

Young Friends General Meeting

20-22 February 2026

York Friargate

Minutes

Those Present: A Ballard, Aaron Longdon, Adam Culverwell, Adam Woods, Anya Doliczny, Anya Nanning Ramamurthy, Ash Sutherland, August Brown, Becky Shirley, Bel Ingham, Beth Wild, Calum Freeman, Ceridwen Jenkins, Charlie Watkin, Chloe Scaling, Clark Seanor, Claude Stanford, Dan Dickson, David Harrison, Declan Minskip, Dominic Rawlinson, Ed Rugg, Elliot Mears, Elliot Kirk, Emil Brierley, Emily Dellow, Eve Park, Felix Matthews, Finn Taylor, Frankie de Vos, Freddie Brasher, Georgia Campbell, Georgie Rix, Gwen Baines, Hannah Stranex, Iola Wallace, Izzy Hepburn, Jack Pipe, Jacob Webb, Jennie Atherton, Jessie Fenn, Joan Miller, Joshua Marchant, Juno Lee, Kenneth MacIver, Kima Meijer, Len Berry, Limes Brighton, Louis Willis, Lucy Sproule, Mads Carlier, Maë Punter, Maisy-May Gilhart, Matthew Burnell, Megan Irwin, Millie Robinson, Morgan Gasson, Nell Gayle-Harris, Nicole Marr, Rachael Booth, Remy Dimmock, Robin Halpin, Robin Henderson, Rosie Gillham, Russet, Sage Arkless, Sage Dunn-Krahn, Sam King, Sammy Gilbert, Samuel Cooper, Samuel Robinson, Sasha Mir King-Smith, SJ Spencer, Skye Simpson, Skye Dutton, Theo Healey, Thomas Sutherland, Tyler Griffin, Waldo Walker, Will Reed, William Stratham, Willoughby Densham (82)

Co-Clerks:	Chloe Scaling and Will Reed
Trustees:	At Open of Meeting: Georgia Campbell, Bel Ingham, Kevin McNamara, August Brown, Maë Punter, Greg Stanier At Close of Meeting: Georgia Campbell, Bel Ingham, Kevin McNamara, August Brown, Maë Punter, Finn Taylor, Kenneth MacIver
Area & Local Meeting Representatives	Becky Shirley - Central England Area Meeting Ed Rugg - Central England Area Meeting Emil Brierley - Hardshaw & Mann Area Meeting Nicole Marr - West Kent Area Meeting Sam King - Carlton Hill (Leeds) Local Meeting Will Reed - York Area Meeting

2026.02.1 [Minute of record: Intro to Quaker Business Method](#)

Rachael Booth, one of our elders, reminded us how the Quaker business method works, including specifically at YFGM.

2026.02.2 Changing our name

Matthew Burnell introduced the item.

Young Friends General Meeting has not always been our name. In 1993, we changed from Young Friends Central Committee to Young Friends General Meeting.

In May 2025, a Special Interest Group was held to discuss whether YFGM might change our name and, if so, what our next name might be.

We have reflected on the importance of the word “Friends” for our community and of the need to speak plainly about who we are.

We have discerned that our new name will be ‘General Meeting of Young Friends in Britain.’

We ask our Trustees to begin the process of officially changing our name with the charity commission, noting that we will also be known as Young Friends General Meeting until this is finalised.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings so that our name can be changed in Britain Yearly Meeting’s book of discipline.

2026.02.3 May spiritual review weekend

Dan Dickson and Calum Freeman introduced the item.

We feel a strong leading to have a spiritual review weekend in May 2026, rather than our usual gathering. There are questions we have about who we are as a community and we need time to pause and try to discern on these questions.

Four core themes are proposed:

1. Why do we gather? What is our nature? What are we for?
2. Who are we between gatherings? What sort of community?
3. Are our processes and structures serving us? How can our structures enable bold and vulnerable service?
4. How do we financially support this?

This will be a General Meeting of the charity, albeit with only time-sensitive, required business. We expect to receive the accounts and any necessary nominations. We ask the Nominations committee to decide how and when any nominations come to the General Meeting.

In order to take this break, we would like role holders to act in a limited capacity and to ensure that the gathering arrangements are planned to ensure this is possible. Role holders' travel expenses will be paid.

In order to reflect on who we are, it would be helpful for attenders to have previously experienced a YFGM/YFB gathering. Whilst those who have not attended a YFB gathering before may attend this weekend, we will not be able to provide the support and context to these Friends that would be typical of a YFB gathering. As such, we strongly discourage these Friends from attending. We will ensure that we are clear in setting this as an expectation in communications.

For this gathering only, we ask that the newcomers bursary be suspended. Instead, any newcomers who choose to attend can claim their travel expenses for the next YFB they attend. We ask the Trustees to ensure this takes place.

We do encourage those who have attended a YFB gathering before but feel new, or who have not attended in a long time, to join us and bring their perspectives.

We ask that the planning of this spiritual review continue at our April Planning Weekend in Darlington.

2026.02.4 Admin support

Georgia Campbell and Will Reed introduced the item.

A lot of time and effort has gone into bringing this proposal to the General Meeting. It has been a painful process which has reminded us again of the need to support, uphold and trust our Trustees. We thank our Trustees and others involved for their careful consideration throughout this process. In 2012, it was noted that YFGM could not run without paid admin support and our role holders have been doing this for the past year. We thank the Friends who have undertaken the administration required to run YFGM and hope that we will be better able to commit our time and energy to the spiritual life of our Meeting, including our Concern.

We note that without a significant change to our income, this proposal will be unsustainable. We hope that in agreeing to this proposal, admin support will give us the capacity to look seriously at our financial situation and develop new ways of bringing in income to run our Meeting sustainably.

We ask our Trustees to agree to the proposal as set out and bring this back to the General Meeting for review in February 2027, once the support has been in place for a while. At that point, the General Meeting will discern whether to continue with the arrangement in its current form, to amend it or to terminate it.

We append the proposal to these minutes.

2026.02.5 Nominations to Nominations

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

Role	Released	Appointed	Until
Nominations	Jacob Webb Izzy Hepburn	Ceridwen Jenkins	February 2029

2026.02.6 Minute of record: Separated Reports Meeting

An online session was held on Zoom on Tuesday 17th February, 2026, 7:30pm (GMT). This session was not a General Meeting of the charity, but rather was an opportunity to hear more from members of our community about the life of our Meeting between gatherings, and to meet in anticipation of our weekend together.

The meeting heard the following reports in full:

- Report from our Planning Weekend Newcomers
- Trustee report
- Switchboard report
- Finance report
- New Ways of Belonging Working Group report
- Meeting for Sufferings report

2026.02.7 Planning Weekend Newcomer report

The Planning Weekend Newcomer report was presented in full by William Statham and Georgie Rix at the Separated Reports Meeting. The report was so admired that we were called to bring this item to the General Meeting. The report is appended to the minutes.

2026.02.8 Finance report

A summary of the finance report was presented by Tom Sutherland. Friends are called to donate money to YFB if they can and to ask their meetings if they can also donate money to keep our community going. A slightly amended version of the report circulated before the meeting is appended to the minutes.

2026.02.9 Minute of record: Reports

The other reports mentioned in minute 2026.02.6 were circulated to Friends in advance of the Meeting and are appended to the minutes, along with the New Ways of Belonging proposal from Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC 2025 11 02). This paper is still to come to Agenda Planning Committee, meaning it's not known when or in what form this proposal will be brought before the Yearly Meeting.

2026.02.10 Minute of record: Greetings to the World Executive Committee of Young Adult Friends and Young Quaker Christian Association - Africa

On Friday 20th February 2026, our Friend Tim Rouse got on a plane and flew to Kenya for the first face-to-face meeting of the World Executive Committee of Young Adult Friends (WECYAF). Following the committee meeting, he is traveling on to Uganda to take part in the Young Quaker Christian Association - Africa's Triennial gathering near Kampala. We send our loving greetings to both.

2026.02.11 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
Planning Weekend Newcomer	Georgie Rix Mary Casson William Statham	Robin Henderson Rosie Gillham Theo Healey	May 2026
Fundraiser	None- handover period	Aaron Longdon	May 2029
Finance Trustee	None- handover period	Finn Taylor	May 2029
Trustee	Greg Stanier (in absentia)	Kenneth MacIver	May 2029
Elders	Rachael Booth	Calum Freeman Sasha King-Smith	February 2029
Pastoral	Devon Tipping Elliot Mears Kenneth MacIver	Ash Sutherland Georgie Rix Robin Halpin	February 2029
New Ways of Belonging Working Group Representative	Grace Roberts	n/a	

Our representative to Europe and Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) Spring Gathering 2026 was appointed between our October 2025 and February 2026 gatherings. Louis Willis was appointed.

We note the following co-options to committees for this YFGM and thank the Friends below for their service:

Georgie Rix and Ash Sutherland to Pastoral.

We thank Sam Cooper for choosing co-option to Nominations discernment as his chosen Saturday evening entertainment.

Clark Seanor and Becky Shirley have been our catering co-ordinators for this weekend.

