

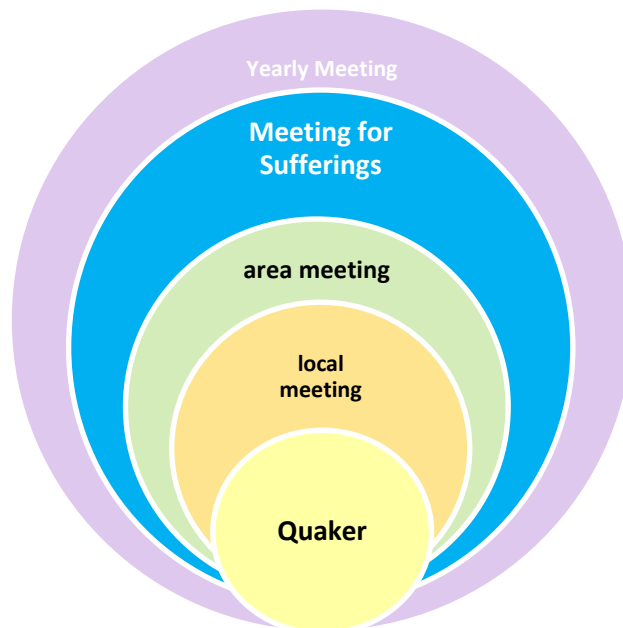


Meeting for Sufferings

Handbook

2024 to 2026

www.quaker.org.uk/mfs



Welcome to Meeting for Sufferings

There are 2 parts to this handbook

Part 1

is an essential Checklist giving an overview of everything you need to know before, during and after the Meeting

Part 2

goes into more detail with additional information

Part 1

Checklist and Overview

Before the Meeting

- Please **register your intention to attend** at forms.quaker.org.uk/sufferings You are invited to indicate on the form if you are willing to help support the meeting (for example: be a microphone steward, doorkeeper, Elder).
- **Read the documents** in advance.
- **Discuss any items of interest with other Friends in your AM** if possible.
- The Support Group often organise a meal on the Friday evening before Meeting for Sufferings for those staying the night before in London. Details of the venue and time will be included in the MfS attendees calling email for you to indicate your wish to attend.
- Remind yourself of Advice 13 in *Quaker faith & practice*

On the Day

- Arrive, or join online, in good time – the meeting for worship starts at 10am.
- If at Friends House, sign in and collect your badge at the MfS welcome desk (normally in the Waldo Williams (refreshments) room).
- Lanyard colour system
 - Black lanyards for AM reps
 - Yellow lanyards for Support Group
 - Red lanyards for committee reps
 - Blue lanyards for Trustees
- If you're late:
 - For those joining onsite: the doorkeeper will show you to the overflow room where you can join the worship; you'll be able to join the main meeting when this ends (approximately 10.20am), just before the start of business.
 - For those joining online: the Zoom host will admit you from the waiting room at a suitable point.

In the Meeting

- Please leave the ends of the rows free for those arriving late

- **Maintain the silence in the room during the short breaks** – if you wish to talk at these times go out of the room
- **If you are called to minister** for those at Friends House please make sure you have checked the diagrams in the handbook so you know how to hold the microphone to ensure you can be heard (see page 16 in the handbook)
- For those at Friends House, **use electronic devices** only for the documents related to the meeting and make sure the sound is turned off
- **Support group** members are responsible (among other things) for eldership and pastoral support. Onsite, they can be recognised by their yellow lanyards and name badges. Online, Support Group members will include 'Support Group' in their name. Support Group members are available to answer questions etc. in the breaks and after the meeting.

When you return to your own meetings

We hope you will have had an inspiring and enriching experience during Meeting for Sufferings and that you will be able to enthuse and stimulate your meetings back home! The minutes and Clerk's follow up letter (published online Friday after the Meeting) may help you choose highlights from the Meeting.

General Information

For those at Friends House, details of the Wifi code will be available on posters in the Refreshment room & Meeting Room: please use the '**FH Conferencing**' network. The password is subject to change at intervals throughout the year and will be clearly indicated.

Contacting the Support Group

[A Search Group has been appointed to find nominations for the Support Group. Once the Group has been appointed, this section will be updated with the appointed names.]

You can contact the support Group via the sufferings@quaker.org.uk email address.

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1 Introduction

Welcome.

This handbook is for all Friends, particularly those serving, or about to serve, on Meeting for Sufferings (MfS).

Attending Meeting for Sufferings for the first time can, at first, appear daunting, but remember that if you don't understand something, seek help from a member of the Meeting for Sufferings Support Group. For those in Friends House, Support Group members are available before the meeting and in breaks throughout the day. You can find Support Group members by the registration table and in the refreshment room.

You can recognise the Support Group by the yellow name badge and lanyard.

The Support Group shares information through the 'Practical arrangements for Sufferings' page in the 'Meeting for Sufferings' section on the Britain Yearly Meeting website (www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/meeting-for-sufferings-representatives).

2 About Meeting for Sufferings

2.1 Role and Function of Meeting for Sufferings

For full information about the role and function of Meeting for Sufferings, see chapter 7 of *Quaker faith & practice*. The latest version can be found on the Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) website <http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/chapter/7/>

As a worshipping community, its functions include the following:

- to discern the furtherance of the spiritual life of our Yearly Meeting and of the development of its visionary and prophetic role
- to set the priorities for the centrally managed work
- to issue public statements in the name of BYM
- to receive regular interim reports from BYM Trustees
- to make a report of its own activities to Yearly Meeting each year
- to foster communication throughout the Yearly Meeting
- to receive and take appropriate action on minutes received from area meetings and other committees

(See *Quaker faith & practice* 7.02.)

At the end of each meeting, a checklist to summarise the business that we have dealt with is published with the minutes. This helps us check we're doing what we should.

