



Yearly Meeting of
the Religious Society
of Friends in Britain

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

20 November 2015

Meeting for Sufferings will be held over the weekend of 4 – 6 December 2015 at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham

Dear Friends

As you know, our next meeting is a residential meeting at Woodbrooke. This is our second ever residential and the first time our new group meet together residentially. We are hoping that the weekend will provide opportunities for us to get to know each other better: deepening our sense of fellowship and building a worshipping community together.

I'm glad to hear that the two optional sessions being provided by Woodbrooke on the Friday afternoon have proved popular, with 30-40 Friends at each. These should help us prepare and feed into our time together and our considerations over the weekend.

In planning the meeting, Arrangements Group felt that it would be good to spend time focussing on Area Meetings. There is a general feeling that Area Meetings are struggling (as is also mentioned in the Quaker Life report), but it is hard to articulate exactly what the problems are and therefore know what can be done to address them! We have put together a starting paper based on issues that have come out of the Regional Gatherings. We will spend time in regionally based home groups before coming back to a full plenary consideration.

We will also be receiving an annual report from Quaker Life Central Committee. I attended the recent Representative Council where the theme was 'What is the ground and foundation of a gathered meeting?' When asked if they felt their area meeting was struggling over two thirds of friends present raised their hand! There is a clear overlap between our focus on area meetings and the work of Quaker Life, so we do recommend that you talk with your area meeting's Quaker Life representative in preparation for this meeting.

We will be receiving reports and recommendations from several of our working groups. If we agree with suggested changes to the CNC terms of reference (brought to us by our Review Group for Terms of Reference of Central Nominations Committee) they will need to be forwarded to yearly meeting for approval. The proposals from the Group on BYM's Relationship with Listed Informal Groups are for us to agree and implement. We will also be hearing from our Book of Discipline Review Preparation Group – both a formal report on their progress so far, and the chance to participate in an exercise reflecting on sections from the book.

Talking of *Quaker faith & practice*, we also have a number of suggested amendments coming to us from the Church Government Advisory Group to consider and forward to Yearly Meeting if we are happy with them.

Alongside these items we will also have a report from our trustees, AM minutes, appointments, and our annual report to agree (though we may choose to amend it slightly in the light of what happens during our December meeting).

Another small (but not insignificant) item is the laying down of our Long Term Framework Working Group. We accepted their document "Our Faith in the Future" at our last meeting and since then the Group has been busy preparing supporting materials for Friends and Meetings, and also a final report. We haven't included the report with these papers (it's 20 pages long!) but it is available on request from Graham Spackman (his contact details are below). Arrangements Group will consider it in more detail and forward it to other bodies as appropriate.

There are, as ever, a lot of papers for the meeting. Please do read them in advance and let us know if there are any substantive issues, particularly in relation to the changes to Quaker faith and practice, the recommendations for CNC terms of reference and about Listed Informal Groups, and our annual report.

I look forward to seeing you at Woodbrooke, and all of us spending time together and continuing to strengthen our worshipping community.

Yours in Friendship

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ethel Livermore". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of "Ethel" and "Livermore" being capitalized and prominent.

Ethel Livermore,
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

Papers enclosed with this mailing

Agenda

News and Views/Practicalities

MfS Arrangements Group minutes 2015 10 15

MfS 2015 12 02b Court and Prison Register

MfS 2015 12 03 Draft amendments to *Quaker faith & practice*

MfS 2015 12 06 Central Nominations Committee Review Group report

MfS 2015 12 07 Quaker Life Central Committee report

MfS 2015 12 08 Our Area Meetings Today

MfS 2015 12 09 Reports from other European Yearly Meetings

MfS 2015 12 10 Long Term Framework Working Group

MfS 2015 12 11 Minutes from AM's and other bodies, not taken elsewhere

MfS 2015 12 13 Minutes of BYM Trustees meetings, September and November

MfS 2015 12 15 Listed Informal Groups Review Group report

MfS 2015 12 16 Meeting for Sufferings Annual Report

Also:

- MfS 2015 12 - MfS forward agenda
- How to find Woodbrooke map and directions
- How to find The Beeches map and directions

Other papers available from the website (or on request from Graham Spackman, grahams@quaker.org.uk or 0207 663 1021):

- QL Rep Council 2011 introductions (Paul Parker, Linda Murgatroyd)
- QL Rep Council 2011 accompanying notes (Linda Murgatroyd)
- QL Rep Council 2011 questions for AMs handout
- MfS October 2011 - Strengthening Our Area Meetings (paper MfS/11/10/D)
- Meeting for Sufferings regional events programme 2014-2015

News & views – December 2015

The newsletter of the MfS Support Group

Welcome Friends, to Woodbrooke for the third meeting and the first residential of this triennium.

Please remember that the Support Group is here to help and to act as Meeting for Sufferings Elders and Overseers during our Meeting for Worship for Business. We welcome any comments and enquiries and you will know us by our yellow-topped name badges.

Contacting us

Janet May-Bowles, (Convenor) Chilterns AM - janet.may-bowles@dsl.pipex.com

Ann Banks, Brighouse West Yorkshire AM - annbanks101@gmail.com

Sylvia Boyes, Craven & Keighley AM - robinandsylvia@aol.com

Debbie Cates, Cambridgeshire AM - debzcates@hotmail.co.uk

Judith Mason, Banbury & Evesham AM - judithmason@talktalk.net

Angela Pivac, Thaxted AM - angelapivac@gmail.com

Gillian Turner, South London AM - gillianturner033@gmail.com

- You will find members of the Support Group at the main Woodbrooke reception desk, (where the name badges are laid out for collection), between 18.00 and 19.20pm on Friday evening.
- Other members of the Group will be collating the tabled papers in the Foyer – you will also find spare copies of the mailed papers – and hole-punches and staplers there as well as expense forms.
- The Support Group will be based in the Rendell Harris Room over the weekend. There will be members of the Support Group there for a ‘surgery’ on Saturday afternoon between 2 – 3pm. In addition, members of the group will be available informally in the Garden Lounge during all the hot drink breaks; we would also welcome your comments at any other time outside the formal sessions.

During the meeting

You will also see that some of us will sit in the front row of the Cadbury room which is the nearest thing we have to an “elders’ bench”.

At Meeting for Sufferings we start our Opening Worship by gathering in silence, so that the worship starts as soon as the first Friend settles down.

We trust that Friends will continue to work to strengthen the discipline of our meetings; we remind ourselves of the useful advice in *Quaker faith & practice* 3.01 to 3.11. We ask that shuffle breaks are for shuffling not chatting; paper rustling is kept to a minimum; and conversation ceases 5 minutes before the session begins so that

we are worshipping together when the clerks enter.

On Friday evening, please endeavour to arrive for worship before 18.50, Friends arriving after 19.30 will be asked to wait and worship outside until 20.00, when anyone waiting will be invited by our doorkeepers to join the Meeting.

Practicalities

Arrivals

We will be arriving at different times on 4th December. We assume you will arrive in time for the evening meal at 18:30, unless you tell us otherwise.

When you arrive, please check in with Woodbrooke staff, who can let you know where your room is.

Members of the Support Group will be available in the hall from 17.00, and you can collect any tabled papers from there.

Friends based at The Beeches

As we're sure you are aware, there are not enough bedrooms at Woodbrooke to accommodate all participants. Some Friends will be staying at The Beeches, which is about 20 minutes' walk away, or 5 minutes in a car. We plan to organise walking together, car sharing, and taxis if required, to and from Woodbrooke. A map of directions to The Beeches has been included with your December papers. The address is: 73, Selly Oak Road, Birmingham B30 1LS.

Please be aware that The Beeches does not provide breakfast; all meals will be at Woodbrooke. The Woodbrooke Dining Room is open from 7.30 to 9.00am.

Friday afternoon preparation workshops

We are expecting up to 40 in each of the afternoon workshops, which will be in the Art Room. Participants are welcome to have lunch at Woodbrooke on Friday as long as you've told us in advance.

Tour of Woodbrooke

A guided tour of Woodbrooke by the Friends in Residence will be available on Friday afternoon. Gather in reception at 16.00 if you are interested.

Meals

The Woodbrooke dining room can't hold all of us at one time. Ideally, we will avoid all arriving at once, and forming an exceptionally long queue. Once you've finished, please leave the table to make room for other Friends.

Friday evening meal

Please note that our evening meal on Friday will be from 18.30 to 19.15. All food is taken away at 19:15 and no food is kept aside now for late arrivals. A small selection of microwave meals are available for guests arriving later.

If possible, we hope Friends will sit with other members of their Home Group (see below) during the Friday evening meal.

Meetings

All of the main sessions will be held in the Cadbury Room. Please be in the room in time to find a seat and settle into worship for the start of the session.

Worship

The agenda has been planned so that open worship is threaded through our time together.

At Woodbrooke, morning worship (in the Quiet Room) and epilogues (in the Cadbury Room) are open to anyone who is in the building (i.e. not only members of Meeting for Sufferings). Epilogues will be led by members of our Support Group.

Microphone stewards

The Support Group are looking for volunteers to serve as microphone stewards in the Cadbury Room during the sessions. Eight Friends will be required and will be used in rotation over the weekend. Please contact the convenor, Janet May-Bowles directly on janet.may-bowles@dsl.pipex.com if you are willing to volunteer.

Hearing Loop System

The Cadbury Room has a hearing loop system similar to the one in the George Fox room at Friends House. If anyone has any queries or encounters any problems, please speak to a member of the Woodbrooke technical staff.

