

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)
BELGIUM AND LUXEMBOURG YEARLY MEETING

Epistle

from the

Residential Yearly Meeting

May 22-24, 2026

Arend-Fixmer Centre "Les Etangs"

Medernach, Luxembourg

To Friends everywhere, we send loving greetings from the annual gathering of Quakers in Belgium and Luxembourg, held in peaceful wooded surroundings and blessed with glorious Spring weather. This was a historic occasion, being the very first time that the Yearly Meeting has ever been held in Luxembourg and not Belgium.

Thirty-four Friends and Attenders of the four BLYM worship groups gathered for a weekend of spiritual and practical discussions and Quaker worship, and were joined by guests including a representative of FWCC-EMES, a Friend visiting from German Yearly Meeting and Rhiannon Grant of Britain Yearly Meeting, who led us in discussions and workshops related to our *Advices and Queries* Project.

Joyful cries of "Great to finally meet you in real life!" were heard all around on the first evening of our gathering, as Friends who had only ever worshiped or conversed together online met each other for the first time in the flesh.

In the first evening's epilogue, we were encouraged to imagine what we might do in the present in order to create a happy memory for the future. The task in the present moment for our Quaker community is to discern how to proceed with our *Advices & Queries* Project.

For many years we have sought guidance in the book of discipline of Britain Yearly Meeting, currently entitled *Quaker Faith and Practice*. In recent years we have begun to adopt additions to this text based on our own experience of living as Quakers in Belgium and Luxembourg, and have already produced our own supplement to the British publication.

Like many other Friends, we follow the practice of using *Advices & Queries* as a succinct form of guidance to help us live our Testimonies. In our sessions and workshops this weekend and in the two online sessions which were held in advance, we have begun to explore the possibility of creating our own version of *Advices & Queries* to better reflect our own specific experience.

This weekend we have looked at that possibility more closely. Guided by Rhiannon, through discussions in small groups and in plenary sessions, and also through creative workshops, we have explored what *Advices & Queries* mean to us and what a future version might include. One group spent time responding to No. 42 of *Advices & Queries* through art (see below), while another group created a short spontaneous video on the theme.

The complexity of this process revealed itself throughout the course of the gathering. For many Friends, religious language is associated with painful memories from their previous faith communities. We have realised that many of us (unconsciously) edit the existing *Advices & Queries* when we read them – we accept the text as we would receive an already loaded dinner plate, then we push certain items out of the way that are not to our taste, before eating.

At the same time, Friends feel anxiety over excluding the religious experiences of others. We have a tendency, when in doubt, to retreat back into silence. But in keeping with George Fox's challenge: "What canst thou say?", we have discerned to go forward with our project. We accept the challenge: to choose, claim, and use words that fit together to create a new way to engage with the "Absolute Perhaps" of Ben Pink Dandelion.

Through our sessions together, we have become aware of the size of the challenge. Different paths and different histories have brought us to Quakerism – some were born into the tradition, some have "shopped around" for a spiritual community. How do we speak with one voice? How do we reflect the diversity of languages and cultures within our Yearly Meeting? How do we – so many of us transplanted from other cultures and countries – speak on behalf of "Belgian" and "Luxembourgish" Friends?

What tone will we adopt – formal, informal? Active or passive voice? Addressing Friends in second person singular or first person plural? Can we fashion a new version that acknowledges doubt and the dark night of the soul, that reflects our awareness that all compassion for others starts from acceptance of self?

Let us create a text that sparkles. Let us find words that delight us, inspire us and light a spark within us. Let us be prophets of joy.

As our gathering – so full of sweet moments to savour – comes to an end on this day of Pentecost, our hope is that the Holy Spirit will light a small flame in our hearts and in our community. Embracing the spirit of *Ubuntu* – often translated as "*I am because we are*" – we understand that God is a verb. How do we bring a divine vision to all that we do, see God in our relationship to all things?

We have heard that becoming a Quaker is stepping into the future. May it be so.

Signed in and on behalf of
Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting

Paul Holdsworth, Co-Clerk

Nick Rendle, Co-Clerk

