

Young Friends General Meeting

24 - 26 February 2023

Brighton

Minutes

Those Present (47): Alex Foxe, Alexandra Boliver-Brown, Amanda Boughton, Anne Seilly, Becky Shirley, Ceridwen Jenkins, Maë Punter, Chloe Scaling, Connor Powell, Devon Tipping, Dominic Rawlinson, Elliot Mears, Emma Dunmore, Georgia Martin, Georgia Campbell, Grace Roberts, Will Reed, Kim Edwards, Matt Alton, Rachael Booth, Rebecca Cutts, Ro Bashforth, Rowan Queerly, Ruth Bretts, Samuel Cooper, Samuel Gilbert, Sasha Lawson-Frost, Sasha King-Smith, Sonya Stepanova, Tas Cooper, Tim Hall Farthing, Tim Rouse, Gray Wood, Gwenllian Shippides, Hannah Stranex, Izzy Hepburn, Jacob Webb, Jasmin Higgs, Jennie Atherton, Jenny Baines, Jessica Beck, Jessie Fenn, Johanna Longmore, Kaden Foley, Leilani Rabemananjara, Limes Brighton, Lucas Bain-Lefevre

Co-Clerks:	Tim Rouse, Hannah Stranex
Trustees at opening of meeting:	Tim Hall Farthing, Jenny Herbert, Leilani Rabemananjara, Tim Rouse, Hannah Stranex, Gray Wood, Sammy Gilbert, Row Bashforth
Trustees at close of meeting:	Tim Hall Farthing, Jenny Herbert, Leilani Rabemananjara, Georgia Campbell, Sammy Gilbert
Area & Local Meeting Representatives	Alexandra Boliver-Brown - East Kent AM Hannah Stranex - Surrey and Hampshire Borders AM Gray Wood - Hampshire and Isle of Wight AM Will Reed - York AM Amanda Boughton - West Kent AM Anne Seilly - Luton and Leighton AM

2023.02.1 Representative to Living Witness

Living Witness is a group that supports Quaker conservation work and deep ecology which YFGM has in the past appointed a representative to attend.

We agree to lay down this role, noting that what is laid down now may be returned to in future if we find that a more formal connection is needed.

We encourage YFGMers who feel personally called to get involved in Living Witness and uphold them in their ministry.

2023.02.2 Report on Planning Weekend

Our Planning Weekend for this gathering took place in Doncaster from 13-15 January. Elliot Mears and Georgia Campbell gave a report on their role as Planning Weekend newcomers, saying that they found it a worthwhile experience. They appreciated sharing birthday cake and having more time to get to know people.

2023.02.3 Planning our next gathering

Our next gathering will take place from 26 - 29 May. A planning weekend will be held from 21 - 23 April 2023, to thresh the items that should be on the agenda for the May gathering. We have heard enthusiasm for in-person planning weekends, which provide spiritual nourishment and the opportunity to get more done.

We agree to hold our next Planning Weekend in person and ask trustees to ensure that organising the event is entrusted to an appropriate person or committee.

2023.02.4 Trustee reform

Rachael Booth and Tim Hall Farthing have presented proposals around reforming our trustee body and establishing a 'Switchboard' committee.

This will reduce the size of our trustee body, focusing it on governance, with the new committee having representation from committees across YFGM.

Full details of this proposal are included in the appendix attached to these minutes. A version of this proposal was attached to Documents in Advance. Tim and Rachael have

verbally explained small changes since this version, including making the Switchboard Convenor role a 'hat' within the committee.

We are joyful and excited about adopting this model, hoping that it will bring flexibility within trustees and in the interactions between committees. We note that it will require willingness from role-holders to come together and establish Switchboard as a functional committee, particularly in the immediate transitional period.

We accept the proposals including the constitutional amendments included in the appendix.

2023.02.5 Spirituality session and visitor

We were visited by Adwoa Burnley, clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting, which will take place online and in-person in London from 28 April - 1 May 2023. Adwoa joined us to run a spirituality session which included reflections on the Quaker business method, encouragement to get involved in committees of the Yearly Meeting, and a warm invitation to young Friends to come along to Yearly Meeting events.

