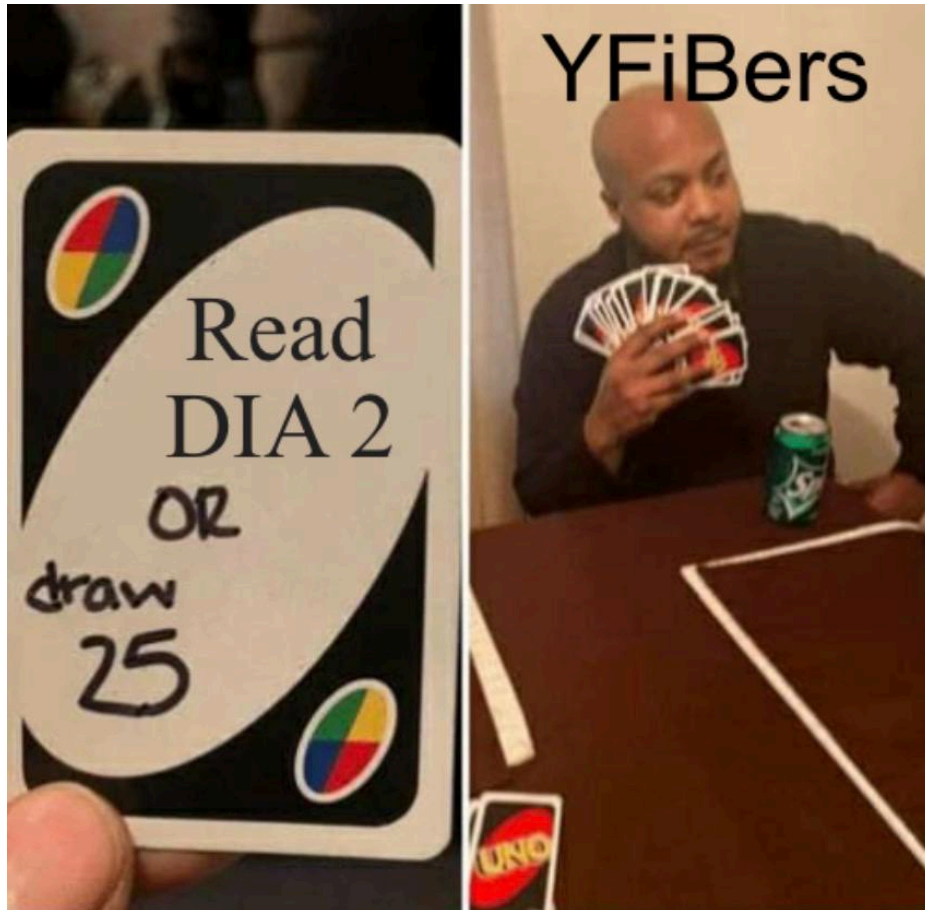


# General Meeting of Young Friends in Britain

## Spiritual Review Gathering



## Documents in Advance Part 2: Hearts & Minds Prepared

22nd-25th May 2026  
Redland Friends Meeting House, Bristol

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Meet Anand.....	3
Meet Adam.....	3
<b>Mouths Prepared</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Sessions</b> .....	<b>4</b>
A Note on Business/Decisions.....	4
Who are we.....	4
Accounts/Report returns.....	4
Between Gatherings.....	5
Structures.....	5
Money.....	5
Noms Returns.....	6
Decisions.....	6
<b>Finance Proposals</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Deposit of Living Questions:</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Structures of YFiB</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Reports</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Trustee report.....	15
Last Ever Meeting for Sufferings Report.....	16
April 2026 Darlington Planning Weekend Newcomer Report.....	17
Finance Report.....	18
EMEYF Spring Gathering 2026 YFGM/YFiB Representative Report.....	19

## Introduction

We're almost there, Friends! Just over a week away from the beginning of our Spiritual Review Gathering.

In this document are some final details about the content of the weekend. What our sessions are going to look like, some potential finance proposals, a deposit of the living questions within our Meeting, some very slick diagrams attempting to capture our Meeting's current structures, and, last but not least, some of the reports we will be receiving at the weekend. So much food for thought!

The scale and scope of information required to pull this together is a lot grander than usual. It's possible there is something you need information on, or have questions about, that isn't in either DIA 1 or DIA 2. If this is the case please do email [elders@youngfriends.org.uk](mailto:elders@youngfriends.org.uk) and if we have answers we will share them with you!

We will be having help from two facilitators throughout the weekend, Anand and Adam. We are so grateful for the time and efforts they will (and already have!) share with us.

## Meet Anand

I've worked with Quakers on conflict, non-violence and community-building for more years than I'm comfortable mentioning (how did I get this old!). I am still learning how hard things are in practice.

But I don't want to study war no more! I'm now focused on what a sustainable, optimistic and practical future might look like – and what we need to build together, holistically, to get there. What peace actually looks like.

I've also worked in lots of other areas, including conservation for the UN, in technology, wildlife photography, museums, publishing, childcare, economics and transport – and mostly in Africa for the last few decades. That gives me a range of different experiences and insights, as well as hope, energy and urgency for the future. I'm now trying to connect this all together in new ways.

## Meet Adam

We forgot to ask Adam for a blurb in time (sorry Adam...), so here is a brief summary from YFiBbers who know him: Adam works for Quaker Peace and Social Witness, has been to YFiB before and some of us have had the pleasure of experiencing his facilitation skills at EMEYF (European and Middle Eastern Young Friends), where he has served as a gathering Elder and as a member of the Planning Committee. He is also an Elder of his local meeting. You may recognise him from his bare toesies, his pink hoody, or the faint gleam of cheekiness in his deepset eyes.