We note that the Safeguarding handover from Jennie Atherton to Hannah Stranex is ongoing and expected to end in May 2026 rather than this weekend.

2026.02.12 [Minute of record: Special Interest Groups](#)

Special Interest Groups this weekend were:

- Lent
- YFB Advices and Queries
- Quaker Vegan Witness
- Boardgames
- Singing/Music

We thank everyone who facilitated these sessions for us, and encourage Friends to think of SIGs they might like to run at future YFBs.

2026.02.13 [Minute of record: Spirituality session](#)

Our elders held a Spirituality session asking the question, 'Is too much business bad?' We thank everyone for their thoughtful contributions and this will inform how we bring business to the Meeting going forward.

2026.02.14 [Minute of record: Our Concern: what do we do next?](#)

A session was held to consider ways in which we can act on our Concern for trans and non-binary inclusion in the Religious Society of Friends. A main session was held to develop ideas. Alongside this, a quieter zine workshop was held for a more creative approach.

Four questions were asked in the main session:

1. How do we work with those already supporting trans Friends in our Religious Society?
2. How do we engage with the unsure majority of Friends?
3. How do we respond to prejudice against trans Friends in our Religious Society?
4. How does YFGM take responsibility for our Concern?

Friends helped to facilitate conversations on these questions and made notes to be shared in a follow-up meeting with clerks and elders. We thank these Friends for their service.

2026.02.15 Clerks' Offering

A momentous gathering! We are changing our name to the General Meeting of Young Friends in Britain. Whether we decide to colloquially refer to ourselves as GMYFB, YFiB or YFB, is up to the community. This will likely come about organically. How long will it take to change our name officially and among Quakers more widely? Who knows!

We have witnessed the hubris of man, or rather Limes, as he attempted to eat an entire pan of leftover sauce with a ladle. This was unsuccessful.

We saw ourselves come together as a community, with everyone pitching in. The kitchen was clean at 11pm on Saturday evening. This feels nothing short of miraculous, but it's down to who we are and who we've been to each other. Some of us are goofy goobers but still have our shit together.

A range of entertainments were held on Saturday evening, with a quiz providing much laughter and quieter ents of crafts and a film providing a more chilled out evening. Crafts were abandoned in favour of singing sea shanties and one Friend decided to choose a secret fourth option of being co-opted to join the Nominations committee in their discernment!

We thought about how we take up our Concern, and hopefully go ahead with a new sense of energy. As we prepare for our spiritual review, we will learn how we are led to nurture our community, as we grow in ourselves and together, and nurturing the Religious Society of Friends as we do so.

We are YFB: Young, Fabulous and Broke.

We will meet for a spiritual review weekend at Bristol Redlands Meeting House from 22nd to 25th May 2026.

Chloe Scaling and Will Reed, co-clerks

Appendices & Further Information

- A. Administration Proposal
- B. Planning Weekend Newcomer Report
- C. Finance Report
- D. Trustees Report
- E. Switchboard Report
- F. New Ways of Belonging Working Group Report
- G. Meeting for Sufferings Report
- H. Ways into membership for unattached Friends: a proposal from a working group of Quaker Life Central Committee

A: Administration Proposal

Thanks to new timelines on the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Britain Yearly Meeting, we now have the opportunity to discern, as a General Meeting, on the offer of administrative support from Quakers in Britain. This is a change from Documents in Advance 2 which has us receiving a minute from Trustees about this administrative support agreement. Below you will find details about the agreement. Friends are asked to send any questions to Trustees in advance of the weekend (trustees@youngfriends.org.uk). Three of our Trustees will also be available to answer questions in person at the weekend at set times - keep an ear out for announcements!

There will be a digital annotated copy of the current draft of the Memorandum of Understanding available for interested Friends at the gathering; you can also ask Trustees for a copy of this by emailing. As our discernment will be on the question of whether to go ahead with the agreement in the broad perspective, rather than the minutiae of the agreement, the Memorandum of Understanding is not required reading.

Matters of Fact/FAQ - Admin Support

Admin Support Officers (ASOs) Time

Offer from QiB (Quakers in Britain) for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to allocate 1 day per week of an Administrative Support Officer's time to working on tasks for YFGM. This would be provided by a member of staff employed to work predominantly for QiB the rest of their working week.

There is flexibility for the person to manage their variable workload where there are busier periods of time for YFGM and QiB respectively (i.e. working a half day on YFGM tasks one week and one and a half days the next). We would agree to an annual timetable of work which would take into account existing commitments

(e.g. Yearly Meeting). It is helpful if other committees can update Trustees on when they are busiest, and any timelines for the tasks we'd like admin support on.

ASOs Tasks

This is the current task list sent to QiB. Committees are encouraged to share any updates or additions to this at any time.

Essential Tasks

Task	Example	Time?
Liaising with and booking meeting houses for YFGM and PW events which meet our requirements.	Including checking accessibility of the building and transport to location. Gather details of capacity, rooms, facilities etc.	Work could be spread across the year, booking well in advance. Six meeting houses per year are required.
Maintaining datasets and relevant documents. Sharing info with relevant committees.	Event sign-ups with dietary/accessibility information. Update membership and role holder records and mailing list.	Heaviest workload before YFGMs, some work after (from Noms) and odd tasks throughout the year. Backlog to work on in quiet periods.
Creating information sheets for each YFGM.	Medical, dietary, accessibility info, emergency contacts. Some other general info.	Heaviest workload before YFGMs. Templates for general info may require only minimal adaptation.
Supporting the catering coordinator.	organising pots and pans shipping and storage, providing dietary requirements from sign-ups. (Food order/planning help?)	Work in advance of YFGMs and PWs.
Support Finance with book-keeping	Admin support of finance tasks, finding Independent examiner	Workload likely to be higher around YFGM and annual reporting deadlines (Accounts to YFGM- May, Accounts to Charity commission- October)

Other Tasks

Task	Example	Time?
------	---------	-------

Monitoring event registration numbers and information.	Ensure relevant information is passed to each committee - including updating Logistics committee with the number of attendees while registration is live	Run up to YFGMs.
Docs in Advance Support	Ability to understand YFGM docs in advance structure/processes in order to recognise and highlight areas that need updating. Prompt committees to complete their relevant areas in good time and send this out when it's complete.	Run up to YFGMs.
Help with finding accessible travel and off-site accommodation.	Current and possible future venues. Collate information to be used as a guide in advance.	Could be spread across the year for venues we regularly attend.

Hiring, Management and Termination/Continuation

QiB have shared they have someone who works part of their time in service to Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) which is being laid down in May. As this person is in post already, we could work with them over April to complete any training/upskilling on tasks specific to YFGM (e.g.familiarity with google drive etc). This means they'd be available to start work for us from the beginning of May (pending MoU finalisation), supporting and learning from committees as we prepare for May's gathering.

QiB would assign our work to one ASO, so it will be one member of staff we build a working relationship with. If they were to leave their post QiB would ensure our work is completed by someone else so we would not be without their service.

Day to day management of the work would be overseen by the ASO's line manager from QiB. YFGM would have a dedicated supervisor who delegates priority of tasks and is the main YFGM point of contact for the ASO. The YFGM supervisor would meet at least once a month with the ASO. If there were any concerns about the ASOs work, the YFGM supervisor would contact their QiB manager in the first instance for us to work together to resolve the issue. Trustees would support the YFGM supervisor to monitor and check the ASO's work and discuss priority of tasks, informed by other committees.

Matters relating to the arrangement would be discussed with the Head of Governance at quarterly meetings or in line with the YFGM cycle of events. As a QiB employee, the ASO is bound by QiB Terms and Conditions of employment and

policies which may at times not align with YFGM policies. For example, the access and use of any YFGM IT systems by QiB staff would need to be in line with the QiB IT policy, or excepted for in the MoU. We would put in place a data-sharing agreement to clarify what data is collected and how it is processed by QiB.

This agreement is for one year of work. QiB or YFGM are able to end the agreement early, giving at least three months notice. We will hold meetings at least quarterly with QiB to ensure we are happy with the arrangement and discuss any issues that may arise. We could request to continue this agreement or negotiate another with QiB to begin May 2027. We could also leave the agreement to end in May 2027 and not take up any alternative with QiB.

Conflicts of interest, such as QiB hiring a YFGM member, would be flagged early and mitigations placed. There are no known conflicts of interest at this stage

Cost

The following costs are indicative. A salary review has since been undertaken which may affect these costs, in line with living wage increases.

Salary costs, including NI and Pension @1 day per week*	£7,811
Management costs**	£1,930
IT costs (assuming no additional software licences required by YFGM)	£115
Total Annual Cost	£9,856

* Salaries are based on median rates of pay, including NI and Pension contributions, anticipated in 2026.

**Management costs include weekly and monthly supervision of the staff member in line with BYM policies and procedures, plus monthly task-based meetings and quarterly account management meetings with YFGM.

This was calculated to include the London pay uplift, as many staff working for QiB in Friends House are entitled to this.

Why is this different to MBS/previous QiB proposal

Previously, YFGM have contracted with QiB under various arrangements for admin support, most recently in an Interim MoU (Memorandum of Understanding). It was decided in 2021 not to make this a permanent arrangement due to concerns of the

efficacy of the support. We hope to mitigate this concern this time with changes to the management structure, clearly outlined expectations, as well as it being a different person doing the admin work.

