

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

# Preparing for Yearly Meeting

Compiled for Yearly Meeting,  
Friends House, London and online  
28 April–1 May 2023



# Preparing for Yearly Meeting

## Welcome

Yearly Meeting is an opportunity for learning, inspiration and strength for our witness in which we aim to search our spiritual depths, refresh our spiritual lives and explore what we are called to do as communities and individuals.

Over the next few Yearly Meetings, we will need to make decisions in response to reviews of Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering, Meeting for Sufferings and central committees and the first stages of the revision of our book of discipline. Some of these decisions will be coming to Yearly Meeting in 2023, and some in later years.

What are the foundations on which we build our Society? How can we best organise ourselves to direct our energies out into the world? Who should we be speaking with, building bridges with? When the world does not always exhibit the values we cherish, how can we create the change which is needed?

This year, we ask Friends to consider how we centre ourselves and organise our community, so that we may best do what we are called to do. In particular, we are looking at these questions:

- Releasing our energy: How do we ensure our structures are simple, inclusive, and sustainable?
- Revitalising our communities: How do we revitalise our Quaker meetings and nurture joy?
- Following the leadings of the Spirit: How can we build a better world with integrity, and how can we recognise and support truth in the wider world?

Friends worship in different types of community, locally, across areas and regions, in person and online, spontaneously and scheduled, in exclusively Quaker groups and with those of other denominations and faiths. Yearly Meeting is also a worshipping community in which all should feel welcome. Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee encourages preparation for Yearly Meeting by individuals and in the various communities to which we each belong. Let us use this Yearly Meeting as an opportunity to build foundations for our community and our actions.

## Proceedings

A number of documents will help us meet with hearts and minds prepared. The full set comprises:

1. *Preparing for Yearly Meeting*, including community guidelines and resources for preparation (this document)
2. *Yearly Meeting agenda & notes*, including etiquette for online meetings
3. *Testimonies*, including index of epistles
4. *Trustees' annual report*, including financial statements for the year ended December 2022
5. *Patterns of membership*, including the 2022 tabular statement

Together with the Yearly Meeting Minutes, which are distributed after the conclusion of Yearly Meeting, these are the '*Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain 2023*'.

All documents will be available online at [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym). Many Friends will read the documents online and have access to the web links included in the documents. Each document is in a printer-friendly PDF format, and we ask Friends to print their own copies or to seek assistance from someone in their meeting. To minimise costs and environmental impact we will only be printing a limited number of copies. These will be prioritised for those attending in person or with accessibility needs.

If you require accessible documents, please request these when booking for Yearly Meeting. If these do not meet your accessibility needs, or the needs of someone you know, please email [ym@quaker.org.uk](mailto:ym@quaker.org.uk).

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

You can read about Yearly Meeting in **chapter 6** of *Quaker faith & practice*. Alternatively, contact the Yearly Meeting Office on 020 7663 1040 or at [ym@quaker.org.uk](mailto:ym@quaker.org.uk), or go to [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym).

# Our community agreement

## Quaker practice at Yearly Meeting

“Respect the wide diversity among us in our lives and relationships. Refrain from making prejudiced judgments about the life journeys of others. Do you foster the spirit of mutual understanding and forgiveness which our discipleship asks of us? Remember that each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God.”

*Advices & queries 22*

Yearly Meeting aims to be a spiritually enriching experience, where Friends build a loving and inclusive community. It is important for us all to consider what impact our behaviour and words might have on others. We need to continue to practise listening and speaking to one another with care. Quakers are not immune to the bad behaviour that seems to occur more often online than in person. We need to maintain our discipline of coming together to “know God’s will for the gathered group”, despite the challenges of meeting remotely.

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee asks you to share responsibility for creating a safe and loving community by upholding Quaker discipline at this Yearly Meeting.

Throughout Yearly Meeting and beforehand, whether meeting online or in person:

- Follow the guidance on safeguarding and online security provided for events.
- When talking or writing to other participants about the Yearly Meeting topics please take care over how you communicate. Use inclusive language and behaviour to avoid hurt. Pause before communicating (especially online) and carefully consider whether you might be about to say something you would later regret.
- Be mindful of how important or sensitive the subject may be when discussing views and beliefs you or others may hold. Respect the experiences and opinions of others, even if they differ from your own. Be open to change.