## Mouths Prepared

**Breakfasts:** Cereal, Toast, etc will be available for breakfast each morning.

**Friday evening:** Smoky white bean stew with couscous and broccoli. Dessert: donuts

**Saturday lunch:** Three-bean chilli with rice and guacamole in wraps and nachos.

**Saturday evening:** Jamaican jerk chickpea and cauliflower with rice and flatbread.

**Dessert:** cookie dough pie

**Sunday lunch:** brunch fry-up wraps with hash browns, baked beans, sausages, spinach, mushrooms and polenta.

**Sunday evening:** pasta with lentil bolognese and steamed kale.

**Dessert:** apple crumble and custard

**Monday lunch:** korma-style yellow split pea curry with naans and also leftovers!

With alternatives for Friends with dietary requirements!

## Sessions

### A Note on Business/Decisions

As the weekend goes on, there are a few places where the meeting may feel like it is turning into business. If the clerks feel led, they may move us into a formal Meeting for Worship for Business, and begin discerning on a minute. However, if the discernment stops being fruitful, or it becomes clear that there isn't enough time to do the discernment justice, the clerks may simply minute the state of the meeting (even in its division), and commit to come back to it later.

### Who are we

The "Who are we" sessions are about the big questions: What is our nature? Why do we gather? What happens through us? During these sessions we will attempt to build a shared understanding of the complex identity and purposes of YFiB.

Clarity found in these sessions will contextualise and inform the rest of the weekend.

**Part A** will take the form of worship sharing, focused on these questions.

**Part B** will be a workshop facilitated by Anand and Adam

**Part C** will involve more worship sharing, with pens/paper provided to write/draw with. This may turn into Meeting for Worship for Business, or may not, either is fine.

### Accounts/Report returns

In this business session, YFiB will be asked to consider the 2025 accounts for approval pending independent examination. The draft accounts will be circulated before the gathering.

Should Friends have any questions or comments regarding the 2025 accounts, please contact a member of the finance committee by emailing us (at [finance@youngfriends.org.uk](mailto:finance@youngfriends.org.uk)) or by sending us a message on Discord.

We will also minute the receipt of the following reports (some appended!). Attend the reports session on Tuesday, 19 May at 7pm to hear and consider these in full!

- Trustees Report
- Finance Report
- PWN Report
- EMEYF Report
- Sufferings

## Between Gatherings

The “Between Gatherings” sessions will consider what sort of community we are between gatherings, particularly how we communicate and organise between gatherings.

**Part A** will be a workshop facilitated by Anand and Adam, during which there will be space to have deeper discussions about specific aspects of how YFiB exists and functions between gatherings. Friends will have an opportunity to write or draw about their joys, concerns and hopes for the areas they feel led to.

**Part B** will be worship sharing on a question like: “*How can the way we communicate and organise/mobilise between gatherings bring us closer to truth and love and unity?*”, during which Friends are encouraged to move around the room and read the contributions from Part A.

## Structures

Are our processes and structures serving us? How can our structures enable bold and vulnerable service?

With our purpose and direction clarified on Saturday, we will try to reimagine our structures and the aspects of YFB we take for granted. How often do we gather? What type of gatherings do we have? Where and how are our decisions made? Do our structures and processes enable us to be adventurous and support each other? What relationship do we want to have with the broader Religious Society? What would we like our role within it to be?

This will be a workshop facilitated by Anand and Adam.

We may make use of some diagrams of our structures and processes, [you can find them below!](#) (“I’m sure everyone will completely agree about how accurate they are, lol” - Calum Freeman, 2026).

## Money

We will open with a *deeply sincere* and *terribly serious* (silly) competition for the best fundraising idea. This will be adjudicated by our expert panel, and the winner of the best fundraising idea will receive a vegan treat.

We will then gather in the discipline of Meeting for Worship for Business to consider proposals to relieve our financial situation. Existing proposals can be found below, but we remain receptive to the movements of the Spirit in the question of which proposals will be discerned during the meeting.

## **Noms Returns**

In this business item, we receive nominations brought by our Nominations Committee from their work this weekend, and discern whether to make the suggested appointments.

## **Decisions**

At the end of the weekend, there will be a session labeled “decisions”. This will open with a summary of the weekend so far. Then the meeting will be asked to discern in worship: Are we led to make any decisions now? If the answer is no or not yet, that’s ok.

## Finance Proposals

Our projected deficit in 2026 is -£27,370. The biggest parts of our budget each year are: role-holder travel to general meetings, newcomer travel and accessible accommodation.

- For **role-holder travel**, we would like to ensure that committees carefully consider who needs to come to a general meeting. It might also be worth considering whether we cap or pay a proportion of role-holders travel, either as a temporary or permanent measure.
- For **newcomer travel**, this may be a good opportunity to consider whether this is still something the meeting is able/willing to provide. Again, we could cap or pay a proportion of newcomers travel, either as a temporary or permanent measure.
- For **accessible accommodation**, this is a sensitive matter as it relates to the inclusion of all members of our meeting, and we don't wish to make Friends feel uncomfortable or excluded. This is a large part of our budget (£6,000 spent in 2024, and £10,000 in 2025). Again, we could cap or pay a proportion of this if the meeting felt that this is something that would be the best way to support the meeting.

The finance committee feels that a culture shift is needed in the meeting, where all Friends are expected to **donate** to ensure the upkeep of the meeting - with a few exceptions if Friends are unable to donate.

- Ways of doing this might include: making donations part of the **registration process** (e.g. a tick-box on the registration form), making donations part of the **sign-in/sign-out process** (e.g. a separate box to tick to confirm if a Friend has made or will be making a donation), or perhaps more **passive approaches** (e.g., posters put up around venue, adding a link to the feedback form).
- Introduce a **booking fee** (something like £5/£10/£15) payable at the time of registration (with a pathway for those who would not be able to pay this). With an additional pay-what-you-can scale that can also be at the time of registration and/or at the event. Have descriptive categories of financial situations (e.g. unable to pay for food and heating, able to contribute to savings monthly, able to go on a holiday abroad annually etc.) and our suggested payment/donation for each category (e.g. from £0-£200).