Saturday afternoon free time activities

There will be some optional group activities for the free time on Saturday afternoon. Further information will be available on Saturday morning.

Helping Woodbrooke to help us

Woodbrooke staff and Friends in Residence will be working hard to help us; please bear in mind that our large group will stretch Woodbrooke's capacity, and they will be looking after a lot of us at once.

Departures

Our meeting will continue until lunchtime on Sunday. Woodbrooke can provide packed lunches (on request) for those who need to leave before the shared meal; and can help with information about buses, taxis etc.

Welcome to new members of Meeting for Sufferings

Appointed at Meeting for Sufferings on 5 September 2015:

Dorset & South Wiltshire AM	Alternate	Joan Wright
Norfolk & Waveney AM	Alternate	Teresa Belton

Released from service:

Thaxted AM	Alternate	Michael Collins
YFGM	Representative	Iwona Luszowicz

If you change your address or email address, wish to receive papers in advance and/or minutes by email, please notify Graham Spackman grahams@quaker.org.uk or phone 020 7663 1021.

Agenda mailing

Volunteers are **always** needed to help with the Meeting for Sufferings agenda mailing.

We would appreciate any offers of help in preparing the Meeting for Sufferings agenda mailings (collating and envelope-stuffing) on mornings of the following Fridays (all travel expenses are paid and a free lunch in the Restaurant is provided):

22 January 2016

18 March 2016

If you are within easy reach of Friends House and would like to offer some help, please contact Graham Spackman on grahams@quaker.org.uk or 020 7663 1021.

Meeting for Sufferings: 4 – 6 December 2015

Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 1046 Bristol Road, Birmingham B29 6LJ

Revised agenda

Friday 16:00 onward - Arrivals

18.30 Evening meal

19:30 Session 1 starts in Cadbury Room

1 Opening Worship

Record of deaths

2 Welcome

Membership (tabled paper **Mfs 2015 12 02a**)

Adoption and acceptance of the agenda

Court and Prison Register (**Mfs 2015 12 02b and bi**)

3 Church Government Advisory Group – draft amendments to *Quaker faith & practice* (for decision)

Catherine James, convenor of CGAG will speak to this paper.

(Mfs 2015 12 03)

4 Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group report - part 1 (for information)

Lesley Richards, clerk, and Helen Rowlands, secretary of the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group will present a verbal report.

(tabled paper **Mfs 2015 12 04**)

21.00 Epilogue

Saturday 07.45 - 09.00 Breakfast

09:15 Session 2 starts in Cadbury Room

Open worship

5 Appointments

(tabled paper **Mfs 2015 12 05**)

6 Central Nominations Committee Review Group report (for decision)

Alison Breadon and Gerald Hewitson of Central Nominations Committee Review Group will speak to this report.

(Mfs 2015 12 06)

7 Quaker Life Central Committee report (for information)

Jocelyn Burnell, Assistant Clerk of Quaker Life Central Committee will speak to this report.

(Mfs 2015 12 07)

11.00 Break

8 Area Meetings – part 1

Introduction followed by time in Home Groups.

(Mfs 2015 12 08)

12.30 Lunch

13.30 Free time

15.30 Drinks available

16:00 Session 3 starts in Cadbury Room

9 Reports from other European Yearly Meetings (to receive)
To receive and acknowledge the reports from the Friends who attended 2015 European Yearly Meetings as BYM representatives.
(Mfs 2015 12 09)

10 Long Term Framework Working Group (for decision)
To note the conclusion of the work of the Long Term Framework Working Group and to lay it down.
(Mfs 2015 12 10)

11 Minutes from AMs and other bodies, not taken elsewhere (to receive)
1. West Somerset AM minute 2015/80 from the AM held on 18 July 2015 regarding the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.
2. Britain Yearly Meeting Housing Threshing Event held at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 11-13 September 2015 report (for information).
(Mfs 2015 12 11)

Open worship

12 Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group report - part 2
An exercise exploring *Quaker faith and practice*

13 Report from Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees (for information)
Jennifer Barraclough, clerk of BYM Trustees, Ingrid Greenhow, assistant clerk and Peter Ullathorne, BYM Treasurer, will speak to the minutes of the BYM Trustees meetings held on 11-13 September and on 13 November.
(Mfs 2015 12 13a and b)

18.15 Evening meal

19:15 Session 4 starts in Cadbury Room

14 Home Groups

19:45 Community/social time

21.00 Epilogue

Sunday 07.45 - 09.00 Breakfast

Bedrooms to be cleared by 09.00 please

Open Worship

09.30 Session 5 starts in Cadbury Room

15 Review of BYM's relationship with Listed Informal Groups (for decision)
Joycelin Dawes, a member of the Listed Informal Groups Review Group will speak to this report.
(Mfs 2015 12 15)

16 Meeting for Sufferings Annual Report (for information)
Anne Ullathorne, Assistant Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings will speak to the Meeting for Sufferings Annual Report.
(Mfs 2015 12 16)

17 Area Meetings – part 2

11.00 Break

18 As led

Open Worship

12.30 Lunch

13.30 Departures

Mfs 2015 12 Additional information

Meeting for Sufferings Forward Agenda (2016)

Arrangements Group hopes members will find it helpful to know that the following items are currently proposed or being considered by Arrangements Group for meetings in 2016. It is possible that these plans will change.

February	Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) report BYM Sustainability Group report Yearly Meeting: YM agenda; names of clerks for YM next year
April	Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC) report (following the International Representative Meeting in Peru, January 2016 - www.fwccworld.org/fwccworld/peru.html) Our witness in the world - Call for Equality: Follow-up from Yearly Meeting 2014 (with particular reference to YM2015 minute 36) and preparation for Yearly Meeting 2016 Trustees: financial report
July	Reflections following Yearly Meeting Appointment of Meeting for Sufferings clerks 2017
September	Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) report
December	Young People's Participation Day Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) report Quaker Housing Trust (QHT) report

Matters expected to return in due course

- Gender Equality and the Tabular Statement – sent to Recording Clerk Feb 2015
- Sustainability & new energy technologies – sent to QPSW for advice in July 2015
- Memorial meetings for reconciliation – sent to QCCIR for advice in July 2015

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Minutes of Meeting on 15th October 2015

Present: Sue Goodson, Ursula Fuller, Ethel Livermore, Jane Pearn, Anne Ullathorne (convenor), and Juliet Prager and Paul Parker (items 2 and 3)..

1. Welcome

We welcome Sue Goodson (Sheffield and Balby AM) to our meeting today. We plan to use Q-groups to support our work and hope to have a session on this at our next meeting.

2. Reflections on MfS held on 5th September 2015

We have reflected on the meeting held on 5th September which seemed gathered and focussed on the business before us.

We ask Central Nominations Committee to ensure that the terms of service of people whose names come for appointment are made explicit.

We have considered the nature of the 'shuffle breaks' during our meeting. These should be referred to as 'breaks' and fifteen minutes seems to be the appropriate time to take. We would like to hold the silence in the room and will need to encourage any conversations to be had outside the room.

Thirty young people also attended the Young People's Participation Day which was held concurrently and today we have been joined by Cat Waithaka (of the Children and Young Peoples Team) and Georgina Bailey (Recording Clerk's Office) to consider the Young Peoples Participation Day in 2016. MfS Representatives will be reminded about the 2016 Day in July to encourage greater participation and liaison between Representatives, Area Meetings and Young Participants. We have considered some ways in which Young People may be able to be involved with an agenda item of MfS.

3. Forward agenda

We have considered the forward agenda which helps our planning. We suggest that MfS focusses on work on social and economic justice as requested by YM 2015 (Call for Equality – minute 36) in our April 2016 meeting.

4. Regional Gatherings and Relationship with Area Meetings

We have received a report prepared by Juliet, following the last of 18 regional gatherings which have been held between February 2014 and September 2015. Following some amendments, we will share this report with all Representatives. Anne will write something, based on this, for *The Friend* to encourage reflection on our working together throughout BYM. We will be focussing on relationships at our next MfS both between MfS and Area Meetings and between Area Meetings.

5. Agenda Planning for MfS on 5th December 2015

As this meeting takes place over a weekend at Woodbrooke, more detailed planning has been required. Our aim is not only to cover the received items of business but also to help strengthen relationships.

Again we think it may be helpful to send out advance notice for certain agenda items. We ask our clerks, working with Juliet, to finalise the detailed programme.

6. MfS Annual Report.

We have received the first draft of the MfS report to Yearly Meeting and have made suggestions. The amended version will be circulated amongst us and then considered by MfS in December.

7. Date and time of next meetings

We plan to meet as follows:

Tuesday 15 December 2015

11am til 4pm

Monday 22 February 2016

11am til 4pm

Anne Ullathorne
Convenor

Membership

a) Membership of Meeting for Sufferings

Since our last meeting we have received the following nominations and requests for release for Meeting for Sufferings until the rise of Yearly Meeting 2018:

Nominated:

Joycelin Dawes	Representative	North London AM
Martin Ford	Alternate	Leeds AM

Release requests received:

Charlotte Allen	Alternate	Leeds AM
Robert Steele	Representative	QPSWCC

We appoint the Friends named and thank the Friends released for their service.