As representative or alternate, feel free to seek help from your area meeting colleagues or the Quaker body you represent. Some representatives meet regularly with their alternate or with a local support network to help them discharge their responsibilities as these include not only participation in the meetings but also feedback within the area meeting.

Meeting for Sufferings is connected with most of the Quaker networks and is an excellent place to find out what is going on throughout Britain and, indeed, the world. It

is also a forum whose members can influence the form Quaker work takes, by bringing to bear their wisdom and knowledge.

See: *Quaker faith & practice chapter 7*, especially 7.02.

Britain Yearly Meeting is a church. Our centrally managed work is undertaken within the legal framework of a charity, overseen by a small Trustee body. **Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) Trustees** have strategic responsibility for implementing the laws governing charities, including responsibility for the work, assets and property of the yearly meeting. Trustees are all members of Meeting for Sufferings. BYM Trustees report to Meeting for Sufferings regularly and they consult Meeting for Sufferings. Meeting for Sufferings can make recommendations to Trustees but cannot instruct them.

Clerks and secretaries of central committees and the Recording Clerk give reports to Meeting for Sufferings and introduce items of business for consideration.

2.2 Membership of Meeting for Sufferings

The Meeting for Sufferings membership is around 100 Friends made up of: c.80 representatives, 3 ex-officio clerks, the YM Treasurer, the other 13 BYM Trustees, and 5 staff *ex-officio*, plus the two MfS clerks.

- 70 representatives/alternates nominated by area meetings (*Quaker faith & practice 7.06 and 7.07*)
- 4 representatives/alternates nominated by standing committees (*Quaker faith & practice 7.08*):
 - Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC)
 - Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC)
 - Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR)
 - Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC)
- 1 representative/alternate nominated by Young Friends General Meeting (*Quaker faith & practice 5.08*)
- 2 representatives/alternates (1 for each body) nominated by each of General Meeting for Scotland (*Quaker faith & practice 5.03*) and Crynwyr Cymru - Quakers in Wales (*Quaker faith & practice 5.04 and 5.05*)
- The clerk of Yearly Meeting, the clerk of BYM Trustees, the Yearly Meeting treasurer and the clerk of Central Nominations Committee
- All other BYM Trustees
- The Recording Clerk, Deputy Recording Clerk, and all other members of the Management Meeting (*Quaker faith & practice 8.21*), *ex officio*
- The clerk and assistant clerk of Meeting for Sufferings.

Meeting for Sufferings, at the discretion of the clerk, is empowered to invite other Friends, committee members or staff members to participate for specific business or at particular meetings.

(See minute 33 of Yearly Meeting 2011 and *Quaker faith & practice chapter 7*.)



2.3 Meeting for Sufferings Working Groups

Meeting for Sufferings has several working groups. Three (Arrangements Group, Support Group and Church Government Advisory Group) are permanent - the others are time-limited.

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group (MfSAG) discerns the agenda and oversees general arrangements. Its members are: Meeting for Sufferings clerk and assistant clerk, and three members of Meeting for Sufferings, working with the Recording Clerk or Deputy Recording Clerk. They are appointed by MfS but nominated by Central Nominations Committee.

Meeting for Sufferings Support Group (MfSSG) provides eldership at sessions of Meeting for Sufferings and oversees some practicalities. All of the Support Group are members of Meeting for Sufferings. They are nominated by a nominations group of MfS.

Church Government Advisory Group (CGAG) prepares changes to the church government parts of *Quaker faith & practice* as required by decisions made by Yearly Meeting. It brings changes to Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting for approval.

Meeting for Sufferings has two time-limited working groups:

- Book of Discipline Revision Committee
- BYM Sustainability Group

2.4 Meeting for Sufferings appointments

One of the roles of Meeting for Sufferings is to appoint Friends to serve on other bodies. Below is a list of the appointments that Meeting for Sufferings makes.

Depending on the group, nominations are brought either by Central Nominations Committee (CNC) – which is appointed by Yearly Meeting – or through Meeting for Sufferings.

Body	No. of appointees
Meeting for Sufferings	
Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group	3 (+ clerks)
MfS Working Groups	
BYM Sustainability Group	6
Church Government Advisory Group	up to 5
Book of Discipline Revision Committee	28
Other central bodies	
Friends Trusts Ltd.	5-10
Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations	up to 15
Quaker World Relations Committee (formed of representatives to Friends World Committee for Consultation)	6
Quaker Life Central Committee	12
Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee	15
Other organisations	
Quaker Housing Trust	12
Quaker Council for European Affairs	2
BYM Reps to other Yearly Meetings	
Belgium & Luxembourg YM, Central Europe YM, Denmark YM, Finland YM, France YM, German YM, Netherlands YM, Norway YM, Sweden YM, Switzerland YM	10 (one each)
Ireland YM	2

3 Meeting for Sufferings agendas

3.1 Setting the agenda

The agenda is discerned and planned by Arrangements Group, and then approved by the members at the start of each meeting.

Items for the agenda can come from various sources, but only certain Quaker groups can communicate formally with MfS by minute (Qf&p 7.04). Usually, minutes sent to MfS will be considered at the first possible opportunity, but sometimes they are taken to a later meeting, to allow more time for discernment.

Minutes can be for information only but may also request discernment and action. MfS acts as a 'hub' for information and communication, so we spend time considering reports from the key committees and Quaker bodies.

Agenda Group works hard to plan meetings that are meaningful, balanced, interesting and timely. Of course, routine business needs to be done, and it's important to make sure MfS attends to all its functions.

Whenever possible, time will be included for Home Groups, so that members have an opportunity to discuss issues in more detail, and to get to know each other better.

3.2 Meeting for Sufferings agenda items

The 'forward agenda', circulated with documents in advance, gives information about more major matters that might be coming to future meetings.

Agendas usually include at least some 'required' or 'routine' business. This section explains when those items can be expected.

