

### **What is Senior Conference?**

Senior Conference is a week-long spiritual gathering, providing the opportunity to explore the Quaker faith and how it can be practised in today's world. It is run by and for young people aged 15 to 18. It is a place of friendship, laughter, and reflection, which builds a strong and supportive community over the course of the week, and friendships which last a lifetime.

### **What is the focus of the week?**

Each year the Arrangements Committee choose a theme to focus our thoughts throughout the week. In 2017 the theme will be **"Diversity and Unity"**. We explore the theme with visiting speakers, in small group discussions and through shared activities. In previous years, speakers have included famous authors, serving MPs, former Guantanamo detainees, asylum seekers, activists and workers from a variety of areas of Quaker organisations across the UK and worldwide.

### **How do we create a community?**

Family-sized groups of young people, called base groups, meet twice each day to have fun, get to know each other and share ideas in a supportive environment. These groups are facilitated by participants. All participants are expected to participate in all sessions, which are designed to be enjoyable and inclusive to all, and it is this spirit that spreads through the community. As such, drinking alcohol, drug taking and sexual activity are not allowed at the event, including during the outing to Oxford. Smoking is forbidden on the school site and is discouraged at the event, but we recognise that some participants may be addicted so special provisions are made to allow individuals to smoke if they declare themselves a smoker at the start of the event. They will then be asked to sign to agree to the smoking boundaries at the event.

### **What else happens?**

In the afternoons a choice of workshop activities are offered. In the past, these have included arts and craft, circus skills, drama, cooking, countryside walks and discussion groups. Participants will be asked prior to the event which workshop they wish to do for the week. There has also been an opportunity to try a different workshop in the final session in recent years. In the evenings, everyone comes back together for entertainments sessions which in the past have included wide games, discos and open mic nights. Quaker worship frames the event with short meetings for worship at the beginning and end of each day. It is a very busy and intense week so it is also important everyone is able to get enough sleep. An example of a timetable is available on the FSSE website.

### **How is it organised?**

Each year Senior Conference is organised and run by a new Arrangements Committee of about ten 16-18 year olds with responsibilities for Clerkship, Eldership, Oversight, arranging Entertainments and co-ordinating Base Group facilitation. They are each nominated by a nominations committee of their peers and appointed at the preceding year's event. They are supported in their roles by a team of adult volunteers, led by two adult co-ordinators. The team meets together for at least three planning meetings throughout the year to plan the event. Overall responsibility for the event rests with Friends Southern Summer Events, FSSE, which also arranges Junior Gathering, formerly Summer School, for 11-14 year olds. All FSSE events follow safety guidelines outlined by Britain Yearly Meeting and all adult volunteers require 2 references when they join the team and up-to-date enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS, formerly CRB) checks. Further information is available on the FSSE website.

### **Who can go?**

Senior Conference is not just for young people who attend their local meeting on a regular basis. It is for 15-18 year olds interested in Quakerism and with links to a local meeting. This is often through a parent or grandparent. There are places for 86 young people. Priority is given to young people with connections to local Quaker meetings in the South of England (These are listed on the FSSE website) and then to areas of the UK where there is no similar event in 2017 and then anyone else. If all places are allocated any further applications will be placed on a waiting list.

### **Where does it take place? How do you get there?**

For many years Senior Conference has been held in the beautiful surrounding of Sibford School, a Quaker boarding school in rural Oxfordshire. Participants stay in shared bedrooms in single-sex boarding houses and all bedding is provided. All meals are provided by the school with meat and vegetarian options. Other dietary requirements can also be catered for and should be included on the medical form. Participants should all make their own arrangements to travel to and from the event but a coach is included to and from Banbury station if required. There are regular trains to Banbury from London Marylebone. The coach will leave Banbury station at about 4pm on Saturday 19 August 2017 and return participants to Banbury train station at about 2pm on Saturday 26 August 2017. Exact times will be confirmed in the final mailing once payment has been received. The Arrangements Committee will be expected to arrive 24hrs before the event to make final preparations.

### **How much does it cost? Is there help available to pay?**

Senior conference costs £325.00 per participant. The majority (more than two thirds) of this fee pays for food and accommodation. However, we do not want anyone to be prevented from coming due to cost. Most local and area meetings have funds available to help with these costs. An overseer at your local meeting is a good first point of contact. FSSE can grant a limited number of bursaries which are intended for use if for some reason your local and area meetings are not able to help. If you need help of this nature please contact the booking secretary (contact details below). All payments from individuals and meetings are due by 30 June 2017. FSSE will not contact meetings to collect bursaries on your behalf. All cheques should be made payable to Friends Southern Summer Events and have the name(s) of the participant(s) clearly written on the back of the cheque.

### **How do you apply?**

To apply for a place at Senior Conference, please fill in the application form. Parents/Guardians of participants under 18 will need to sign the form. The form also needs to be signed by either the clerk, an elder or an overseer from your meeting or alternatively they can send an email on the participant's behalf. Please send the completed form to the booking secretary by **28 May 2017** (email preferred). The booking secretary will email to confirm the form has been received and to offer a place at the event, or to inform that the application has been put on a waiting list. After this date any applications on a waiting list will be offered places on a first-come-first-served basis. While the Arrangements Committee places are guaranteed they still need to complete and submit the application forms.

### **Where can you find out more?**

Each year the clerks write an epistle which is then agreed by the whole conference at the end of week in a Meeting for Worship for business session. These give an accurate reflection of the event. Recent epistles are also available on the FSSE website. There is also a Senior Conference Facebook page.

### **Contact details**

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any aspect of the event please contact the co-ordinators, Peter Slade and Becky Moylett. All forms, dietary and medical information and payment should be sent to the booking secretary, Kate Ulrick: [seniorconference@fsse.org.uk](mailto:seniorconference@fsse.org.uk).