## Deposit of Living Questions:

In preparation for this Spiritual Review, we asked YFiB members to contribute to this deposit of 'living questions' (thoughts, reflections, and questions about YFiB, who we are, and how we do things that they have been sitting with for a while) and ideas for changes we could make going forward. We have categorised them roughly by theme. Some contributions have been copied across verbatim, some have been edited or summarised for brevity or clarity. Where two or three contributions were very similar, they have sometimes been merged. We encourage you to read and reflect on these living questions in advance of the weekend and hope they will give you food for thought. You may also find them helpful to revisit over the course of the weekend.

There is a Padlet board where you may add comments and reflections on these questions (or add even more questions!). Comments and posts will be moderated so may only update once or twice a day. Contributions will be uploaded from Friday 15th May to Friday 22nd May, and stay available to view (but not add to) during the weekend. <https://padlet.com/augustb7/YFB>  
(Any issues contact [august.b@youngfriends.org.uk](mailto:august.b@youngfriends.org.uk) )

### **Our events:**

- What if we tried to be a community that has a lot more special interest gatherings, in person and online? YFiB weekends could be our general meetings (primarily for Business with some community building in spiritual and social ways, for all who want to come), with a lot more of the other stuff going on in smaller groups ongoing and between those.
- The Business spirituality session showed that Friends feel connected to Meeting for Worship for Business when it is spiritually meaningful. The Business brought to YFiB can be the heart of who we are and what we do together if it speaks to this. If it doesn't, does it need to come to a Meeting for Worship for Business at a gathering?
- It often feels like we are squeezed for time at YFiB weekend, as a consequence we have very limited time for many of the things our community really value and that people come to YFiB for, like SIGs, spirituality sessions, community time, etc. How can we ensure we are using our time together well?
- We currently run six events each year (three General Meetings, three Planning Weekends), could we divide these differently? Perhaps two for General Meetings of the charity and its financial and strategic affairs, two for development of our Concern(s), and two for time in community.

### **Increasing numbers and newcomers:**

- Perhaps our spiritual review might be a good opportunity to reconsider what we call first-time attenders, or how we can avoid these Friends feeling alienated from the rest of the meeting? For example, returning to the word 'enquirers', or not using a particular word at all?

- We keep having lots of people, with people not able to attend who might want to. Europe and Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) has had success with blending gatherings using Zoom and an OWL camera. Should we explore this as an option? Would this be a way to include people prevented from attending due to disabilities, busier lives, or other commitments? And to make our Business reflect more of the community?
- Should we open registration early for Area Meeting reps to ensure that they are able to register and are not prevented by any numbers caps?

### **Catering:**

- What are YFiB's current catering priorities? What kinds of structures would best allow us to cater events in line with these priorities?
- We don't currently have a formalised process or structure for catering our events - the informal catering structure does not seem to be working for us. Specifically, we have a lot of people who try cooking once and never cook for us again because they found it so stressful, and we're often scrabbling around to find people who will step forward and cook. What would a better cooking set-up look like?

### **Committee structures and role-holder capacity:**

- Should we create a formal Outreach Committee, made up of our Media Officer, Fundraiser, and Quaker Rainbow rep?
- We laid down our Outreach and Media committees not because we didn't want them but because we didn't have enough people. We now have loads of people! We maybe don't need outreach focused on getting more new people to YFiB but outreach about Quakerism in general, and telling people about Quaker events, YFiB-organised or not, would be great.
- Do the majority of what our committees are doing need to be the responsibility of role-holders alone, 'closed-off' and often done invisibly?
- How can we reduce the perceived separation between roleholders and non-roleholders? Would encouraging more members without an appointed role to contribute (in planning, with practical getting stuck in at events, etc.) help with this?
- Could we use Discord to facilitate non-roleholders helping to get things done? Could we use this to open up some of the work currently being done by Switchboard to anyone within the wider community who is interested? We would need to take great care to ensure that decisions are still taking place via proper discernment, not on Discord.
- How do we ensure that we are a worshipping community of equals, not an 'in-group' of role-holders or overworked committees running things for everyone else?
- Can we explicitly ask role-holders to make certain decisions according to their role responsibilities and bring reports to Planning Weekend instead of the General Meeting?

- How can we develop a clearer sense of what role-holder responsibilities are and are not?
- How can we develop a clearer sense of how, when, where, and by whom different decisions should be made?
- The old system of trustees pre-2023 required Nominations to work really hard to appoint a few specific trustee roles and cajole committees into nominating the rest. The resulting committee mostly functioned but relied on really hard work from the most engaged trustees and the committee often had gaps where there were vacancies. The new system is better on paper - but it requires Nominations to work really hard to appoint trustee roles. The resulting committee mostly functions but relies on really hard work from the most engaged trustees and the committee often struggles with onboarding new trustees and retaining people. There probably aren't any quick fixes to this, and a lesson of the 2018 'roles reorganisation' is that finding something that works for a fundamental part of our structure needs time to percolate and develop.
- What do we need from our trustees? What is working, what isn't? How does the role fit into our wider structures?

### **Planning Weekend:**

- Feedback sessions at Planning Weekend often demonstrate that many Friends have varied and conflicting understandings of what YFiB is and is for. We have a tendency to try to shape ourselves to appeal to all. What is the purpose of collecting this feedback? What is the most appropriate way to 'process' it?
- Often the true discernment about our agenda at Planning Weekend takes place at agenda setting, as we realise that our Threshing sessions have asked too much of our time. How do we ensure that there's true discernment taking place in Threshing? Do we all share an understanding of what it means to be led to minister in a Threshing context? If we don't, are some Friends more inclined to minister than others? Which voices are lost?
- Can items even be threshed in a room of 30+ Friends? How can our Planning Weekend make space for vulnerable and challenging discernment?
- Who ought to be at Planning Weekend? With increasing numbers attending, do we need a cap on attenders? Should it be restricted to roleholders only, with occasional exceptions?
- What are Planning Weekends *for*? In their current form, are they effectively supporting the needs of the whole meeting?
- What kinds of decisions is Planning Weekend empowered and not empowered to make? Proposals about how the meeting might want to spend its time are sometimes vetoed at Planning Weekend, are we happy with this?
- Could the meeting ask Planning Weekend to discern on more procedural matters, as a way of ensuring that Friends, role-holders or not, can be engaged in YFiB decision making?