Most meetings:

- Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees' report
- Prison & Court Register
- Registration of Quaker Recognised Bodies

March:

- Information about the forthcoming Yearly Meeting agenda
- Approval of the letter to other European Yearly Meetings

July (or October, after a residential Yearly Meeting)

- Yearly Meeting - reflection and receipt of minutes

December:

- Meeting for Sufferings' Annual Report to Yearly Meeting
- Reports on other Yearly Meetings in the last year
- Operational plan and budget (from Trustees)

Usually every year:

- Reports from central/standing committees:
 - Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR)
 - Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC)
 - Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC)
 - Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC)

For more information about these committees, see the separate leaflet about Britain Yearly Meeting governance, or *Quaker faith and practice* chapter 8.

Every three years:

- Quaker Housing Trust triennial report
- Quaker Council for European Affairs triennial report

Meeting for Sufferings: Dates 2024 to 2026

- 5 October 2024
- 7 December 2024

- 1 March 2025
- 5 July 2025
- 3 to 5 October 2025 (residential weekend at High Leigh)
- 6 December 2025

- 7 March 2026

4 Your role as a member of Meeting for Sufferings

At the first meeting there will be an induction for all members (i.e. representatives and alternates). If you miss this, or if you are appointed in the middle of a triennium, please seek out members of the Meeting for Sufferings Support Group, who will advise you.

4.1 Responsibilities of Meeting for Sufferings members

We need everyone to help make sure that Meeting for Sufferings is effective as possible. So all members are asked to:

- Participate fully in the worship and discernment of the meeting.
- Take your share of responsibility for the conduct of the meeting. Members need to agree the agenda, and then assist the clerk to carry it through efficiently.
- Be courageous when decisions have to be taken. It is no help to the Yearly Meeting if Meeting for Sufferings ducks or fudges difficult decisions. Help to ensure that the minute communicates the decision, and reason for it, clearly to those who may have not heard the preceding discussion.
- Take your share of responsibility for the atmosphere in which Meeting for Sufferings works. Our work can be much improved if members remain mindful of our Quaker business method. During the meeting, this might include:
 - asking others to uphold the clerk during minute-writing;
 - suggesting a period of worship when things go awry;
 - taking care of someone who is upset;
 - giving spoken ministry during the opening and closing periods of silent worship.

At other times you can uphold the Meeting by:

- volunteering to mentor new members;
- spotting and suggesting appropriate uses for the skills of fellow members;
- Keep your area meeting or other nominating body informed about what is happening at Meeting for Sufferings, and vice versa.
- Undertake, if you feel you are able, particular tasks you are asked to do.

4.2 Being a ‘representative’

As a representative, it’s your responsibility to be aware of leadings and concerns within the meetings or committee you represent, so that you bring insights to the discernment process at Meeting for Sufferings. This might be particularly important, when a minute has come from your AM or committee. Similarly, you’re expected to report back to the bodies you represent.

4.3 Alternates and representatives working together

At each meeting there should be one Friend from each of the Quaker groups represented on Meeting for Sufferings. Each of those groups is asked to nominate one representative and one alternate.

The representative and alternate arrange their attendance at Meeting for Sufferings to suit their area meeting or other body and themselves, ensuring that the area meeting always has one Friend present. For example, you may decide to have one ‘main’ representative with a backup, or to take turns. The important thing is to make an arrangement which suits both people.

Alternates, as well as the representatives, receive all the papers and communications relating to Meeting for Sufferings (See *Quaker faith & practice* 7.06).

Experience shows that this system works best when the representative and alternate communicate regularly and fully with each other. Ideally, you will discuss agenda items with each other prior to the meetings and agree what you will do to take a report back to your area (and local) meetings. You can uphold each other and share tasks, even with only one attending each meeting.

For the first meeting of the triennium, both the representative and alternate are invited. If one of you is unable to attend, make sure you share the advice and guidance received with the other.

4.4 Visitors and additional participation

There are times when we welcome visitors to the Meeting. They're recorded as visitors, but not as observers: everyone in a Quaker meeting is a full participant.

4.4.1 Visitors in lieu of representatives

Each area meeting or committee should always be represented at Meeting for Sufferings. If the representative/alternate are both prevented, please inform the Graham Spackman (sufferings@quaker.org.uk) as early as possible. Another Friend from the AM or committee can attend – they'll be recorded as a 'visitor' but participate fully (section 7.05 of *Quaker faith & practice*).

4.4.2 Other visitors

When Friends visit Meeting for Sufferings, perhaps to speak to an item or represent a particular group, we're glad to welcome them, and we minute their attendance.

4.4.3 Additional visitors

Sometimes, it's helpful for two Friends to represent an AM or committee at the same Meeting. For example, if the AM's representative is also a member of Support Group, their alternate may not have many opportunities to attend. Or, when MfS met in Manchester in 2017, we welcomed additional visitors from local area meetings.

At the same time, for practical reasons we can't open the meeting to an unlimited number of people.

If you feel there's a good reason for another member of your AM or committee to attend MfS as well as you, please contact the clerk at least one week in advance via sufferings@quaker.org.uk. They wouldn't expect to have more than one request a year from each area meeting.

5 Before and during the meeting

Almost all meetings are held over one day in blended form (onsite at Friends House and online via Zoom). Until the final meeting of Meeting for Sufferings in March 2026, we plan to hold one residential meeting at High Leigh in Hertfordshire in October 2025.

This section complements the information which you will receive with your papers for each meeting. If you don't understand anything in it, please ask either contact Graham Spackman on sufferings@quaker.org.uk or 020 7663 1021 beforehand or speak to a member of the Meeting for Sufferings Support Group on the day.

5.1 Preparation

The calling email is sent out two weeks in advance of meetings. A link to the Meeting for Sufferings papers is always sent out electronically. If you have not received anything by the Friday eight days before the meeting, contact Graham Spackman on grahams@quaker.org.uk or 020 7663 1021.