Visitors invited to represent area meetings/committees in the absence of appointed representative and alternate:

Rici Marshall	Leeds AM
Sarah Donaldson	Manchester & Warrington AM

Other visitors:

Alison Breadon	Central Nominations Committee Review Group
Joycelin Burnell	Quaker Life Central Committee
Gerald Hewitson	Central Nominations Committee Review Group
Catherine James	Church Government Advisory Group
Lesley Richards	Book of Discipline Review Preparation Group
Helen Rowlands	Book of Discipline Review Preparation Group

Court and Prison Register

As explained in section 7.01 of *Quaker faith and practice*, Meeting for Sufferings was established in 1676, to consider the sufferings of Quakers. The practice of recording Friends' names in the 'Great book of Sufferings' eventually lapsed; but in 1997 Meeting for Sufferings revived the practice of maintaining a register of Friends before the courts or imprisoned for matters of conscience.

Since the last Meeting for Sufferings, we have heard of two Friends who have been physically injured in the course of expressing their witness. Neither has resulted in court proceedings or imprisonment against the individuals; however, arrangements Group suggest Meeting for Sufferings may wish to uphold these Friends and to include their names in the register.

Barbara Penny (York AM)

In September, York Area Meeting sent the following minute:

York AM minute 2015.09.30 Injury to Barbara Penny

On Tuesday 11th August, whilst carrying out Quaker Witness at Menwith Hill in accordance with agreed procedures and alongside the Campaign for Accountability of American Bases, our Friend Barbara Penny of Harrogate Meeting was hit by a car leaving the base which failed to stop in the agreed manner. Barbara's leg was injured and her ankle broken. She was in hospital for two weeks and has been in considerable pain since with very limited mobility. We send our good wishes to Barbara and ask Harrogate Meeting to keep us informed of her progress and of any police or legal action. We ask our clerks to forward this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

John Guest
Clerk, York AM

David Amos (Kingston & Wandsworth AM)

David Amos is a recent member of Meeting for Sufferings. In October he was volunteering in the West Bank with the Olive Harvest Trust, when the group he was with was attacked by a group of eight or nine masked settlers, firing guns and setting fire to trees and undergrowth. David was hit on the back of his head by a rock thrown from about four feet away. He was treated in hospital and has now returned to Britain. This incident occurred during a period of particularly high tension.

Court and Prison Register

Meeting for Sufferings was established in 1676, to consider the sufferings of Quakers. The practice of recording Friends' names in the 'Great book of Sufferings' eventually lapsed; but in 1997 Meeting for Sufferings revived the practice of maintaining a register of Friends before the courts or imprisoned for matters of conscience.

Since the papers for the December 2015 meeting were circulated, we have been sent information about two Friends facing court proceedings and/or imprisonment. The Meeting may wish to record their names in the court and prison register.

Sylvia Boyes (Craven & Keighley AM) was given a conditional discharge by Reading Magistrates Court on 20 October 2015 after she had been arrested for attempting to enter the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Burghfield on the 70th anniversary of the dropping of nuclear bombs on Japan. She felt compelled by deep personal conviction to draw attention to the illegal weapons of mass destruction kept at the base.

Sussex East AM has sent the following minute of its meeting held in November:

Minute 93/15

Chris Coverdale an attender at Rye and Hastings Local Meetings has been arrested and is currently in Lewes Prison as a result of his decision not to pay taxes because he considers the use of taxes for military purposes a breach of the UN Convention. We ask that the representative to Meeting for Sufferings should put Chris Coverdale's case before Sufferings.

We understand that our current Prison Chaplin, Alan Thompson is finding difficulties in performing his duties and that Bob Booth of Seaford LM is still acting in this role. We ask that the Clerks notify Bob Booth and Alan Thompson of Chris's case.

Church Government Advisory Group

The following papers contain proposals for changes to the following sections of Quaker faith and practice (Qf&p):

a). 3.27 - Authority for Public Statements

To reflect the Speaking Out Policy agreed by Meeting for Sufferings in February 2014.

b). 9.05 / 9.06 - Quaker World Relations Committee

To reflect recent changes in QWRC's role and responsibilities.

c). 9.13/9.14 - Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR)

To reflect recent changes in QCCIR's role and responsibilities.

d). 13.45 to 13.57 - Prison Ministers, Visitors and Chaplains; College Chaplains

To reflect changes to government and the prison service in both England/Wales and in Scotland.

e). New Entry - Friends House (London) Hospitality Limited

To include reference to Friends House (London) Hospitality Limited.

f). Small changes, intended to improve accuracy:

- 3.24i Nominations & Appointments
- 4.10.t Area Meetings
- 4.40 Records
- 6.18 Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee
- 10.21 Conflict within the meeting
- 14.23 Property
- 14.29 Sale and other disposal of property
- 14.45 Friends Trusts Limited

In the following pages, each of these six sections starts on a new page, with an introduction, followed by the proposed text.

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to consider these recommendations and, if they are acceptable, to forward them to Yearly Meeting.

Introduction from Church Government Advisory Group (CGAG)

The papers from CGAG appear onerous, but they fall into different groups. The changes to *Quaker faith & practice* which we suggest are needed because of:

- a: changes in the law, or to government organisations (eg chapter 13)
- b: omissions from Qf&p (eg Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd and part of ch 13)
- c: changes in our structures (eg sections in chapter 9)
- d: decisions by Meeting for Sufferings or BYM (eg 3.27)

Last year, BYM was not happy with our suggested paragraph 3.27 so we have reworked it and send you our revised version in the light of comments made. The 'small changes' paper gathers together some very minor amendments which we feel would best be dealt with as a whole by BYM at a yearly meeting in London if possible, rather than at the residential meeting in 2017, when matters of more substance will be discussed.

We appreciate the work Yearly Meeting Publications Group will do in checking for any errors in the papers, which removes any need for us to 'dot and comma' the documents. We do ask that any suggestions for improvements to the text be sent to CGAG in advance, and that Sufferings will allow CGAG to make any minor amendments which become necessary.

We hope that our draft texts meet the requirements of our yearly meeting.

a). 3.27 Authority for Public Statements

Britain Yearly Meeting, held 1st to 4th May, 2015 received Minute MfS/15/02/16 from Meeting for Sufferings, which met on 7th February, 2015. The Minute offered a revision prepared by the Church Government Advisory Group, to Quaker faith & practice section 3.27 regarding the Yearly Meeting's speaking out policy. Britain Yearly Meeting recorded in its Minute 32 that they were unable to agree the proposed changes and referred the matter back to the Church Government Advisory Group and Meeting for Sufferings for further work.

Following comments made at Yearly Meeting in session and in commentaries subsequently submitted by individual Friends, a revised Section 3.27 on our speaking out policy has been prepared by the Church Government Advisory Group. The revised draft maintains the message of previous editions but aims to soften the tone which may have read as prescriptive and unfriendly.

Now offered as Guidance on Making Public Statements the tone remains firm. This is achieved by greater clarity regarding the availability of guidelines and procedures agreed by Meeting for Sufferings and additional support and guidance available from the Recording Clerk.

Section 3.27 describes the underlying principles which should guide Friends when speaking out.

Section 3.28, a new section, accentuates the responsibilities laid on Yearly Meeting and its constituent bodies and on central committees as well as the implications for Friends at Area and Local Meeting level.

We believe the revised draft conveys a positive message and should not inhibit our Society and its members from speaking out and speaking truth to power. We should all be sensitive to protecting our Society's reputation for openness and truthfulness and this can be achieved by knowledge of our guidelines and procedures when we come to make public statements.

We ask Meeting for Sufferings to endorse this revision to 3.27 and forward it to Yearly Meeting 2016 for adoption.

Guidance on Making Public Statements

3.27 Principles

Speaking out in the world is an essential part of our religious and social witness. Friends are encouraged to express their faith and values whenever suitable opportunities arise, and to use the media confidently for public comment on our concerns. Quaker witness to the world is guided by the Spirit and also guided by our religious discipline. The guiding principle is that statements or public comments made in the name of Friends and relating to the corporate life and witness of the Religious Society of Friends must be authorised by the appropriate meeting for church affairs.

3.28 Practice

Yearly Meeting statements issued on behalf of Friends in Britain require the full discernment of Meeting for Sufferings or Yearly Meeting in session and will be recognised as carrying the full authority of the yearly meeting. Other public statements or comments may be called for at short notice in response to current events using the full range of media. In such cases, the Recording Clerk, in consultation with appropriate clerks of Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings or Trustees, is authorised by Meeting for Sufferings to issue such a message, as long as it is in line with an established and discerned Quaker position. Press releases publicising the yearly meeting's core work are authorised by the Recording Clerk. At area and local meeting level it should be made clear whenever local initiatives relate solely to area or local meetings. Individual Friends or groups, such as listed informal groups (13.19) must be careful not to claim to speak for Friends as a whole, but just for themselves or their group, unless specifically authorised to do so. Other forms of public action undertaken in the name of Friends should similarly be authorised by the appropriate meeting for church affairs. For example, when participating as individuals in vigils or demonstrations Friends should be aware that they may be identified as speaking on behalf of Quakers.

On occasion it may be necessary for the clerk of a meeting, or another appointed Friend, to take urgent action to correct misleading reports in the press or other misunderstandings in the public domain. This section is not intended to hamper such necessary action undertaken responsibly in the interests of a meeting or group. *Full guidelines and details of procedures, agreed by Meeting for Sufferings, are available from the Recording Clerk or online at [quaker.org.uk /qfp](http://quaker.org.uk/qfp) These cover the yearly meeting, area and local meetings, matters delegated to General Meeting for Scotland or to Meeting of Friends in Wales (ref. 5.03, 5.04, 5.05), as well as other Quaker groups. A summary policy document for meetings and groups is also available. Additional support or guidance can be obtained from the Recording Clerk.*

b). 9.05 / 9.06 Quaker World Relations Committee

Revisions of Sections 9.05 and 9.06, which describe the Quaker World Relations Committee of Britain Yearly Meeting, have been prompted by the need to reflect the change in governance by Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and the evolving relationships between the yearly meeting and the world-wide community of Quakers.