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.

2023.02.7 Nominations Returns

We appoint the Friends named in the below table to the roles specified. We release Friends as indicated in the table and thank all those named below for their service.

Role	Released	Appointed	Until
Logistics	Two vacancies brought forward	Becky Cutts Rowan Queerly	February 2025
Pastoral	Sasha Lawson-Frost Grace Roberts	Elliot Mears Jennie Atherton	February 2026
Elder	Jennie Atherton	<i>Vacancy carried forward</i>	-
Planning Weekend Newcomer	Jessie Fenn Elliot Mears Georgia Campbell	Maë Punter Georgia Martin	May 2023
Trustee	-	Georgia Campbell	May 2026
Representative to EMES Annual Meeting	-	Rowan Queerly	May 2023
Nominations	Kaden Foley Becky Cutts Rachael Booth	Izzy Hepburn Kaden Foley Jacob Webb	February 2026

We record that, as per our minute on trustee reform,

- The role of Convenor of Trustees will be laid down and Jenny Herbert will continue as a Trustee until February 2025;
- The role of Logistics Trustee will be laid down;

- The role of Elder Trustee will be laid down and Gray Wood will continue as an Elder and as a Trustee until February 2024;
- The role of Pastoral Trustee will be laid down and Row Bashforth will continue as a member of the Pastoral Committee only until May 2024;
- The role of Management Trustee will be laid down and Tim Hall Farthing will continue as a Trustee until May 2023;
- The role of Communications Trustee will be laid down and Leilani Rabemananjara will continue as a Trustee and as Media Officer until May 2025;
- Our clerks will continue as clerks until the dates appointed, but will no longer be trustees.

We have heard from Limes Brighton about his involvement with the Europe and Middle East section of FWCC and their forthcoming annual meeting. We appoint our representative, asking them to report back from the event at the next YFGM. For any other friends who wish to attend the event, bursary funding is available to help with financial costs.

2023.02.8 Special Interest Groups

Special interest groups this weekend were:

- Quaker Socialism (Lawrence Hall)
- Getting in the Sea (Jenny Baines)
- Moravian Side-wound Theology (Sasha Lawson-Frost)
- Godless Quakerism (Lawrence Hall)
- Responding to call for discernment on Membership (Tim Rouse)

We thank those who facilitated Special Interest Groups, and encourage anyone who would like to run a SIG at a future YFGM to speak to the Logistics committee.

2023.02.9 Co-options

We thank the Friends listed below who were co-opted to committees this weekend.

- Anne Seilly - Elders
- Jacob Webb - Nominations
- Georgia Campbell - Pastoral

We expect several committees to co-opt people for next YFGM. People interested in being co-opted should email noms.yfgm@gmail.com.

2023.02.10 Clerks' Offering

We have spent this weekend together in Brighton Meeting House, hearing the cries of seagulls through the windows. This location is both city-central and idyllic; we are surrounded by gardens and beautiful old buildings, as well as more than a few pubs. We had the delight of being visited by Adwoa Burnley, the clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting, who spoke to the importance of gratitude for this worshipful community that we share.

Our weekend has been cooking, worshipping, nominating, eating, cleaning; everything that is incredible, beautiful, normal for a YFGM. There has, as always, been tension as we try to live as a community; we cannot thank enough those people who go above and beyond to make all the practical things happen, and who provide the practical framework that allows us to have these weekends where the Spirit moves amongst us so freely.

In this broken world our systems don't always work how we imagine that they should, but we mend what we can and make do. We get to at least try to make better systems, and a better world.

We have heard powerful ministry on equality and integrity which has reminded us of the power of the Light in our community and the joy of experiencing that together. During our meeting for worship with Brighton Friends, a Friend stood up and ministered in song. As members of YFGM and the local meeting joined in, the beauty of their voices wove together, reminding us why shared experiences are often the most wonderful.

