engagement patterns and needs. Many Quaker communities still lack **diversity** compared with the broader world; we are missing voices that would enrich the community.
- The **geography** of the Quaker community is also changing: we may see a decline in location-based communities and a move towards new models of connection and community which aren't tied to physical proximity, including online.
- We see an opportunity for **growth** in our Quaker community, noting that in recent population-wide surveying, there is a significant group of people identifying as spiritual but not currently involved in organised religion.
- We live in a time of **multiple crises**: climate breakdown, rising inequality, the drumbeat of war, political & social polarization, and increasing isolation are creating both challenges and opportunities for spiritual community. The rise of polarisation and extremism in the UK may mean we are called to broaden and deepen our peace work.
- The erosion of democratic norms, loss of accountability in public life and restrictions on freedom to protest are making our testimony to **truth, integrity and peace** more relevant.
- Many **Quaker structures**, especially at local and regional level, are changing to become fit for purpose, but some places are left behind. The Quaker

property portfolio may also need to change to remain appropriate to the need.

- The largest constitutional **change to Yearly Meeting** for a generation provides an opportunity for a reset in our national structures.
- We are a well-resourced organisation with stable income. However our income is not growing in line with our costs, so to be **financially sustainable** we must seek ways to remain impactful and maintain our service level to Quakers within our financial constraints or find additional sources of income.
- The next generation of Quakers may have even **less disposable income and time** than the last to contribute to their Quaker communities.

Commitments

We commit to;

- remaining **simple, radical** and **spiritual** in all that we do.
- effective **collaboration** and **partnership** wherever possible.
- the **inclusion** of young people, children and their caregivers as widely as possible.
- an approach which embodies **equity, inclusion** and **anti-oppression**.
- putting corporate **discernment** at the heart of our decision-making, ensuring our actions are underpinned by our theology.
- doing work which is **well-planned** and **well-resourced**, makes a difference, is **impactful** and provides **good value for money**
- being **compliant** except where we discern a need to be **defiant**.
- operating in ways which are both **environmentally** and **financially** sustainable.

Charitable purposes:

Our work rests within the four areas defined as the charitable purposes of Britain Yearly Meeting in *Quaker faith & practice* 8.03:

- a. **Sustaining church & faith:** organising and maintaining the whole of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain as responsive to the leadings of the Holy Spirit; this entails calling, briefing and running decision-making meetings with all the facilities necessary for them to work efficiently and effectively, and also conducting relations with other churches and faiths and ecumenical bodies;
- b. **Supporting Quaker communities:** supporting Friends in their local organisation by providing services and advice relevant to the current needs of the Quaker community: for example such work may relate to children, elderly people, those getting married, those looking after meeting houses, and those raising funds;
- c. **Promoting Quakerism:** raising awareness and developing understanding about the basic tenets of Quaker faith and practice, such as spirituality, peace

and human rights, within and without the Religious Society of Friends in Britain;

- d. **Faith in action:** putting Quaker thinking into practice in relation to the problems and needs of people at home and abroad: for example, through training, conferences, work with those in positions of power, and social and development projects.

We see the first of these as our primary purpose, from which the others flow. Within each of these four areas we identify the priorities set out in the chart overleaf:

Sustaining church and faith

- making a success of continuing Yearly Meeting
- supporting structural change
- renewing our book of discipline
- articulating Quaker theology and positioning
- supporting core compliance functions

Supporting Quaker communities

- *some text to come via the QL strategy Approaches for the future 2026-2030 currently under consultation*

Promoting Quakerism

- helping people find out about Quakers and Quakerism
- supporting people to find, attend, return to and join a Quaker community
- Quaker witness is visible to the world
- offering multiple pathways for engagement with Quakers
- promoting Quakers as an inclusive faith community

Faith in action

- building resilient, effective communities of action
- peace & peacebuilding
- climate and economic justice
- accountability: right to campaign/protest, truth in public life

Things we'll explore further:

We'll explore:

- Whether we should offer some optional additional services on paid-for basis to area meetings and other Quaker communities.
- Whether we can fundraise from people who are not Quakers for certain types of work – for example, elements of our programme work on peace and climate justice.
- How we might deal with hypothecated funding (i.e. earmarking of funding for specific purposes or projects).
- How we keep our core infrastructure in right proportion to our charitable activity.
- How we can work in a more integrated way and remove silos which currently exist.
- How we can partner better with Quaker Recognised Bodies to achieve our goals.
- How Quakers can lend their voices and influence to causes aligned with our discernment.

Things we won't do:

We won't:

- Fund projects ourselves that could be paid for by someone else.
- Take on new work we can't resource properly.
- Duplicate work done by others.
- Create silos within our own work where our resources are not used to best effect.
- Take on work we don't know will be impactful or can't be measured.
- Take on work which doesn't require our specific contribution
- Take on work which partners could do better or are already doing.
- Speak out on matters where we do not bring a different and specifically Quaker or faith perspective to the situation.

At a meeting of

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Held via videoconference

Friday 5 and Saturday 6 September 2025

BYMT/25/09/05 Trustees Annual Report and Accounts 2024

We receive the draft Trustees' annual report and financial statements for 2024 (paper BYMT 2025 09 04a), and the external auditor's management letter (paper BYMT 2025 09 04c). We also receive the minutes of the Finance, IT, & Property Committee/Internal Audit & Risk Committee (FIPC/IARC) Joint Meeting on 14 July 2025 (paper BYMT 2025 09 02i) and note the recommendations to us in minute FIPC IARC 25/03.

Our Treasurer has introduced this item. We have also heard from the Finance Director and Clerk of FIPC.

We note FIPC/IARC's recommendation that we use graphics to illustrate our current and future financial positions in our presentation of the accounts and ask staff to explore this next year. We also take note that our external auditor has drawn our attention to changes to the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) for the year ending 2026 which we should consider as we prepare the 2025 accounts.

We are very pleased to note the continued improvement in the way the annual accounts are prepared and congratulate the Finance Team on sustaining this progress.