The revision aims to provide some description of the role and functions of QWRC, its dynamics and how it relates to other national and international Quaker groups and organisations. The Committee's Terms of Reference provide the substantive detail regarding the collaborative work of the Committee, with Britain Yearly Meeting Central Committees for example, and how effective communication with Quaker bodies world-wide is achieved.

The revised draft has been prepared in consultation with members of the current Quaker World Relations Committee over several months.

We ask Meeting for Sufferings to endorse this revision to Sections 9.05 and 9.06 and to forward it to Yearly Meeting 2016 for adoption.

9.05

Representatives of Britain Yearly Meeting appointed by Meeting for Sufferings to serve on Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) also form the Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC) of Britain Yearly Meeting. QWRC members are expected to attend the annual meeting of Europe and Middle East Section (EMES) of FWCC and, as members, representative meetings of FWCC.

Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC)

9.06

QWRC is accountable to Britain Yearly Meeting through Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees. QWRC is responsible for promoting understanding of the different forms of Quakerism practised world-wide today.

Within Britain Yearly Meeting, QWRC's role is to provide a space for knowledge sharing across the yearly meeting and for wider collaborative engagement in the work of QWRC. The Committee liaises with Quaker Life and Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committees, the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations and others on matters of common concern, and in furtherance of the relationship between all of Britain Yearly Meeting and the world-wide community of Friends. QWRC aims to support BYM and its constituent parts in engaging in international relationships with other yearly meetings and Quaker organisations around the world.

QWRC advises Britain Yearly Meeting on the nature of the relationship between yearly meeting and Friends World Committee for Consultation (including its Europe and Middle East Section), and advises BYM Trustees on the financial support needed by those bodies from Britain Yearly Meeting.

QWRC, being Britain Yearly Meeting representatives to FWCC, and being informed on matters of concern to Britain Yearly Meeting, reviews the outcomes of its work in this area and reports its conclusions annually to Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees.

c). 9.13/9.14 Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR)

Revisions of Sections 9.13 and 9.14 which describe the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations of Britain Yearly Meeting have been prompted by the need to reflect the change in governance by BYM Trustees and the evolving relationships within the yearly meeting.

The revision aims to provide some description of the role and functions of QCCIR, its constitution and dynamics, and its range of activities and responsibilities within the Yearly Meeting. The Committee's Terms of Reference provide the substantive detail regarding the work of the Committee, of the many lines of communication between the Yearly Meeting and other churches and faith communities, and of the support offered to Friends both nationally and locally.

The revised draft has been prepared in consultation with members of the current Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations over several months. We ask Meeting for Sufferings to endorse this revision to Sections 9.13 and 9.14 and to forward it to Yearly Meeting 2016 for adoption.

9.13

The Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations is appointed by Meeting for Sufferings and is accountable to Britain Yearly Meeting through Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees. At least one member is appointed from General Meeting for Scotland and at least one from the Meeting of Friends in Wales. Ireland Yearly Meeting is invited to nominate a representative through Britain Yearly Meeting's Central Nominations Committee. Additional members may be co-opted to assist with particular issues.

QCCIR is responsible for keeping Britain Yearly Meeting informed of relevant issues and movements which emerge from the interchurch and interfaith life of Britain, and of opportunities for dialogue and co-operation between churches, between faiths, and between faiths and churches. It liaises with other churches and communities of faith, keeping them informed of developments in the life of the Yearly Meeting and responding on behalf of the Yearly Meeting so that Friends' views on issues of faith and order are represented. QCCIR supports members of BYM, both nationally and locally, in raising awareness and understanding of the interchurch and interfaith dimension of religious and spiritual life.

Local implications

9.14

Britain Yearly Meeting's membership of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) does not commit local meetings or individual Friends to any particular course of action with regard to interchurch relationships. However, in 1989 Yearly Meeting

asked meetings to review their involvement in local and regional ecumenical activities, encouraging greater participation where need be. The recognition by CTBI member churches of our yearly meeting's non-credal tradition which is implied by Clause 2b (see 9.09) may make it easier to formalise these local relationships.

d). 13.45 to 13.57 Prison Ministers, Visitors and Chaplains; College Chaplains

Church Government Advisory Group were asked by the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee and Quaker Life to consider changes to Quaker faith & practice paragraphs 13.45 to 13.54 (entitled 'Quaker Ministers, Visitors and Chaplains') and paragraphs 13.55 to 13.57 (entitled 'College Chaplains') for the reasons given below. The historical references in 13.45 to 13.54 are correct but the present situation in relation to government and the prison service in both England/Wales and in Scotland has changed. There is also an attempt to “future proof” the section as far as is possible by using generic rather than specific references to government bodies.

The ‘Home Office’ no longer applies, as the contact and the administration of chaplains (formerly known as ministers) is now carried out by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) on behalf of the Ministry of Justice.

In Scotland the administration is carried out by the ‘Scottish Prison Service’, SPS and prison chaplaincy is governed by The Prisons (Scotland) act 1989.

The Prison Act 1952 referred to has been updated by Prison Service Orders and Instructions. The latest of these referring to chaplaincy is PSI 51/2011. This changes the reference from ‘ministers’ to ‘chaplains’.

Internally to the Society of Friends there are changes to the processes caused by changes in administration. The administration and support of Quaker Prison Chaplains is now carried out by Quaker Life and the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee. These changes should be reflected.

Some of the changes required are additional to the existing entries in Quaker faith & practice.

There should be a reference to the important role volunteers’ play, working with appointed chaplains.

Finally reference to visitors does not reflect the present situation. The group formerly known as the Board of Visitors is now known as the Independent Monitoring Board, IMB, and prison visitors are known as Official Prison Visitors and are supported by a national charity known as the National Association of Prison Visitors, NAOPV. Both these should be reflected as a form of prison service (volunteers and visitors), or removed from Quaker faith & practice.

As regards paras 13.55 to 13.57, it was felt that Quaker faith & practice should reflect the fact that College Chaplains are not the only other type of Quaker Chaplains apart from Prison Chaplains.

The present text, and the new text proposed by Church Government Advisory Group, are attached. It will be seen that there are introductory paragraphs to cover all

chaplains (to include college chaplains) and then further paragraphs specifically covering prison chaplains and visitors. Members of the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee have been consulted about these changes.

Note: Numbering is sequential only.

Quaker Chaplains

1 Quaker chaplains can be found in a variety of settings including prisons, secure units, universities, colleges, schools, hospitals and hospices, on the streets, in sports clubs and workplaces, often as part of an ecumenical chaplaincy team. There is a difference between the role of Quaker chaplain and that of Quakers seeking to offer oversight or support Friends within an institution. Quaker chaplains may also do this but their role primarily is to offer a formal space for people of all faiths and none to explore the spiritual in a trustworthy relationship. Apart from prison chaplains, Quaker chaplains may be appointed either by the area meeting or by one of its local meetings according to local circumstances. The work may need support, both financial and spiritual, from the appointing meeting (see 12.27).

2 Chaplaincy can be an opportunity for outreach. Friends' non-credal approach and openness to new light, from whatever quarter, may be particularly appealing to the enquiring mind. Friends should be ready to make Quaker views known as well as providing pastoral care. There may be opportunities for holding a meeting for worship as part of chaplaincy work; local elders should share in responsibility for such a meeting.

Some places may have several Friends responsible for pastoral care associated with chaplaincy; local meetings should have an overall responsibility to support all these Friends both practically and spiritually.

3 Quaker Life offers information and advice to chaplains of all kinds and helps link them together.

Prison chaplains, volunteers and visitors

4 In the early days of the Quaker movement many Friends were imprisoned for their beliefs. Friends were imprisoned in the twentieth century as conscientious objectors to military service. Perhaps because of this there has been a continuing concern for prisoners and the conditions in prisons, exemplified in the work of Elizabeth Fry (see 23.98–23.100), which is continued by others to the present day.

5 A prison chaplain is a priest or minister of a recognised religious denomination appointed by the appropriate authorities to perform duties of a religious nature

according to PSI (Prison Service Instructions) inside a specific institution (or institutions). Quaker prison chaplains are included in this definition.

Quaker prison chaplains

Duties

6 A Quaker prison chaplain has four tasks:

- to visit and minister to those in prison who have registered themselves as Quakers,
- to assist the work of the prison chaplaincy,
- to be a Quaker presence in the prison, particularly in relation to staff,
- to be a channel between the prison service and the area meeting, keeping Friends aware of prison issues.

Where it is possible for the Quaker prison chaplain to arrange an occasional or regular meeting for worship, these can be of great value. Volunteers, who are also subject to security clearance, are sometimes welcomed into the prison to assist with these.

7 When prisoners are under restraint or punishment, in segregation or in the hospital wing, they will be in particular need of spiritual comfort and reassurance. The Quaker prison chaplain has a right and duty to visit a prisoner registered as a Quaker, whether in membership or not.

Appointment

In England and Wales

8 A Friend is recommended for this service by the area meeting (4.10.s), which formally minutes the nomination and then informs the particular institution, as well as Quaker Life, for the nomination to be approved and the appointment made.

