

Young Friends General Meeting

23-25 February 2024

York Friargate

Minutes

Those Present: A Ballard, Alex Foxe, Alex Skinner, Alexander Kermond, Alicia Birch, Anya Nanning Ramamurthy, Arden Chandler, Arjun Nanning Ramamurthy, Artemis, Aspen Stopard English, Becky Shirley, Bel Ingham, Beth Wild, Bobby Cooper, Bridget Holtom, Calum Freeman, Ceridwen Jenkins, Charlie Appleyard, Chloe Scaling, Claude Stanford, Daisy Bergman, Dan Dickson, Daniel Marrs-Gant, Dominic Rawlinson, Edward Rugg, Eliza Martin, Ell Kirk, Ella Booth, Elliot Mears, Emily Brown, Esme Fenn, Eva Park, Frankie Austin, Freddie Brasher, Georgia Campbell, Grace Roberts, Hannah Davies, Hannah Stranex, Izzy Hepburn, Jack Pipe, Jacob Webb, James Davies, Jane Swinney-Sievwright, Jennie Atherton, Jessi Fenn, Jessica Beck, Jo Moylett, Juno Lee, Katie Turney, Kenneth MacIver, Kea Ward, Kevin McNamara, Kim Edwards, Leilani Rabemananjara, Liam Lawson, Limes Brighton, Louis Roberts, Lucy Cox Dodgson, Mads Carlier, Maë Punter, Matthew Burnell, Niamh Echo Swinney-Seivwright, Nicole Marr, Peter Badrick, Rachael Booth, Robin Henderson, Rowan Queerly, Sam Sender, Sammy Gilbert, Samuel Bennett, Samuel Cooper, Stephen Shirley, Steven Calvosa, Syed Bekhemassa, Tamara Ullyart, Tas Cooper, Tim Hall Farthing, Tim Rouse, Vanessa Sayal, Will Reed, Willoughby Densham, Willow Bevington, Wren Argent, Zoe Badrick (83)

Co-Clerks:	Tim Rouse, Hannah Stranex
Trustees:	Leilani Rabemananjara, Georgia Campbell, Bel Ingham, Kevin McNamara, Liam Lawson
Area & Local Meeting Representatives	Gray Wood - Hampshire & Islands AM Tamara Ullyart - Darlington LM Dan Dickson - South East Scotland AM Alexandra Boliver-Brown - East Kent AM Maë Punter - Jesus Lane LM Juno Lee - North East Thames AM Sam Sender - Cornwall AM Will Reed - York AM

2024.02.1 Minute of record: Business Method

Our elders and clerks have introduced the Quaker business method, the way we make decisions together in a spirit of worship.

2024.02.2 Minute of record: Nominations

We have heard an introduction to the nominations process from Chloe Scaling, the deputy convenor of our nominations committee. This process is the way in which we find and appoint people to serve in the roles that facilitate our community. We were encouraged to reflect on who might be the right names to serve in each role, and make suggestions to the Nominations Committee through the noms box. The Nominations Committee will speak with those suggested, discern upon names to nominate to the Meeting, and bring those back to us on Sunday to make appointments as led by the Spirit.

2024.02.3 Report from Trustees

We heard from our convenor of Trustees, Leilani Rabemananjara, one of our five trustees. We heard that the trustees attended a course on being a charity trustee provided by Woodbrooke. The trustees submitted our annual report to the Charity Commission, which is available to read on the YFGM website. The Trustees are also looking at updating the travel and finance policies. The report in full is appended to these minutes. Any Friends wishing to contact the Trustees can do so between YFGMs by emailing them at trustees@youngfriends.org.uk or via the Discord.

2024.02.4 Report from Planning Weekend Newcomers

We heard a report from our Planning Weekend Newcomers, Artemis and Kenneth, which reflected that attending planning weekend laid bare some of the things that felt opaque whilst attending YFGM, and was a good experience overall. We thank them for their presence at and contribution to Planning Weekend, and append their full report to these minutes.

2024.02.5 [Report from Switchboard](#)

We heard a report from Georgia Campbell, our Switchboard convenor. Switchboard has been in place for a year now, and has found its feet in terms of how it operates, responding to questions that need to be considered between YFGM events, and across different committees. Since the last YFGM it has considered a variety of things, including preparing for YFGM and looking at risks and contingency plans around our activities.

2024.02.6 [Report from Sufferings](#)

Tim Rouse, one of our co-Clerks, gave a report from Meetings for Sufferings in December. At the latest Sufferings, items of interest to Young Friends that were considered include: a consultation on the phrasing of the Quaker marriage declaration and making it more inclusive, membership as practised by Local and Area Meetings, an update around Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering, and Meeting for Sufferings, and considering the status of Quaker Recognised Bodies (QRBs).

In the last year there have been informal conversations amongst YFGMers about being an anti-racist church and whether the Quaker Concern Over Population (QCOP) is at odds with this commitment. As QCOP's status as a QRB was due for consideration at this Meeting for Sufferings, our rep raised this with the Clerks of MfS, which has led to a process of dialogue with QCOP and a pause on the renewal of their QRB status.