One of the main challenges we faced with MBS was not having a single person who was providing our needs, instead feeding into a team. This meant we frequently had to reiterate our expectations and chase where work was. One of the advantages of this QiB proposal is that we would have one staff member working on YFGM tasks.

Freelance possibility:

The scope of the research and due diligence required to adequately prepare to engage someone to do freelance work is far beyond current trustee capacity and would significantly delay the engagement of support. In addition, we believe that the person, task and legal compliance management for freelance admin support are likely to outweigh much of the time saved by the admin work taken on. This could be an option in future if YFGM's structures are able to support a more hands-on engagement with admin work.

B: Planning Weekend Newcomers Report

31st January 2026

The Clarendon Times Online: Two Unsuspecting Individuals Dragged into YFGM Planning Weekend Cabal

Between the 9th and 11th January, at Lancaster Meeting House in Lancaster (of all places), two unsuspecting and as yet unnamed individuals became embroiled in the long-time secret functional ritual of Young Friends General Meeting Planning Weekend, the clandestine workings of which were only revealed last year in Quaker Metro. These journalists (for which we have the utmost respect and certainly not a petty corporate rivalry here at the Clarendon Times) discovered that the affair, which aims to devise practical and business workings of the gathering of some simply rad youths under 35, uses a process called threshing to determine what will be discerned at the upcoming event. This method involves a slightly less formal and pressured form of business meeting, producing threshing notes rather than minutes. It is also focused on silence and helpful vocal contributions, rather than pain and suffering as some have been led to believe.

Reports from the two individuals, since the event, who after being rescued from their ordeal, were placed in therapeutic programmes, suggest that the practices uncovered in this investigation are still in place. They, purportedly, took a peek into the serious and abject horrors of committee operations (including gardens), the commitment of whose members cannot be understated. Thankfully they managed

to settle back into their own abodes of living when they returned and were not successfully rehomed into so called “home committees”.

Elsewhere, the victims were forced to engage in social activities for which they put on brave faces. One endured such hardships as leading an assortment of their captors through the treacherous city landscape on frivolous expeditions as well as being led on late night visits to such destinations as Napoli. Meanwhile another reported being forced to perform musical renditions.

In a shocking turn of events, it appears that the participants may be considering returning to the accursed event and both will be attending the February young friends debacle. According to the victims, captors appeared to be welcoming and friendly and were already known to them. They held a re-education session prior to the event, explaining the threshing document, which may have helped with washing the brains.

The rescued even noted some positive experiences with the process of threshing, finding it easier to contribute (if that word can even be used for those suffering under such torture) than in normal business and also “enjoyed” the cutthroat activity of agenda setting (though no non-metaphorical throats were cut). Though another, rather more rationally, found the contradictory nature of dialogue (presumably a method of afflicting pain upon their victims) meant the threshing regime was challenging to keep up with and a bit stressful. They maintained however the interesting and insightful nature of some of the items, such as relations with meeting houses regarding transphobia and practical challenges of running such a large event.

Nevertheless the hostages, become so socially entangled with the captors, that they helped or at least endeavoured to assist in such tasks as cooking and identifying white beans within a sea of chickpeas. Such cooperative behaviours as this have been branded by experts as casebook examples of Stockholm syndrome.

Here at The Clarendon Times Online, we are grateful to the planning weekend meeting in creating the separated reports meeting. Despite the fact that this unleashes more minutes for the young friends to discern more of their dastardly Quakerly minutes, it will at least inhibit the crazed attempts of the indoctrinated victims to spread pro-planning weekend propaganda, to an audience comprised of more non-role holders. (The role-holders are regrettably already lost causes). Though, unfortunately nothing may stop them spewing this propaganda in the corner of a free dungeon.

It is difficult to accept the conclusions of the hostages in uniting with their captors, despite their alleged friendliness, given the abject horrors of Quakerism.

12th February 2026

The Clarendon Times Online: Rescued Hostage Releases Poem

Prepare yourselves, their indoctrination has gone so far as to manipulate one of them into releasing a light hearted poem. Shocking stuff. The chilling poem reads as follows:

Planning Weekend... the naughty child of YFGM?

In January it was held in Lancaster and attended by many Friends,

We learnt about the stress surrounding admin support

And how Meeting for Threshing was definitely not short

Sitting in on many different committees we were able to observe

All the backstage work our dedicated role holders serve

We got to see behind the curtain of this beautiful event

To see the calm and knowing faces of "Wait, what the actual fuck is going on?", which made us glad we went

As although it was chaotic and decisions where sometimes slow

Me and William got to see how YFGM's plans for the future grow

How important venue decisions regarding dealing with transphobia are made

To how feedback from previous events is conveyed

to YFGM Planning Weekend and how that feedback is used

To actively and continuously get improvements infused

Into an already quite hard to organise event

To which I have a new found respect for all the work which has went

Into making YFGM a thriving community

Where young friends can gather in light and in unity

C: Finance Report

"Openness in business is a Quaker tradition arising from our testimony to truth" - Quaker Faith and Practice, 14.16

This report intends to shine a light on the efforts of the Finance committee and to bring some transparency on the ways in which the Finance committee oversees and manages the meeting's finances. We will focus particularly on the expenditure and income which relate to our last YFGM in October, and then mention some larger items that the Finance committee wish to make Friends aware of.

At the October 2025 YFGM we spent:

- **£1,384.88** on Access (accessible accommodation, and travel for non-roleholders and non-newcomers) - this amount is 23% of our annual budget for this category in 2025, which was £6,000.
- **£1,038.75** on newcomer's travel - this amount is 42% of our annual budget for this category in 2025, which was £2,500. Looking at this in more detail, we might expect this amount to be closer to a third of the budget rather than 42%, however due to the geographical spread of our events this percentage will vary per event. In 2025 in total we spent £2,669.31 of our £2,500 budget for this category.
- **£895.36** on food - this came to roughly £1.51 per person per meal, £0.27 below the budgeted amount of £1.78 per person per meal.
- **£29.20** on committee expenses (primarily printing for the concern session) - this amount is 12% of our annual budget for this category in 2025, which was £250.
- **£2,233.85** on role-holder travel - this amount is 41% of our annual budget for this category in 2025, which was £5,500. Looking at this in more detail, again we might expect this amount to be closer to a third of the budget rather than 41%, however this percentage will vary per event. In 2025 in total we spent £6,902.67 of our £5,500 budget for this category, this overspend is likely due to the wide geographical spread of our general meetings in 2025 (from Bristol to Edinburgh).
- **£600** on venue costs - this amount is 30% of our annual budget for this category in 2025, which was £2,000.

There was **£366.90** donated by card at YFGM in October 2025, other donations received between October and December 2025 include:

- **£352.98** in online donations made via People's Fundraising.
- **£350.00** in donations from Local and Area Quaker Meetings - made via bank transfer.
- **£180.00** in regular donations from individual Friends - made via bank transfer.

The Finance committee prefers to receive donations online through People's Fundraising - as this reduces a large amount of the administration when reconciling our accounts. But we are also able (and willing!) to take donations via cash or card at YFGM.

*In summary, the total expenditure for the October 2025 YFGM was **£6,182.04**, and the total income received from donations between October to December 2025 was*

£1,249.88. During this period we also received £2,829.00 in grants from charitable trusts.

Other items of interest include the 2025 budget: This was approved at the October 2025 YFGM, with the understanding that we will commit to remaining within its expected limits. The Finance committee has been considering the ways in which we might achieve this. As part of these considerations, we will ensure to keep trustees and the meeting aware of any predicted overspends through these reports which we hope will be a regular report given at each general meeting.

The Finance committee has also begun preparing the 2025 accounts, ready for them to be independently examined. We hope to have this completed before the May 2026 YFGM, so that we are able to present the accounts at the appropriate time in line with the finance policy. This process is made much easier by the use of our accounting software ExpensePlus, through which we can easily retrieve reports detailing our income and expenditure for the year.

These are exciting times for the Finance committee. We are looking forward to welcoming a new Finance Trustee and Fundraiser to the committee in the coming months, which the Nominations committee are seeking names for at the upcoming YFGM. We are also hopeful for the proposed Spiritual Review Weekend in May, which is to be discerned upon at the upcoming YFGM. We hope that this will give us an opportunity to pause, reflect and consider the future of our community!

Should any Friends have any questions or queries for the Finance committee, please let us know by emailing us at finance@youngfriends.org.uk, or by sending us a message on the ask-a-committee channel on the YFGM Discord.

Friends, we have choices to make on how we are going to spend our reserves, currently that choice is being made for us. If we continue to budget for an annual deficit of over £25,000, we will spend through our reserves in a little under 2 years.

