

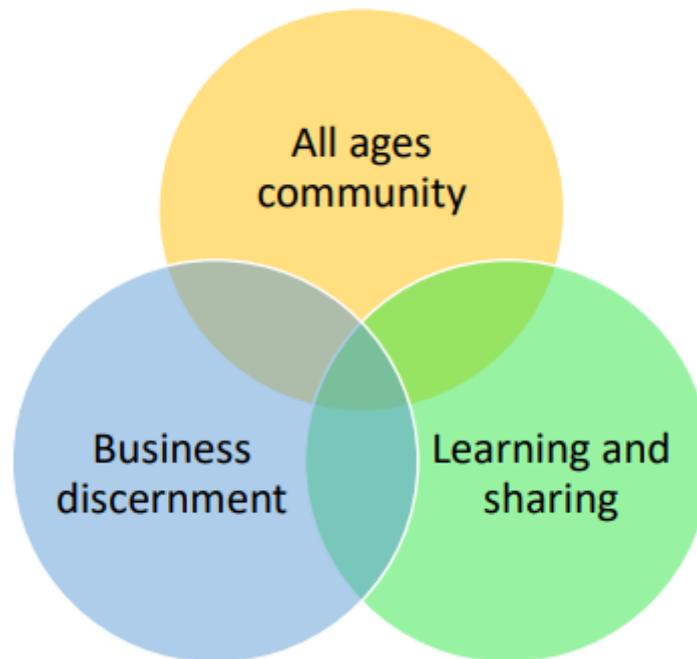
Consideration Of Yearly Meeting Options by CRM

This paper provides a suggested way to facilitate this discussion.

Background

Regional Meetings have been asked to consider issues associated with holding Yearly Meetings and suggestions made by the Right Holding of Yearly Meeting Committee, a national committee. On 29 March after Meeting for Worship, Friends in CRM will meet to consider these issues.

Various pieces of work already undertaken (surveys, consultations with RMs, etc) bring a clear agreement that the purposes of our Yearly Meetings should be three-fold:



We make various evaluations, both individually and in our meetings about how effectively these purposes are currently met by the way we do YMs.

We know that Yearly Meetings are in a time of change. Some aspects have already changed:

- The time of year has changed
- Not all RMs are able to host a YM
- Planning for YMs has become more collaborative
- Standing Committee (and AYM) have endorsed planning being more collaborative
- Costs have risen and are continuing to rise
- Suitable venues are less available now
- The role of Standing Committee has been reviewed and changes suggested. This affects the needs of business aspects of YMs—generally to mean that some items can be dealt with by Standing Committee, not needing to go to YM for agreement.

- That Standing Committee be recognized as the executive committee of AYM with responsibility for the ongoing management of AYM through the year.
- Standing Committee meet more frequently, sometimes by electronic meeting (ZOOM).

Standing Committee Review Recommendations, Jan 2020

There are consequences of these and other changes already:

- Some Friends are no longer able to attend YM
- The distribution of organisational workload is changing
- The AYM Secretary is required to service more Standing Committee meetings: prepare, do agendas, do minutes, distribute to RMs, and chase up their responses.

Some aspects are in flux and uncertainty, and there are questions still to be tackled:

1. Is there a “right time of the year for YM”?
2. Might it be good to have a fixed venue for YMs?
3. Should we hold YM-type gatherings less frequently? Perhaps localised ones in between?
4. Should we appoint a national hosting group to plan and run YMs?
5. Might we use electronic means of meeting to a greater extent?
6. Can we increase the emphasis on “All Ages Community” and “Learning and Sharing”?
7. Might we have to reduce the emphasis on YM for decision-making?
8. Existing Quakers are ageing. Can we make Quakers more attractive, more relevant, more visible to the rest of the world?
9. Are we expecting YMs to be too many things; to try to meet too many needs?
10. How do we make YMs affordable?
11. Can we make access to YM more level to all Friends (age, distance, affordability)?
12. How would we deal with a pandemic at the time of YM?

Suggested preparation for discussion on 29 March

A useful next step may be to dream of some possible ways of doing and adapting YM to improve it. Many parts could fit together to build a new picture (model). We need new ideas, but we also need to be realistic, and try not to incorporate ideas which fly in the face of experience and reason. It’s fun to have whacky ideas, and sometimes they contribute really well. We Quakers also have a track record of adopting nice ideas that fly in the face of reason—let’s not do that.

It is suggested that each person might spend a little time doing some research into one of the above (pick one which is of interest to you.)

You may like to write something which stands out to you, for sharing.