- In addition to its practical functions, a lot of socialising takes place at Planning Weekend (which is mostly attended by roleholders), is this healthy for the life of our community? Could we create alternative spaces and/or events outside of main YFiB weekends for Friends to spend time together, in smaller spaces/groups?

### **Switchboard:**

- What is Switchboard empowered to do and what is it not?
- Is Switchboard helping to relieve roleholder responsibility by sharing tasks, or are the same Friends asked to attend each time?
- Does Switchboard feel good? Does Switchboard feel led? Is Switchboard able to discern?
- Switchboard convenor is a significant task. Its current ad-hoc nature means Friends take it on and struggle to find anyone else to take it on after them. It takes up a significant amount of time, making it difficult to balance with other role-holder responsibilities.
- Convening Switchboard requires strong administrative skills, with an ability to view the whole scope of YFiB and its needs, and a clear understanding of how these needs can be met. Should the Switchboard convenor be a discerned role? Essentially like a YFiB Operations Manager. This role may need to be a Trustee.
- Is Switchboard fulfilling its intended purposes of facilitating communication between committees and ensuring specific important tasks are completed?
- Switchboard seems to have become a 'general purposes' committee - could some of what it does be opened up to the wider community?
- Does Switchboard need to return to having specific representatives from each committee who attend every meeting (rather than whichever committee member is available), as was the original intention?

### **Money:**

- How do we facilitate a culture shift whereby everyone who is able gives what they can to support the upkeep of the meeting? Should we make asking for donations part of the registration process? Or take a more passive approach, like having posters around the meeting house and/or send a link to donate out with the feedback form?
- The biggest parts of our budget each year are: role-holder travel to general meetings, newcomer travel and accessible accommodation. Should we cap how much role-holder travel we cover each time, either as a long-term or short-term measure?
- Is newcomer travel something the meeting is still willing and able to provide? Could we only pay a proportion of newcomer travel? Or stop paying for it entirely? What if we made funding available only based on need rather than automatically?
- How do we draw the line fairly on which travel and accommodation we will fund? Accessible accommodation is a significant part of our spending but

many Friends would not be able to attend without that support. Are there times when we should only cover a proportion of costs (e.g. fund the cost of the very basic option rather than the flexible private hotel room where the former would have been suitable)?

- Could we factor in varying costs when we consider when and where we meet, in order to minimise the cost of accessible accommodation? (i.e. avoiding school holidays and avoiding holding gatherings in Liverpool the same weekend as a major football match)
- If we held our events at fixed times and locations each year (e.g. always having our October weekend on the third weekend of the month and in York), would this reduce costs by allowing Friends to book travel and any accessible accommodation well in advance?

### **Concern for trans and non-binary inclusion within the Religious Society of Friends:**

- Reflecting on the Concern Action session held in February, do we have a clear sense of how we can take forward action on our Concern? Where are we led next?
- The editor of *The Friend* has invited YFiB to take over an issue, do we feel led to explore this possibility? Could considering this question help us discern how we carry our Concern forward?
- Could we have a weekend or two dedicated to the life of our Concern, reviewing and shaping action?

### **Relationship with the wider Society:**

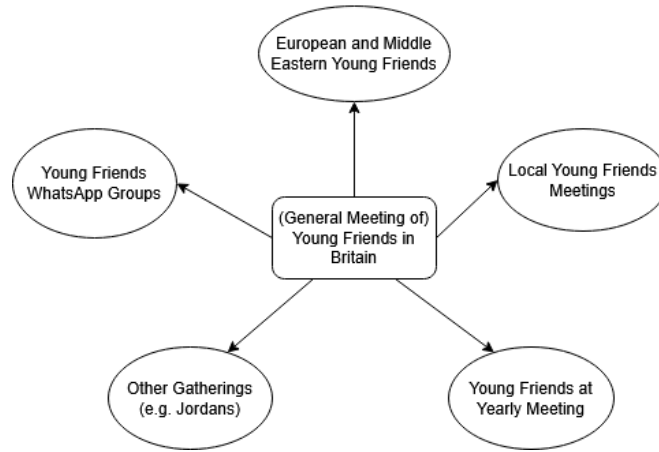
- Do we intend to be the General Meeting of all Young Friends in Britain, or of our members (i.e. those who attend our in-person events at least some of the time)?
- When we interact with other Quaker bodies, are we doing so as representation for all British Young Friends, or just for members of our meeting? How do we make that clear and make sure we are doing it well?
- What do we want our relationship to be with local young Friends groups?
- What do we want our relationship to be with Britain Yearly Meeting and with Britain Yearly Meeting staff?
- What do we want our relationship to be with local and area meetings?
- Should we email the area meeting clerks mailing list to get details of any appointed YFiB reps and encourage area meetings who haven't appointed one to do so?

### **Spiritual Review Weekend:**

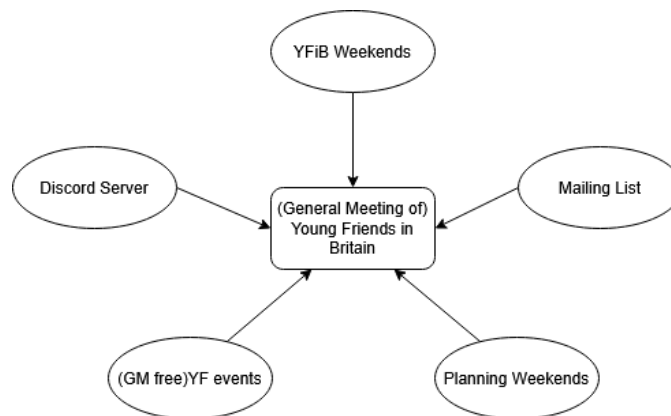
- How can this weekend be a time for really listening to each other and to the Spirit?
- May we pray for patience and for an awareness of the Divine to guide this meeting in May and all meetings going forward.