9 The newly nominated Quaker prison chaplain then needs to contact the managing or coordinating chaplain in the particular institution for their appointment actually to happen. This process may take some weeks or months. Potential prison chaplains should be aware that there will be investigations into their criminal record and level of security risk.

The Quaker prison chaplain must be able to accept the restrictions that working in a prison requires. There is no age limit, provided the Friend is mentally and physically able to do the work, which may be physically demanding.

In Scotland

10 In Scotland the administration is carried out by the appropriate authorities for Scotland. Following notification from an area meeting of the name of a Friend appointed as a Quaker prison chaplain, General Meeting for Scotland is responsible for providing this name to the governors of all prison establishments in the Area Meeting area. These Friends then volunteer to serve on a prison chaplaincy team by directly contacting the prison chaplain. To exercise their pastoral responsibility, Quaker prison chaplains in Scotland have to operate in liaison with the official prison chaplaincy team members.

Preparation and support

11 Quaker Life can offer a newly appointed Quaker prison chaplain the benefit of knowledge and experience. Resources are provided through the BYM website: www.quaker.org.uk/qfp. Training and a conference are held each year which provide information on aspects of penal affairs, but also offer those attending good opportunity to discuss particular problems and to gain the informed support of Friends working in other penal establishments.

12 The Quaker prison chaplain undertakes to bear the area meeting's responsibility for ministering to the spiritual needs of prisoners who are registered as Quakers. Quaker prison chaplains are responsible for the pastoral and spiritual care of the Quaker prisoners in their establishment(s); they should, therefore, be experienced Friends and in good standing. Prison chaplains have their needs too, and it is very important that the area meeting should support the Friends doing this demanding work on their behalf. The Quaker prison chaplain and area meeting will probably want to decide between themselves how support can best be given (see 12.27) and whether or not it should come from a formally appointed group.

Area meetings will find it helpful to encourage Quaker prison chaplains to report on their work once a year.

13 Going into a prison can be intimidating and it may be difficult to find the right way of communicating with those you meet there. It is often hard to know what to say, particularly to those serving long sentences or far from home, but if the preparation of the heart is taken seriously the right words will come. Ministry is giving of oneself and allowing others to give to us; our common humanity enables us to minister. Laughter, too, is part of the healing ministry.

Prison visitors

14 Official Prison Visitors are volunteers who are appointed by the Ministry of Justice or the Scottish Prison Service on the recommendation of the prison governor to visit certain prisoners who have asked for visits to be arranged. Their duty is to befriend those they visit. They have no duties of a specifically religious nature and are

sometimes required to avoid religious topics. Friends wishing to offer this service should approach the governor of the prison where they wish to serve. They are supported by a charity known as the National Association of Official Prison Visitors (NAOPV). Some Quakers become prison chaplains after having been a visitor.

e). New Entry - Friends House (London) Hospitality Limited

This is a new entry to Quaker faith & practice 5th edition. It has been prompted by the absence from our book of discipline of a record of the role and functions of Friends House (London) Hospitality Limited which was created in 2007. The entry reflects the governance of the Company and its relationship to Britain Yearly Meeting. Church Government Advisory Group proposes that this new section is inserted after Section 8.15 of Quaker faith & practice with a new heading agreed with Yearly Meeting Publications Group.

The Company's articles of incorporation and registration by the Charity Commission provide the substantive detail regarding governance and the company's aims and objectives. The Company reports annually to Companies House, the Charity Commission and to Britain Yearly Meeting.

This new entry has been prepared in consultation with members of the current Board of Friends House (London) Hospitality Limited over several months. We ask Meeting for Sufferings to endorse this new entry as Section 8.16 and to forward it to Yearly Meeting 2016 for adoption.

8.16 Friends House (London) Hospitality Limited

Friends House (London) Hospitality Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Britain Yearly Meeting. Its Board are members of the Society of Friends and are appointed by BYM trustees. The Company manages and administers for the benefit of staff, users of and visitors to Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall, a full range of office and hospitality support services, including the letting of rooms and facilities for meetings and conferences. This Quaker company is an opportunity for outreach, communicating Quaker values in the service it provides and the way it is managed. The company's profits are used to support the work of BYM.

f). Small changes, intended to improve accuracy

There are eight small changes to *Quaker faith & practice* that may be desirable. These changes are listed below, together with a short explanation of why each is required. These are offered to Meeting for Sufferings for members to consider, and if they can unite with them, to forward them to Yearly Meeting for consideration and hopefully for their approval. All the changes reflect a desire for accuracy in our Book of Discipline.

Section 3.24i

The whole of section 3.24 gives advice and guidance to nominations committees; this sub-section details certain roles where membership of the Society of Friends is expected. Trustees are currently omitted from this list. We suggest that an additional sentence is inserted after the first sentence, so the sub-section would read:

Those nominated to serve as clerk of a meeting, elder, overseer, treasurer, registering officer or as a member of any nominations committee should be in membership. Those nominated to serve as a trustee must be in membership. In case of difficulty the Recording Clerk may be consulted. (For further guidance on the appointment of elders and overseers see 12.07–12.09.)

This change would bring consistency between chapters of Quaker faith & practice, as Section 15.10 starts, “Those appointed to serve as trustees must be members or sojourning members of Britain Yearly Meeting”.

Section 4.10t

The whole of section 4.10 gives advice to area meetings on matters to be kept under review. Subsection 4.10t is about compliance with legislation, but contains reference to a defunct organisation. We suggest the phrase “Criminal Records Bureau procedures” be replaced so that the subsection would read:

the relevance of new legislation to their activities and the compliance of their constituent meetings with the law: current concerns include matters as diverse as charity law, criminal records checking procedures for work with children, young people and vulnerable adults (4.14), data protection (4.45) and disabled access.

This change is also suggested as the Criminal Records Bureau only worked in England and Wales: the new wording will cover the whole of the yearly meeting and will not need to be changed again should the name of any official body change.

Section 4.40

This section is about keeping and preserving Quaker records. Add the term 'custodianship' after the word 'ownership' in the opening phrase so that it would read:

It is advised that the following be preserved in Friends' ownership or custodianship:

This change is suggested as the marriage registers used in England and Wales since 1837 have been provided by the Registrar General. Section 60(1)(b) of the Marriage Act 1949 states that one copy of a filled marriage register books be kept in the custody of the Society of Friends, but the law is unclear on who owns the marriage registers (the Society of Friends or the Registrar General). We have sought advice from the General Register Office, who tell us that they consider that the marriage registers remain the property of the Registrar General. We should respect their opinion on this, but it does require the small change suggested above.

Section 6.18

This section is about Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee. Our Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee also works with BYM Trustees, so reference to them should be included in the final paragraph. That paragraph could start:

Agenda Committee works closely with Meeting for Sufferings, the standing committees and BYM Trustees to promote the right holding of Yearly Meeting, to foster Agenda Committee's relationship with them, and to integrate the work of the committee into the budgeted programme of central work of Britain Yearly Meeting.

This reflects the working relationship that has developed since the BYM Trustee body was created in 2006.

Section 10.21

This section is about conflict within a meeting. The final sentence needs to be changed to remove the terms 'monthly' and 'general meetings'. The whole of the final paragraph could read:

Deep-seated problems are sometimes more easily resolved when an experienced facilitator from outside the situation is called on. Quaker Life or area meetings may be able to suggest Friends with an understanding of how groups and individuals interact with one another, and who are able to spend time with a meeting that has got into seemingly insoluble difficulties.

This instance of the term monthly meeting was not noticed when the text was revised to change the nomenclature from monthly meeting to area meeting. The

term 'general meeting' has just been omitted – it could be suggested that General Meeting for Scotland, the Meeting of Friends in Wales and possibly some of the regional groupings could be included, but we are unclear on how to do so without a clumsy use of English.

Chapter 14

The final three suggested amendments might be seen as quite technical, but they are offered in order to reflect legislative and regulatory changes which mean that Friends Trusts Limited may be a holding trustee in certain situations, rather than a custodian trustee.

A Custodian Trustee is one who, under the provisions of the Public Trustee Act, holds all the property (land and investments) of a trust (normally a charity) on behalf of the trustees of that charity. There can only be a Custodian Trustee where it holds all the land and investments of the charity. Where, as is increasingly the case, a charity, such as an Area Meeting, wishes its investments to be held and managed by its investment advisers, Friends Trusts Limited cannot be 'Custodian Trustee' but the Charity Commission is normally willing to enact a charity scheme confirming that assets still held by Friends Trusts Limited (normally the land and buildings) are held by Friends Trusts Limited as 'holding trustee' on the basis that the legal position is the same as if it had been the custodian trustee.

Section 14.23

Add the term 'holding trustee' after 'custodian trustee', so the last two sentences would read:

Legal responsibility for the purchase, upkeep, use and disposal of real property rests with the trustees of the relevant meeting even if Friends Trusts Limited (see 14.45) is the custodian trustee, holding trustee or else nominee of the property. The property of area meetings usually consists of meeting houses and burial grounds.

Section 14.29

Add the term 'holding trustee' in the first sentence of the second paragraph, so that sentence would read:

Where Friends Trusts Limited is the custodian trustee, holding trustee or nominee of the property, it is required to seal the conveyance or lease and will do so on receipt of the properly minuted instructions of the trustees of the area meeting (or other owning body).

Section 14.45

Add the term 'holding trustee' in the first sentence of the section, so that sentence would read:

The main object of the company is to act as custodian trustee or holding trustee, where the terms of trust permit, of property and investments situated in any part of the world and held in trust for the benefit of or in connection with the Religious Society of Friends in Great Britain.

