

## GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

## PAPER F

### Issues that could be brought to Yearly Meeting 2026

Every year, the clerk of General Meeting for Scotland is invited to join YM Agenda Committee, this year in July, to reflect on what issues and situations are moving amongst Scottish Friends that could be usefully be brought to Yearly Meeting the following year. The clerk writes a letter in advance of this meeting, and last year's letter is reproduced below.

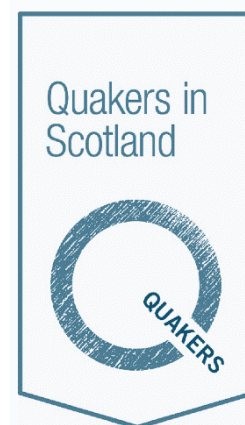
Yearly Meeting in May 2026 will take place over the first May Bank Holiday weekend, from Friday 1 to Monday 4 May 2026, and will be held at Friends House, London and online. This will be the last stand alone Yearly Meeting before a Continuing YM starts, with four meetings a year.

The agenda making process for YM is described in *Quaker faith & practice*. It is about how our whole community can further the work of the Spirit together. What discernment do we need? What issues could usefully be thought about to the benefit of Friends in Britain and what needs to be said to the world? It is not an opportunity to 'pass resolutions' and deal with all current situations (There are other bodies for that), but some may be relevant. Friends are asked to give guidance to the GM clerk by the end of June 2025.

## GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

**To YM Agenda Committee, 13-15 Sept. 2024**

**What might be brought before the Yearly Meeting in 2025?**



**This paper gives some suggestions from reflecting on what is moving in Scottish meetings and with Scottish Friends.**

### **A. SHARING OUR EXPERIENCE OF HOW WE APPROACH CHANGE**

We are some 1300 Friends in four area meetings, meeting together as General Meeting for Scotland (GMS). GMS has "national responsibilities on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting, to represent and advance the life and witness of Quakers in Scotland" (*Quaker faith & practice* 5.03).

Whilst we have our particular geographical spread and distinct political and legal framework in which we operate, what is moving with us is not dissimilar to what is going on in the rest of the Yearly Meeting. At times we feel mired by difficulties in maintaining our structures and properties and of finding ways to engage productively with each other. But we can see so much which is positive too, in our activity and witness, and in ways we bring each other together. It does feel we are 'advancing life and witness'.

Reflecting on the positives and negatives, one area that could be helped by discernment at Yearly Meeting in session might be sharing our experience of how we approach change.

We are all aware of living through a period of rapid social, economic and environmental change. The adaptations to the way we live as individuals and as Quaker communities continually bring us up against difficult choices and realities we don't always wish to face. It can be painful and 'living with the other disciples' is not always easy. Yearly Meeting met all this well this year, but there remain tangles to work through at all levels.

It may be pertinent to look at the spiritual experience of living through change. What have we learned? What works? What are the lessons for us as individuals and as community? Do we have to be fearful? What can we apply? What are the fundamentals in expressing Quaker spiritual experience that reflect the success we have had in adapting and changing over 450 years?

That might help us by allowing us to stand back and put in a wider perspective on the changes affecting us.

These include, for us:

- Finding ways to transition to new Quaker structures that work for us;
- Finding ways of spiritual refreshment together that advances life and witness;
- Working to increase diversity and inclusion in our meetings;
- Learning how to strengthen worship (in hybrid meetings);
- Building on the success of our using BYM staff – particularly our Local Development Worker and our Parliamentary Engagement Officer and their back up in Friends House.

We might find common experience in how we can work through change together that helps us recognise that the difficulties and fears can be overcome positively.

In many ways Yearly Meeting this year began that process.

## **B. GIVING DEPTH TO OUR PROCESSES**

It is not only Yearly Meeting in session that exposes a lack of clarity amongst us as to why we do things. YM has worked well on trying to revitalise Friends' processes by explanation and example. Nominations work might be revisited to emphasise the way it links in with community. We minuted this year:

*Discernment within a nominations system must be based on strong communities of faith. When we have difficulties in operating the process, in finding Friends to serve, in accepting service, in fulfilling our service, they may be telling us that there are fundamental issues within our Quaker communities that need addressing. The principles operate from our meetings being communities where we know and support each other. Nominations process is the more difficult if we do not know each other, do not support Friends in the roles in which they serve and don't seek a common responsibility to make things work.*

## **C. A QUAKER VIEW ON PRISONS**

Follow up to the 2024 Swarthmore Lecture by working towards a contemporary Quaker view on prisons. The Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group and its associated Community Justice Forum have been helping us with that theme.

## **D. UNDERSTANDING POPULISM**

Continuing work on identifying trends that result in populism being expressed in our politics and communities. What can Quakers do? The recent sessions on Truth & Integrity have really helped here. Our Parliamentary Engagement Working Group picked out from the introduction to the QPSW strategy plan: *Working with truth and integrity, and listening as well as asking, are foundation stones of our work. Rooted in the Quaker testimonies, our role is "drawing spirituality out into the political world, to testify to that of God in the community and environment around us".* The PEWG had a session on this plan and emerged re-energised. Something similar might help us all at YM.

## **E. GIVING FRIENDS JOYFUL AND ENRICHING EXPERIENCE**

YM 2024 was successful in this and we encourage more of the same, and work towards a residential gathering.

Michael Hutchinson  
Clerk, General Meeting for Scotland