It is the trustees' responsibility to consider each year whether the charity is a going concern for the year ahead. We have taken account of the strength of our balance sheet and the expected cashflows to the end of 2026 and confirm that we consider the charity to be a going concern.

We approve the annual report and financial statements and authorise our Clerk and Treasurer to sign them on our behalf, following approval from Meeting for Sufferings.

We authorise our Treasurer to sign the Letter of Representation to the auditors.

We thank staff and others for their work in producing these documents.

The annual accounts and financial statements will be provided to Friends at Meeting for Sufferings, filed with the Charity Commission, and made available on our website.

Marisa Johnson
Clerk

Kit King
Assistant Clerk

To: Vipin Narang, Finance Director, Adetola Oyebadejo, Financial Controller,
Sarah Donaldson, Secretary, Meeting for Sufferings

BYM Trustees' annual review, annual report and accounts 2024

The BYM Trustees' annual review, annual report and financial statements are available to view on the BYM website at;

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/our-structures/britain-yearly-meeting-trustees#heading-1>

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Held on Friday 5 and Saturday 6 September 2025, by video conference

Minutes

Present: Catherine Brown (minute BYMT/25/09/06b onwards), Lis Burch, Kit Fotheringham, Ursula Fuller, Jo Hills, Chris Jardine, Marisa Johnson (Clerk), Kit King (Assistant Clerk), Liz Law (minute BYMT/25/09/11 onwards), Ruth McTighe (minute BYMT/25/09/01 to minute BYMT/25/09/09), Silas Price, Elizabeth Redfern, Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer) (minute BYMT/25/09/01 to minute BYMT/25/09/09, minute BYMT/25/09/11 onwards)

Prevented: John Lewis

In attendance: Sarah Donaldson, Senior Change Leader: Quaker Governance; Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk (minute BYMT/25/09/11 onwards); Vipan Narang, Finance Director (minute BYMT/25/09/01 to BYMT/25/09/09 and BYMT/25/09/11 onwards); Paul Parker, Recording Clerk; Lisa San Martín, CEO Quiet Company (minute BYMT/25/09/01 to BYMT/25/09/10); Ali-Haider Hussain, Finance Business Partner (minute BYMT/25/09/08)

Visitors: Georgina Bailey, former BYM Trustee (minute BYMT25/09/07a); Val Brittin, Trustee, Woodbrooke (minute BYMT25/09/10); Mandy Cooper, Chief Executive Officer, Woodbrooke (minute BYMT25/09/10); Elaine Green, Clerk of Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (minute BYMT25/09/11); Nicola Parker, consultant (minute BYMT25/09/06c)

BYMT/25/09/01 Welcome and Introductions, Agenda Check, Conflicts of Interest Check

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We considered our agenda.

During our opening worship, we heard read extracts from Minute 1 (Engaging Across Differences) from Emily Provance's A Testimony of Community:

"Seek relationships with a diversity of people. We see God in our relationships with the community. This is one way God speaks. Diversity includes ideological diversity. If you know the truth and are correct, exposure to people with different ideas is no threat to you. You can hide from change by isolating yourself from all who are different. But if you are not open to change, you are sowing the seeds of war. To isolate yourself from others is to cut off your ability to learn from God.

We tend to be afraid of people who are different. Differences serve a useful purpose. Look kindly at your differences and love across all differences. To love each other is to love Christ. Appreciate differences among your friends and associates.

We are challenged by our different individual and group experiences of God and sometimes even enraged. It's human nature to feel jealous and angry when God loves people who aren't like us (and accepts and rewards them), but that's God's

decision that we must accept. Even if it is extremely difficult, we must interact with people that our society says we shouldn't. To refuse to engage with people you disagree with is to refuse to influence history. If you think an idea is wrong, criticize the idea and not the person who said it. You cannot truly love God without also loving your sisters and brothers."

BYMT/25/09/02 Continuing Business

We receive a list of continuing minutes.

BYMT/25/09/03 Minutes Received

We receive the following minutes:

- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC), 3 June 2025
- Reparations Working Group (RWG), 5 June 2025
- Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC), 14 June 2025
- Friends Trusts Limited (FTL), 20 June 2025, separated minute
- Agenda Planning Committee (APC), 20-22 June 2025 and 10 July 2025
- Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations (QCCIR), 20-22 June 2025
- Internal Audit & Risk Committee (IARC), 24 June 2025
- Finance, IT, & Property Committee (FIPC)/IARC Joint Meeting, 14 July 2025
- FIPC, 14 July 2025
- Quiet Company Board (QCB), 15 July 2025
- Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee (YMAC), 25-27 July 2025, separated minute
- IARC, 21 August 2025, separated minute regarding Changes to investment management

BYMT/25/09/04 Dates of Future BYMT Meetings

We considered the proposed meeting dates for 2026 and 2027 circulated with the papers (BYMT 2025 09 03).

We agree to meet as follows in 2026 and 2027, if nothing occur to prevent:

2026

- Saturday 7 February 2026, online
- Saturday 30 May 2026, online
- Saturday 5 to Sunday 6 September 2026, residential
- Friday 27 November 2026, online

2027

- Saturday 6 February 2027, online
- Saturday 5 to Sunday 6 June 2027, residentially
- Friday 10 (pm) to Saturday 11 (am) September 2027, online (Catherine Brown prevented)
- Friday 26 November, online

BYMT/25/09/05 Trustees Annual Report and Accounts 2024

We receive the draft Trustees' annual report and financial statements for 2024 (paper BYMT 2025 09 04a), and the external auditor's management letter (paper BYMT 2025 09 04c). We also receive the minutes of the Finance, IT, & Property Committee/Internal Audit & Risk Committee (FIPC/IARC) Joint Meeting on 14 July 2025 (paper BYMT 2025 09 02i) and note the recommendations to us in minute FIPC IARC 25/03.

Our Treasurer has introduced this item. We have also heard from the Finance Director and Clerk of FIPC.