Conclusion

If Meeting for Sufferings agrees to these proposed changes, we would be happy to work with Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee to prepare papers that they consider would help present these amendments to Friends at Yearly Meeting.

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to consider these recommendations and, if they are acceptable, to forward them to Yearly Meeting

Catherine James
Convener
Church Government Advisory Group
October 2015

Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group

Meeting held 7.11.15

Extracted Minute

RPG 15/11/04 Our future work

We have taken stock of the work we have undertaken so far and considered what remains to be done in order to fulfil our terms of reference.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings as our first annual report on progress, and to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee for information.

Our work so far

We met for the first time in November 2014 and today's meeting is our fifth.

We started by getting to know one another and clarifying our understanding of our task. In order to understand the background and context we did some initial research:

- We reviewed the report of Meeting for Sufferings' consultation about the need for revision (Meeting for Sufferings' paper MFS 2014 02 05). Two Friends also read the submissions which had been received and identified some additional themes which had not been included in the report. We noted that whereas Meeting for Sufferings itself had reached unity on recommending a full revision to Yearly Meeting, the submissions from Friends and meetings were fairly evenly divided on this matter.
- Two of our number met with a group of Irish Friends who had been involved with their recent revision process. From them we learned of the need to be really clear about what process is being asked for at the outset.
- We spoke with some Friends who had been involved with Britain Yearly Meeting's previous Book of Discipline Revision Committee (BDRC) to find out what processes had been used, what was helpful and where they had experienced difficulties. We noted the need for any revision process to be adequately resourced throughout, and the importance of good communication. We learned of the need to anticipate from the outset

practical tasks that might come later in the process, such as seeking copyright permissions and design/production of a book (or website).

- We held a joint session with the Quaker Committee on Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR), to learn from them what had emerged from the conference and YMG 'Journey' groups on issues around belief and theology (identified as "Theism/Nontheism" in the appendix to our Terms of Reference) which they held in 2014. We received the minute drawn up by the Journey Group.

We have identified and worked on three main tasks:

1) Preparing Friends for any revision

- a. We have developed and launched the Reading Quaker faith & practice project, encouraging Friends to read and reflect on the book as it currently is, in order to develop a sound foundation for considering future needs. We have worked with Woodbrooke to develop supporting materials for the Being Friends Together resources bank, a conference to be held in April and Woodbrooke-on-the-Road workshops for 2016. We will continue to promote and support this venture.
- b. We have invited a group of Friends to participate in a Theology Think-tank to explore the issues characterised as 'Theism/Nontheism' and to see if it is possible to express our understanding of theological diversity in a less polarised way.

2) Consulting and then recommending what a future book might be like, e.g. in relation to structure, style, format and media

We have met with current and previous members of Church Government Advisory Group to consider these issues.

3) Developing a mechanism for Friends to lodge material for future consideration, even in advance of a decision to revise

We have begun specifying a possible online tool which would both enable Friends to submit material for future consideration and become the main tool for a future revision committee to track and electronically process text and other materials.

In clarifying our Terms of Reference we confirmed that we are expected to report to Meeting for Sufferings when we think the time is right for Yearly Meeting to return

to the question of revision (Yearly Meeting 2014, minute 42), and provide MfS with options for how to proceed.

Looking forward

The extended metaphor we used in our discussion was of surfing. We are paddling our board out to a helpful place and we have begun to create waves with our Reading Quaker faith & practice project. This has been met with enthusiasm, but we don't yet know what the response will be. We hope this is the beginning of a process which strengthens community, deepens spiritual understanding, encourages respectful listening and lays the foundations for a future revision at some point.

We have to advise MfS which wave to catch. This is not easy as we are all bobbing up and down in the sea. The lead in time is necessarily long for YM and particularly YMG. We need to ensure that YM can be confident in making a decision. The discussion needs to be undertaken in an open way, respectful of our differences and yet we don't want to lose the momentum that we are beginning to see building.

We see 2017 as an opportunity to report back not to make a decision. We would like to report in session on what we have been doing and it would be good if Friends had the opportunity to feed back in small groups what they have learnt from Reading *Quaker faith & practice*.

As part of our remit we were given a list of issues that had been raised as not well covered in the current book (MfS reference). Work is currently being done on some of these, some are more transitory in nature and some issues need us to find a way to prompt the necessary discernment.

Amongst these last issues are currently:

The uses of new technology

The link between prayer and action

Family, safeguarding, etc.

Outreach and what we are telling people about ourselves

Ways of doing administration of small meetings

Experimental worship, for example all age worship and 'afterwords'

YMG 2017 might also be an opportunity to test more widely the discernment that is taking place on some of these issues.

Having initiated an interest in actually reading our Book of Discipline we would like to capitalise on this by encouraging Friends to write. We have been reminded that Quaker faith & practice began as a book of extracts of minutes, it was this that gave its authority. Some issues might benefit from discussion in a YM session. While an anthology of Friends experience is very valuable, as a book of discipline it is important to keep Quaker faith & practice of manageable proportions. We must not attempt to cram everything into it.

YM Agenda Committee and MfS will be thinking in Oct 2016 about the general arc of YMs from 2018 to 2020. RPG hopes to be in a position to feed into process.

Lesley Richards, Clerk

Appointments

b) Yearly Meeting Nominating Group

Brings forward the following names for service or release:

Central Nominations Committee

To serve until Yearly Meeting 2017 to fill a vacancy

Nominate:

Michael Long Northumbria AM

Release:

Dorothy Nelson Cornwall AM

c) Central Nominations Committee

Brings forward the names of the following Friends for service or release as indicated:

Quaker Housing Trust

To serve from 1 May 2016 to 30 April 2019

Re-nominate:

Christina Birch Swarthmoor (SW Cumbria) AM

Nominate:

Annie Bellinger Wirral & Chester AM

Peter Ranken North East Thames AM

Karima Brooke Oxford & Swindon AM

Quaker United Nations Committee

To serve from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018

Re-nominate:

George Stanley Lee South London AM

To serve from 1 January to 31 December 2016

Nominate:

Colm O Cuanachain Luton & Leighton AM

Quaker Peace & Social Witness

Release:

Robert Steele Chilterns AM

To serve from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018

Re-nominate:

Liz Law South East Scotland AM

Charlotte Seymour South Wiltshire AM

Nominate:

Camilla Oelman	Thaxted AM
Susan Smith	Oxford & Swindon AM
Caroline Kibblewhite	Dorset & Wiltshire AM

Book of Discipline: Review Preparation Group

Release from 1 May 2016:

Gerald Hewitson	North Wales AM
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Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations

To serve until 30 April 2016 to fill a vacancy

Nominate:

Chris Wilson	Dorset & South Wiltshire AM
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We note that the appointment above was made between meetings by our clerks.

To serve from 1 January 2016 until 30 April 2017 to fill a vacancy

Nominate:

Joel Wallenburg	Northumbria AM
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To serve from 1 May 2016 to 30 April 2019

Re-nominate:

Rowena Lovrance	South East London AM
Ben Wood	Leeds AM
Chris Wilson	Dorset & South Wiltshire AM

Nominate:

Gillian Court	Northamptonshire AM
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The Retreat (York) General Meeting: Members

To serve from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018

Re-nominate:

John Nurse	Southern Marches AM
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Meeting for Sufferings Support Group

Release:

Robert Steele	Chilterns AM
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Meeting for Sufferings Church Government Advisory Group

To serve from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018

Re-nominate:

Catherine James	North Wales
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Northern Friends Summer Youth Events

Release:

Tom Sayles	North Scotland AM
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Review of Central Nominations Committee Terms of Reference

This is the report of the Group which was set up by Meeting for Sufferings in 2014, to review Central Nominations Committee's Terms of Reference (Mfs2014/06/08).

There are three parts to this paper:

- A summary of the report
- The main report of the Review Group
- Draft Terms of Reference

Summary of the Report to accompany Central Nominations Committee's Revised Terms of Reference

As a group we have sought to take our tradition seriously, whilst holding it lightly: prepared to live adventurously in finding ways of working which speak to our current age.

The proposed changes in CNC ways of working, and strengthening its reporting to other bodies, are an attempt to bring out the possibilities inherent in its current function, but which are hidden or lost in the current arrangements.

At the heart of our proposals is the individual, and offering the opportunities for individuals to deepen their life in the Spirit through service more widely. In this way, we hope that these suggestions will expand the pool of people who recognise a call to central work.

Key Proposals

- The number serving directly on CNC Committee to be reduced to fifteen members, plus Clerking Team of two
- CNC meetings to be more reflective, with greater stress on observation, scrutinising process, evaluation and reporting.
- The task of searching for a name to be undertaken search groups of 2-4 Friends.
- Search groups to include, alongside CNC members, Friends not currently serving on CNC, drawn from a larger pool.
- Search Groups empowered to carry out meaningful discernment of names themselves, outside CNC meetings.
- Search groups to normally contact potential nominees directly, listening to and nurturing their journeys.
- The search groups find ways of working which suit them, whilst not ignoring opportunities such as telephone conferencing and Skype.

- A wider range of routes available to be chosen by search groups for finding names, varying according to each role – such as advertising
- A communications sub-group to be appointed from within CNC to ensure clarity of communication with the wider Society, and to nurture the relationship with those Friends on the QSIF database.
- The role of Supporting Friend to be more clearly defined on the Quaker Service Information Form, with alternative routes to the same information.
- No necessity for the historical overlap in membership with MfS, and MfS to take on responsibility for internal appointments apart from Arrangements Committee.
- CNC to be encouraged to be open and brave in challenging itself and the rest of YM to face difficult truths and fears, bringing these into the light.