- Do not lobby clerks, introducers, staff or other servants of the meeting regarding the agenda (see *Quaker faith & practice* **3.04**). Do not assume that Friends who are closely involved will always be available to discuss a topic with you; people might need time off from the discernment between Yearly Meeting sessions.
- Do not claim to speak on behalf of others when expressing your own view.

In Yearly Meeting and preparatory sessions:

- Follow the general counsel on church affairs set out in *Quaker faith & practice* **3.01–3.07**. Friends are encouraged to speak clearly and briefly, and stand to speak if able to do so. Our experience is that Friends online may not sense as quickly as Friends present in person that their Ministry has been heard. Clerks may say when a Friend has ministered at sufficient length and it is time to make space for others’ contributions so that a wide range of voices can be heard. If this message is not received it may occasionally be necessary to disconnect an online contribution.
- Yearly Meeting sessions are meetings for worship, so give your full attention to the matter before the meeting. Do not carry on a parallel discussion on social media, just as you would not chat to neighbours during a face-to-face session.

Interactions between Friends (online or in person) can result in pain and distress. Be mindful of your own words and actions, and careful that you do not cause inadvertent hurt.

Behaviour such as bullying, harassment or verbal abuse is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. If you experience or witness unacceptable behaviour by anyone in our community, for the well-being of everyone concerned, please let an elder or a member of the Pastoral Care Team know.

Yearly Meeting clerks and elders may decide, exceptionally, to block access to the event for anyone who does not abide by these guidelines.

## Resources for preparation

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee has chosen resources in various formats to promote inclusion. Some are for individual contemplation and learning, while others are suitable for groups. Not all Friends will engage with all of these resources, but we hope everyone will find something to help them prepare for discernment at Yearly Meeting in session.

### Releasing our energy to follow the leadings of the Spirit

“Every stage of our lives offers fresh opportunities. Responding to divine guidance, try to discern the right time to undertake or relinquish responsibilities without undue pride or guilt. Attend to what love requires of you, which may not be great busyness.”

*Advices & queries 28*

**The focus of Yearly Meeting 2023 is ‘Releasing our energy so that we can follow the leadings of the Spirit, fulfil our purpose and build a better world’.**

The following resources are suggested for reading and reflection in preparation for Yearly Meeting. You may wish to read and consider these on your own, or use them as a starting point to share in meetings/study sessions with other Friends.

When looking at the following resources, you might want to think about:

- What do you know about our Quaker structures? Do they work for your Quaker community?
- Is there something your Quaker community would like to do, but needs help or inspiration?
- How sustainable is your Quaker community? What will it look like in twenty years’ time?
- How do you and others in the different communities to which you belong, try to live with truth and integrity?

## Resources

“I wish I might emphasise how a life becomes simplified when dominated by faithfulness to a few concerns. Too many of us have too many irons in the fire. We get distracted by the intellectual claim to our interest in a thousand and one good things, and before we know it we are pulled and hauled breathlessly along by an over-burdened programme of good committees and good undertakings. I am persuaded that this fevered life of church workers is not wholesome. Undertakings get plastered on from the outside because we can't turn down a friend. Acceptance of service on a weighty committee should really depend upon an answering imperative within us, not merely upon a rational calculation of the factors involved. The concern-orientated life is ordered and organised from within. And we learn to say No as well as Yes by attending to the guidance of inner responsibility. Quaker simplicity needs to be expressed not merely in dress and architecture and height of tombstones but also in the structure of a relatively simplified and co-ordinated life-programme of social responsibilities.”

Thomas R Kelly, 1941  
*Quaker faith & practice* 20.36

The current structures of Britain Yearly Meeting

- *Quaker faith & practice* 8.05
- On the website [www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/our-structures](http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/our-structures)
- In a downloadable document [www.quaker.org.uk/documents/quakers-in-britain---a-short-guide-to-our-structures-1](http://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/quakers-in-britain---a-short-guide-to-our-structures-1)
- Further material will be available closer to the time of Yearly Meeting at [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym)

The declaration made by the Quaker Truth and Integrity group can be found here: <https://quakertruth.org>.

*Kinder ground: creating space for truth*, the 2021 Swarthmore Lecture from Thomas Penny, is available as a **book** or as a **video**. Links to both can also be found at: [www.woodbrooke.org.uk/swarthmore-lecturer-2021](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/swarthmore-lecturer-2021).