We note FIPC/IARC's recommendation that we use graphics to illustrate our current and future financial positions in our presentation of the accounts and ask staff to explore this next year. We also take note that our external auditor has drawn our attention to changes to the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) for the year ending 2026 which we should consider as we prepare the 2025 accounts.

We are very pleased to note the continued improvement in the way the annual accounts are prepared and congratulate the Finance Team on sustaining this progress.

It is the trustees' responsibility to consider each year whether the charity is a going concern for the year ahead. We have taken account of the strength of our balance sheet and the expected cashflows to the end of 2026 and confirm that we consider the charity to be a going concern.

We approve the annual report and financial statements and authorise our Clerk and Treasurer to sign them on our behalf, following approval from Meeting for Sufferings.

We authorise our Treasurer to sign the Letter of Representation to the auditors.

We thank staff and others for their work in producing these documents.

The annual accounts and financial statements will be provided to Friends at Meeting for Sufferings, filed with the Charity Commission, and made available on our website.

BYMT/25/09/06 Financial Report

a) Quarter 2 Finance Report

We receive the Quarter 2 finance report (BYMT 2025 09 05a). At the end of June, we were slightly behind on budget, mainly due to lower income from legacies. Work is progressing towards improving our debtors position.

b) Preparations for 2026 Budget

We note the update on preparing the 2026 Budget included in the Recording Clerk's report (BYMT 2025 09 07).

When considering deficit reduction, we need to be clear that we are not talking only about expenditure control or contraction but also stimulating increase in income generation. Further elements that will influence our budgeting in the coming years will be our approach to managing staff costs, decisions about the future of Drayton House, and capital budgets including sustainability implications. When we receive

the draft budget for 2026 at our November meeting, we will also receive some projections of future budget trends until 2028, when we expect to have a balanced budget.

We note that the Programmes & Prioritisation Committee (PPC) will begin its work later this year. This will enable BYM to take a broad cross-programme view of resource allocation and ensure that we continue to deliver the work as discerned by the Religious Society.

c) Changes to Investment Governance

We receive paper (BYMT 2025 09 05b) from our Treasurer, setting out the context for the process we initiated to review our investment governance, including retendering management of our portfolio, and summarising its findings. This work has been supported by a working group consisting of Elizabeth Redfern, Vipin Narang, Alastair Jackson (chair designate of Friends Trusts Limited, which has joined this exercise) and our Treasurer, with advice from external consultant Nicola Parker, who has joined us for part of this item to answer our questions.

We also note the minute we have received from the Internal Audit & Risk Committee (BYMT 2025 09 02m) responding to the investment governance review's recommendations.

The working group are recommending three groups of changes:

- A different approach by using funds rather than discretionary managers;
- A move to promoting a positive engagement attitude to investment rather than relying solely on negative screening;
- In order to have a policy that can be implemented with integrity we should adjust our policy to recognise the possibility of exposure at low levels to stocks that we may be uncomfortable with. In such cases we would want to be aware of their existence and work with the fund managers to reduce any such exposure and apply pressure on the companies in question.

We have heard that in the retendering process we have now shortlisted five funds in the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) field which focus on positive change. Moving away from screened funds will mean that the working group will need to assess carefully whether each fund complies with our investment policy, and this will need to be monitored continuously if we invest with them, but the nature of their ESG priorities, seeking out sustainable and forward-thinking companies, means this is low risk. We recognise that it is not possible with integrity to lay claim to an absolutist position, in which we exclude investments in funds with any association with pornography, munitions and related products, and fossil fuel extraction, given today's extended supply chains and obscure company ownership structures. It is this which requires us to take a positive engagement approach in order to minimise exposure to these stocks while aiming to make a positive impact on the market.

We have considered the working group's proposal for how our Investment Policy Statement (IPS) might be redrafted to clarify our expectations. The new policy will have more emphasis on positive impact and less on screening. We have heard that there are further refinements to be made to the wording in the policy we received in

paper BYMT 2025 09 05b. We ask staff, including those working in relevant programme areas, to work with BYM Trustees to produce these refinements and bring a final draft to our November meeting.

We have also considered the recommendation that, once the latest retendering process has finished and the new investment managers are appointed, we hold more regular meetings with them and engage an investment consultant to support us in holding them to account. We agree to this and ask our Finance, IT & Property Committee to establish a subcommittee for this purpose. Such a committee might invite staff members responsible for campaigning to attend where this would be beneficial. We ask staff to bring draft terms of reference to FIPC for consideration.

We note the points raised by Internal Audit & Risk Committee in BYMT 2025 09 04 about the need to retender our investment management at least every 5 years, to facilitate greater engagement with our investments from Trustees by providing updates and information that are easier to understand for non-specialists, and about the heavy workload weighing on FIPC which leaves limited capacity to monitor investments and oversee their management.

We ask staff to produce text to stand alongside the new IPS in order to convey our excitement about this new way forward for BYM's investments.

d) Sale of land at Lakenheath

We receive a report from John Dash, Property Management Advisor, (BYMT 2025 09 05c) outlining the circumstances which have prompted the proposed sale of a parcel of land at Docking Drove, Lakenheath, farmland which was left to Quakers in Britain while a sitting tenant was farming it. That tenant's sons are now farming it, though there is no tenancy agreement in place. The proposed sale arrangements involve agreeing a sum with the tenants to facilitate vacant possession; a deed of surrender has been drafted and a payment of £58,500 to the tenants is suggested by way of consideration.

Having considered John Dash's paper, a report from local agent, Simon Pott, the associated legal advice, and the draft contract and deed of surrender documents included with BYMT 2025 09 05c, Trustees are satisfied that the proposed disposition of the Property at Docking Drove, Lakenheath, is on the best terms that could reasonably be obtained by the Charity, and agree to the sale.

e) Changes to CAF Signatories

We receive a request to authorise a change of mandate for our CAF bank account (BYMT 2025 09 05d).