We need to increase our income to continue to keep up with our high levels of expenditure. Friends are encouraged to ask their local and area meetings for donations, and are strongly encouraged to donate regularly themselves, to ensure we are able to meet the needs of our community. The link to the People's Fundraising donation page to YFGM (hence forth known as YFiB) can be found below and on our website, with this Friends can make a one-time payment or set up direct debit to make donations at regular intervals, we can also accept cash donations in person and we can collect money via our chip and pin device. Our bank details for direct bank transfer donations and standing orders are also listed below. People's fundraising link

<https://www.peoplesfundraising.com/donation/young-friends-general-meeting>

YFGM Religious Society of Friends
Sort code 08-90-16
Account number 5005134200

D: Trustee Report

Trustees give a brief report at every YFGM gathering outwith the legally required annual report that is shared with the charity commission, in order to help us keep everyone up to date with Trustees' activities and goings on between meetings. In the past few years this has taken the form of a short verbal report.

This report differs in structure and nature. The experimental separated reports session necessitates a more formal written record of our report, but also Trustees would like to share a holistic impression of what our work entails. We hope by doing this our community will be more empowered to offer us support; whether through nominations to the committee or through upholding us with a greater understanding of our role.

As a committee we are grateful to take on key responsibilities that allow YFGM to run as a charity, and are glad to be able to serve the community in this way. The past year was a particularly challenging time to be a trustee. In January 2025, we were tasked to find admin support after the contract was ended with Mindful Business Solutions. The lack of admin support in the interim has added a burden to many of our committees, and for Trustees, discerning on appropriate alternatives and completing the legal and contractual research required has taken a significant time and effort. While within our duties, this has been especially challenging in a committee with reduced capacity. We will speak in more depth on the subject of Admin support in business on Saturday of YFGM.

Trustees' regular duties include annual review of our policies and constitution to ensure they meet the requirements and aims of the charity and risk assessments for YFGM events. This year we have also created a complaints policy. Following the growing Concern about transphobia in Quaker spaces, trustees have increased our forward planning of risk by implementing an impact assessment for our gender inclusive bathroom processes. This led to codifying the existing trans inclusion minute into our trans and nonbinary inclusion policy. The demographic survey as part of this work also gave us additional insight into our current community, allowing us to better direct our service. We work to support other committees in their duties as required, including in challenging matters such as safeguarding. This year we have had increased responsibilities across every duty resulting in an unusually busy time.

Our main responsibility is to uphold the constitution to run YFGM as a charity. This necessitates us to be pragmatic and do our best to follow directions as written, and updating as necessary. We are trying to be mindful of the advice “the letter killith, but the spirit giveth life” while our growing community finds challenges with current governing documents and policies. Thank you to the Friends who have reached out to discuss ideas of how our governance structures could be improved. We welcome this support and contribution to our community and encourage others to help us find creative solutions.

The constitution changes accepted in October (codifying the age limit of 36) are still to be updated on the Charity Commissions website. This is in process but delayed due to lengthy wait-times in communication with the Charity Commission to correct the current version held.

We serve this community with and for the love of YFGM, recognising the importance it has in the lives of many of our members and in our own. YFGM needs every member in order to be the wonderful place we know it can be. If so led, please do consider contributing names to the noms box for trustee or finance trustee. Consider if being a trustee could be your part in our community. The workload will always be lighter when shared by a stable committee. Roleholder service is not all we ask of our members. We ask you to give us grace and to uphold us as we build and maintain the systems that YFGM rests on.

QF&P 23.48

... How can I learn the sanctity of each life unless I live in a community where we can be a person not roles to one another?

QFP 15:03

... Stewardship involves prayer, and it involves thought, and it involves applying what emerges from the two. As individuals our particular talents may lead us to greater emphasis on one of those elements, but they can never be wholly divided within any of us, and as a community we need to be faithful to all three: prayer, thought and application.

E: Switchboard Report

History

Switchboard is what we call all our committees at Young Friends General Meeting. At least one person from each committee meet on the second Monday of each month on Discord to check in with one another and make decisions between YFGM events and towards the long-term structure of Young Friends General Meeting.

Since YFGM in October 2025

Since our YFGM in October, Switchboard have:

- **Discussed how we can better utilise the YFGM website**

Edits have included: Navigation optimisation – finance information more accessible, how to create local YA Quaker communities, etc.

We encourage YFGMers to browse our website and suggest improvements.

- **Adapted how best to support Planning Weekend Newcomers**

One of the ways we've achieved this is by holding pre-PW meetings.

How we support our Planning Weekend Newcomers and any newcomers to Planning Weekend outside of the PWN role will be a continually trialled and tested process. We hope our PWNs will continue to give us feedback on how supported they feel in this aspect of YFGM planning.

Planning Weekend is open to all YFGMers – not just role holders or Planning Weekend Newcomers. Just come along!

- **Reflected on how to move forward with our concern for inclusion**

There's a lot of enthusiasm from YFGMers and a call to acknowledge racism as well as transphobia in our concern.

We will be holding a session to consider ways in which we can act on our Concern for trans and non-binary inclusion in the Religious Society of Friends. **We're looking for a Friend who is happy to help with the main session which is being held to develop ideas.** There will be a separate zine workshop for a quieter, more creative approach.

We are seeking a Friend willing to help facilitate group discussions, although the main aspect of this role will be note-taking. We will hold a meeting for facilitators before the gathering and another afterwards to feed back to clerks and elders. Knowledge of YFGM's Concern discernment would be beneficial to this service. The subject we're looking to facilitate a discussion on is, 'How do we work with those already supporting trans Friends in our Religious Society?'

F: New Ways of Belonging Working Group Report

In 2014, Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) recognised the difficulties of Friends who are likely to move geographically and therefore face barriers to membership through an Area Meeting. It specifically recognised that this is something which disproportionately impacts young Friends (2014 YM Minute 40).

In July 2025, YFGM was approached by a working group acting under Quaker Life Central Committee. This group was considering the topic of “New Ways of Belonging” that would permit some non-geographical Quaker communities to confer Membership of Britain Yearly Meeting.

With no YFGM Gathering planned until October 2025, Clerks provided some initial responses to the proposal that YFGM be one such non-geographic body. It was made clear that these responses had not been discerned by the General Meeting.

The two main questions/concerns the Clerks raised were:

1. What happens to a Friend’s BYM membership when they age out of YFGM? Particularly for those who do not worship with a Local Meeting.
2. YFGM already has a process of membership. Anyone who has registered to attend a YFGM event in the past three years is considered by our constitution to be a member of YFGM. This is a distinctly non-spiritual relationship with membership which prevents a two-tier system of belonging. Would a Friend who has gained Membership of BYM through YFGM specifically belong to YFGM in a way another Friend may not?

The group was looking for input so that they may bring this to the Yearly Meeting in July 2026, with final revisions made to their proposal around September 2025.

Given the practical, theological and existential questions that may arise when considering what conferring Membership to BYM may mean, this wasn’t going to be a timeline that YFGM could work to in providing a discerned response.

YFGM clerks were sent a draft proposal which included YFGM as one of two bodies that would confer BYM Membership. The expectation of YFGM as such a body was that we would provide the pastoral, eldership and business discernment required to uphold Membership.

We held a Special Interest Group at the YFGM held in October 2025 which discussed these draft proposals. Whilst the abstract idea of being able to confer Membership was favourable, it was difficult to understand how we could provide meaningful Membership beyond reducing it to the process of confirming an application. We fed back details from the Special Interest group to the working group which led to a specific role for YFGM being removed from the report.

We also appointed a representative to the New Ways of Belonging working group. With the final proposals having now been made, this role has been laid down.

The final proposals will now be brought to the Yearly Meeting in July 2026. As they currently stand, an ‘Anchor Meeting’ would be established to act in the same

manner as an Area Meeting for non-geographical Quaker meetings such as Woodbroke's online Meeting, Quaker Rainbow, and, potentially, YFGM.

If these proposals are taken forward by Yearly Meeting, we as YFGM can then discern in our own time if we all called to confer Membership to BYM and, if so, in what form this would take.

G: Meeting for Sufferings Report

Report of Meeting held 6 December 2025 - Will Reed

I attended Meeting for Sufferings on Saturday 6 December 2025. There were over 160 pages of papers to read in advance. This was the penultimate ever Meeting for Sufferings as the Meeting will be laid down to be replaced by a Yearly Meeting that meets more than once yearly.

Sex Matters to Quakers

On the agenda was a review of the process for registration and renewal of Quaker Recognised Bodies (QRBs). It was requested that Agenda Planning Committee consider the proposals for clearer criteria and simpler processes once Meeting for Sufferings is laid down. This included discerning the appropriate length of time for those seeking QRB status to wait for re-application if they are denied QRB status.

This would become relevant as one of the bodies seeking Quaker Recognised Body status was the group Sex Matters to Quakers. This group's Facebook page description says, "We are individual Quakers across the UK who hold that sex is a biological, immutable reality."

The minute on this discernment reads, "We have received minute BYMT/25/11/22 from Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees expressing significant concerns with this application, in particular behaviours which are not in keeping with our corporate discipline. We are not in unity and cannot approve this application at this time. Our corporate position as a yearly meeting is clear and it is not clear that it can be reconciled with the Group's approach."

I have written an account of my experience of this agenda item, which I have attached as Appendix 1.