2024.02.7 [Report from Meeting with QCOP](#)

Our Friend Will reported on the progress of the dialogue with QCOP. Britain Yearly Meeting facilitated a Meeting for Listening between several members of YFGM, attending as individuals rather than as our representatives, and several from QCOP.

A range of views were held by the YFGMers and members of QCOP present, and while we share a commitment to reproductive rights, it was felt that they tend to see this as a means to an end rather than a goal in its own right. Those who attended from YFGM reported that they were relieved by some of the things said, concerned by others.

We expect to continue this dialogue, with a focus on safeguarding against conversations that lead into population control narratives, and embedding anti-racism in any conversations about population.

We thank Will for his report.

2024.02.8 Report from Quakers in Yorkshire

In January, Jess Beck delivered a session on behalf of YFGM at Quakers in Yorkshire. We heard a report from Jess about this, which is appended to the minutes, where we heard that she gave ministry that 'we are not the Quakers of the future, but the Quakers of the present.' We thank her for representing us.

2024.02.9 Nominations Returns

We approve the temporary expansion of the Elders committee to six members, by appointing two Friends this weekend, and expect the committee to return to five members from our October gathering.

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
Planning Weekend Newcomer	Kenneth Artemis Rosie Gilbert	Willow Bevington Jack Pipe Calum Freeman	May 2024
Logistics	Becky Cutts Alexandra Boliver-Brown	Zoe Badrick Freddie Brasher	February 2027
Elder	Gray Wood	Rachael Booth Matthew Burnell	February 2027

2024.02.10 Palestine

We have watched in horror the most recent escalation of a decades-long conflict in Palestine, particularly in the Gaza strip. The cycle of violence has no winners, only victims, including both Israelis and Palestinians.

The military assault in Gaza not only takes lives, but seeks to threaten the very existence of Palestinians as a people. This is not a genocide in the making; it is a genocide in progress, rooted in the systematic dehumanisation of an entire people,

and an attempt to erase that culture and identity. We see it as a moral imperative to respond corporately as Quakers, to continue to learn but also to speak out, and to use our power in whatever capacity we have, individual and collective, to resist and oppose genocide and our own government's collusion in it.

In many ways, the settler-colonialist actions of the state of Israel mirror that of Britain's bloody past, and our own government along with others is responsible for supporting the state of Israel both with words and weapons.

Britain's history doesn't mean we can't speak out on injustice elsewhere - but in doing so, we need to acknowledge, understand, and criticise our own history and the privileges that it brings us today.

In condemning the actions of the Israeli state, and of the British state which upholds them, we emphasise our care and sorrow for the individuals at the heart of this conflict. The 'innocent victims', the terrorists and freedom fighters, the conscript and volunteer soldier - all are unique, precious, children of God.

As we go forward we will strive to do what we can, how we can, to work for peace. We recognise the value of hope in complementing the actions we take for peace - of keeping our faith that, one day, "freedom from the scourge of war will ... be brought about through the faithfulness of individuals to their inmost convictions". (part of QF&P 23.92)

As we ask ourselves '*what does love require of us?*' we recognise the need to preserve the peoples, practices and culture of Palestine, through action direct and indirect. We uphold our members in their ministry, and will commit to standing with them in their work for peace.

We are reminded of the words of Friend Bayard Rustin, that "We need in every community a group of angelic troublemakers who really will disrupt. Our power is in our ability to make things unworkable. Not with any weapons because that is not our weapon. The only weapon we have is our bodies, and we need to tuck them in places so things, wheels don't turn."

2024.02.11 [Change of signatories](#)

Following minute 2023.10.16, we would normally expect to have three signatories on our bank accounts; the Treasurer, Finance Trustee, and one further trustee.

To allow for handover periods and additional capacity in making payments, we have previously appointed Hannah Stranex as an additional signatory, but we now release Hannah, as well as Sammy Gilbert, as signatories.

The signatories for our Co-operative Bank accounts are:

- Tim Hall-Farthing, Treasurer
- Liam Lawson, Finance Trustee
- Bel Ingham, Trustee

We have released as signatories:

- Hannah Stranex, Co-Clerk
- Sammy Gilbert, ex-Finance Trustee

We further note that the finance committee are in the process of setting up a new bank account with the Charity Bank. The signatories for this account will be:

- Tim Hall-Farthing, Treasurer
- Liam Lawson, Finance Trustee
- Leilani Rabemananjara, Trustee

2024.02.12 Special Interest Groups

Special interest groups this weekend were:

- Quakers and Disability - Quaker Disability Equality Group
- Outreach Discussion Group - Juno Lee
- Capoeira - James Davies
- Making Upcycled Wallets - Sam Sender

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.

2024.02.13 Co-options

We note that the following friends have been co-opted to serve on committees this weekend, and thank them for their service. We remind committees to inform trustees at the first opportunity of any co-options they wish to make.

- Kevin McNamara - Pastoral
- Rachael Booth & Anya Nanning Ramamurthy - Elders
- Freddie Brasher - Logistics
- Niamh Echo Swinney Seivwright - Nominations

2024.02.14 Budget & How We Spend Our Money

Our treasurer, Tim Hall Farthing, has explained to us the process of deciding our budget for 2024, and with Liam Lawson, our finance trustee, has talked us through our income and expenditure as it was in 2023, and the proposed budget for 2024.