We authorise our Treasurer to sign a letter requesting the proposed changes as follows:

Signatories to be added

The following individuals are to be added as signatories to both BYM accounts (Account numbers: [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]):

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Additionally, all new signatories are to be authorised for online banking setup

Signatories to be Removed

The following individuals are to be removed as signatories and as the primary account contact:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

New Primary Contact

The new primary contact for the accounts is to be:

[REDACTED]

BYMT/25/09/07 Employment Committee

a) Employment Committee annual report

We welcomed Georgina Bailey, former BYM Trustee and former Clerk of Employment Committee (EC). We receive a report on the work of EC in 2024 (BYMT 2025 09 06a).

We note that anti-oppression work has become more of an embedded part in all work streams, as well as being its own item on EC's agenda. We are pleased to hear that safer recruitment procedures have received appropriate attention.

We thank Georgina for preparing the report and for her service as clerk to the committee in recent years.

b) Employment Committee terms of reference

We receive a proposal to change the terms of reference of the Employment Committee (BYMT 2025 09 06b).

We accept the proposal and authorise the change.

BYMT/25/09/08 Operational Plan 2025 Mid-Year Report

We welcomed Ali-Haider Hussain who spoke to the report. We note the progress towards fulfilling the Operational Plan for 2025 and are pleased to see the reduction in the number of projects that are delayed compared to previous years.

We thank Ali-Haider and the Operational Managers for producing the report.

BYMT/25/09/09 Recording Clerk's Report

We have received the Recording Clerk's report from Management Meeting, covering June to September 2025.

We also receive the reporting dashboard dated September 2025 with indicators of key information on compliance, communications, and organisational health.

BYMT/25/09/10 Woodbrooke Discussion

We welcomed Mandy Cooper, Chief Executive Officer, and Val Brittin, Trustee, from

Woodbrooke. Mandy and Val gave an overview of the history, original intentions of the organisation, and developments since Woodbrooke ceded their building to the Bournville Village Trust in 2023. Mandy described the journey Woodbrooke has been on over the last two and a half years in streamlining costs, developing teaching and learning programmes, and broadening Woodbrooke's reach to Friends and enquirers across 45 countries. We were encouraged to hear that Woodbrooke is utilising their established reputation as a vital source for Quaker education to scale their offering while utilising new and developing technologies to increase access. We are pleased to hear of the return of Equipping for Ministry (a two-year learning journey for Friends who want to deepen their understanding of Quakerism), and since the announcement of the 2026 programme there have been over 400 expressions of interest in the course.

Woodbrooke has a new energy, shifting their focus from surviving to thriving. We look forward to redeveloping the relationship between Woodbrooke and BYM and will receive a proposal for a new Memorandum of Understanding between the organisations at our meeting in November.

BYMT/25/09/11 Theology of Trans Inclusion

We welcomed Elaine Green, Clerk of Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations.

In February 2024 (Minute BYMT/24/02/11) we asked Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations to consider preparing a document which sets out the theological basis for our intention to "welcome and affirm trans and non-binary Friends" (minute 31 of Yearly Meeting 2021), to mirror the work that went into We are but Witnesses following Yearly Meeting's recognition of same sex marriage in 2009. The committee has prepared a carefully crafted and thoughtful draft, which has benefited from consideration by Quaker Life Central Committee, and some consultation with a small number of Friends.

We receive the document with gratitude and are conscious of the challenges that had to be addressed in preparing it. We have considered some of the risks that might arise from publication and have proposed a small number of edits that will address these concerns. We have also considered some theological points that are beyond our remit as trustees and ask QCCIR whether they would be comfortable in endorsing an amendment to paragraph 10. We will abide by their discernment on this.

We ask staff to bring us some options for publication and any additional documents such as advice on lettings and the development of learning resources by Woodbrooke and/or QLCC that may be helpful to accompany the release of this paper.

We thank Elaine Green and QCCIR for their deep, careful, and compassionate work in preparing a document which we trust will help our Yearly Meeting to come closer to mutual understanding and the longed-for unity we have been seeking on this subject.

We send this minute to QCCIR and QLCC. We will return to this at our November meeting.

BYMT/25/09/12 Strategic Priorities

Following our consideration of this topic at our June Meeting, and introduction of the process to Meeting for Sufferings in July, we receive the report of progress from Jo Hills, Chris Jardine, Paul Parker and Siobhán Haire.

We have offered our suggestions on the draft, noting that text concerning support for Quaker meetings may not be finalised until Quaker Life Central Committee's work on their own strategy in this area is further advanced. We ask for a version including our comments to be circulated to QPSWCC and QLCC for their comments and agree to share this version as a working draft with Meeting for Sufferings in October.

We send this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee, Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee, and Meeting for Sufferings.

BYMT/25/09/13 Relationship with Yearly Meeting

a) Draft Yearly Meeting Governing Document

We receive a revised draft of the Yearly Meeting Governing Document from Sarah Donaldson (paper BYMT 2025 09 11a).

We endorse the changes as laid out in the paper, and forward it, with the changes agreed today, for final approval by Yearly Meeting in session, and thank staff for their hard work on this.

Having agreed these changes in principle, we now ask staff to bring forward revisions to our terms of reference in line with this draft, so that the two documents can be presented to Yearly Meeting.

b) Meeting of Clerks

Our Clerk and Assistant Clerk met with Ingrid Greenhow, Clerk of the Agenda Planning Committee for Yearly Meeting, on 30th July, to explore options for how Trustees will report to the new continuing Yearly Meeting at its more frequent sessions.

Trustees feel positive about the way forward as discussed in paper BYMT 2025 09 11b and hope that this will be an opportunity to engage more frequently with the Yearly Meeting, highlight the breadth and depth of the work of staff, and develop a stronger relationship with the Yearly Meeting. We look forward to reporting more often on the financial position of BYM, in addition to presenting the annual report and accounts.

We receive the other updates contained in their paper (BYMT 2025 09 11b) and look forward to receiving future Clerks' Updates.