The agenda and papers will always be available electronically on the BYM website at www.quaker.org.uk/mfs You will also find previous papers and minutes there if you need to refer to them.

If you are joining the meeting at Friends House and require printed copies of the papers, please let us know in advance (at sufferings@quaker.org.uk) and we'll leave you a set on the Friends House reception desk.

The paperwork includes:

- A calling letter, which gives the provisional agenda and refers to any related papers in the batch, with their reference numbers; this letter may give an indication from the clerk as to which matters are likely to need most preparation
- The agenda (which is put to the Meeting by the clerk, for acceptance, on the day)
- All papers related to the business;
- The minutes of the previous meeting, unless already sent;
- For those travelling to the Meeting at Friends House, details of how to claim expenses for your travel (and if necessary, hotel accommodation). Please note Finance won't be able to process any claims without the relevant receipts.

Review the paperwork thoroughly before the meeting. The agenda can often seem overwhelming; you may wish to focus your preparation on particular items. Allow time before the meeting to follow up anything you are not clear about with the administration secretary. Do not be afraid that this is wasting staff time – it's wasting everyone's time if you are not fully prepared. Often following receipt of a minute from an area meeting or committee, MfS Arrangements Group will give a recommendation as to what might be expected but it is for the meeting as a whole to decide.

Allow time for reflection and prayer.

If someone in your area meeting or other nominating body has particular knowledge or expertise on one of the subjects on the agenda, talk with them about it.

Go through the business with your alternate, in advance of the meeting, if at all possible.

If a minute from your own area meeting or other body is included in the papers, you may be invited to speak to it on the day – so you should be prepared to give background information if called, or if you feel moved to speak.

Feel free to make your own notes on the papers, both beforehand and during the meeting. If attending Friends House and you use an electronic device in the meeting, please make sure the sound is turned off and avoid using it for anything other than the Meeting's business.

Please let us know you will be attending by completing the online registration form (the link will be sent to you with the papers).

5.2 On the day

5.2.1 Arrival

For those at Friends House:

- If you have not been to Friends House before, consult the plan in section 11 of this handbook. Enter the Garden Entrance and collect your badge from the registration desk in the refreshments room. Please return it to the reception desk at the end of the day, ready for next time.
- Leave your coat and baggage in the cloakroom provided. The cloakroom is normally unstaffed and may be locked for periods during the day, so if you expect to leave early please let staff know.
- Refreshments will be available before the meeting; this can be a good opportunity to get to know other members of Meeting for Sufferings.

You may also wish to take the opportunity to visit the Quaker Centre Bookshop if it is open.

For those online:

- Please connect in good time. The Zoom meeting is opened at 9.30am half an hour before the beginning of the meeting.
- For those who wish to talk informally to other representatives ahead of the meeting, a fellowship breakout room is available from 9.30am to 9.55am. Please observe silence in the main Zoom meeting.
- Please remember to rename yourself if necessary so your Zoom name reads 'Name, Area Meeting or Committee you are representing'.

5.2.2 Refreshments

Hot and cold drinks, and light refreshments, are provided free before the meeting.

We normally provide a free light sandwich lunch in the refreshment room (either vegetarian or vegan) but you can bring your own food or get food elsewhere. You can let us know if you require lunch when you register.

For those online, fellowship breakout rooms are opened for the second half of the lunchbreak if you wish to speak to other representatives informally during the lunch break.

5.2.3 Taking your seat at Friends House

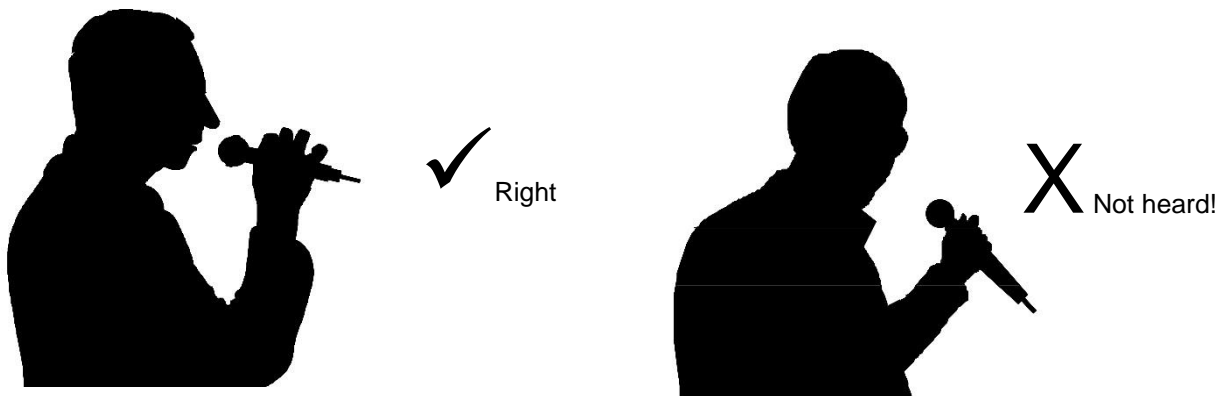
Go to the meeting room in good time to settle into worship before 10am. In general you may sit where you wish (you may see notes on seats reserved for a particular reason). Some Friends will inevitably arrive after the worship – please leave the ends of the rows free for latecomers.

If you need a hassock for feet or to help make a lap, these are normally placed inside the door at the entrance.

The meeting room has a built in hearing loop. If you wear a hearing aid, please set it to the 'T' position. It may help to arrive early to check the system is working for you. If your hearing is good, leave free the seats in the centre for those who need to see the speakers' lips.

5.2.4 Microphones

At Friends House, these are essential for those using the loop system and for Friends joining the meeting online. If you are called to minister please make sure you hold your microphone in the correct position.