Towards a faith-based understanding of gender diversity

The Meeting also received a discussion paper from the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations. It was agreed in the meeting that the paper would be named, 'Towards a faith-based understanding of gender diversity'. The discernment on this paper was difficult, but the following was minuted:

“We endorse this document [and] ask that it be made available [...] as an articulation of our position as expressed in minute 31 of YM 2021, providing us with a language and framework for further conversations, and commend it to Friends and Meetings for careful consideration.”

This can be accessed through the Britain Yearly Meeting website here:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/towards-a-faith-based-understanding-of-gender-diversity-in-our-church>

Update on memorandum of understanding between trustees

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the constituent charitable bodies of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain was agreed by Meeting for Sufferings in October 2023. Its purpose was to clarify existing relationships and duties. The Meeting asked Quaker charitable bodies that have not yet signed to work with the Deputy Recording Clerk to progress this matter. This information has been passed on to the YFGM Trustees.

Equity investments

After concerns about policy compliance, BYM Trustees are switching all equity investments to the Royal London Sustainable Investment Fund. Other Meetings were asked to consider the management of their investments.

Book of Discipline Revision Committee

The Book of Discipline Revision Committee are essentially working on developing a new Quaker Faith and Practice for our generation of Friends. They have come to the working title, *Our Quaker Way: the spiritual discipline of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain*.

The first draft will be available in early 2027 and Friends are asked to prepare for the communal discernment process, emphasising open-hearted listening, shared responsibility, and the insight that “our love frequently creates unity”.

Clear out your calendars for Spring 2027 and prepare to honour and uphold the work of thy Friends by doing some reading! We may want to consider how we as YFGM can facilitate some corporate consideration of this draft, e.g. through a reading group.

Quaker Marriage Declaration

If you're getting Quaker married, you could previously promise your vows:

- a. Through divine assistance; or,

b. With God's help

These remain but there now exists a third option:

c. Upheld by the Light of Love

Additionally, previous couples could not promise different vows, but now one Friend can ask for their promise to be upheld in the Light of Love, and another can beg for God's help.

Appendix 1

I thought I'd share a little about my personal experience of the Sex Matters to Quakers agenda item. YFGM clerks are the Meeting for Sufferings representatives for Young Friends General Meeting. We were aware in advance that this item was due to come to December's meeting. My co-clerk, Chloe and I, typically take it in turns to attend Meeting for Sufferings and it was my turn.

When I discerned if I would be willing and able to take on the role of co-clerk for YFGM, I was aware that discernment on items like this potentially would be my role. Being a transgender man, I often don't know how to hold within myself how I feel about transphobia in our Society of Friends. When I left my old church and came to Quakers, it was an easy decision because I felt welcomed here. I sometimes wish letting Quakers be was simple like this.

So, it was my turn to attend Meeting for Sufferings. However, as Friends pointed out, it didn't need to be me, the transgender clerk, that would be the one to attend. Part of me felt that this was what I'd signed up to do, that I'd wanted to help YFGM put voice to its own Concern for transphobia in the Religious Society of Friends, so that we might share the peace, hope and joy of what we know. However, as a good friend and Friend pointed out to me, I should double-check that this was what I was actually being asked.

My co-clerk and the YFGM elders joined me for a Meeting for Clearness, where we discerned on a Friend's name to attend. In doing so, I felt a great certainty that attending was what I was asked to do. I'm a man with a great sense of guilt and I know what it is to do anything to stop feeling it. This was so different in nature. It sat with me in such a sense of assuredness. I knew it would be awful, but the doing of it was so clearly for me. It was the first time I have known that I was fundamentally led, and that love was its part.

We also discerned what we would do to make the meeting bearable. We were reminded of our Friend travelling in the ministry with two elders, who had come to our last YFGM. I didn't feel that pastoral support was what was needed. I would be upheld spiritually and emotionally if I knew I was truly following what I was asked to give, so we arranged for another YFGMer to join me in an eldership capacity. We

also asked for a quiet room we could go to for worship when the Meeting wasn't in session, and whether for this item particularly, we might beg for more silence between ministry.

I didn't feel that the application made by Sex Matters to Quakers was reflective of the group, although it spoke in very reasoned and Quakerly language. This is a group that, in online posts, refers to trans women, my friends, as Trans Identified Males. A Friend gave ministry in the Meeting who was not a member of the group, but identified with their language of sex-realism. When I explained afterwards that, from the way the group uses language online, it's my understanding that what they mean by sex-realism is that I'm not a man, the Friend looked appalled and said, "But you're *Will*."

When I read the group's application, I immediately asked my friend for worship. It was just the two of us, online, but there came a moment where I gave ministry and felt completely cracked open by it. Before this worship, when I'd come across painful rhetoric in Quaker spaces about trans people, I'd been upset on behalf of my friends. I couldn't stand that there were Friends who were afraid of my friends. My friends, who had the light of God so clearly blazing within them.

In sharing worship together before Sufferings, I realised how much I was pulling myself in at my corners. I'd been asking myself what clothes I could wear that would make it hardest for Friends to try and look through me to see a woman there. I'd been hopeful I could be so put together, so articulate, so respectable and Quakerly that, by my very presence, the Meeting would be convinced of me.

For some Friends in the meeting, there was no shape I could twist myself into that would make them believe the very fundamentals of myself. Until this point I'd thought a lot about the cost for us as a Society if we continued to let transphobia have a place with us. What I hadn't really realised was the cost for me as a Friend.

I was called not to be masculine and restrained, reasoned and unimpeachable, but to bring the vulnerability that silence requires. I felt as though I'd had a message laid upon my heart to carry with me there.

It was a mild Saturday in December, and I sat outside at a garden cafe just as it opened. I had an almond croissant with hot frangipane straight out of the oven and tea served in a caffetiere. I met my friend who was joining me for eldership. We walked around the corner to Friends' House, and when the item came before the Meeting, I felt the air suspended around me, and I begged God to use me. I begged for a total abjection of self, that all I would bring was God's will to be done. I hadn't prayed like this before but that didn't lessen the sincerity of it.

I feel a sense of embarrassment in writing with these terms. It makes me want to stick my tongue in my cheek and roll my eyes every now and again so I give the

impression that it's only meant in good fun. I'm sure my spiritual, even mystical experiences are explicable in a scientific sense; I can even find explanations myself. I don't feel like the kind of religious person this phrasing implies. All I can say in my defense is that this is the only language I have for the motion of love.

I quaked and I stood to minister. I wasn't called by the clerk. We heard ministry. I tested mine in light of this and I stood again. I stood again. I stood again.

The BYM trustees had sent a minute to the Meeting in which they suggested that the representations made in the application were contrary to the Trustee's experiences of the group. Some Friends couldn't understand how the Trustees could write a minute along these lines when the group had expressed itself so finely; surely a group that spoke in such good terms couldn't be as described by the Trustees. Some Friends hesitantly put forward that there was perhaps more they could go away and learn about the group; that they might look at its online presence, maybe.

I had the message that had been laid on my heart. I stood again. The clerks said we would break, and that they would write a draft minute asking the Appropriations Committee to appoint a group to consider the QRB application so it could be reviewed in further detail. The Meeting ended and I turned to my Friend and I broke apart.

I remember Friends' hands on my shoulders and, blearily looking up, I saw a good many Friends around me. One of them said that it hadn't been decided yet, there would be more discussions. So much of the ministry was about the need for more discussions.

A Friend I know to have a trans son said that we'd had four years already and I sobbed harder. My travelling elder asked if I wanted to go to the quiet room and I nodded and we left. When we got to the door it was locked so I cried against a radiator in the corridor. A Friend followed after us and asked if they could help and we eventually received a key.

I cried. I had some water. I cried a bit more and I shared the ministry with my friend. I drank some more water and then we came back to the Meeting. The Friend with the trans son told me she'd asked the clerks to consider my loud sobbing breakdown as ministry. The Meeting reconvened and the clerk explained that, due to events over the break, they were no longer going to appoint a group to consider the application: the Meeting was clearly led in its welcome for trans and non-binary Friends and it wasn't clear here. The application would be denied. The room said hope so with the wholest voice I've heard from it.

When I spoke to my friend about it afterwards, I said it was like I hadn't meant to be called on to give ministry. That maybe this was the truest expression of the ministry

I was called to bring. My friend said it sounded less like a feature of process and more like the spirit breaking through in spite of it. Somehow, this holds everything I think I understand about God.

Elsewhere in the 160 papers were the rewrites of Quaker Faith and Practice establishing a continuing Yearly Meeting in place of Meeting for Sufferings. It included Quaker Faith and Practice 6:11, "Anyone who lived with [Mary Hughes] during April and May knew how intensely Friends' Yearly Meeting was on her mind. It was as important to her as 'going up to Jerusalem'. For weeks beforehand it came into her prayers in the morning, at meal times and with friends."

I'd read this on the train down the night before. The woman sat next to me was travelling down to London only to take a train right back up again because she knew her daughter wouldn't return home without her. The man who sat next to me in Pret had just been to Alcoholics Anonymous. He was in his 80s and loved football and he told me it may surprise me to know that he was gay. When I told him I was too, he hugged me and kissed my cheek.