BYMT/25/09/14 Appointments

We receive the following nominations from our Nominations Group:

Buddy to support new trustee in their first year of service:

- Liz Law to support Ruth McTighe

Programmes and Prioritisation Committee:

- Lis Burch to serve from 7 September 2025 to 31 December 2027
- Ruth McTighe to serve from 7 September 2025 to 31 December 2026
 - We expect to appoint the remainder of the PPC at our November meeting, to begin work shortly after.

Quiet Company Board

- Rosie Bekhradnia, Devon Area Meeting, to serve from 20 July 2025 to 31 December 2027
 - In minute BYMT/25/06/21, we agreed to appoint Rosie Bekhradnia (formerly Rosie Hakes) to the Quiet Company board, subject to her being accepted into membership. She was accepted into membership on 20 July 2025.

Drayton House Project Board

- Jo Hills to serve for the lifetime of the project
- Kit Fotheringham to serve for the lifetime of the project

We agree to these appointments and thank Nominations Group for their hard work in bringing us these names.

BYMT/25/09/15 Preparing for Meeting for Sufferings

We have prepared for Meeting for Sufferings.

BYMT/25/09/16 Reviewing the meeting

We have reviewed the meeting.

BYMT/25/09/17 Time with Recording Clerk

We have spent time with the Recording Clerk.

BYMT/25/09/18 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

BYMT/25/09/19 Clerks' offering

***Quaker faith & practice*, 21.06 partly reads:**

“Through our discussions we recognised our anxieties and fears. We realised that we are individuals and that we are alone but, as part of a loving community, to be alone does not necessarily mean to be lonely. We discovered that it is acceptable to have confused feelings, to be different, to do things our own way. We should not feel guilty when we are wrong, and appreciate that there must be room for mistakes. There are people who want us to be exactly as we are.

Epistle of Junior Yearly Meeting, 1991”

We closed our meeting with a period of worship. We have witnessed, through the ministry in our meeting and in our prayerful upholding of one another, that BYM

Trustees continue to be a living, evolving, and loving community, with every aspect of our work being driven by the will of God as heard in deep worship.

We depart hoping to meet again on 7 November 2025, should nothing occur to prevent this.

Marisa Johnson
Clerk

Kit King
Assistant Clerk

Agenda Planning Committee of Yearly Meeting

Introduction

We will be joined at our meeting by Ingrid Greenhow, clerk to the Agenda Planning Committee of Yearly Meeting (APC). She will give us an update on the recent and current work of the committee, including in relation to matters laid on it by Yearly Meeting 2024 minute 37.

APC has sent the minute below for our information. The decision whether to retain the name 'Meeting for Sufferings' once this body is laid down will be taken by Yearly Meeting in May 2026.

Separated minute of Agenda Planning Committee

At a meeting of

Agenda Planning Committee

Held in person at the Royal Foundation of St Katharine, London and online via Zoom videoconferencing, 20-22 June 2025

APC 25/08 The name "Meeting for Sufferings"

We receive paper APC 2025 06 03: The name "Meeting for Sufferings" and Siobhán Haire has spoken to this. The paper contains a number of options for the possible future use of the name Meeting for Sufferings and we have discussed these in depth. The committee feels that the name of Meeting for Sufferings is less important than the function of upholding those who are suffering for their faithful witness. We suggest that an annual compilation of reports of those suffering for their faith might be valuable. We hope that a periodic meeting for worship to mark this could form part of Yearly Meeting.

We recommend that the term Meeting for Sufferings be no longer used.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Ingrid Greenhow, clerk
22 June 2025

Faithful relationship of church and state

In 2023, Meeting for Sufferings received a minute from Young Friends General Meeting relating to the loyal address given by Quakers at the time of the coronation. Sufferings made a minute in response, raising some questions and proposing that the matter be considered again at a future date. Pendle Hill Area Meeting subsequently sent in a further minute. These three minutes are copied below for information.

At this meeting we will hear prepared ministry from Stuart Masters, a member of Central England Area Meeting and a Woodbrooke Associate Tutor. The text of his prepared ministry is provided for those Friends who would like to read it in advance.

Relevant minutes

Young Friends General Meeting, 24–26 February 2023

Separated Minute 2023.02.6.a Loyal address to Charles Mountbatten-Windsor

Our co-clerk Hannah Stranex reported to the meeting on an invitation received by clerks in early February, to send two people from YFGM to be part of a Quaker delegation to give a loyal address to Charles Mountbatten-Windsor, called King, on 9 March.

Quakers in Britain have historically been a privileged body, invited to make such addresses at significant times in the life of the monarch. Around thirty such privileged bodies exist. Quakers in Britain received this invitation sufficiently recently that there has not been the opportunity for discernment on the invitation by Meeting for Sufferings, and will be sending a delegation.

YFGM was invited as a General Meeting within the Yearly Meeting, and to provide representation for young people among the delegation.

Facing a deadline to give a response that fell before YFGM, and after discussion with some YFGMers, clerks declined the invitation, giving the following explanation to Britain Yearly Meeting staff:

“As this could not go to the General Meeting for discernment in time, the clerks have taken the decision after consulting with a range of YFGMers. We heard - and had - objections including that participating legitimises an institution at odds with Quaker values, that making a 'loyal' address would not be truthful, and that our presence would be tokenistic rather than following the movement of the Spirit. In the circumstances, we feel that YFGM could not in good conscience accept this invitation without the opportunity for full discernment.

We're glad to hear that the planned text will include clear calls for full social and legal equality for trans people, and for the dismantling of racialised privilege throughout society. We hope that in "speaking truth to power", the address focuses on truth without the cushioning of unearned honour or false flattery.”

We thank the clerks for making this decision in difficult circumstances.

2023.02.6.b Loyal address to Charles Mountbatten-Windsor

YFGM's response to this was powerful, and complex. We support and uphold the decision of the clerks. We feel that while there was no time for the question of whether to accept the invitation to be brought to the meeting for discernment, their response was nonetheless spirit-led and reflects the feeling of the meeting well.