Online, if you are called to minister, simply unmute yourself and speak. Try to remember to mute your microphone after you have finished – but the staff member acting as Zoom host will do this for you if you forget.

5.2.5 In the meeting

The clerk opens the meeting at 10am by saying “Meeting for Sufferings held [date]”. There follows 20 to 30 minutes of open worship. During this time there is usually a reading, and the assistant clerk may read the names of recent members of Meeting for Sufferings who have died.

The clerks have microphones, and there are other microphones in the room for those who wish to speak.

Latecomers at Friends House may use the overflow room from 10:00. They are normally admitted after the worship in the stillness at approximately 10:20, when the clerk opens the business by offering the agenda to the meeting.

Latecomers online will be let into the Zoom meeting – please be considerate by joining in silence.

Some items have an introducer to open up the issues for Friends to consider.

- Once a matter is before the meeting, any Friend moved to speak will rise and wait to be called by the clerk.
- If called please wait for a microphone to be brought to you or move to a microphone (as appropriate)
- Begin by giving your name and the area meeting or other body you represent.
- Bear in mind *Advice 13* on vocal ministry, which applies equally to vocal ministry in business meetings.
- Be wary of adding anything new when it was well left before, and the clerks are moving towards making a minute.
- Uphold the clerks; while they are preparing the minute, remain silent and seated, and do not rise in the hope of being called to speak.
- After the minute has been offered to the meeting, do not add new material – only comment on the minute.

Consider prayerfully before rising to speak more than once on a particular topic, or of rising more than once or twice during the day, as the meeting may need other wisdom than yours.

There is usually a short shuffle break during the morning and the afternoon session and it is good to keep an atmosphere of quiet stillness in the room, keeping any talking outside the doors.

Immediately before lunch, the Deputy Recording Clerk will give items of news before the clerk adjourns the meeting.

The meeting closes with open worship, terminated by a handshake between clerk and assistant clerk. Try to avoid leaving before the end; be considerate. Remember that travel expenses can be reclaimed; it is often worth buying a flexible ticket, to avoid leaving the meeting before the end in order to catch a particular train.

6 Between meetings, including reporting back and taking soundings

All the Meeting for Sufferings papers are available online. The minutes are posted on the BYM website (a link will be emailed to all representatives) normally about a week after the meeting.

6.1 How Meeting for Sufferings communicates

It will help you to know how information about Meeting for Sufferings is communicated from Friends House.

Papers in advance	The link will be emailed to representatives and alternates, and available on the website	2 weeks before each meeting
Minutes and follow-up letter	The link will be emailed to representatives and alternates, and available on the website	1 week after each meeting

Meeting headlines and link to the minutes	emailed to Area Meeting clerks	1 week after each meeting
Review of the meeting	published in <i>The Friend</i> (which is independent from BYM)	the week after the meeting
Media releases	co-ordinated by the BYM Public Affairs & Media Manager	as appropriate, usually on the day of the meeting or early the following week

6.2 Your role as a communicator

Take the opportunity of your service to share with local Friends about the work of Meeting for Sufferings and its place in the Yearly Meeting work programme. Meeting for Sufferings members are a vital two-way link in the communication chain between local Friends and central work. Feedback to sufferings@quaker.org.uk if you have any comments to make to the clerks in between meetings.

When reporting to the body that **you** represent on Meeting for Sufferings, you may need to concentrate on just a few matters – perhaps consulting with the (area meeting or committee) clerk beforehand. You could point out issues that are particularly relevant to Friends, especially where they are asked to consider further. You can use the follow-up letter prepared by the clerk of Meeting for Sufferings for this purpose as well as the minutes. You may also want to add to these on issues where you know your meeting has particular concerns. Offer to share the full minutes if Friends want more information and point them towards the report in *The Friend*.

Friends are much more likely to be interested in Meeting for Sufferings if your reports – whether they are written or spoken – are lively, relevant to them, and personal.

Members of Meeting for Sufferings may be specifically asked to take soundings in their meetings about future agenda items. Again, how you do this depends on you and your meeting.

6.3 Minutes sent to Meeting for Sufferings

Perhaps as a result of one of your reports, or for other reasons, your Meeting or committee may wish to send a minute to Meeting for Sufferings. The concerns of Friends, tested and minuted at local and area meetings throughout Britain, are a key part of our Quaker witness and contribute to our vision for Quaker work.

When a meeting has decided, after thorough investigation and testing, to forward a minute to Meeting for Sufferings, the purpose of the minute should be made clear. Is it for information, for action, to test a concern, or a response to consultation? Please encourage your clerk to read the guidelines on the BYM website <http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/working-with-meeting-for-sufferings> before a minute is sent.

Minutes are dealt with as follows:

- Minutes sent by area meetings for information are received, usually on draft minute.
- Minutes relating to current centrally managed work, where action is wanted or proposed, are usually received and passed to an appropriate standing committee.

- Minutes bringing concerns which need testing at Meeting for Sufferings level are taken as substantive agenda items.
- Minutes responding to formal consultations go directly to the appropriate working group. Meeting for Sufferings representatives receive a list showing which area meetings have sent minutes, which subjects have been discussed, and what follow-up action has been taken.

The Deputy Recording Clerk will notify area meetings of the progress and outcome of their minutes, and may ask for reports on an area meeting's follow-up activities where appropriate.

7 Discernment

Quaker faith & practice chapter 3 equates discernment with “the recognition of God’s will” (3.02).

Discernment is essential to decision-making in a meeting for worship for business and to the perception of what is right to offer as vocal ministry in worship.

Coming to a corporate decision on priorities, and on the public voice of the Society, requires the same skills as Friends will have developed in their own meetings for church affairs.

Meeting for Sufferings also takes responsibility (along with Yearly Meeting) for expressing the public voice of Friends – conveying our insights to the wider world.