It wasn't that I was upset that the group hadn't been denied its application. I just didn't know how to hold what I'd been given without putting it in the hands of the Meeting. I came home and I watched Strictly with some friends of mine that aren't Quakers. I went to work on the Monday and, when my colleagues asked me how my weekend was, I said it was fine.

H: Ways into membership for unattached Friends: a proposal from a working group of Quaker Life Central Committee



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

Quaker Life Central Committee

Ways into Membership for Unattached Friends: A Proposal from a Working Group of Quaker Life Central Committee

Summary

These proposals of ways into membership of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) for Unattached Friends, though fairly simple in concept, represent a significant change to familiar practice and call for careful discernment. They address the following:

1. The history of concern for Unattached Friends
2. Developments towards inclusion of Unattached Friends
3. The need for appropriate new terms which are not divisive
4. The creation of a new body with essential functions of an Area Meeting, excepting those associated with geographic location
5. The role of the new body in membership processes
6. The part played by non-geographic Quaker communities
7. Non-geographic communities in relationship with the new body
8. Implications for existing BYM structures

Notes

'Unattached Friends': See Appendix 1 for some context to current usage.

Friends and members: 'Friend' refers here to both members and attenders of Quaker meetings or groups; 'member' refers either to a member of a Quaker group or community, or to a Friend in membership of the Society of Friends.

Lower case/capitals: We are aware of the BYM style guide on this. To keep things simple, and to avoid implying degrees of formality or importance, the terms used here for all groups, meetings and communities are capitalised – other than to distinguish a yearly meeting from the Yearly Meeting.

Wayfinding: The necessary detail in these proposals makes them quite a long read; sections and paragraphs are numbered to help with this.

1. Background to this work

a. A longstanding call to respond to the needs of Friends excluded from membership of BYM has not so far been addressed at Yearly Meeting (YM). Part of YM 2014 Minute 40 reads:

“We have heard of a need for a yet more flexible approach to membership for some people, including particularly young adult Friends, whose journeys may preclude them committing to a local or area meeting. We ask Meeting for Sufferings, working with Quaker Life Central Committee, and having sought the views of those concerned on this matter, to consider how to respond to this call.”

Rapid advances in communications technology, and the changing nature of how we experience community, indicate that the question would keep resurfacing, and that the need for a response would only increase.

b. In January 2021 Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) considered a paper (Appendix 1) by Oliver Robertson, Committee Secretary, on ‘Unattached Friends’, which includes the keynote for most of our thinking here:

“The current situation has meant that staff have become much more fluid and imaginative in understanding what Quaker community means, that it is often less shaped by geography than we have previously understood and that people often have a range of ways of connecting to multiple communities.”

c. In November 2021 QLCC discussed a paper brought by Rachel Matthews, BYM staff, on ‘Unattached Friends and Membership’, which explored many connected issues including the discriminating effects of membership processes, emerging and online Quaker communities, and how our testimony to equality impels a need to go beyond “all are welcome” to “we will travel with you”. A steering group was set up to take the issues raised forward and a working group was appointed in July 2022 (QLCC 22.26) to consider:

1. Ways to fully include people whose belonging and connection is not chiefly within a geographic location, such as a local or area meeting

2. Inclusion in BYM of Quaker worship communities which are not defined by geographic location
3. Encouragement and support of models of community and worship which are identifiably Quaker, but may not 'look' like most existing Quaker worshipping communities in 2022

d. Also in 2022, Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) reported on the question of membership and appointment to central service (MfS/22/10/12), followed by a call to Area Meetings to consider these questions: Why do we have membership? What is it for? Is it still necessary? If yes, what form(s) could it take? (MfS/22/12/10). Other recent minutes on membership include: MfS/23/10/06, MfS/23/12/09, MfS/24/12/14.

e. Between 2022 and 2024 the working group reported at intervals to both QLCC and MfS and was laid down following its report to MfS in October 2024. In March 2025 QLCC appointed a committee member and a member of Quaker Rainbow to a new working group and a Woodbrooke staff member joined the group before its first meeting in May. Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM) was also invited to be represented. No name came forward but we consulted YFGM regularly and kept them informed throughout. The group focused its task on QLCC Minute 24.06, which asked the previous working group to expand its remit:

“To consider the potential for an individual’s membership of specific groups associated with Friends to be sufficient basis for membership of BYM as a whole”.

f. We note the timeline above to clarify that recent considerations of membership by MfS and by QLCC have run in parallel, each body connecting with the other by reports and minutes but not duplicating their remit or focus. Yearly Meeting may need to bear in mind the work undertaken elsewhere when considering these proposals from QLCC. For example, the working group has not considered more basic questions around BYM retaining a system of membership, questions which nevertheless do have relevance for these proposals.

g. Nor have we explored recent developments affecting Area Meetings. In January 2025 Wales became the first region in BYM to amalgamate AM charities into one charitable entity with new forms of trustee arrangements; other regions are in the process of doing so, and each is approaching it differently. These proposals assume a relationship between a Local and Area Meeting in which the AM is a formally constituted charity. Current and impending changes could have implications for any new structure for non-geographic Quaker bodies, which cannot as yet be anticipated.

2. Towards inclusion of non-geographic communities and Unattached Friends

a. In July 2025 we reported to MfS with an outline of this work since 2022 and on progress towards proposals to Yearly Meeting. Many Unattached Friends have their main experience of Quaker fellowship, worship and practice, and their strongest Quaker connections, with non-geographic groups, especially online worshipping communities where there is a clear call for some kind of membership process. Our report in July offered initial thinking on two questions from MfS related to this call:

- What might be the specific characteristics of a Quaker group or community which would enable them to be a body that could confer membership, as Area Meetings do now?
- What would need to be present in terms of a meaningful membership process.

Meeting for Sufferings united with the proposals brought in response and asked for formal proposals to return “in timely fashion, looking to send them to a future session of Yearly Meeting for consideration.” (MfS/25/07/11 New ways of belonging).

B. More recently, we tested out a previous assumption that Quaker Recognised Bodies (QRBs) would be target groups for this development. Of 70+ such bodies, we discounted all but a dozen whose online profile indicated the kind of Quaker group that might be eligible, i.e. with some community and/or worship focus in their connections as an affinity group. Of those, two expressed interest – in fact, strong interest, which was enough to affirm the point of seeking out communities and Friends disadvantaged by the geographic-only route into membership. Friends are unlikely to ask for this if they believe it’s out of the question, they’ll just carry on being Quakers not in membership. But we trust that once the option exists and is known about, other groups will express interest in this alternative route to membership.

c. Of all the possible non-geographic communities affected, by far the greater number are online worshipping communities, including Friends participating in the many meetings for worship offered by Woodbrooke. Online meetings for worship are now common, and many are not attached to Local or Area Meetings; newcomers to Quaker worship are among their regular attenders. A recent survey of Woodbrooke’s online worship participants found 67 people who would like either to apply for membership through Woodbrooke’s worshipping community or to transfer their membership there. Friends attending meeting for worship online have needs to worship as part of a community, just as they do in their worship elsewhere.

d. We also reviewed our earlier response to the first question in 2b above, i.e. that eligible non-geographic communities could be approved to confer membership and develop procedures to reflect the needs of their particular community. We rejected that idea as potentially too demanding of BYM staff or committee oversight,

and because of the risk that the membership of some Friends might be informed by idiosyncratic understandings and practice of Quakerism (congregationalism).

e. The possibility of the Yearly Meeting becoming the membership-conferring body, as in some other yearly meetings, was another idea we rejected. In BYM's case, it would create a one-sided relationship, i.e. the member would belong to an organisation that isn't set up to reciprocate. Quaker Life's work is to help nurture and support Quaker Communities, not in supporting Friends directly. AMs provide this through their pastoral care arrangements and their constituted purpose in fostering community (*Qf&p* 4.02), and much of it happens in Local Meetings.

f. Our proposal here is for a two-level model with something in between the Yearly Meeting and the "community of belonging". The creation of an AM-like body would bring a relationship similar to that between Area and Local Meetings, enabling wider testing of membership applications and support with eldership and pastoral care. While the driver for these proposals is to provide a path to membership for Unattached Friends, we see benefit in the potential for such a relationship to evolve in response to other emerging needs of non-geographic communities.

g. Rather than replicating all features of Area Meetings described in *Qf&p* Ch.4, we see this evolution proceeding from core *principles* in their constitution and functions. The basic requirements of an AM-like body would need to be established, possibly including constitution as a charity with trustees, while allowing for others to arise organically. The intention would be to link the best of the past with the opportunities of the future, only some of which can be anticipated in the present.

h. The new body would process membership applications with authority to confer membership. Friends connected with a non-geographic group as their primary Quaker "community of belonging" would have a relationship with the AM-like body much as LM Friends have with their AM: they might or might not attend its meetings for business or give service, but if they wish to apply for membership they discuss this first with local Friends and their application is taken forward by the Area Meeting.