Christ taught that “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Both the riches of the monarch and their claim to dominion over the rest of us are intrinsic to the institution of the monarchy; such an institution is incompatible with our testimony to the equality of all.

Quakers have a long tradition of speaking truth to those who hold power, however deserved that power; but if we are truly being led to speak truth to power then our words and our actions will be illuminated by the living spirit. The rising tide of authentic ministry is undeniable, we quake and shake with it; is this what we are doing when we give a carefully curated loyal address, however nicely worded?

The raw unfiltered leadings of the spirit leave no room for curation or royal approval. Our words must be chosen not for their appeal, nor even for how we as individuals agree with their sentiment, but for whether they express the spirit as it moves among the seekers of the light, the friends of truth that we aspire to be.

We hope that there is a path for further discussion within British Quakerism regarding both attitudes to the monarchy, and what it means to speak truth to the institutions of power and privilege in this day and age.

We forward part a and b of this minute to Meeting for Sufferings and the Book of Discipline Revision Committee.

Meeting for Sufferings 1 July 2023

MfS/23/07/09 The practice of giving a loyal address

Young Friends General Meeting has sent us their minute 2023.02.06 setting out their reasons for not wishing to participate in providing a loyal address in March this year. We have been asked to consider both our current attitude to monarchy and the overarching issue of speaking truth to institutions of power and privilege. We are grateful to Young Friends for bringing this matter to us. Can our participation in civic ceremonies of this sort be a faithful witness to the alternate Gospel Order to which we are committed, or is it rather an expression of complicity with the domination system of worldly powers?

We hope to return to this matter of the faithful relation of church and state at a future date.

Pendle Hill AM, 18 May 2024

Minute 24.35 Loyal address

Our Friend Damian Entwistle has raised the matter of the Loyal Address delivered to a monarch at the time of their accession to the throne and whether this might be discussed at Yearly Meeting 2025. Damian has told us of his concern arising from the Loyal Address (March 9th, 2024), and the circumstances surrounding it. He asks

that Area Meeting support Young Friends General Meeting in their request for an exploration of the topic of Britain Yearly Meeting's standing as a 'Privileged Body', and the 'Loyal Address' that arises from that status. Friends are in unity with the vigour and passion of Young Friends. We note the sensitivities of this topic and the importance of having opportunities to 'speak truth to power'. We affirm our position as a dissenting group. Local Friends have been inspired by the example of Young Friends to engage more fully in listening to, and supporting, young voices. We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings and ask that it request of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee to devote time to consideration of this topic at Yearly meeting, 2025. A copy of the Loyal Address is attached to these minutes. A copy of the minute from YFGM is similarly attached.

Quakers and Loyalty to the State – The Historical Context

Stuart K. Masters – Central England Area Meeting

When Quakers in Britain made their loyal address to Elizabeth II in two thousand and twelve, I remember feeling surprised and upset by what appeared to me to be a practice fundamentally at odds with Quaker values and testimony. At that time, I was in the early stages of my research into Quaker history, theology and spirituality. In the subsequent thirteen years I have found that the situation is far more complicated than I had previously appreciated. In this prepared ministry, I will set out the way Friends corporately have viewed their relationship with the state across most of their history and identify several questions that might be considered in light of concerns raised about the long-standing practice of making a loyal address to the monarch. The intention is not to propose any specific response to this matter, but rather to provide some relevant background information to help support discernment. In an appendix, I have included some relevant Bible verses, and passages from Quaker writings.

The Traditional Quaker Perspective

In the seventeenth century, early Quakers adopted an understanding of the role of earthly government and their relationship to the state that has been largely maintained across Quaker history, at least until the early twentieth century. This was based on the distinction between two contrasting kingdoms and two fundamentally different forms of government – the kingdoms of the world and earthly government, and the kingdom of God and divine government.

Kingdoms of the world – This is the temporary and constantly changing realm of human culture, with its social structures, ideologies and behaviours that have emerged and developed out of a state of corruption and disorder within a world that has gone wrong. In these circumstances, the world is primarily understood to be ordered by the power of evil.

Earthly Government – Earthly government is a characteristic of the kingdoms of the world. It is ordained by God within the conditions of a fallen world to constrain evil, punish evil doers and protect the innocent. In doing this, it can legitimately use physical force. However, it has no jurisdiction over matters of faith and conscience. Although government was created for the good, it is often corrupted by the evil it was established to control and tends to exceed the bounds of its authority.

The kingdom of God – This is the eternal realm of divine grace and order which was established at creation but was lost with the fall of humanity. The nature of this kingdom was revealed in human form in Jesus Christ. When aligned with this grace and order, the whole creation, including human motivations and behaviours are

rooted in the divine power of love and truth. In these circumstances, the world is ordered by the power of God.

Divine Government – Divine government is a characteristic of the kingdom of God. Through the work of Jesus Christ, God has offered humanity a fresh opportunity. Christ is king, the Holy Spirit has been poured upon all flesh, and God can now rule within humans so that the divine nature is visibly embodied in their lives. When God's government is exercised within people, they are freed from darkness and evil, so they no longer need to be constrained by earthly government.

Several important implications flow from this early Quaker understanding:

1. The primary and superior kingdom and form of government is the kingdom of God and divine government.
2. The kingdom of God and divine government currently exist in part within the life of the Quaker community, but this rule is yet to be established in fulness within human society and the rest of creation.
3. Until the kingdom of God and divine government is established in fulness, earthly government is required to constrain evil, punish evil doers and protect the innocent. Hence, within its divinely set bounds, the state has legitimacy and may use physical force in carrying out its functions.
4. Friends have recognised the legitimacy of the state and earthly government within its divinely set bounds and have been willing to abide by its laws and statutes unless these require them to do something contrary to what they understand God has commanded.
5. The ultimate loyalty of Friends is to the kingdom of God and divine government, which is eternal and unchanging. The kingdoms of the world and earthly government are, by their nature, temporary and changeable.
6. Given that their primary loyalty is to the kingdom of God, corporately, Friends have not explicitly advocated for any one form of earthly government. Instead, they have focused on expressing their convictions and concerns to whoever is in power under whatever arrangement and have lobbied for their religious freedom when this has been constrained or threatened.