We find guidance throughout chapter 3 of *Quaker faith & practice*, especially from 3.02 to 3.11. Discernment is promoted through:

- silent waiting and listening
- an active, seeking spirit
- knowledge of facts and the ability to estimate their relevance and importance
- the sharing of knowledge, experience and concern
- the willingness of us all to seek the truth in each other’s utterances
- openness to persuasion
- willingness to recognise that we may be mistaken
- recognition that we are all different
- a willingness to recognise and accept the minute
- loyalty by the meeting as a whole once a minute is accepted as representing the discernment of the meeting.

Learning to listen to the Spirit is a life-long process.

7.1 Discernment: references/useful reading:

- Barry Morley, *Beyond consensus: salvaging the sense of the meeting* (Pendle Hill Pamphlet 307), Wallingford (PA): Pendle Hill Publications, 1993.
- *Quaker faith & practice*, chapters 1 and 3.
- Michael J Sheeran, *Beyond majority rule: voteless decisions in the Religious Society of Friends*, Philadelphia: Philadelphia YM, 1996
- Patricia A Williams, *Quakerism – A theology for our time*, York: Sessions, 2007. (especially chapter 4)

- Rex Ambler, *Light to live by: an exploration in Quaker spirituality* London: Quaker Books, 2002
 - Minute 6 of Meeting for Sufferings (Quaker Business Method), June 1999
 - Jane Pearn, *The language of leadings: A reflection on faith, action and concern*, July 2017
 - Jane Mace, *God and Decision-Making: A Quaker Approach*, 2012
- The published books listed here can be purchased from the Quaker Centre Bookshop in person or from www.quaker.org.uk/shop

7.2 A note on decision-making within the BYM structure

This section is about Meeting for Sufferings' relationships with Yearly Meeting, BYM Trustees and central/standing committees – there's a simple diagram in section 13.

Yearly Meeting (*Qfp chapter 6*)

Yearly Meeting (YM) is an occasion when the concerns of Friends can be shared with the meeting as a whole, as it seeks God's guidance and relates each particular insight or service to the others brought before it.

The YM clerk is a member of Sufferings. MfS is expected to report to YM each year.

MfS determines the Yearly Meeting dates, on the recommendation of the Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee. MfS may summon a Special Yearly Meeting if necessary.

Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) Trustees (*Qfp 18.17-18*)

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees (BYMT) act on behalf of the YM as managing trustees of the work, assets and property held directly by BYM. They are appointed by YM and accountable to Yearly Meeting, and report to it each year.

Trustees are all members of Meeting for Sufferings. Trustees aren't formally accountable to MfS, but they are expected to listen to its guidance, and they keep in close contact by sharing information about their work.

In relation to Meeting for Sufferings, BYMT should:

- Ensure priorities for the centrally managed work as discerned by MfS from time to time are carried out in an efficient and prudent manner, consistent with BYM's religious and charitable objects and in accordance with MfS' long term plan (currently, 'Our Faith in the Future');
- Implement MfS' priorities by approving an annual operational plan and budget for centrally managed work and the means for measuring progress;
- Provide interim progress reports on the centrally managed work;
- Approve the *Annual report and accounts*, and present them to MfS before forwarding to Yearly Meeting and to the Charity Commission.

Central and standing committees (*Qfp 8.04-14*)

Britain Yearly Meeting's centrally managed work is overseen by committees.

Four of the committees have a representative on Meeting for Sufferings, and we aim for a constructive two-way dialogue between them and us. MfS appoints their members of but the committees themselves are accountable to YM through Trustees:

- Quaker Life Central Committee (*Qfp 8.08*)
- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (*8.11*)

- Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations (8.12; 9.13)
- Quaker World Relations Committee (8.13; 9.06)

8 Data protection legislation for MfS

Britain Yearly Meeting Data Protection

As a member of a committee, covered by Britain Yearly Meeting's data registration, you need to be aware of the Yearly Meeting's policy on data protection.

Data which you collect for your own use, including minutes of committee meetings and membership information (including personal details of members of your committee) must be kept and used in accordance with Britain Yearly Meeting's data protection policy.

You must obtain explicit permission for the listing or processing of personal data from individuals who are not members or for details of children and young people under 18.

Guidance on data safety, including the BYM policies is given in Data Safety and Information Security Guidance Notes for meetings (4th edition 2014).

In brief, the main guidance for committees is:

- Contact information about members may be used by the constituent bodies of the Yearly Meeting for their legitimate business. It is accepted that lists of committee members' contact information may also be used to help members contact one another and be shared with other central or standing committees as appropriate to facilitate the centrally managed work.
- Information on attenders and non-member partners may also be held but used only with their explicit consent. Information on children and young people under 18 may only be used with the consent of their parents or guardians.
- All members of BYM have a responsibility to protect personal information that they collect. This includes contact lists, books of members, papers, electronic files and information held by your meeting, committee, staff or passed to other organisations.
- You are responsible for ensuring that the principles of data protection are observed if you delegate responsibility for maintaining a membership or mailing list or other records or for completing the compliance form to another person – a member of the meeting, committee or to staff. If you ask another organisation to use the personal details that you hold, for example to produce an address list or a mailing, you need to make it clear to them what they can and cannot do with the information that you provide to them.

If you have any further queries, please contact us at sufferings@quaker.org.uk

9 Claiming expenses and planning travel and accommodation

Most people prefer to make their own accommodation arrangements, but you may ask Graham Spackman to book accommodation on your behalf. Please note he would need at least two weeks' notice and we can't guarantee that he would be able to find you a room at certain times of the year.

You can claim the expenses you incur in attending Meeting for Sufferings and helping to carry out its work. Expenses could include telephoning, copying, postage, travel, accommodation and childcare costs. If you're not sure what you should claim for, please talk with a member of staff. Britain Yearly Meeting needs to have a realistic picture of what running Meeting for Sufferings costs.

