



Your guide to East Scotland Area Meeting

Bringing together local Quaker meetings in

DUNDEE PERTH ST ANDREWS

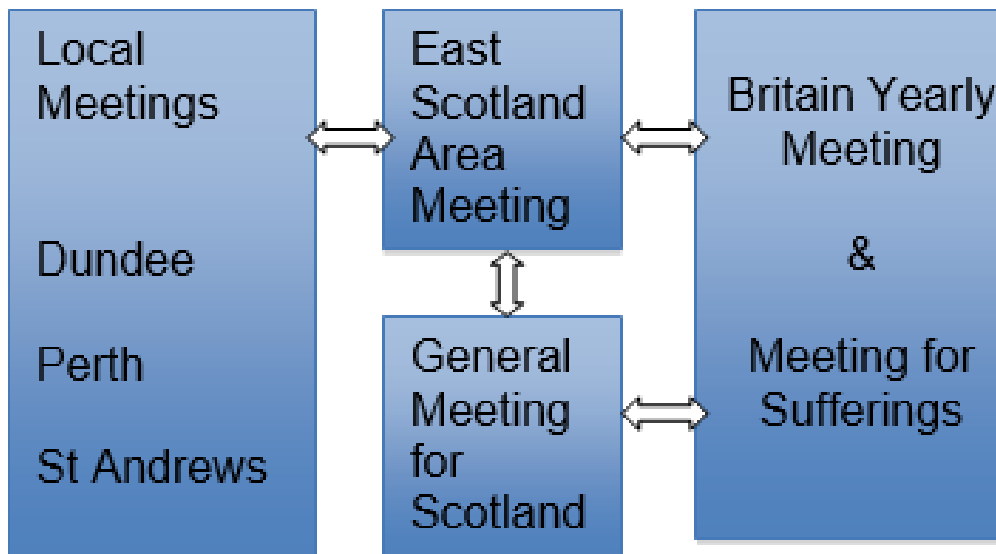
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Who are Quakers

'Quakers' is the common name for the Religious Society of Friends. Quakerism is almost 400 years old and grew out of Christianity and today we also find meaning and value in other faiths and traditions. We recognise that there's something transcendent and precious in every person: 'something of God in everyone'. Different Quakers use different words to describe this, but we all believe we can be in contact with it and encounter something beyond our individual selves. The phrase comes from the words of George Fox, who is regarded as the founder of Quakerism, in 1656: *'Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one.'* This quote and others from the Quaker tradition are collected in our book 'Quaker Faith and Practice' Within the book is a series of 'Advices and Queries' which we use to help refresh and guide our thinking and living. We don't offer neat creeds or doctrine, and we don't have clergy. Instead, we try to help each other work out how we should live. All people are welcome and accepted at a Quaker meeting for worship.

How we are organised

Diagram



Quakers use the word 'meeting' in two ways. One is to refer to our meetings for worship (see page 7). The other is to refer to our organisational structure.

The UK-wide Quaker body is called Britain Yearly Meeting. In Scotland the national Quaker body is General Meeting for Scotland. Within that there are four Area Meetings, of which we are East Scotland Area Meeting. East Scotland AM includes a network of three local meetings: Dundee LM, Perth LM and St Andrews LM. Each local meeting has its own characteristics according to its location and size.

The following abbreviations are often used:

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|----------------|---|
| AM | Area Meeting (see page 5) |
| LM | Local Meeting (see page 6) |
| GMfS/GM | General Meeting for Scotland |
| BYM | Britain Yearly Meeting. |
| MfS | Meeting for Sufferings |
| YFGM | the General Meeting run by and for 18-30 year olds. |

All Quakers in Britain are part of Britain Yearly Meeting. BYM is based in Friends House in London where much of the centrally managed work for Quakers in Britain is carried out.

BYM also refers to the annual assembly of Quakers which acts as the final decision-making body for Quakers in Britain. Any member of the Religious Society of Friends is entitled to attend. Anyone who regularly attends a local meeting and wishes to go to BYM should speak to a member of their local meeting.

Meeting for Sufferings is the national representative body for Quakers in Britain which handles BYM business between the annual gatherings. It meets throughout the year and is made up of representatives from area meetings, General Meeting for Scotland, Meeting of Friends in Wales, Young Friends General Meeting and BYM trustees.

Area Meeting

Our area meeting (East Scotland) is made up of three local meetings; in Dundee, Perth and St Andrews. Responsibility for running area meetings is held by their members.

AM is the principal business meeting for East Scotland and meets four times a year rotating round the local meetings. The agenda will include worship together, practical matters, membership items, subjects of interest to Quakers, often including a guest speaker, and time for meeting together socially. AM appoints a representative to Meeting for Sufferings and encourages and enables Quakers to attend conferences and other gatherings to help them experience and understand the Society of Friends in its wider form. AM has responsibility for membership matters, care of children, appointments to certain Quaker roles, arrangements for marriages and funerals, finance and property

Items of concern raised by local meetings which they would like to have considered by Quakers nationally, need to come to Area Meeting for discernment as to whether they should be taken forward. At the same time concerns from BYM and Meeting for Sufferings may be passed to area meetings for discernment.