Addressing the Head of State

Ever since the sixteen fifties, Friends have regularly addressed the head of state both in person and in writing. On occasions, this has been what we might call "speaking truth to power", but more often it was about reassuring the government

that Friends were law-abiding and posed no threat, lobbying for religious toleration or some sort of privilege, or offering their support and thanks. Here are a few early examples:

George Fox and Oliver Cromwell – Between 1655 and 1658, George Fox met with and wrote to Oliver Cromwell as head of state on a number of occasions. He reassured Cromwell that Friends posed no physical threat to the government and recognised its right to use force to control evil.¹ Margaret Fell also petitioned Cromwell about the sufferings of Friends.

Margaret Fell et al and Charles II – During 1660/1, Margaret Fell spent several months in London petitioning the king and other members of the royal family on behalf of Friends. The two main “peace declarations” of 1660/1 seek to reassure Charles II and the new regime that Quakers are a “harmless and innocent people” who are no threat to them.

William Penn and James II – Because William Penn was a personal Friend of James II, he became the principal lobbyist for religious toleration during the 1680s. As a result, when the so-called “Glorious Revolution” of 1688 deposed James II, Quaker loyalty to the new regime was initially viewed with great suspicion.

Quakers, the State, Concessions and Privileges

By the late seventeenth century, Quakers had become very effective political lobbyists, and this has significantly shaped their relationship with the state. By adopting an attitude of respectful dialogue and diplomacy, they were successful in securing a range of important concessions or privileges from the British state. During the period, this included the right to affirm rather than swear an oath, being recognised as conscientious objectors, and being allowed to adopt a practice of marriage that was not open to other nonconformist religious groups.

Oaths and Affirmation – In order to benefit from the provisions of the 1689 Act of Toleration, nonconformist groups were required to swear the oath of allegiance. However, since this was contrary to Quaker practice, Friends were allowed to make an affirmation instead.² Subsequently, Quakers were granted a more general right to affirm on a time limited basis in the Quaker Act of 1695, and then for perpetuity in the Tithes and Church Rates Recovery Act 1714. The right to affirm, therefore, was a privilege conferred on the Quaker community by the British state.

¹ George Fox and John L. Nickalls ed. *The Journal of George Fox* (London: Quaker Books, 1997), 197-200.

² J. William Frost, “Adjusting to New Conditions in Britain and America, 1690-1700” in *The Quakers 1656-1723: The Evolution of an Alternative Community*, Richard C. Allen and Rosemary Moore, eds. (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018), 195.

Conscientious Objection – The principle of conscientious objection is often regarded as a relatively recent innovation. However, in the eighteenth century, the British state experienced serious problems in trying to force Quakers into military service. This resulted in provisions within the Militia Ballot Act 1757, that allowed Quakers an exemption from military service on the payment of a fee. This exemption given to Quakers as conscientious objectors represents another privilege conferred on Friends by the British state.

Quaker Marriage – The Clandestine Marriages Act of 1753, tightened marriage rules, so that for a marriage to be valid, it had to be performed in a church after the publication of banns or the obtaining of a licence. This was contrary to Quaker marriage practice and the Act explicitly exempted Quakers and Jews from its provision. This is another example of a privilege granted by the British state to Quakers (and, in this case, to Jews) that did not extend to other nonconformist faith groups.

These examples help explain how Quakers became a privileged body within the United Kingdom with a historic right to present an in-person address to the monarch. The success of Friends in obtaining privileges reflects the careful way with which they managed their relationship with the state from the late seventeenth century onwards. It probably also had a lot to do with their success in business and trade, and their growing wealth, making them significant players within the global economy of the British Empire.

The issue of Equality

Quakers today tend to assume that Friends have always upheld a testimony to equality. However, this assumption is hard to sustain. It is true that, within the religious sphere, they have maintained that all people including women might offer Spirit-led spoken messages and exercise a God-given ministry. However, such spiritual equality did not necessarily extend to social, economic or gender relationships within the world. Firstly, Friends have traditionally made a distinction between those living in the fallen way of Adam and those living in the new birth in Christ, and they did not believe that there was equality between these two categories of people. Secondly, by the late seventeenth century they seem to have accepted that social and economic distinctions were divinely ordained. Robert Barclay makes this point in his *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (1678). For this reason, it may be more accurate to state that, until the twentieth century, Quakers mainly upheld a testimony of inequality.³

³ Elizabeth Cazden, ““Within the Bounds of Their Consciences” The Testimony of Inequality Among Eighteenth-Century New England Friends” in *Quakerism in the Atlantic World, 1690-1830*, Robynne Rogers Healey, ed. (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021), 44-64

The issue of Loyalty

As we have seen, across history, Quaker loyalty to the state has not implied explicit support for a particular form or structure of government. Friends have lived under a constitutional monarch in Britain and the Commonwealth, and under an elected president within the United States and have not corporately expressed a preference for one structure over another. Rather, their statements of loyalty have meant that they reject insurrection and affirm their willingness to abide by the laws and statutes of the state as long as these do not require them to do something that is contrary to their consciences. Hence, this is loyalty is conditional rather than absolute.

Questions for Reflection

In the past, Quakers have not chosen to express support for any one particular structure of earthly government, preferring instead to communicate their concerns, leadings, and demands to whatever form of authority has been in place in their time. Do Friends wish to reconsider this approach? If so, what are the prospects of them finding unity on the matter?

How might Friends measure the potential benefits of being able to express their current concerns, hopes and requests directly to the head of state, against their discomfort and reservations about the social hierarchy and inequality associated with state and government structures?