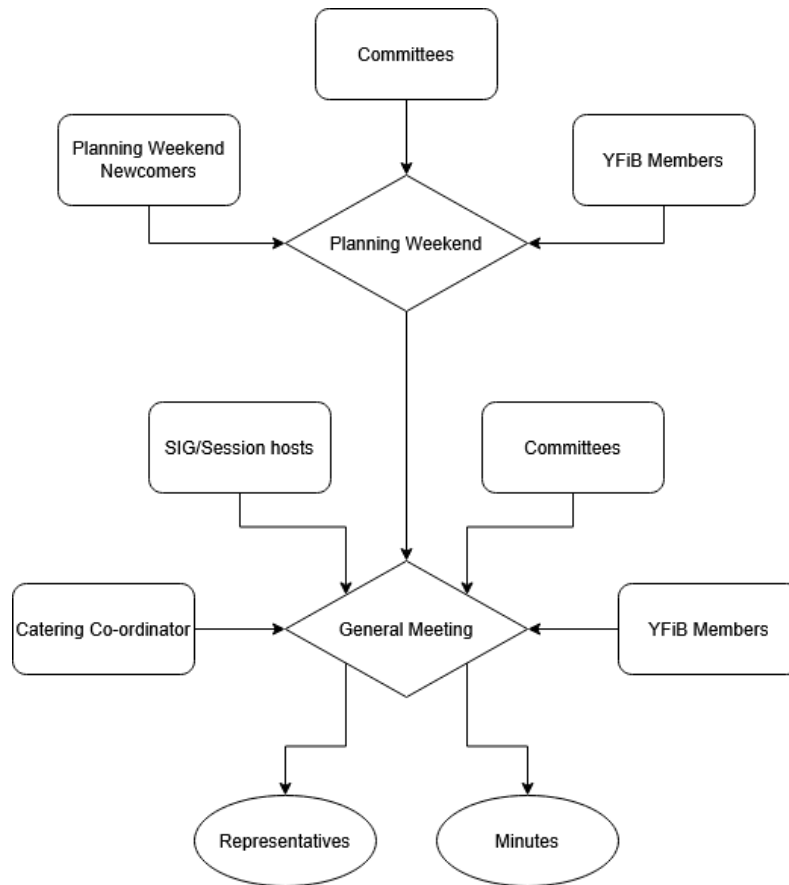
# Structures of YFiB

Where YFiBbers connect with other young Friends:



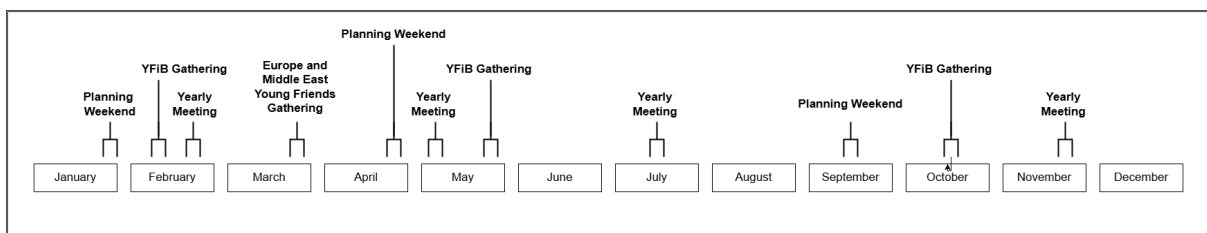
Where YFiBbers connect with each other:





YFiB internal structures

## Gatherings Throughout the Year



## Reports

More reports will be circulated closer to the gathering. Come along to our online reports session to hear and consider them in full!

Tuesday 19 May @7PM on Zoom!:

<https://quaker.zoom.us/j/83117331019?pwd=ibAa4ULSDUwDhXSRshf9wapmADKIA.G.1>

### Trustee report

By Georgia Campbell

I'm not sure I can say any more that trustees have been unusually busy, as that seems to be how I've started every trustee report for at least the last year. Perhaps we're just busy as usual.

A full-strength trustee committee came out of February YFiB, to the delight and relief of the existing trustees. We have been in handover mode, ensuring knowledge is passed from old hands to new with a minimum of overwhelm (on either side!). A grand to do list has been formulated as a central port of call for tasks to grab. To indulge some corporate speak, we are refining our Ways of Working to facilitate a balanced, proactive committee.

Still underway are communications with BYM. The (hopefully) final draft of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will get us admin support has been informally agreed, only pending final signatures. We are aiming for a start date by early June at the latest.

We have also minuted to sign the Safeguarding MoU with BYM and Area Meetings. This will strengthen the sharing of information between organisations that could impact our members. It was minuted by General Meeting in October 2023 that Trustees would take the decision on whether to sign this MoU, and we are now moved to do so.

As this is the first trustee report under our new name, it's worth mentioning that it proved surprisingly simple to navigate adding General Meeting of Young Friends in Britain as a working name for this charity. Currently, YFGM is also still listed, while we do the work of updating the name in our policies and constitutional documents, and while everyone (including other Quakers!) gets used to the change.

The summer is set to be no quieter, with constitution and policy review, the onboarding of our admin support, and the outcomes of the Spiritual Review. Our committee has a number of transitions ahead, with nominations due in May, October and next February. We ask our community to consider whether this may be service that you are led to, and offer support in the decision making and, of course, if you are nominated.

August Brown will be taking over from me (Georgia Campbell), and I hope you all join me in wishing them, and the rest of the committee, the best of luck. They have all the support and light holding I can give.