3. New terminology

a. Non-geographic Quaker communities have mushroomed in recent years, especially since Covid, as Friends increasingly make fruitful in-person and online connections and via social media. They meet with existing groups for a range of Quaker activities and purposes, they establish new communities, and not all these Friends have a connection with a Local or Area Meeting or wish to maintain one.

b. The new membership-conferring body would do things differently from an AM in some ways, to reflect the different nature of non-geographic communities and their various, sometimes divergent, needs. All these communities will need new terms without geographic connotations to be used wherever they are referenced. The

Church Government Advisory Group (CGAG) suggested replacing Local Meeting with Constituent Meeting in *Qf&p* Chapter 4, which might do for that purpose. It didn't suggest an alternative to Area Meeting, other than 'non-geographic', which, while accurate, feels clumsy and can imply that the meeting is not quite the real thing.

c. We acknowledge that significant changes to wording in *Quaker faith & practice* will not be helpful at this time, and that Chapter 4 explains relationships and functions as usefully for the proposed innovation as it does for existing practice. But it will be important to establish at the outset that new arrangements are intended to grow and develop over time, including the likely emergence of hybrid communities straddling the old and the new – and of the balance shifting toward the latter. It will not help the natural evolution of Quaker communities to draw boundaries distinguishing one kind from another based on where and how Friends meet.

d. With that in mind, we suggest replacing 'Local Meeting' and 'Area Meeting', both presupposing location as the norm, with other terms that recognise the evolution of what we see as normal. Just as Preparative and Monthly became Local and Area with changes in practice, these developments would call for a further review. Changes in terminology affecting BYM as a whole are beyond the scope of these proposals, but we commend this premise to Yearly Meeting for consideration.

e. In these proposals, we use Home Meeting and Anchor Meeting for the LM-like and AM-like bodies respectively. 'Home' indicates the significance of their community for otherwise Unattached Friends (i.e. they are in fact attached); 'Anchor' offers a metaphor for grounding this virtual structure of diverse communities. In anticipation of ongoing change, each term offered avoids describing what a meeting does or where/how it does it. And in the way LMs are named by location, e.g. Milford Haven Local Meeting, Home Meetings would retain their community name as a prefix, e.g. Quaker Rainbow Home Meeting. The Anchor Meeting will also need some identifying prefix; we suggest that Friends Anchor Meeting might serve for now.

4. Creating the Anchor Meeting

a. In January 2025 QLCC received this guidance from CGAG:

“The existing wording of *Quaker faith & practice* provides no insuperable obstacle to the creation of a non-geographic Area Meeting. We recognise that the emergence of online meetings which are not part of an existing Area Meeting does need to be recognised within *Quaker faith & practice*. We see the key issues as the provision of pastoral care, the question of membership and provision for the forwarding of concerns to Yearly Meeting. There would also need to be a recognition of the responsibilities that arise from being part of the formal structure of Britain Yearly Meeting.”

b. The new Anchor Meeting would be a clearly defined Quaker organisation, based in Britain, having many of the characteristics, functions and responsibilities of an Area Meeting, excepting any relating to its geographic location and others that are irrelevant or not applicable. The task of setting-up the Anchor Meeting would likely require a holding group of a few experienced Friends - from its linked communities - to initiate communications with potential Home Meetings and call a first meeting. The Anchor Meeting might begin as a blank sheet, not to be filled in with decisions and detail but a space where many ideas can be sketched in lightly to see what emerges. We envisage things starting simply with only a few essential roles.

c. The remit of the holding group would include handing over as soon as there are processes for the nomination and appointment of Friends to run the meeting. Which of the functions and responsibilities of an AM, as detailed in *Qf&p* Ch.4, would be relevant to the Anchor Meeting will become clearer once it is established and its relationships with Home Meetings emerge. Certain essentials would apply to this AM-like body, such as appointment of a treasurer (possibly trustees), two-way communications with BYM, and provision for the forwarding of concerns. But there need be no rush: the important work of this new body will need time for thoughtful consideration of how it wants to work and what it wants to be.

d. These proposals note the broader implications for governance of establishing the Anchor Meeting but don't explore the detail. Should the proposals on membership be adopted, other work will be required to ensure new arrangements are fit for purpose and sit appropriately within BYM structures. Part of those considerations might include designating a Local Development Worker (LDW) to support the new arrangements, especially in their setting up and while they bed in.

e. The Anchor Meeting would be a community of non-geographic groups with a shared purpose in membership matters, but it would hopefully develop beyond that. Early on it might convene a meeting for Friends in the various Home Meetings to explore their vision of the Anchor Meeting's purpose as a Quaker community, i.e. more like a threshing meeting than a place to make decisions. There is no blueprint of what the Anchor Meeting's fuller purpose might turn out to be.

5. How the new membership-conferring body would work

a. Among other functions, the Anchor Meeting would receive and process membership applications and confer membership. Characteristics of the new body required for this purpose would be little different from those of an AM: Appendix 2 outlines features that should be in place, and notes essential elements of any procedures. Membership-conferring status will likely require Yearly Meeting approval; support and guidance on preparing and applying for this should be accessible from within BYM.

b. Membership applications:

i. The Anchor Meeting would receive applications from Friends in Home Meetings; it might also receive them from Friends who for different reasons are not linked with any such group, and for whom the Anchor Meeting could be a place of direct connection and support. Examples might include Friends whose strongest Quaker connections are directly with BYM through service or employment, and people in prison who have no relationship with a Local or Area Meeting.

ii. Applications received from Friends living abroad would be considered if they belong to a UK group accepted as a Home Meeting, but the process would explore why the Friend wants to apply for membership of this yearly meeting rather than another, or for International Membership, which is a well established system for Quakers in places where there are no yearly meetings. FWCC is part of current considerations on whether to open this up to Friends who don't feel comfortable in the yearly meeting where they live.

iii. The same scrutiny should apply to applications from Friends who choose this route because they have fallen out with their LM or AM. A non-geographic community could provide a Friend with a welcoming fresh start, but it would not be helpful to create a "repository" for disgruntled Friends. Particular care would be taken where a Friend's membership has been terminated and they hope to (re)acquire membership this way. Through resources in its Home Meetings, the Anchor Meeting will need to have some means of engaging with such Friends to counsel on conflict resolution or other approaches to their difficulty.

c. Although these proposals focus on the responsibility of the Anchor Meeting for membership applications and processes, all other membership matters (*Qf&p* 11.19-40) would be included, such as terminations, resignations, records of deaths and marriages. Transfers of membership might work a bit differently. A transfer out to an Area Meeting could depend on where the Friend lives or where they offer service. In any event, it will involve the Area Meeting accepting the certificate of transfer, which it might not if the Friend has no connection. Transfers-in to the Anchor Meeting might need a level of discernment similar to that of an application for membership, for the possibility of issues noted in 5b.iii above.

6. The role of Home Meetings in membership processes

a. Non-geographic Quaker communities vary considerably – much more so than Local Meetings in their differences – but they have some things in common, including their Quaker faith and their understanding of what it means to be part of a larger community of British Friends. Not all these communities will want to participate

in the new arrangements, but those that do should meet certain criteria to ensure their Quaker focus is sufficient to provide some Friends with their only Quaker experience. Communities might need support in moving towards eligibility as a Home Meeting; the Anchor Meeting would have a role here, possibly aided by input from Quaker Life. Some Home Meetings might be encouraged to develop further as distinctly Quaker communities by strengthening their Quaker practice, such as in their worship, in making decisions, and in how they support one-another. Quaker Life might be involved in identifying communities that are ready to participate, perhaps along the lines of the process for registering Quaker Recognised Bodies.

b. Home Meetings will play an important part in how membership processes have an essential focus on “the wellbeing of the applicant at their heart” (Appendix 2). A community with a fairly loose concept of the relevance of eldership and pastoral care to its primary function (as a group sharing a common interest, purpose or cause) may need some means of supporting potential applicants sufficiently. This wouldn’t necessarily mean appointing elders or pastoral Friends. Where a group agrees that spiritual nurture and pastoral care are everyone’s responsibility, experience and capacity in the community can be drawn on for the care of all Friends, enabling support of membership applications when these arise. The community might appoint a coordinator of eldership and pastoral care to keep an eye on need and possibly to promote activities that contribute to the care and support of individuals, as well as of the community as a whole.

c. Anyone considering membership will hopefully talk first with people in their Home Meeting, which should encourage this with explicit opportunities. Whatever the arrangements for pastoral care, there should be a focus on the Friend’s need for support in this important step in their Quaker journey. Experienced Friends in the Home Meeting or the Anchor Meeting might advise on a meeting for clearness or other opportunity for the Friend to share their intention and talk it through.

d. Throughout this work we bore in mind a two-sided principle underpinning new arrangements:

- They should be sufficient for their purpose
- They should not place an undue burden on a community

In other words, new work and responsibilities must not be at the expense of a Home Meeting’s primary purpose as a community of affinity and belonging. Most of these communities will have plenty to do already; it should be possible to incorporate new requirements with a light touch, and for the community to decide on priorities in the light of its own resources and its capacity to embrace change.