Local meetings

Dundee Local Meeting

Meeting for worship is held every Sunday at 11.00am in the Meeting House at 7 Whitehall Crescent, DD1 4AR. This building has been in Quaker ownership since it was built in 1892 and is now owned by a trust for the benefit of the local meeting. Provision is made for a children's meeting when needed.

Perth Local Meeting

Meeting for worship is held on the second and last Sunday of each month at 11.00am at 7 St Leonard's Bank, Perth (Subud Centre) PH2 8EB. A children's meeting is organised when needed. Friends are very scattered so they also sometimes meet in each other's homes. Meetings for learning and social events are arranged throughout the year.

St Andrews Local Meeting

Meeting for worship is held every Sunday at 10.30 at 2 Howard Place, St Andrews KY16 9HL. A children's meeting is held every Sunday and the children usually join the adults for the last 10 minutes of worship. There is a midweek meeting for worship every Thursday from 1.15 until 1.45. Regular discussion groups and shared lunches are arranged in response to the needs of the meeting. Friends from the meeting are appointed to the University's multi-faith Chaplaincy team.

Meeting for Worship

Quaker meeting for worship is held in silence and lasts for about one hour. We have no paid clergy to lead us, no liturgy and no hymns.

The meeting begins as soon as the first person is seated. As other members gather we move into silent worship together. The silence is different from that experienced in solitary meditation. The listening and waiting in Quaker meeting is a shared experience in which we seek to come nearer to each other and to God. Out of the silence someone may feel prompted by the Spirit to speak. This “ministry” should be listened to attentively and considered carefully. Further ministry should not follow on too closely from what has been said.

Sometimes a meeting may pass with only silent ministry. At the end of an hour an elder will shake hands with their neighbour to close the meeting. Many local meetings have time for “Afterword” when those present may offer reflections which they wish to share but which were not ministry. Notices will then be given of future events and news of absent friends.

There will be an opportunity, if you wish to stay and chat after the meeting, when tea and coffee are provided.

Meeting for worship for business

Quaker business meetings are conducted in a distinctive way from other organisations. They are meetings for worship but with a prearranged agenda and will begin and end with silence. No vote is taken, as we are not trying to reach consensus or establish the will of the majority, but to work in the discernment of God's will.

This means that all present must come prepared but with an open mind so as not to be committed to one course of action. Discernment takes place in an atmosphere of reflective listening, each person contributing their own perception of the issue but without contradicting previous statements. When considering an agenda item a person is expected to speak only once.

The clerk and assistant clerk or co-clerk are the servants of the meeting and have the task of discerning "the sense of the meeting" and at what point unity has been reached. They will prepare a draft minute on each agenda item which will be offered to those present to comment on. Once agreed the minute is read out and is accepted as the decision. Occasionally the clerks may feel that there is not unity on a matter in which case it will be deferred to another meeting for business

People in the meeting

You may hear people in the meeting referred to as Friends, attenders or enquirers. Enquirers are those new to Quakers, seeking to know if our way is for them. Attenders are those who come regularly to meeting for worship and are involved in our Quaker community. Those in membership are referred to as Friends. If you have been attending for some time you may be asked if you would like your name and contact details included in the book of members and attenders. If you want to know more about membership you can speak to your overseer. Having no paid clergy both members and attenders share in the organisation of our meeting and care of each other. There are a number of roles which members of the meeting will be asked to assume for a limited number of years (see page 10)

Children and Young People

Area meeting looks on the care and involvement of children as an essential part of its responsibilities. Each local meeting makes their own provision when children come along with a parent. There are opportunities for young people to meet others at family and Link weekends, at Northern Young Friends summer Shindig for 11 to 16 year olds and Junior Yearly Meeting, the national gathering of 16 to 18 year olds. Young Friends have their own General Meeting for 18-30s www.yfgm.quaker.org

Roles in local meetings

Everyone is encouraged to be involved in the care of the meeting, but as Quakers have no clergy or hierarchy some people are appointed for a limited time to roles with particular responsibilities.

Elders are always members of the Society of Friends and their job is to nurture the spiritual life of the meeting, particularly supporting the right holding of worship.

Overseers concern is for the pastoral care of everyone in the meeting. In most meetings each overseer will be given a group of members and attenders with whom to keep in touch and ensure their needs are known. Sometimes an attender is appointed as an overseer.

Elders and overseers work closely together as their work can often overlap. To enrich the life of a meeting they may arrange gatherings of people for worship sharing, to discuss a topic, to listen to each other's spiritual journeys or to share food and fellowship together.

Elders and overseers work in local meetings but are appointed by area meeting

Clerks are members of the Society of Friends and are appointed to look after administrative tasks. All Quaker bodies have clerks. In a local meeting they have responsibilities within the meeting for worship for business. The clerk will often be the person who reads out notices after meeting for worship.