Running a worship sharing group: suggested questions to consider ahead of Yearly Meeting 2023: [www.quaker.org.uk/blog/preparing-for-yearly-meeting-2023-through-worship-sharing](http://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/preparing-for-yearly-meeting-2023-through-worship-sharing)

There will be opportunities to attend learning and preparatory sessions online in the week running up to Yearly Meeting (see **page 6** for details). Some of these events might refer to material found in the resource list above; however, it is not essential to have read and studied this material before attending a preparatory session or a Yearly Meeting session. All Friends are welcome.

# Attending Yearly Meeting

Yearly Meeting will take place over the weekend of Friday 28 April to Monday 1 May 2023. Held at Friends House, London, and online, the event will include Yearly Meeting in session, worship and the Swarthmore Lecture.

## First time at Yearly Meeting?

Yearly Meeting is a large event and can be very busy. The most useful guide to what is happening is the YM Planner, which lists everything which is taking place – including Yearly Meeting business sessions, discussions on the theme, worship, and meetings or workshops about putting faith into action. Volunteering to help with microphone stewarding, for example, (see [page 8](#)) can be a good way of getting to know how Yearly Meeting works and meeting other Friends.

Our *Thinking of attending Yearly Meeting?* blog has more information that will be useful for attenders new and old: [www.quaker.org.uk/blog/thinking-of-attending-yearly-meeting-2023](http://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/thinking-of-attending-yearly-meeting-2023)

## Before Yearly Meeting

On Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 April there will be an opportunity to attend programmed events in advance of Yearly Meeting. There will be a number of preparatory sessions relating to the agenda Yearly Meeting, as well as 'fringe' events, consisting of meetings of Quaker Recognised Bodies and Quaker central committees. The Groups Fair is likely to be held online on Saturday 22 April.

All preparatory events will take place online, and it is essential that you book your place at Yearly Meeting in order to gain access to this programme. Please book online at [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym).

Other opportunities will include Woodbrooke sessions on 'How does Yearly Meeting work?' and 'Supporting online discernment'. Those attending Yearly Meeting for the first time, or for the first time online, are strongly encouraged to attend.

Events relating to the Yearly Meeting agenda are planned for the weekend before Yearly Meeting. Friends are encouraged to attend, as these will help us to join in discernment at Yearly Meeting with hearts and minds prepared.

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee is currently

finalising the timetable, so please look out for the latest information on events and time slots at [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym). Once you have booked to attend Yearly Meeting (in person or online), further details will be made available.

## Attending in person and online

Some Friends will participate online while others will attend in person at Friends House in London. We know that travelling to London can be difficult for many Friends and others are uncomfortable with large crowds. Nevertheless, it is important that everyone finds a way to join Yearly Meeting if they wish.

Clerks would love to welcome Friends from every area meeting at Yearly Meeting in person as well as online. Families are warmly encouraged, as are young people. If your child is attending the Children's programme for 0–11s, a responsible adult must also be present with them at Friends House.

In the main sessions, which will be clerked from the Large Meeting House, everyone online will be part of the meeting, alongside those at Friends House; everyone will be equally able to indicate that they wish to be called to give ministry.

Friends joining online will be able to take part in Yearly Meeting sessions and join in morning and evening worship. There will be a live link to the Swarthmore Lecture on the Saturday evening.

All preparatory sessions and meetings leading up to Yearly Meeting will be online only. However, all sessions over the weekend of Yearly Meeting will be online and in person. In any event, you must book in order to attend. After registering, you will be able to book individual sessions online from home; full details will be provided.

There will also be other, smaller meetings on specific topics taking place around Yearly Meeting. These will all be online and will be organised by various Quaker groups. You will be able to book these in the same way that you book the sessions of Yearly Meeting.

For both in-person and online attendance, registration opens on Tuesday 10 January on the Quakers in Britain website: go to [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym).

Registration for Yearly Meeting in person closes on 31 March, online registration closes on 17 April and Children and Young People's programmes bookings close on 17 March.

## Swarthmore Lecture

The 2023 Swarthmore Lecture will be given by Esther Loukin. Esther is the co-founder of disabled-led organisation Reasonable Access, and an activist for disability access. She has often used legal methods successfully, and will use her Swarthmore Lecture to speak of her experiences as a disabled person, and her experiences of holding organisations to account.

The lecture will take place at Friends House, London, on the evening of Saturday 29 April 2023. Friends attending Yearly Meeting online will be able to access the event via a live stream.

To find out more, go to [www.woodbrooke.org.uk/swarthmore](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/swarthmore).