Signed, in and on behalf of Young Friends General Meeting,
Tim Rouse & Hannah Stranex
Co-clerks

Appendices & Further Information

- Appendix A: Trustee Reform Document

Trustee Reform

Detailed Proposal

Trustees

The trustee committee would be downsized to 5 people. The only trustee appointed as a named position would be the finance trustee, since this requires gaining deeper financial knowledge. The remaining 4 will be generic trustee members, who will wear various hats over time. Hats to be held flexibly from among those on trustees includes convener, data protection lead, etc. YFGM clerks will no longer be trustees, although they will be kept up to date and have the right to attend trustee meetings at their discretion.

The Trustees will continue as charity trustees and have responsibility for charity matters, managing YFGM's longer term interests and ensuring that policy is followed. To help Trustees in their work they may invite members of the Switchboard, or others, to their meetings as needed.

We expect that trustee roles will still need to include a handover period, to allow for responsibilities to be passed over more rationally (even though they are no longer expected to necessarily be a direct replacement).

Trustee Responsibilities include:

- Ensure that YFGM is discharging its duties as a charity regulated by the Charity Commission.
- Ensure that the duties of role holders are being discharged
- Have sign-off on items such as the budget and policies that are to be presented to the general meeting.
- Periodic review of policies to ensure legal compliance.
- Being the "contractual backstop" to the administrative worker
- Represent the charity of YFGM to BYM Trustees and other charity bodies.
- Develop and improve policies and constitutional documents
- Periodic Review of YFGM's relationships with Local and Area Meetings.
- Trustees should convene in case of any emergency at YFGM, where there is no policy in place.
- Running an annual Strategy Day for both Trustees and Switchboard.

As part of this reform, we propose to adjust the section in the constitution which forbids re-appointment of trustees to the same trustee role (which no longer makes sense without several distinct trustee roles), to instead prevent appointing or re-appointing anyone as a trustee who has been a YFGM trustee in the last three years.

Switchboard

Switchboard's primary function is to be a point of contact between all of the "big committees" before and during YFGM, to ensure the smooth running of community events. The focus is short to medium term.

It shall consist of the conveners of Elders, Pastoral, Logistics, and Nominations, both Clerks, a representative of Trustees, the Treasurer (as a representative from finance), and the Media Officer. It shall be convened by the convener of Elders (or another person chosen from Elders). This is intended as a representative committee, and each committee should be welcome to send someone else instead of their convenor as needed. The steering committee should also expect to invite other people when that would be useful, e.g. when there's an item that is particularly relevant to our needing input from a specific person.

Switchboard will meet at planning weekend, and between planning weekend and YFGM (probably online). Morning meetings of the Switchboard at YFGM should also happen to allow for communication during the event.

Switchboard responsibilities include;

- Ensure all are aware of what pre-YFGM tasks are being completed by committees, and if necessary find ways for those less busy to help the more busy
- Ensure a risk assessment has been performed for each event
- Ensure that agreed sessions are ready to happen.
- Ensure training for role holders is being made available and is being used
- Point of Contact with YFGM's worker - oversight of work including booking of meeting houses etc., balance of workload, resolve basic problems
- Implement policies when running YFGMs and acting for the community
- Discuss and implement responses to problems at YFGM in line with policies
- Care of Planning Weekend.

Clerks

Clerks shall continue to clerk business meetings and represent YFGM to the wider world as the default contact point. To enable them to do this they shall receive papers and minutes from Trustees, and be notified via redacted paper and minute if confidential matters have been discussed. Clerks are not normally expected to attend trustee meetings but may do so at their discretion (or may be asked to by trustees).

Clerks would also attend Meeting for Sufferings on behalf of YFGM.

Communications Trustee -> Media Officer

The media officer's responsibility is to ensure that YFGM's media presence is a positive one. Their duties shall include populating the blog and news pages of the website, and promotion of YFGM and its events on social media and other forms. This would be a three-year role.

This replaces the communications trustee role.

Management Trustee

This ceases to exist as a distinct role. Trustee responsibilities currently lying with the management trustee will belong to the trustee committee, with various "hats" where they need a named person (e.g. data protection).

Convenor of Trustees

This will no longer be a 3 year + handover role appointed directly through our nominations process. Instead, convenorship will be a "hat" to be held by one of the trustee committee - usually someone who has had a bit of time on trustees already. We'd expect this hat to be held for at least a year at a time.