Treasurer will look after the accounts, gather contributions for Quaker work, distribute money from special collections and will submit an annual report to area meeting treasurer.

Clerks and treasurers are appointed by local meetings.

The appointment of people to all these roles is through a nominations process (see page 12)

There is a variety of other more informal roles in local meetings which everyone is encouraged to share in for example:

Welcomers are asked to greet those coming in to the meeting room and shake their hand. They may also be asked to look after the provision of tea and coffee after meeting for worship

Librarians look after the stock of books and look for new Quaker publications.

Nominations and appointments

In the absence of clergy and conventional authority structures, Quakers appoint people from amongst themselves to carry out the necessary roles. This is done by a nominations process.

In a business meeting a nominations committee will be appointed which will be asked to make recommendations. The committee will consider what gifts people bring to the meeting and what work needs to be carried out. This is a prayerful process.

Members of the committee will have conversations with those whose names have been suggested so that they understand the nature of the commitment.

Names will then be brought back to the business meeting for appointment. Appointments are usually for three years. Some people may be appointed for a second “triennium” but that is usually the maximum they will serve in that particular role.

The nominations process works at all levels of Quaker organisation – local, area, general and national.

A Quaker Glossary

The following words and phrases are commonly used among Friends but their use may be unfamiliar to you.

Centring down: is the process of settling into worship, setting aside our preoccupations and becoming aware of the Spirit within and among us.

Concern: is something which arises in response to a strong leading of the Spirit. Whether to act on a concern is tested through discernment at a meeting for worship for business

Epistle: is a formal letter addressed to Friends in general, drawn up by a yearly meeting or other body to convey the substance of the meeting's deliberations

Gathered meeting: is a meeting for worship in which we have a strong sense of being drawn closely to one another, in the presence of God.

Holding in the light: is the way we describe focused prayer for someone or for those in a difficult situation. For example it may be for a friend who is ill or dying or for those caught up in war or disaster.

I hope so: said as an affirmative response when the clerk reads out a draft minute during a meeting for business, and asks if it is acceptable.

In right ordering: an action, personal or corporate which conforms to Quaker principles and is felt to be appropriate

Meeting for Clearness: a meeting of a small group which has a focus on a particular issue and enables those present to be clear about possible options and ways forward. They are held when a couple asks for a Quaker wedding, or for someone to seek guidance at times of difficulty or where a conflict has arisen.

Outreach: the work of making Quakerism known to a wider public

Testimonies: how we act as Quakers goes together with what we believe. The testimonies reflect our values and have emerged from our Quaker witness. They are simplicity, truth and integrity, equality and justice, sustainability and peace.

Threshing Meeting: is a meeting at which a controversial matter can be openly discussed in order to defuse potential conflict.

Worship sharing (sometimes called creative listening) : groups that can provide a setting where all who take part learn about themselves as well as about others.

Common acronyms for Quaker organisations

ESAM East Scotland Area meeting (see page 5)

QPSW Quaker Peace and Social Witness works at a national level on behalf of Quakers, running peace building projects overseas, campaigning and providing resources to enable local Quakers to take action.

QL Quaker Life provides national support for spiritual nurture and practical tasks required in the running of local Quaker meetings in Britain.

QCCIR Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations

FWCC Friends World Committee for Consultation acts to encourage fellowship among all the branches of the Religious Society of Friends worldwide

NFPB Northern Friends Peace Board. Quakers from throughout the North of Britain meet and work together 'to advise and encourage Friends in the North in the active promotion of peace in all its height and breadth.'

Further sources of information

Websites

The BYM website www.quaker.org.uk

The General Meeting for Scotland website
www.quakerscotland.org

Books

Advices and Queries

Quaker Faith and Practice

Being a Quaker: *a guide for newcomers* by
Geoffrey Durham

For children:

Quaker meeting and me

Let's explore the Quaker Way

Quakers: a guide for young people

Online

Quakers in Britain facebook group

Quakers in Scotland facebook group

Journals

The Friend – a weekly news journal

Friends Quarterly

Tayside Quaker – quarterly newsletter for our area
meeting

Scottish Friend – quarterly newsletter for General
Meeting for Scotland

Leaflets

Available from your meeting or from Friends House
There are various leaflets about worship, membership, testimonies, Quaker work, Quaker funerals and Quaker weddings.

Courses

Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham (www.woodbrooke.org.uk) offers a year-round programme of courses, conferences and events.

Enquirer's Weekends which are exploratory retreats for newcomers are held at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Swarthmore Hall in Cumbria and Charney Manor in Oxfordshire.

Becoming Friends: *Living and Learning with Quakers* is available in print (check your meeting's library) and also online at www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/becoming_friends.html

Resources

Your local elders and overseers are always happy to talk to you about Quaker faith and experience and can advise about support available to attend courses.

There is a wide range of books available to borrow in local meeting libraries

Revised October 2018
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