## Last Ever Meeting for Sufferings Report

By Chloe Scaling

Since our last General Meeting, there has only been one Meeting for Sufferings, the last ever one, on 7th March 2026. Meeting for Sufferings was the meeting responsible for making Yearly Meeting decisions outside of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM), meeting around four times a year. It was made up of mostly representatives from Area Meetings (one per meeting per event, with alternates appointed in case the representative could not attend) and General Meetings like our own, as well as BYM's Trustees. There would always be a report from the BYM Trustees and Treasurer, often Meeting for Sufferings would record in the Court & Prison Register when someone had been involved in the court and prison system due to action they had taken as a Quaker (historically, this recorded persecution for simply being a Quaker, more recently, non-violent direct action around issues like peace and the climate have tended to be the reasons). Apart from the above, Meeting for Sufferings often made decisions around governance, for example minor changes to *Quaker faith & practice*, but often there was discernment on much bigger topics and issues, which inevitably there was not enough time for. The meeting usually ran from 10am to 4pm on a Saturday, with one weekend gathering every three years. There were usually decent breaks, including an hour for lunch, the rest of the time was spent in business meeting.

At Yearly Meeting in 2024, it was decided that Meeting for Sufferings would be laid down. Yearly Meeting will meet around four times a year, with three day-long meetings and one weekend per year. Each Area Meeting, General Meeting etc. will send representatives, but other Quakers will also be able to attend. Will this work any better than Meeting for Sufferings? Who can say?

The most shocking thing about this Meeting for Sufferings was that they not only were able to receive our minute about our name change from February 2026 gathering, but actually updated *Quaker faith & practice* during the meeting. There was already an item on updates to the online version of *Qf&p* on the agenda for the day, so we snuck in there. The minute on that item said *Qf&p* would be updated on 1st May 2026, but at the time of writing this in May, this has not yet happened.

Most of the other business this time was procedural, including wrapping things up for the laying down of Meeting for Sufferings. Some Quaker Recognised Bodies were laid down and some had their registration renewed. We also heard from Quaker Committee on Christian and Interfaith Relations and members of the Quakers in Britain peacebuilding team. As always, the minutes are public, so you can read them in full here:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/papers-and-minutes>

After lunch, a meeting for worship was held to “commemorate and celebrate the work of Meeting for Sufferings”. Some Friends gave ministry about Meeting for Sufferings over the years and a final minute was read. It felt like a funeral. We even had a wake afterwards, with tea and cake. Now we can say, suffering is over.

## **April 2026 Darlington Planning Weekend Newcomer Report**

By Theo Healey and Robin Henderson (Stained Glass Robin)

This past planning weekend took place from the 10th to the 12th of April at the Friends Meeting House in Darlington. There were 34 Friends in attendance, and the meeting house also had a Resident Friend who would come down frequently to answer questions and assist in finding things throughout the building. The weekend was an interesting one, and from what we have been told was different to previous planning weekends.

The weekend was used to plan the Spiritual Review weekend which is coming up in May, and as this is very different to a usual YFIB, the planning weekend was as well. There was no threshing and instead we opted to have meeting for worship for business, which resulted in the meeting having minutes to present, something which there was uncertainty about. We discerned about numbers and catering as well as how to take stress off of roleholders and ensure that everyone feels supported in what they are doing within the Meeting. Sometimes these discussions could be challenging, with many Friends feeling initially strongly led in different directions. This reflects the level of passion that many YFIB members have for their community, as well as the challenges of finding new consensus when turning away from the beaten track. Alongside several meetings for business the committees met individually and were able to set things in motion for May. The logistics team began creating the sign up sheet with special thought being given to making sure that newcomers knew this was not an event that would be particularly catered towards them due to the nature of figuring out where YFIB stands identity wise and the work that is going to go into that. We also heard from the pastoral team and finance as well.

It was not all work and meetings however, with people doing crafts, getting bubble tea, and stacking electric tea lights onto a Friend in a post dinner bit of fun. There

were Morris Dancers in town and a lovely indoor market square. Darlington had several Friends who owned and operated storefronts near the Meeting House, and there were some local Friends about whom we were able to speak to. Many people felt spiritually refreshed after the weekend and others noted the feeling that the spiritual review weekend was well underway and that the planning weekend went well.

## Finance Report for May 2026

### General Meeting of Young Friends in Britain

“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 GM in February.

At the February 2026 GM we spent:

- **£2372.1** on Access (accessible accommodation, and travel for non-roleholders and non-newcomers) - this amount is 26% of our annual budget for this category in 2026, which is £9,000.
- **£82.30** on newcomer's travel - this amount is 3.2% of our annual budget for this category in 2026, which was £2,500. This event seems to be an outlier in the general trend of newcomer expenses as there can be up to 30 newcomers per event.
- **£509.63** on food - this came to roughly £1.03 per person per meal, £0.75 below the budgeted amount of £1.78 per person per meal.
- **£32.73** on committee expenses (primarily transport for our cooking equipment) - this amount is 8.2% of our annual budget for this category in 2026, which is £400.
- **£2,051.48** on role-holder travel - this amount is 34.2% of our annual budget for this category in 2026, which is £6,000. This is encouragingly close to a third of our budget for the year, hopefully we can continue this trend for the rest of the year.

There was **£65.50** donated by card at YFGM in February 2026, other donations received between May and the start of the year include:

- **£674.34** in online donations made via People's Fundraising.
- **£1300** in donations from Local and Area Quaker Meetings - made via bank transfer.
- **£1352.36** 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 YFiB.

*In summary, the total expenditure for the February YFiB general meeting 2026 was **£3513.24**, and the total income received from donations between January and May was **£3326.7**. During this period we also received **£11,700** in grants from charitable trusts.*

Currently, there are no predicted overspends for this year, but it is possible that the Access or Roleholder's travel costs may climb higher for the next two events, we ask that the meeting supports our committee in continuing to make the decisions needed to run YFiB.

