

Friargate Quaker Meeting

A guide for Newcomers



Welcome to Friargate Meeting

Our full name is 'The Religious Society of Friends'. 'Quakers' is a shorter name first given in mockery because our founder, George Fox, told a judge in Derby in 1650 that he should "tremble at the work of the Lord".

We are a varied collection of people - some of us (typically 10% or fewer) were born into a Quaker family; the rest have found our way into the Society from other churches or none.

The best way to find out more about Quakers is to talk to Friends and ask them to share their faith and experiences with you. You are also welcome to take part in any of the study groups, discussions, outings or other events that we run.

What do we believe?

Each person is different and unique and it is impossible to say: "All Friends believe..." or "would say..."

Many of us believe that there is 'something of God' in each one of us. For most of us 'God' is a term we use with conviction; for some this is not the case. Quakerism has its roots in Christianity and Friends in general try to work out their faith in practical service and witness. We are united by our shared silent worship.

We hope that our meeting is a community who care for each other, seek strength and truth together, and show our beliefs by our lives and attitudes.

How do we put our faith into action?

- Our meeting currently holds a peace vigil once a month outside St Michael Le Belfrey church. Many Quakers are involved in campaigning for peace.
- We support prisoners at Askham Grange and Full Sutton prisons through our Quaker prison ministry.
- We raise funds for charitable causes, for example we currently support a human rights project in India.
- Individuals in the meeting are involved in a wide range of social concerns either through paid or voluntary work, for example working for housing associations or in mental health.

Who are attenders and members?

Attenders are people who have been coming regularly to our meetings for worship, over different lengths of time, but have not yet felt it right to join the Society.

When an attender feels it right to ask to join the Society, they write a short letter to the **Clerk of Area Meeting** (see below).

More about membership, Area Meetings and the procedures of the Society are explained in our book, '*Quaker Faith and Practice*' which you can find in the meeting room and in the library.

Children

Children of all ages join our meetings for worship for the first fifteen minutes. Even if they are too young to be still and quiet, we benefit from their presence in the meeting.

At 10.45 they take part in their own children's meeting. The children meet in different age groups which are run by parents and others volunteers from the meeting. Each group leader is CRB checked.

We currently run the following children's groups:

Creche 0 – 2 years

Penn Group 3 – 7 years

Fell Group 8 – 11 years

Link Group 12 plus

Our Meeting House

Friargate Meeting House is a modern building, but Friends have been worshipping on the site since the early days of the Society in the mid-seventeenth century.

The Meeting House library contains books by and about Quakers, and other spiritual writings. To help us get to know each other, there is a file of photos in the library. To borrow a book, just sign for what you take out and return, in the book provided. There are also books and pamphlets for sale on the rack in the foyer. Do ask for help if you want to find something.

Roles in the meeting

Each meeting needs many people to do its work and business. Our **nominations committee** suggests people to serve the meeting in particular roles. Appointments are for three years, which may be extended to six.

Elders are responsible for worship. There are 12 elders in our meeting who are responsible for 'the right holding of meetings for worship', which includes special meetings for funerals and weddings. Elders also arrange learning and sharing opportunities, such as study groups.

Overseers are responsible for the pastoral care of all our members and attenders. Anyone can have an overseer if they wish. Our hope is that nobody should feel unsupported or overlooked, but remembered, valued and cared for.

The **clerk** convenes the **Local Meeting** (see below) and deals with the meeting's correspondence. In Friargate, we have two 'co-clerks' to share the work and responsibility.

The **manager and deputy warden**, our paid staff, deal with lettings, supervise the cleaning and act as general welcomers in the name of the meeting.

As well as a **treasurer** and **finance committee**, there is a **subscriptions secretary** who reminds us of the financial needs of the meeting and invites us to contribute annually if we can.

Other tasks are carried out by a wide range of other groups.

Structure of the Society

The word **meeting** is shorthand for the meeting for worship held each Sunday. It describes the collection of people who meet together for worship.

It is also short for the business meeting (called 'local meeting', or LM) held once a month, usually on a Sunday. One may say "Friargate meeting decided..." in referring to a decision taken by this body. All business meetings are held in the manner of a meeting for worship, with a 'clerk' (see above) who convenes the meeting.

The Society of Friends has various decision-making layers. Attenders can be present, provided they ask for permission from the clerk. The layers comprise:

Local Meeting, which deals with the business matters of the meeting. There are two other (smaller) local meetings in York, at Acomb and New Earswick.

Area Meeting brings together several local meetings for business and mutual support six times a year, usually on a Saturday afternoon. This deals with wider matters, including membership. Our Area Meeting is known as York Area Meeting, composed of

Acomb, Friargate, Harrogate, New Earswick and Thirsk local meetings.

Quakers in Yorkshire is held four times a year with speakers and topics and is mainly for fellowship for Quakers regionally. It is responsible for some items of business (finances, Trusts, property etc). We appoint Friends to attend and report back to us. Quakers in Yorkshire is also responsible for the Quaker schools in York (Bootham and The Mount).

Britain Yearly Meeting, or BYM, is an annual event, bringing together around 1000 members of the Society in Britain. It is usually held in May at Friends House, Euston Road, London, the central offices of BYM. Every few years there is a residential BYM during a summer week. This meeting clarifies the thinking of the Society as a whole and makes decisions about attitudes and policies.

Between Yearly Meetings, central decisions are made by '**Meeting for Sufferings**', the executive committee of the Society. The name relates to its original role in considering the persecution of Friends in the seventeenth century. This committee meets about eight times a year at Friends House and is composed of representatives from each Area Meeting and the central departments of the Society.

Our meetings at Friargate

Breakfast meeting takes place on two Sundays a month (the second and fourth): a 40 minute Meeting for Worship at 9.15 am, preceded by a simple breakfast at 8.45.

10.30 am meeting takes place every Sunday and lasts for an hour.

Every Wednesday a meeting takes place from at 1.15 pm. Bring a picnic at 12.45 to eat with others.

See our monthly newsletter, Quakevine (available in the foyer), for times and days of other York meetings.

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