The email sent two weeks ahead of the Meeting with the link to your papers, will include an expenses form (in Word). Please complete and return this by email along with copies of your receipts (again by email – these can be photographs or copies of emails you have received from hotels or train companies). You will be asked for your bank details at the beginning of your period of service so that you can be paid by bank transfer. If you don't have a bank account, a method of payment will need to be set up for you. Our auditors require that receipts be included with expense claims: try to do this on every occasion.

Normally expenses are claimed in arrears, because it is then clear what the actual expenditure has been. If this causes cash flow problems for you, ask Graham Spackman on grahams@quaker.org.uk or 020 7663 1021 to make arrangements for an advance payment to cover the expenses you are likely to incur.

Consider the environmental impact of your mode of travel. But a balance has to be struck: Meeting for Sufferings does not wish to exclude from service those for whom travel by air or by car is the only practical way of attending. Please do not feel obliged to attend online if you are a long distance away – you are welcome to attend Friends House for some, or all, of the meetings you attend.

Similarly, balance the advantages of cheaper tickets, purchased in advance, with the flexibility that an open ticket provides. If you have to stay overnight in order to reach Meeting for Sufferings in good time the next morning, then do so. If you are eligible, consider using a railcard.

If there are occasions on which you use your own transport (cycle, motorcycle, car), then the current rates that you can claim are available from Graham Spackman on grahams@quaker.org.uk or 020 7663 1021. When travelling by car, committee members are expected to attach mileage print out(s) from the internet to your expense form. If you are making a return journey, please attach the mileage which reflects the amount paid for both journeys. All car parking tickets should also be attached to your expense claim.

If you wish to donate all or part of the expenses you claim back to the Society, do so as a separate donation. If you Gift aid the donation, Britain Yearly Meeting can claim back the tax. All donations should be made payable to Britain Yearly Meeting and sent to Communication & services Department, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.

If you would like to receive an electronic or hard copy of the Volunteers Expenses Policy, please email sufferings@quaker.org.uk

10 Feedback complaints and grievances

We are keen to receive feedback, including positive comments. Written feedback can be left at Friends House or emailed to us.

If you have any problems or concerns, then speak to the Meeting for Sufferings Support Group (one of whose roles is to give advice to individuals in confidence).

11 Finding your way around Friends House

Friends House floor plans

2 Second floor

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

1 First floor

- Marjorie Sykes Room
- Hilda Clark Suite (1, 2 and 3)
- Abraham Darby Room
- Kathleen Lonsdale Room
- George Bradshaw Room
- Sarah Fell Room
- The Light (Upper Level)

G Ground floor

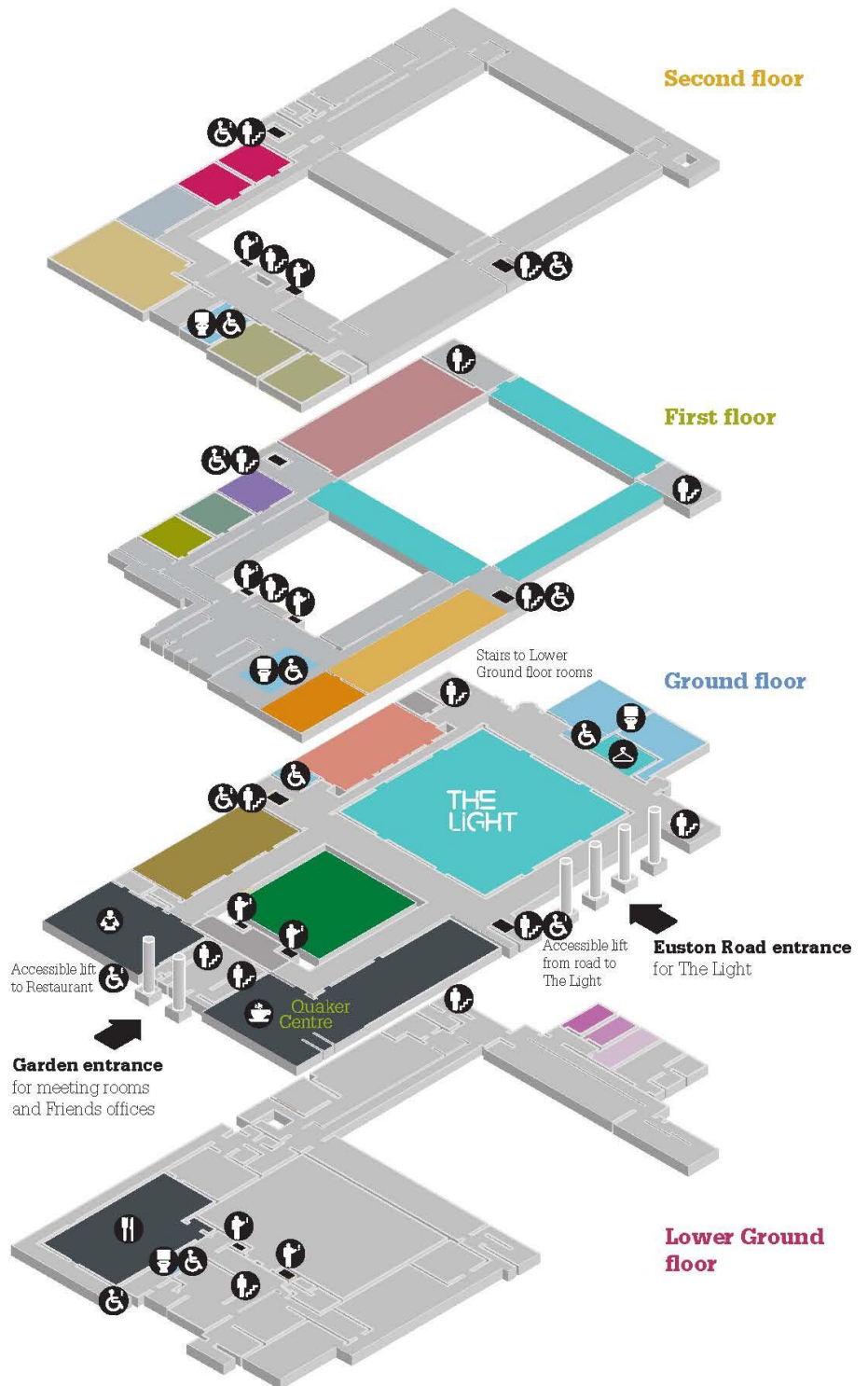
- Ystafell Waldo Williams (1 and 2)
- Ada Salter Suite (1, 2 and 3)
- The Light
- Courtyard
- Café / Bookshop / Worship space