We are looking forward to welcoming a new Treasurer to the committee in the coming months. Should any Friends have any questions or queries for the Finance committee, please let us know by emailing us at [finance@youngfriends.org.uk](mailto:finance@youngfriends.org.uk), or by sending us a message on the ask-a-committee channel on the YFGM Discord.

## EMEYF Spring Gathering 2026 YFGM/YFiB Representative Report

### **Or: Spirit and Silliness in Silesia**

By Louis Willis

In January of 2026, I was discerned as the representative from the at the time Young Friends General Meeting to the Europe and Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF). My task was to attend the Spring Gathering of that body. EMEYF, despite the name, is mostly composed of Friends from Central Europe. There is a more than healthy crop of Germans among them. Indeed, not a few YFibbers attend on their own initiative and some of them hold roles jointly. There is a prophecy at least twice proven true that any YFiB rep to EMEYF will come away with a role.

My journey was a hard one. It began with a train to London and then the Eurostar to Brussels. Jacob and I didn't actually notice the tunnel and it was only when the

graffiti began to be worded in French that we realised we were on the other side. Myself and Jacob had the dubious privilege of being on the first sleeper train running from Paris to Berlin in many years. We were concerned it might also be the last. The train was packed full of journalists and merch-toting tourists and the carriage I was supposed to be in was entirely without power. Fortunately, as is often fated in my life, the error was in my favour and I was upgraded with a nice mix of folks to the premier class (read: given actual bed sheets!). The train driver was apparently on a mission, as we made up approximately 40 minutes in the night and were surprised to hear we were almost there first thing on Friday morning.

Jacob and I journeyed on from Berlin to the city of Poznan. We were to stay with a lovely Polish Young Friend by the name of Konstancja or Kosia. She also confusingly goes by the Polish words for consternation and condensation. Poznan has some excellent museums that we patronised while we were there for the night. However, the real highlight was some short but intimate worship we did with Kosia's Landlady/Neighbour/Quaker Godmother Magda. She made us cookies and talked our ears off long into the night. On Saturday morning I reflected on what an incredible experience I had already had, and we weren't even at the gathering.

Our venue was in the woods of Silesia or Śląsk, an old coal mining region in Western Poland. On the outskirts of a beautiful little town called Janowice Wilke lies an estate called "Lesny Dwor" or "Forest Manor". While certainly in the Forest, the manor was in a state of "Refurbishment", not fit for our purposes, and it became clear that the host was a convinced conman. Nevertheless, the location was exceptionally pretty, if cold. On the first couple of nights, we sourced some terrible quality deadwood from the forest with which to keep ourselves warm to generally positive if smoky results. EMEYF and YFiB have shared custody of Limes Brighton. However, in Poland Limes had custody of nothing more than shorts and beer with which to brave temperatures that at one point plunged down to -5. The decor was very charming and rustic except for one cabin that stood alone and foreboding. It was called Cabin 6 but we rechristened it the witch's cabin and stuffed in many of our roleholders. The facilities were reasonable when they worked.

After settling in on Saturday, we were sorted into small groups and engaged in some icebreaker activities. I know that as a practice this has lapsed somewhat at YFiB, however here it initially worked very well and built much fellowship. The small groups were to be the basis of doing our tasks and certainly working in mine was very positive. Some care has to be taken that not too many roleholders are concentrated in one group and if people are sick or leaving early others are transferred to fill gaps, but as a concept I would like to see it return. On Sunday, we saw to Gathering Nominations. This works a little differently than at YFiB, as there are some roles such as Elders in which the committee is split between two people on 3 year terms, and several vacancies that are appointed only for the duration of a Spring Gathering. Essentially, several committees co-opt on a permanent basis. I do not think that would be suitable for our needs necessarily, but I believe it

contributes, along with other factors, to there being less of a gap at EMEYF between those with roles and those without. Sadly, the EMEYF Spring Gathering was my first opportunity to hear in-person feedback from YFiB non-roleholders as to their experience of our own gatherings. Heartbreakingly, it was not overall positive. I expect much of the difference lies in the fact that EMEYF is held over a week, while YFiB is at best a long weekend. But there is room and time at EMEYF for discussions of a depth I don't always find possible in the UK. The running of YFiB and the growth of our committees may have unintentionally led to the forming of cliques. This is not unheard of at EMEYF: a German friend shared me with a criticism that he felt his countrymen didn't make a big enough effort to connect with EMEYFers from other backgrounds, but overall I found over the course of the week I had a chance to get to know almost every one of the 50 odd attendees present. I have formed friendships with many of them that I hope will last the rest of our lives.

The theme of the gathering was "Borders". This by no means dominated sessions and was not always perceptible, but at various points in worship sharing we were encouraged to think about how they were enforced, how we benefit from them and how they conflict with our faith. We heard from a German Friend, Juergen Menzel, about his work helping Russian Conscientious Objectors flee to the EU, activities related to which he is currently facing criminal charges for. We were also joined for one of our Epilogues by a Palestinian (small f) friend by the name of Mohamed, virtually from Gaza. He told us of his and his family's desperate situation "within the yellow borders of Palestine" and how he wished they could escape them. He longed to be somewhere where the privilege of safety was a given. However he thanked us for holding him and his community in the light, and we thanked him for making our gathering truly "European and Middle Eastern".