7. Relationships between Home Meetings and their Anchor Meeting

- a. These would no doubt feel contrived at first and not of the same order as between a Local Meeting and its Area Meeting – which has a history of evolving practice, and also of habit, memory and shared story, none of which can be replicated. But just as an Area Meeting draws on the Friends in its Local Meetings for its officers and other roles, so would an Anchor Meeting draw on its Home Meetings for Friends, not only to administer its functions but also to build community – which could be important in how the Anchor Meeting develops membership procedures and carries them out.
- b. While a Friend's strongest sense of belonging would invariably remain with their Home Meeting community, they will also be aware that membership is a reciprocal relationship of commitment with the community that conferred their membership. Alongside its purpose as a membership-conferring body, the Anchor Meeting will provide various kinds of support to its Home Meetings, including as a wider spiritual community that will sustain Friends on their Quaker journey. In turn, its members should commit to the Anchor Meeting, including attending its meetings, serving in the roles needed to run itself, sharing in the pastoral care of its members, etc.
- c. This is an area where the support of a Local Development Worker might be most needed. The connections and participation required for these purposes may not feel accessible to Friends accustomed to seeing their group as independent and unique, and Friends already in membership of an Area Meeting may not see the point of engaging with a broader community of non-geographic groups.
- d. A designated LDW might support a Home Meeting in how it encourages Friends to offer service to the Anchor Meeting and to attend its meetings, and they might help the Anchor Meeting promote links *between* otherwise disparate Home Meetings. The new structure would have the potential to offer examples of new ways of working to Local and Area Meetings as they seek to adapt to the increasing importance in Friends' lives of other Quaker communities, especially those they access online.

8. Implications for our existing structures

- a. We know that changes will happen in the Society of Friends, whether we intend them or welcome them, or not. The proposed structure will have implications for BYM beyond enabling Unattached Friends to come into membership, it represents a new choice for all Friends wherever they live. Any Friend connected to a non-geographic group might identify more strongly with that community than the one they sometimes attend on Sunday mornings. Friends can already be associated

with more than one Local Meeting, (they name one as where they are listed and counted for the Tabular Statement) and the same would apply to Home Meetings: Friends might connect with multiple communities that meet online and/or in physical locations.

b. The new choice for such Friends could be to apply for membership of the Anchor Meeting, rather than of the Area Meeting where they live. Or a Friend might be a member of an AM and wish to transfer their membership via their connection with a non-geographic community. Would these possibilities undermine our structures or deplete local communities? Only if we see the two structures as disconnected, as 'either/or'. Alternatively, we could see an integrated structure having some parts in physical places and some parts online. It would mean bringing non-geographic communities in from the margins to join a broader, more inclusive Yearly Meeting.

c. An integrated structure could be an opportunity for young adults, who often have no settled base, to be members of a community which always moves with them. It could offer families reassurance that they still share their Quaker connections. It might help resolve perennial problems LMs and AMs have with maintaining their 'lists'. There are always members who don't engage locally and sometimes they are hard to track down; a 'lost' Friend's active Quakerism could be elsewhere – with Woodbrooke or BYM or internationally. An alternative body for holding membership might mean that AM lists of members reduce, but not because membership of BYM has declined.

d. These proposals offer the possibility of making an important contribution to building community in BYM as a whole. If Friends fear they spell the decline of *their* Society, they need only look to Woodbrooke for an example of the potential in this opportunity. Many of us recall responding to the permanent closure of the Birmingham site with sadness - and grief. Things would never be the same again. And they aren't, they are different: Woodbrooke is thriving in a new multi-faceted form, largely online, offering more courses, engaging more widely and reaching more Friends than ever before.

e. We can still be sad about our loss. With any change we leave something behind, which can be hard, but our loss shouldn't be a reason to turn aside from an opportunity. The YM minute quoted from at the beginning of this paper – calling for a response by Meeting for Sufferings and Quaker Life Central Committee – was made in 2014. We now have an opportunity to respond. The epistle that year includes this reminder of why opening up opportunities for membership matters:

“Coming into membership of the Religious Society of Friends is not simply arrival at a comfortable place; it is also a point of departure: a commitment to the Quaker community and to a life-long process of learning, together with others. What matters most in this community is the quality of our relationships.”

New Ways of Belonging Working Group of Quaker Life Central Committee:

Zélie Gross (Convenor), Simonne Wood (Woodbrooke), John Presland (Quaker Rainbow), with Alistair Fuller (staff)

Queries to help with considering these proposals

- Is it clear that there is a question here of importance to the Society as a whole?
- Are there tools for considering the proposals, e.g. in the paper's presentation of the context and the terminology?
- How do you respond to the idea that Quaker practices should adapt to situations changed by new technology, in particular the rise of online communities?
- Do the proposals suggest a way for current and emerging Quaker practices to coexist on equal terms and to inform each other?
- Is there scope for future developments to be rooted in abiding Quaker principles?
- Are there implications here for the ways that Quakerism engages with the modern world?
- What did you find helpful or engaging in this paper? And what felt challenging?
- Is there anything you expected or hoped to find that isn't included?

Appendix 1: QLCC 2021 01 08

Quaker Life Central Committee Unattached Friends

Introduction

In 2018-2019, QLCC considered the issue of Unattached Friends, hearing about the situation in Britain YM and internationally (minutes 18.67 and 19.33). An Unattached Friend is someone who had previously been involved with Quakers, but is not currently connected with any Quaker community. Since then, the rapid changes brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic have meant that the experience of being attached to a Quaker community has changed significantly. In particular, some previously very involved Quakers may now be effectively Unattached Friends, while the use of virtual platforms for holding meeting has removed some of the barriers to involvement for previously Unattached Friends.

QLCC is invited to consider how we want to consider this issue further. An initial discussion at this meeting will likely lead to a longer item in the future. To help with thinking, significant current activities run by BYM and/or Woodbrooke that support Unattached Friends are described below.

Current activities

- **Woodbrooke MfW** is offering opportunity for worship and fellowship every day of the week. Some of their regular worshippers are either geographically so isolated from other Quakers that there is no other way to regularly meet together, or are disconnected from their own local Quaker community. We regularly hear that these online MfW are a real and meaningful Quaker community.
- **Engaging Young Adult Quakers Project** has continued to develop opportunities to connect and build community amongst young adults. This has been both in person and, more recently, through virtual gatherings. There is a regular young adults epilogue, which both connects young adult Quakers as well as offering community, worship and encouragement to young adults who have found Quakers during the pandemic.
- **Quaker parents/families** have a strong online community, which has functioned well/flourished during lockdown.
- **Children and Young People** have a range of opportunities to meet online; many of them are the only young people or children in their local or area meetings. We have also been supporting those adults who are running events and online gatherings.
- In the development of the **Integrated Strategy for Supporting Quaker Communities** is an acknowledgement of the need to support those who do

not connect geographically and it is possible that this might be a particular focus/responsibility of a Local Development Team Leader as we roll out local development work.

- **Local Development Workers** offer a regular online epilogue, which is often attended by those who are otherwise more disconnected from their worshipping communities.
- The **current situation** has meant that staff have become much more **fluid and imaginative** in understanding what Quaker community means, that it is often less shaped by geography than we have previously understood and that people often have a **range of ways of connecting to multiple communities**.
- We are learning a great deal from this experience in terms of how we build, nurture and sustain different kinds of community and how we can offer a range of ways of connecting and belonging.
- We have *not* pursued the suggestion that we create a list or database of unattached Friends or formalised a structure of support. Nor have we explored further questions of membership and belonging in a more formal sense. (These were suggested next steps from the May 2019 paper (QLCC 2019 05 07).)

Oliver Robertson, January 2021

Appendix 2: Membership procedures for non-geographic Quaker Communities

Essential features of a new membership-conferring body would include:

1. Clear, meaningful and safe membership procedures with the wellbeing of the applicant at their heart, which provide for:
 - Personal spiritual reflection/discernment by the applicant
 - Opportunity for the applicant to clarify their motivation and for the community to feel confident about the outcome
 - Ongoing support and care for the applicant at every stage

2. Experienced Friends, with a good understanding of what membership means to the individual and to the community, who would support and offer guidance to a Friend considering membership. Supporting Friends might be appointed by the Anchor Meeting or might be found in the Friend's Home Meeting, or both.
3. Ways of ensuring procedures are followed correctly, and that decisions are properly recorded and communicated, while not losing sight of the spiritual nature of the applicant's commitment and the community's discernment.
4. A secure, well-organised, GDPR-compliant system of record-keeping. This should include a register of members to meet BYM requirements, and procedures for receiving and passing on membership information as required.

The above four points don't spell out a membership process to be used in the proposed arrangements, they indicate underlying principles that can be expressed faithfully through different processes. The Anchor Meeting would be working with a variety of Home Meetings and might need to adapt procedures to work well for particular communities.

In whatever ways processes vary, they should include the following:

- a. A focus on the applicant at every stage
- b. Established ways of supporting an applicant and upholding the process
- c. The opportunity of a visit or other private meeting of a few Friends with the applicant for conversation/discussion, such as a meeting for clearness
- d. A meeting of the Anchor Meeting based on Quaker discipline, for considering the application and discerning a decision
- e. A process of follow-up, to include welcoming the new member and support/guidance for an applicant not accepted into membership at this time
- f. A formal record of the decision, which is forwarded to BYM.