I.G. Lower Ground floor

- Bayard Rustin Room
- Lucretia Mott Room
- John Woolman Room

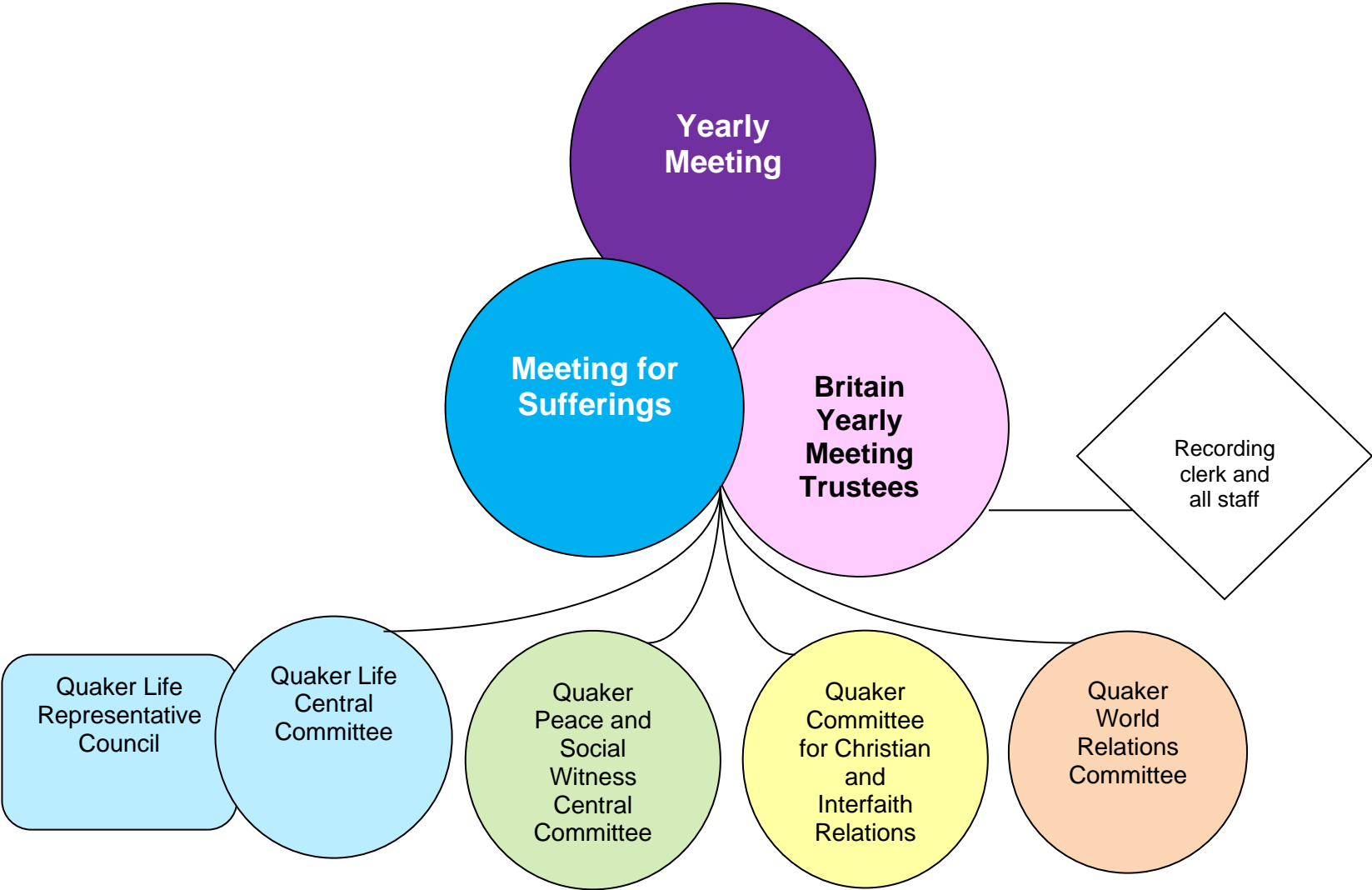
Key

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



13 Yearly Meeting structures overview

This is a simplified diagram of our central structures. There is a more detailed version in *Quaker faith & practice* chapter 8 <http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/chapter/8/>



14 Clerks

In 2024 the clerks are:

Robert Card, Manchester & Warrington AM, Clerk

Elizabeth Allen, South East Scotland AM, Assistant Clerk

15 Contacting Meeting for Sufferings

To send minutes to Meeting for Sufferings:

Meeting for Sufferings email: sufferings@quaker.org.uk

In relation to the content and process of Meeting for Sufferings:

Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk on siobhanh@quaker.org.uk

Or Neil Jarvis, Governance Manager, on neilj@quaker.org.uk

For administrative matters (dates of meetings, papers, claiming expenses etc,

Graham Spackman on 020 7663 1021 or grahams@quaker.org.uk

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