## What's on offer: For children and young people

### Children and Young People's programmes

These programmes are an integral part of Yearly Meeting. They enable children and young people to engage with Yearly Meeting in a variety of age-appropriate ways, encouraging their faith formation and spiritual development and helping them to experience transformation beyond the event. They also help to integrate them with the Quaker community. These events will be in person. There will also be some online opportunities, including activities for families.

All under-18s attending Yearly Meeting need to be booked onto their age-appropriate programme by a parent or guardian. For those aged 0–15, places will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis and must be booked in advance, by the deadline, as we can only accommodate a limited number of children and young people.

The Children's Programme can be booked by individual session while the Young People's Programme, which is a residential weekend, needs to be booked as a whole. Bookings for both programmes close on 17 March (to ensure the volunteers who plan an age-appropriate programme have the necessary information).

Junior Yearly Meeting this year will be held from 1 to 4 April 2023. Information has been sent to area meetings. Over the weekend of Yearly Meeting, Accompanying is available for 15- to 18-year-olds to meet up socially at Yearly Meeting and attend Yearly Meeting in session. Bookings open in January and close on 7 April.

Full details can be found at [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym).

## For young adults

### Young Adults at Yearly Meeting

Sessions throughout Yearly Meeting for 18- to 35-year-olds offer a way to be part of Yearly Meeting and to be in a smaller community. This gives those participating the chance to prepare for and reflect on their own experience of Yearly Meeting.

## Booking information

### Can I come?

Yes! Everyone in our Quaker community is welcome, whether in membership or not. We hope this document will help you prepare for Yearly Meeting. But if you've never been before, and you're still not sure what to expect or how to prepare, ask a Friend from your worshipping community who has been to Yearly Meeting before to help you understand it.

### What do I need to do?

Register! From 10 January you can do this online at [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym). There is no charge to attend Yearly Meeting. But whether you're attending in person or online, registration is essential so that suitable preparations can be made.

You can find more information and follow updates online:

- at [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym)
- on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/bymevent](http://www.facebook.com/bymevent)
- or on Twitter [@bymevent](https://twitter.com/bymevent) (#YM2023).

### What do I do if I have access needs?

We want anyone who wants to come to Yearly Meeting to be able to do so. Please tell us if you have access needs so that we can make necessary arrangements.

Consider whether there is anyone else attending who may be able to support you. You should first speak to Friends in your meeting to see what help they can provide. If they cannot help, the Pastoral Care Group will do its best to support you, but there may be a limit to what can be done.

You can let us know your access needs when you book. You can also email [access@quaker.org.uk](mailto:access@quaker.org.uk) or call the Yearly Meeting Office on 020 7663 1040. Visit [www.quaker.org.uk/ym/help](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym/help) to find out more about our accessibility measures.

### How can I help?

Yearly Meeting wouldn't be able to happen without help from Friends attending. There is a role for everyone, no matter your experience. You could volunteer to support pastoral care, be a doorkeeper or microphone steward, to review one of the programmes for children and young people or serve on Yearly Meeting Nominating Group. All help is greatly appreciated. You will be invited to complete the volunteer offer of service form once you have submitted your booking.

### How can I find more information?

The best place to start is the [Yearly Meeting website](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym), where you will find the answer to most commonly asked questions. And we will update the website as more information becomes available. If you can't find the answer to your question, email the Yearly Meeting Office at [ym@quaker.org.uk](mailto:ym@quaker.org.uk) or call 020 7663 1040.

## Yearly Meeting 2024

### Save the dates

Will you be attending Yearly Meeting 2024? It will take place in London over the weekend of 26–30 July 2024.

The way in which Friends engage with Yearly Meeting has changed over the last few years. Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee has decided it's important that Yearly Meeting remains open to those joining online, and so for the next few years it will continue to be held at Friends House where we are confident of our ability to manage the necessary technology.

Yearly Meeting 2024 will be a longer event than in 2022 or 2023, allowing us to spend more time together, particularly in community events. It will run from Friday to Tuesday, with plenty of opportunities for discussions and fringe meetings.

We look forward to sharing more detailed plans for Yearly Meeting 2024 as they develop.



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

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

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

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

Accessible versions of this document are available. Please contact the publications manager at [publications@quaker.org.uk](mailto:publications@quaker.org.uk) or call 020 7663 1162.

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

Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ

Follow us on social media [@BritishQuakers](https://twitter.com/BritishQuakers)

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