The hope of such changes is to allow the Spirit to flow more dynamically and powerfully throughout the work of CNC, and that in turn, CNC will feel empowered to speak more confidently and assuredly to Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting.

What love requires

Report of the Central Nominations Committee Terms of Reference Review Group

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Introduction

The work of Nominations Committees is fundamental to the spiritual and developmental life of our Society. We have no laity – we are all priests, in all aspects of our life as a community. Service to our religious community is a concept which stems from deep within our tradition, and must be encouraged throughout our structures.

Service to our Society is an opportunity to put our gifts at the Society's disposal. We can develop new or hitherto unrealised gifts and find that of God within ourselves and others. When rightly discerned, service is joyful and empowering. The aim of these recommendations is to offer transparent procedures which work with the mystery of the Spirit to make all service into ministry.

We can see the effective working of a Nominations Committee when we see its work made manifest in a spiritually resourced, empowered and joyful community. Such is the aim of the work of our Central Nominations Committee. This is what it sets out to achieve.

Diversity

As a Religious Society, we seek to embody the kingdom of God. We are thus called to embrace our full diversity, and to fail to do so is to fall short of the promise inherent in that kingdom. We use a corporate discernment process in order to call people to their roles as children of God, working with others to create the Divine Commonwealth. God, within us and beyond us, sees us all as beautiful and unique but also as tiny parts of the pattern of the whole world. The Central Nominations Committee, getting feedback from individuals and groups throughout the Society, is able help everyone find creative ways to move towards the kingdom of God by glimpsing and sharing some of this vision.

Knowing one another and ourselves

“It is a responsibility of a Christian community to enable its members to discover what their gifts are and to develop and exercise them to the glory of God.”

Quaker faith & practice 3.22

The individual Friend is our starting-point, with all their gifts, experiences, leadings and potential, but it also important that we encounter the Spirit through other people. The process of being nominated needs to be a genuine conversation, an exploration which offers individuals warmth, information and space to discern their leading. We need to free Friends. Their journeying may take them towards a role within YM, or serving their LM or AM. There is also much to learn from open conversations which end with ‘no, not at this time’. Nomination is one part of the spiritual journey. As we serve together, we also come to know each other, the better to discover, develop and exercise all of our gifts. What will let the Spirit flow? All is

God's work. All nominations – including refusals and short periods of service - are part of that individual's spiritual journey.

Power

In any spiritual journey, there are dark places. There are legitimate concerns around relying too heavily on Friends personally known by members of Nominations Committees for nominees. Concerns about power being retained by small or long-serving groups are valid. We need to name our fears. In carrying out nominations work we are entrusted with power. We must acknowledge this to ourselves and to each other, and free ourselves from the lust for, and fear of, power and control. This acknowledgment, naming these fears, will enable us to be open, leading to a sense of release. This naming will also leave us more able to question and discuss our processes, and scrutinise, test, support and challenge one another – gently and with love.

We need to ensure that our nominations processes are open, clear and readily understandable. Friends across BYM need confidence in the process, and need to trust CNC to do the very best job possible, within our means.

Change

We anticipate CNC meetings and roles feeling significantly different in rhythm and focus. We expect these changes to take time, love and effort to put into place. We recommend the new Terms of Reference be implemented slowly and carefully, and we are happy to make ourselves available to help the clerks with this process, if they would find that useful. We also recommend CNC reports to Meeting for Sufferings in 3 years on how the changes we suggest are functioning.

Writers of the report

Alison Breadon

Alison Breadon served recently on CNC, including a year as CNC clerk. Currently Clerk and an Elder at Slough and Windsor Local Meeting, Alison is also working at home attempting to bring up two small boys and posting a lot on facebook about the trials (and occasional joys) of Quaker parenting. In a previous life she was, among other things, Coordinator at the Leaveners.

Rhiannon Grant

Rhiannon Grant has served as an Elder, a member of Meeting for Sufferings, and a Quaker Quest core team member among other things. She is currently in membership of Luton and Leighton Area Meeting and balancing university teaching with research and work as a Woodbrooke Associate Tutor.

Gerald Hewitson

Gerald Hewitson lives in Anglesey. A founder member of Holyhead/Caergybi

Meeting, he has served Friends locally, in the Area Meeting, nationally and internationally. He is currently a member of the Review Preparation Group and Convenor of AM Nominations Committee.

Margaret Mortimer

Margaret Mortimer has clerked Yearly Meeting Nominations Committee, her own Local Meeting Nominations Group, and served as a member of Central Nominations Committee. She has also served as a Trustee for Britain Yearly Meeting, and before that as an Assistant Clerk of Quaker Life Central Committee. She is currently serves Friends as Clerk for Central Edinburgh Quaker Meeting, and as Quaker Prison Chaplain for HMP Edinburgh.

Manner of working

We were appointed by Meeting for Sufferings to review the Terms of Reference for Central Nominations Committee. To this end, we have met face-to-face 3 times, communicating otherwise by Skype, and email. We have, on occasion, been joined by the Recording Clerk and the Secretary to Central Nominations Committee.

We have met face-to-face with Central Nominations Committee itself on one occasions, and two members of the group participated in the Nominations conference held at Woodbrooke in the summer of 2015, leading a session for it, raising the issues which we have held under consideration, and hearing contributions and responses. Members of our group have been in frequent contact with the Clerks of Central Nominations Committee, and we have invited – and received – individual comments and suggestions from the whole Committee.

We have researched for this work by reading relevant Swarthmore lectures – including Roger Cowan Wilson's 1949 lecture 'Authority, Leadership and Concern', Quaker Faith and Practice and other Quaker writings. We have also considered material used by Woodbrooke for nominations courses, the nominations processes of Young Friends General Meeting, and the Recast report.

We moved on to look at the nominations procedures of other organisations in the voluntary sector. Material produced by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations was very helpful, as was guidance produced for the recruitment of magistrates and school governors.

We have, from our first meeting, seen the work of Central Nominations Committee as fundamental to the spiritual life and development of Britain Yearly Meeting. We have seen, and are grateful for, the hard work, time, imagination, creativity and commitment which so many Friends have brought to its tasks. We have sort to clarify issues, identify helpful ways of working, and above all, free the Spirit by opening up the processes and practices of Central Nominations Committee.

Recommendations

1. Current situation and capacity

Central Nominations Committee is responsible for supporting the spiritual health and growth of the Yearly Meeting through opportunities for central service. At best it is a conduit through which Friends find their place within central service – by making Friends aware of the opportunities which exist, maintaining an awareness of the balance between individual development and corporately discerned requirements, and discerning appropriate responses to requests for nominations.

Central Nominations Committee is a lynch-pin in the maintenance and development of our centrally-managed work. Over many years its members have felt frustrated by its struggle to reach a broad range of Friends with potential leadings towards participation in this work. The Committee's workload is necessarily substantial, and it has experienced difficulty in finding time and space for the consideration of improvements to its capacity and systems. The need to negotiate change with other central nominating groups (who share the same resources and systems) has also complicated matters. Despite these factors, recently Central Nominations Committee has worked impressively hard to improve its own systems, simultaneously maintaining its high workload with a reduced membership of its own.

This review highlights CNC's need for space and time for reflection and consideration of what messages it needs to communicate. It seeks to open up processes so that the Spirit can flow. And it seeks to give the Committee confidence and freedom to experiment with different patterns of working – in short, to be led by the Spirit.

We have created space for broader reflection and action in committee meetings, by moving discernment of names so that it happens within Search Groups. We have reduced workload and expanded skills and knowledge bases by including Friends not currently serving on CNC to serve on Search Groups.

In addition, the review encourages CNC to communicate clearly and confidently. This function could include publicising roles effectively and widely, working with communication staff, maintaining relationships with those Friends already on the database through a newsletter, raising awareness of how CNC works and QSIFs, creating content for the monthly mailing etc.

We have received many interesting, creative and sensible suggestions from CNC members (and others) as we've been working on the Terms of Reference. The changes we are recommending are intended to give CNC the freedom and the time to implement these kinds of suggestions themselves, and we heartily encourage CNC to do this. **We would also encourage CNC to confidently pass on suggestions to others within BYM, if that seems appropriate.**

Some examples of suggestions include:

- Follow up how appointments have worked out from point of view of the person appointed, and routinely ask for feedback shortly after the appointment is made
- Systematically ask the leaving member of a committee for their reflections and suggestions for future names
- Create a list of suggested 'places' a search group might look for names
- Mentor members new to the Society of Friends
- Investigate whether Overseers could have a formal role in encouraging Friends to consider central service
- Review and evaluate CNC induction information for its quality/relevance/accessibility
- Include IT support/training in induction
- Feedback to YM (for example, notify YM if central committee members are not representative of the membership because roles require a high level of reading/writing ability)
- Consider whether practical arrangements for committees could be made more reasonable, so more and different people could be involved

2. Changes to CNC's ways of working

A. Broader Vision

Nominations work is a bell-weather for the Society – a reflection of issues and spiritual hunger and needs. CNC has an overview of the feeling of engagement in central work and part of its function is to perceive and reflect. CNC is directly connected to the struggles of individual Friends in their relationship to the Society of Friends and their sense of belonging and service. CNC can observe, assess and report on these.