The attendance of Juergen and Mohamed was primarily facilitated by a device known as "The Owl". Much confusion has been had over this thing's name and frankly the jokes are a little stale at this point. It is essentially a large combined webcam and microphone that can both display a 360 panorama of a room, and also display a series of closer shots of people in person activated by speech or movement. It does occasionally hoot for reasons which are unclear to me. It has been whispered to me that it is named Karl. It allowed for a generally high quality experience for the 7 or so attenders who at one time or another were coming over the airways to us. The hybrid nature of some sessions put a small amount of labour onto Elders who had to take it in turns to supervise the Owl and its laptop. However, given we now exist in a reality with a YFiB numbers cap, I would encourage the meeting to explore ways in which we can learn from this example and allow friends that cannot attend YFiB in person to be there online. Some issues with video quality and the meeting making too much of a racket notwithstanding, the online feedback was positive. I was even able to acquire one of the socially distanced friends as a pen pal with which to polish up my German (at the time of writing this has amounted to teaching me the meaning of the words Stövchen and Gurkensalat). On a related note, Tim Rouse (in person) and Paula Christophersen

(through the medium of the Owl) gave a report on a visit they made to Uganda and Kenya as European and Middle Eastern Section (EMES) representatives to the World Executive Committee of Young Adult Friends (WECYAF). I think. There may also have been some FWCC in there somewhere. Anywho! Both reported on the joy of encountering other YAFs from all corners of the globe. In particular Tim reported his feeling of shared tradition with Friends from very different kinds of meetings, despite perhaps initially thinking that as Quakers from liberal and unprogrammed backgrounds he and Paula might stick out.

Alongside the official theme of borders, an unofficial one arose from tension. This was the question of children at EMEYF. There were about 7 minors present at one point or another who themselves were not a point of contention and on the whole the meeting was very welcoming to them and helpful to the parents. Possibly too much, as we were told off for getting too distracted making faces at The Baby during meetings in which we should have been upholding a more worshipful manner. A worship sharing session was held in which we heard from friends for whom the presence of children could be a source of pain. Due to the nature of what was shared in the session, I am very limited in what details I can supply. I can only try to impress upon you that it was challenging, emotional, and necessary. The session spoke to me of something very special in Quakerism. Nothing was settled or sorted. No consensus or decisions were reached. Differences were aired and held and all that changed was we knew our friends better in their sorrows.

The bonfires in the evening were a real highlight, although they were rained off the first couple of nights. Many times myself or another friend would orate our life stories or how we came to Quakers. Workers' songs or selections from the Quaker songbook were sung by firelight, generally very sweetly and occasionally in time. The Planning Committee was decimated by disease in the leadup and the workhorse of the event was our great German mensch Fridtjof. The poor fellow, sturdy as he was, was in a state of inhumane stress for most of the week. He was the best placed linguistically to attempt to communicate with our rascal of a host, to the detriment of his sanity. Around the campfire, he was usually seen with a cigarette in hand, making jokes about his Maoist girlfriend who had brought them for him from China. I asked him how long he had smoked for and he told me a story of how, approximately two weeks before he was discerned for the Planning Committee at Spring Gathering 2025, he'd found a pouch of tobacco and some rizlas on the street. He'd taken it as divine intervention in his approaching time of need, but hoped to leave his carcinogens at the border of Poland at the conclusion of his trial.

Despite this worrying indictment, I upheld the role prophecy and confirmed myself willing and able to serve on the planning committee for the Spring Gathering in 2027. It was threshed that the location should be in the Schwarzwald or Black Forest in southwest Germany, and that the theme, in a similar vein to our own Spiritual Review Weekend, should be a spot of "Who are we as a community" navel

gazing. Ministry was heard on how we can listen and learn from Trees and the Forest as a fellow living community. The location was deemed to be most appropriate as it was approximately central to the EMEYF community and would allow the largest proportion of its members to attend as possible. Although some concerns were raised by the gathering nominations committee that German EMEYFers weren't nominating as many of their friends as we would like, in the end we did end up with at least one fluent German speaker on the committee. The rest of us have or are in the process of acquiring a questionable proficiency in the language. But I am very confident in the committee overall and look forward to the event we and the community will create.

Many things at the venue were a struggle. Plunging temperatures caused some issues for those who had not packed with the temperatures in mind. Issues in the kitchen caused more. Generally, a catering co-ordinator is meant to be found from amongst the members of the planning committee, however, with their reduced numbers Connor, the EMEYF transient Australian, and YFiB's very own Tim Rouse stepped into the breach. Their efforts were heroic and much appreciated. The cooking woes came to a head when, unbeknownst to us, the gas bottle ran out during a process of us in the kitchen subjecting pierogi to what ended up being little more than a tepid bath. Once gas had been restored, we ended up panfrying the soggy rascals. Due to having been prepared in pork fat, many of them were labelled "evil" and several unscrupulous and pig-eating friends took home great pierogi loot.

The worship sharing sessions at EMEYF were a real highlight. There was one in which we were posed questions such as "What do we value most about Quakers?". There was some quite intense ministry given. I ministered that I valued most amongst ourselves the ability to find inspiration in sorrowfulness as well as joyfulness, in the spirit of Advices and Queries 7 and 18. There was a great big sheet of paper on which friends wrote their bits and pieces, which I did not take a picture of and can no longer recall. If you want to know what British friends valued most in Quakers, you can ask them yourselves. It was possibly the non-Quakers I was most interested in at EMEYF, however. There were a few attenders very insistent they were a small friend. I saw several of them seek explanation on Quaker processes, values and spiritually. I saw one of them make a really heartfelt apology to a young Friend they didn't have to make, and even against the protestations of that Friend that there was nothing to apologise for. I really was very moved by how people of various levels of Quaker curiosity seemed to find themselves pulled along in our wake and taking part in the spirit that suffused the event, whether they knew it or not. I also saw a very few instances of Friends not behaving as I thought they should. Whether this was allowing their anger to lead them into speaking harshly to a well-meaning but clumsy Friend. Or in allowing old hurts to fester into a grudge. I found these small numbers of incidents, as in any instance where a Quaker falls below what I think the standards our values suggest, surprisingly hurtful. The Wednesday of the week was a day as led and I decided to do nothing but laundry

and moping. Coming through my sorrows, I felt taken up by an opening that reassured me that I was maybe being a bit silly and this was really a very tolerable level of discord for a week in each other's sometimes vexatious company.

Too many other things happened at EMEYF for me to do them all justice. Also, Skye is now bullying me to finish and submit my report. In many ways I am still processing the impression made upon me at Spring Gathering, and I recall a fond memory almost every day. Please hold the planning committee in the light while we hopefully deliver the next one :-)