We approve the budget as it has been proposed, with the following notes:

- We have been reminded that funds are available for cool activities that align with our charitable purposes; suggestions for activities that might cost money should be directed to the Treasurer.
- We have heard of the importance of being clear and precise in what we ask of our administrative staff, and all of those who do work on our behalf.
- We agree to continue paying reasonable hire costs or making a comparable donation for the use of meeting houses.
- We agree to continue supporting our sister body, European and Middle Eastern Young Friends, with an annual donation.
- We ask our Finance Committee and Trustees to liaise with North East Thames Quaker Trust, to discuss either returning the restricted funds which we hold, or to ask for these to be unrestricted.

We have reviewed the level of reserves held, and are satisfied that this is sufficient for our needs; we have once again budgeted for more expenditure than income, in the hope of making good use of our financial resources to support our Quaker work.

We thank our finance team for their diligence and hard work in preparing and explaining this budget. We are grateful for how much they have achieved since their appointments in October.

The report and budget in full is appended to these minutes.

2023.02.15 Our next gathering

Our next YFGM is in May, over the bank holiday weekend from the 24 to 27. We haven't quite confirmed where it will be, yet, and will publish the location on our website as soon as this is known. We look forward to seeing each other again in May.

We will meet to plan this gathering from 12 to 14 April in Bradford-on-Avon. Our Planning Weekends are open to all, including those on committees, our Planning Weekend Newcomers, and others who feel led to attend.

A big part of Planning Weekend is planning the agenda and items we want to consider at the next YFGM, or in the future; we have had the opportunity this weekend to suggest items to be threshed at Planning Weekend, and encourage Friends to suggest more items in the run up to Planning Weekend by speaking to Elders.

2024.02.16 Clerks' Offering

We return to York, at that precious moment in the year that is not quite winter, but not quite spring. The wind in the streets is cold, but the daffodils are in bloom beneath the walls of the castle nearby.

A similar wind blows through YFGM, too; a current of fresh faces, new Friends who we welcome with open arms and open hearts. We are just as overjoyed to see some familiar faces return, and we are glad to feel like a community with space to nourish and support one another, from which we can take and give in equal measure.

We take joy, too, from the blossoming of our committees, which feel like they are growing into the stability and vigour that we have long hoped for. Planning for this YFGM wasn't easy, and despite, as always, a tight schedule, this gathering has felt like there has been time for beautiful worship, close fellowship, and for us to feel the Spirit at work amongst us, including in the practice of our Meetings for Worship for business.

Our faith is strong, and we are a group of strong personalities, strong convictions, and strong love. We go from this place, resolving in our hearts to each do our one thing to shape the world to be better.

"Friends, let nothing stop you. Faith the size of a mustard seed will move a mountain, but first it'll move one foot one step towards a spade. If you can't manage a mountain, go for a spade, if you can't manage a spade go for a step. If you find yourself further away, point yourself back at a spade."

In friendship,

Hannah Stranex & Tim Rouse, co-Clerks

Appendices & Further Information

- A. Planning Weekend Newcomers' Report
- B. Budget 2024

Appendix A: Planning Weekend Newcomer Report

In the leadup to the Planning Weekend, information including the threshing documents, agenda, and previous sessions feedback was clearly communicated over the YFGM discord and via email. This meant we felt more prepared to participate & contribute. We felt that, in addition to this, having the documents clearly & prominently displayed on the website would be a useful addition. Using both discord and email in tandem is helpful for those who have difficulty accessing discord.

As noted by the previous planning weekend newcomers, the number of acronyms and definitions could be confusing, but explanations were readily offered to us throughout. We agree that proactively defining these, and compiling a list of frequently asked questions is a better solution to this and would be more effective and inclusive. Wearing role badges was extremely useful to navigate the weekend.

During the threshing sessions, and the final agenda setting, there were a lot of emotionally charged and intense discussions around the issues which are important to us as a community at present, namely the genocide in Gaza and trans rights, and at times the more unstructured and informal nature of threshing seemed to make these discussions more strained and hard on all those involved.

Using collaborative documents for threshing and agenda setting made the sessions more accessible, as all friends could participate easily, without having to crowd around a paper copy or squint.

We were impressed how adaptable both the agenda and the attendees were to overruns, underruns, and fresh info/changing situations. A good sense of community was felt with the need to get things done by the end of PW, and the openness and willingness for friends to pitch in and make improvements or support the running of the weekend added to this.

We also enjoyed having more unscheduled/unstructured time, in particular we benefited from hearing about the history of YFGM and having more discussions of the issues we were meeting to discuss.

Attending planning weekend laid bare some of the things that felt opaque whilst attending YFGM, and was a good experience overall - particular thanks to Jane and Echo for keeping us fed during the weekend, and to Scarborough meeting for lending us their lovely meeting house.

In Friendship,
Kenneth MacIver, Artemis

BUDGET PENDING