

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.

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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 Friends House:

- 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 comfortable and able to do so. Our experience is that Friends online may not sense as quickly as those in Friends House 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 please do give them your full attention rather than 'multitasking'. For instance, engaging in parallel discussion on social media would be as inappropriate as chatting to someone else in the room.

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

Behaviours such as discrimination, bullying, harassment or verbal abuse are 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. For more information, please see our policies and procedures on bullying and harassment.

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