(Further Questions About YM Practice and Design below.)

FURTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT YM PRACTICE AND DESIGN	FACTORS WHICH AFFECT
1. Is there a “right time of the year for YM”?	Universities rely more on overseas students; many of them do not go home for vacations, and hence require their on-campus accommodation all year Winter and summer, some locations are more affected than others Impacts and consequences of changing climate How about boarding schools, or other venues? Look up websites for the availability of some you can think of. What effect might Coronavirus, or the like have on our planning? Some previous YMs have seen a significant number of Friends go home sick.
2. Might it be good to have a fixed venue for YMs?	What kind of venue? We are using Avondale multiple times. How well does this suit Friends? Up-sides? Down-sides?
3. Should we hold YM-type gatherings less frequently? Perhaps localised ones in between?	Could this reduce costs? Environmental impact? Would it be sufficient contact? How might more localised gatherings work? Who would plan them? How would we get our “business” done? What would we gain and lose?
4. Should we appoint a national hosting group to plan and run YMs?	We have moved in this direction. YM2020 is using input from quite a few Friends from other Meetings. Would this enable smaller Meetings to contribute more equally? Might the work-load just fall to the willing few?
5. Might we use electronic means of meeting to a greater extent?	We know we can make good use of electronic meetings for some purposes. Are there limits? Would Friends find enough sense of connection, intimacy? What would happen to lunch-queue chats?
6. Can we increase the emphasis on “All Ages Community” and “Learning and Sharing”?	Data-collected suggests that these are really important. Our YMs tend to be designed around “business”. Do we want to change that? Can we? How can we? Where do your personal commitment lie?
7. Might we have to reduce the emphasis on YM for decision-making?	Britain YM is mostly not about decision-making. Mostly is educational, exploration of important topics, but not to make decisions. Go to www.quaker.org.uk and explore to get a sense of their style.
8. Existing Quakers are ageing. Can we make Quakers more attractive, more relevant, more visible to the rest of the world?	WE will die out! Will we be replaced? Do we need emphasis on this, or are we happy for Quakerism to disappear? If not, what do we need to try, to do? How is this relevant to YM gatherings? What structures might we need? What questions do we need to be asking? Of whom?
9. Are we expecting YMs to be too many things; to try to meet too many needs?	Such a long list of “must provides” for YMs. Could we reduce it? What could go? Would this result in simplification? We expect/demand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessibility for Friends with reduced mobility • hearing support for those with hearing and visual impairment • specific catering provision • good internet availability • access to coffee shops • an attractive location • etc Could we split to have different gathering styles? Or vary the style from event to event?

FURTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT YM PRACTICE AND DESIGN	FACTORS WHICH AFFECT
10. Can we make access to YM more level to all Friends (age, distance, affordability)?	<p>From time to time, we talk about levelling costs. We do subsidise young people. Could we reimburse travel costs to part-equalise? What would be fair? What would be practicable?</p> <p>QuakersAustralia (AYM) needs YMs to happen, as part of keeping the organisation going. Yet the cost is borne by Friends who attend YM (QA does make a \$15K subsidy to part-cover venue costs, admin costs, etc). Should that subsidy be greater? Could it be part of equalisation? Copies of YM 2020 budget are available (see #8).</p>
11. How would we deal with a pandemic at the time of YM?	A question which highlights the threat to YM2020. We have developed a Risk Management Plan for this. Does anyone have useful suggestions toward this question?

Clearly, a number of these factors overlap, and interact.

If a new model occurs to you, write it down or diagram it. Perhaps you can discuss it with some others to help refine it. Possibly circulate it prior to the 29th.

At the meeting on 29th March, some people who have done one of these research tasks may be better informed about considering future YM options, which could help.

Research and resources

A considerable amount of survey and statistical information has been collected over recent YMs. This page is a gateway to further information. Spend a little time to see if any of the information or its explanations addresses questions you have been wondering about.

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/ymplanningsupport/survey-statistical-information>

The Right Holding of Yearly Meeting Committee (Australia Yearly Meeting national Committee) has written a Background Paper, which they seek responses to. This can be accessed at

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/sites/aym-members/files/committees/files/Background%20paper%20Nov19.pdf>

There is a diagram of the business Flow Process explaining the theory of how YM business is progressed and transacted. It is at:

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/sites/aym-members/files/books/files/YM%20flow%20diag.pdf>

In Q 7, you are invited to go to www.quaker.org.uk and explore to get a sense of their style.

In Question 9 above is an invitation for you to ask Michael Searle for a copy of the YM2020 budget. Michael.Searle@iiNet.net.au

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