What kind of commitment is implied when Quakers make a loyal address to the king? Does it point to an absolute loyalty to the state, or to the kind of conditional loyalty Friends have given across their history (i.e. that they will be a peaceable and law-abiding people unless the state seeks to force them to do something contrary to their consciences)?

Over the centuries, Quakers have lobbied for and successfully gained several important privileges from the state (e.g. with reference to affirmation, conscientious objection, and marriage practice). Do Friends wish to reflect on their privileged status within Britain, to consider how they feel about this, and to discern what actions they feel led to take?

Is the issue before Friends a straight-forward decision about whether to continue to make loyal addresses to the monarch or relinquish their status as a privileged body? Are there any other options or ways forward that might be considered?

Stuart K. Masters (2025)

Appendix - Bible Passages and Quaker Writings

The Kingdom of God

The apostle Paul encourages members of the church in Rome to follow the way of God rather than the ways of the world. He then goes on to describe what this means – love one another, be generous, give hospitality, live in peace with others, don't seek revenge, do good to your enemies, and overcome evil with good (**Romans 12:9-21**).

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2

Earthly Government

Paul also argues that earthly government has been ordained by God and therefore should not be (violently?) resisted.

¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is authority except for God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore, whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed.

Romans 13:1-2

Fallen Humanity in Adam

James Nayler describes the essential state of human beings living in the fallen way of Adam.

The first man is of the earth earthly: minds earthly things, lives in the earth, delights in the earth, lusts after the earth, covets, contends and sues for it; for his treasure is in the earth and his heart is with it...

James Nayler – *A Discovery of the First Wisdom* (1653)

Renewed Humanity in Christ

James Nayler describes the essential state of human beings living in the renewed humanity in Christ.

The second man is the Lord from heaven, and he that bears his image minds heavenly things and delights in heavenly things; for he is spiritual and judges not according to outward appearance...And having once got a sight of the true riches, he casts away all his idols and idol-worships, and whatever is perishing, and treads upon all that may hinder his enjoyment thereof...

James Nayler – *A Discovery of the First Wisdom* (1653)

Not Being Partisan

During the collapse of the English Commonwealth, Edward Burrough sought to distance Friends from any narrow partisan loyalty. Their ultimate loyalty was to the kingdom of God.

We are not for Names, nor Men, nor Titles of Government, nor are we for this Party, nor against the other, because of its Name and Pretense; but we are for Justice and Mercy, and Truth and Peace, and true Freedom, that these may be exalted in our Nation.

Edward Burrough – *To the Present Distracted and Broken Nation* (1659)

Shortly after the Restoration of the monarchy, James Nayler wrote to King Charles II, not to condemn him, but to encourage him to rule justly and with compassion for the poor and oppressed.

Wherefore O king seek the fear of the Lord, and not pleasure, do justice and judgment in this thy day, relieve the helpless oppressed and break the yoke of bondage that lies upon the poor, and bring judgment into the gates, and let not justice be sold, lest the meek of the earth cry to God against thee...

James Nayler – *Letter to Charles II* (1660)

A key objective of the famous “peace declaration” made to Charles II in 1660, was to reassure the new regime that Quakers were not a physical danger to them and could be trusted as a harmless and peaceable people.

"All plots, insurrections, and riotous meetings we deny, knowing them to be of the devil, the murderer; which we in Christ, who was before they were, triumph over. And all wars and fightings with carnal weapons we deny, who have the sword of the Spirit; and all that wrong us, we leave to the Lord. This is to clear our innocency from the aspersion cast upon us, that we are seditious or plotters."

***A Declaration from the Harmless and Innocent People of God Called Quakers* (1660)**

At her trial in 1664, Margaret Fell stated that, while she accepts the king's authority within the world, Christ is her higher authority, and if there is a conflict between these two authorities, she will give priority to Christ.

I own allegiance to the King, as he is the King of England, but Christ Jesus is King of my conscience... I would rather choose prison for obeying God, than my liberty for obeying men, contrary to my conscience.

Margaret Fell – *Trial at Lancaster, 1664*

Fell's position is still reflected in the current Advices and Queries.

Respect the laws of the state but let your first loyalty be to God's purposes. If you feel impelled by strong conviction to break the law, search your conscience deeply. Ask your meeting for the prayerful support which will give you strength as a right way becomes clear.

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The Issue of Equality

Robert Barclay denied that Quakers were "levellers" who posed any threat to the established social hierarchy and suggested that economic inequality was ordained by God.

I would not have any judge, that hereby we intend to destroy the mutual relation, that either is betwixt prince and people, master and servants, parents and children, nay not at all...we say not hereby that no man may use the creation more or less than another. For we know that, as it hath pleased God to dispense it diversely, giving to some more, and some less, so they may use it accordingly.

Robert Barclay – *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (1678)

With reference to George Fox's defence of enslavement, the Quaker historian Elizabeth Cazden, has argued that he was motivated by a desire to present Friends as a respectable law-abiding people.

[George Fox] determined that it was more important to establish Friends as respectable law-abiding citizens – with submissive law-abiding slaves – than to challenge the system of chattel slavery.

Elizabeth Cazden⁴

⁴ Elizabeth Cazden, "Within the Bounds of Their Consciences," 58.

Approaches for the Future – Faith, Inclusion and Growth

Rachel Matthews from Quaker Life will facilitate a workshop to consult on the current revision of the strategy for supporting Quaker Communities by Quakers in Britain and Woodbrooke Learning and Research. In the workshop, we will explore:

- How our Quaker communities could look in the 2030's and beyond
- What therefore could be areas of priority for Quaker communities in the next 5 - 10 years
- How can the support offer enable those priority areas to flourish and strengthen over the next 5 years

This will be an interactive workshop, with lots of small group discussions and a sprinkling of creativity. The purpose is to gather information to help Quaker Life Central Committee and Woodbrooke Trustees to shape the support for meetings strategy 2026 - 2030.

This is part of a broad series of consultation activities. You can find out more at [Approaches for the future 2026 to 2030 | Quakers in Britain](#)