Pastoral, Elder, and Logistics trustees

These cease to exist. Each of these committees will, however, be represented on Switchboard.

Finance Committee

Although this doesn't really change as a committee, we note that finance committee will report on running costs to the General Meeting, and to trustees on full finances.

This also has a presence on Switchboard via the treasurer and trustees via the finance trustee.

Meeting for Sufferings Rep

This ceases to exist as a distinct role, and is taken on by clerks.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding lead will be a hat held by a member of Pastoral. Deputy safeguarding lead will be a hat held by a trustee. In both cases it is expected that the holder will do so for at least a year at a time.

Constitutional Amendments

The proposed changes would require the following constitutional amendments:

Remove:

12.2. A member appointed to any of the following roles shall be a trustee of the Charity: [list of roles a - h]

Insert:

12.2. The trustees of the Charity shall be those appointed to the role of Trustee or Finance Trustee.

- a. Trustees must appoint a Convenor of Trustees from their number, whose appointment shall be recorded as a Minute of Record by the General Meeting.
- b. If the role of Finance Trustee is vacant, trustees should designate one of their number to fulfil the duties of this role until it is filled by the General Meeting.

Amend:

12.5. The number of trustees shall be not less than three but (unless otherwise determined by a resolution of the charity in general meeting) shall not exceed ~~twelve~~ eight.

Remove:

13.4. a. In the case of the Elder Trustee, Logistics Trustee, and Pastoral Trustee, the Nominations committee shall make a nomination on the recommendation of the Eldership, Logistics, or Pastoral committee respectively.

Amend:

13.5. Each of the trustees shall be appointed for a specified period not to exceed three years and six months, which shall conclude at a general meeting, ~~and shall not be eligible for re-appointment to the same role, but shall be eligible for appointment to a different trustee role.~~ No one shall be appointed to a trustee role if they have held a trustee role in the past three years.

Amend:

13.8. a. A proposal to make a co-option must be approved by a minute of the trustees Switchboard.

Policy Amendments

If accepted by the meeting, this proposal will require consequent updates to several YFGM policies (including Safeguarding, Data Protection, and Finance policies), replacing references to specific trustee roles with the relevant people in the new system. None of these are expected to need substantive changes, so we leave them with trustees to amend under the usual policy update procedure.

Transition Plans

If this proposal is accepted by the meeting, we hope to transition immediately.

For our current trustees where specific roles cease to exist, the default position would be;

- Convenor of Trustees -> Trustee for the remainder of their current term, currently wearing the Convenor hat and also the deputy safeguarding hat.
- Management Trustee -> Trustee for the remainder of their current term. N.B. In this case, we expect to appoint their replacement at this YFGM, with the current holder completing a handover period. We'd want them to do this handover period in either case.
- Elder Trustee -> both an Elder and a Trustee for the remainder of their current term.
- Pastoral Trustee -> both a member of Pastoral and a Trustee for the remainder of their current term. Currently wearing the safeguarding lead hat.
- Logistics Trustee - N/A, no one currently in role.
- Communications Trustee -> both a Trustee and Media Officer for the remainder of their current term.

Our finance trustee and co-clerks would remain in their roles, although the co-clerks would cease to be trustees.

This would leave a trustee body of 6: 5 generic trustees (one of whom was in a handover period) and one finance trustee.

We would expect to appoint 1 new Trustee this YFGM, leaving 7 trustees initially and 6 after the end of a handover period. This is one more than the stated aim, but we feel that is worth doing for a transition period particularly with some transferred over trustees who also continue in other roles. This should be re-evaluated the next time a trustee term comes to an end.

The above may be varied by consultation between the roleholders in question and nominations committee.

For non-trustees:

- The role of Meeting for Sufferings rep would cease to exist. Its current holder is expecting to be released this YFGM regardless, so we would merely not appoint to it.
- Elders, Logistics, Pastoral, and Nominations would each need to ensure they had an appointed convenor, and someone (who may or may not be the convenor) to attend Switchboard.