CNC should value and use the conversations CNC members have with individual Friends – perhaps asking 'where are you on your journey? Is there a call there for you to join central work? Or elsewhere?' These journeys are the life of our Yearly Meeting, and CNC can tap into this life directly. CNC needs to have a clear voice. It needs to communicate what it heard with strength and vigour and confidence.

We recommend:

- i. CNC clerks encourage reflection, in committee meetings and elsewhere, on what CNC learns as it works. Are there implications for the Society of Friends as a whole? Are there messages that need to be passed on?
- ii. CNC gives and receives feedback from the committees to which it nominates. What can we both learn from this nomination/nomination process? This could include hearing from the individuals appointed.

- iii. CNC feels confident to request the Recording Clerk, or a representative from another committee or group, attends a CNC meeting, if needed.
- iv. CNC communicates (by minute) with confident authority, with MfS, Trustees and others, as needed. For example, this could include CNC suggesting the ToR for a given central committee needs changing, or to state that CNC feels committees should appoint their own clerks.
- v. CNC says 'no' to requests for nominations, if they are not manageable. Reasons need to be clear, constructive and based in experience.

This will ensure that:

- CNC's reflections on the spiritual situation in the Society as a whole can be shared and tested against other perceptions
CNC can give and receive support from other parts of the central structure
- If change is needed, those who are able to make changes have the information they need
- CNC will not be setting strategic direction, but it will have a stronger voice and more power to pass on its message to those able to make changes e.g. there are no names, maybe this work should be laid down/meeting times changed etc.
- CNC will hear about successful and less successful appointments, and will be able to reflect and learn from these

B. Resources

CNC do not currently have control themselves over the resources they use, such as staff time, IT or money.

We recommend:

- i. CNC maintains an overview of work done operationally to support nominations – for example by asking staff to report annually to CNC about what resources are dedicated to nominations and any changes that have been made.
- ii. As is currently the case, the Recording Clerk (not CNC) retains responsibility for making sure CNC has the resources that it needs.

This will ensure that:

- CNC's time and particular expertise is used well. We do not feel the work that would be involved in CNC taking responsibility for its resources would be time usefully spent.

C. Times and places of meetings

We recommend:

- i. CNC decides how, when, where and how often it needs to meet to complete the work requested – within limits set by the Recording Clerk. CNC is free to use any non-physical meeting method (such as telephone or internet conferencing) which is acceptable to all who need to participate.
- ii. Relevant documents are shared via the Q-Groups website.

This will ensure that:

- The Committee can maintain a balance between the demands of its work and the needs and situations of its members (including staff)
- The Committee can work flexibly, using whatever methods are appropriate to the task
- The Committee can work independently, not being tied to the meetings of other central bodies or requiring staff time for tasks which are more appropriately done by committee or search group members

C. Clerks and Elders

It is good practice, on most central committees, to appoint Elders as well as Clerks to serve the committee, and we think this would be valuable for CNC.

We recommend:

- i. Two CNC members serve in clerking roles, choosing between themselves how to divide responsibilities such as the holding of meetings, minutes and other paperwork, and contact with staff.
- ii. The Clerks are not included within the 15 ordinary members of the Committee (so that a new member is inducted to 'replace' someone who is asked to serve as clerk). A member can serve as clerk for one or more years, depending on their circumstances and the committee's needs. Clerks can serve as such for an extra year on top of their ordinary term of service.
- iii. We recommend that two CNC members are asked to serve as Elders. Elders would pay attention to the quality of the worship and discernment, support clerks especially in maintaining the discipline of the committee, and to offer a listening ear to members of the committee or search groups who find the work difficult or have concerns about the process.
- iv. The Elders and Clerks may choose to meet together separately from the committee if appropriate.

This will ensure that:

- The quality of the worship and discernment, and especially the discipline of the Committee, is maintained at a high level
- The Committee can work flexibly with the talents of those who are serving, without any requirement to continue previous patterns of clerking or eldership

- The Clerks of the Committee are provided with appropriate support in their work, and can share tasks in such a way as to avoiding overloading individuals

D. Terms of service

Currently, members of CNC are appointed for three years, with the possibility of an extra year for the Clerk. We recommend that members of CNC be eligible for re-nomination for one additional term of service, and also that members could work on search groups preceding or following service on CNC main committee. There are significant benefits to longer potential periods of service, particularly in maintaining institutional memory – and also the need to free the Spirit and utilise the gifts and knowledge of Friends.

We have encountered sincere concerns about longer terms of service on CNC. These concerns are often grounded in a fear of power. Such fear is legitimate. We also recognise that power is unreasonably handed to staff when the committee lacks institutional memory in itself. There are familiar safeguards in place – YM nominating group will discern any potential re-nominations, and YM can appoint, or not. The new pattern of Search Groups (see below) will also prevent individuals on the committee repeatedly refusing or suggesting a particular name. With these protections in place, we feel the benefits outweigh the risks.

We recommend:

- i. Members of CNC may serve for two terms of three years, and one additional year if serving as clerk or assistant clerk.
- ii. The term of service period may be preceded or followed by service on one or more Search Groups, up to a maximum of six consecutive years' service in CNC and CNC-adjacent roles. This could be, for example:
 - a. two Search Groups, each lasting six months + a year on CNC + a year as clerk of CNC + two more years as an ordinary member of CNC + another SG lasting a whole year, after which this individual can no longer serve on CNC or any SGs;
 - b. or service on SGs over three years + three years on CNC
- iii. After a six-year period of mixed service at least two years must elapse before an individual is nominated to serve in any central nominations or adjacent role, including the nominating groups of other central bodies and the Committee on Clerks. Local and area meetings nominations roles are not affected by this.

This will ensure that:

- There is no build-up of long-term, ongoing power in the hands of one or a few individuals

- There is time for members of the Committee to learn their roles well and to pass on that knowledge to newer members of the Committee; this will create an institutional memory in the Committee distinct from that of staff members
- The periods and types of service are flexible to meet the needs of both the Committee and the individuals involved. Service on a search group (only) would be less work and more flexible, with no need to attend CNC meetings.
- There is less work between meetings for CNC members, as the work on search groups will be shared with others

E. Search groups

Currently, the work of identifying nominees for a task is carried out by a group of committee members – the “Search Group”. It is their task to work through the current processes, find names and do an initial discernment - then bring a few possible names to CNC. CNC hears a report on the names and does a final discernment, often agreeing the order in which names should be approached. Our recommendations change the location of the work, moving the discernment of names out to Search Groups and allowing CNC itself to focus on the quality of discernment.

We recommend:

- i. Search Groups are given the authority to discern names ready for appointment, and will normally bring one name for each appointment needed. CNC receives and agrees the nominations. CNC’s discernment is on the quality of the process and on the depth of the discernment conducted by the Search Group rather than on the name.
- ii. The Search Groups report to CNC on their process – What different things did they do to find names? Were there any challenges or extra considerations they took into account? Is there anything CNC or other committees can learn, or needs to hear about this work or committee?
- iii. CNC takes time to consider the report and any actions needed. CNC also scrutinises the process and discernment with a clear eye, naming fears, and asking difficult questions gently – ‘How have you avoided appointing only people you happen to know?’ and so on.

This will ensure that:

- CNC is able to reflect on the processes used to find and discern names, and their effectiveness – and to suggest or implement any changes needed elsewhere
- CNC becomes more effective and responsive over time
- Through challenging one another with love, CNC members grow in the Spirit
- CNC can avoid, as much as possible, discrimination and nepotism

F. Search group membership

Search Groups are currently wholly composed of members of the Central Nominations Committee. We seek to embrace and utilise the wider resources of our Society by opening up Search Group processes, where it is needed, to Friends with knowledge and/or experiences of specific areas of work, or of Friends involvement with it. All members of any search group must be in membership of our Society and at least one must be currently serving on CNC.

We are happy with members of central committees being involved in discernment and nomination of their own successors. We feel that being part of a group, discerning alongside other people will help avoid potential problems. There are also significant benefits to them being included, particularly in passing on knowledge about that committee. CNC has the power to question and check that the discernment process was good e.g. by asking ‘how did you mitigate against the desire to use your position on the SG to maintain committee projects that are personally important to you?’

We recommend:

- i. The concept of “Search Groups” be enlarged to cover potential and current or recent former members of the committee or body on which the person(s) nominated will serve, or other Friends with relevant expertise, where this be deemed to be helpful. Examples could include Woodbrooke staff/tutors, members of Young Friends General Meeting, members of General Meeting for Scotland, and Friends working under concern

This will ensure that:

- Expertise relating to a specific role can be tapped and used within the Search Group
- Institutional memory about roles can be developed, through the use of recent former, and potential future, members of the Central Nominations Committee
- The Committee can consist of fewer members, making meetings more effective, while not adding to the workload of members of the Committee

G. Formation of search groups

A Search Group currently consists of two or three members of CNC, who are either allocated or volunteer for each Search.

We recommend:

- i. CNC establishes processes by which a wide range of people can be found and co-opted into short-term service on a Search Group
- ii. As part of this, CNC establishes a pool of names from which non-Central Nominations Committee Search Group members can be drawn. These could come from:

- a. names discerned by YM nominating group
 - b. post-CNC members
 - c. individuals from central committees suggested by Clerks
 - d. names recruited from Quaker Life network
 - e. volunteers openly advertised for
- iii. CNC has a duty to maintain this pool, which we estimate would need a total of around 45 names. Of these, we think that at least 20 would arise from the bodies to which CNC nominates.
 - iv. CNC allocates most CNC members and Friends from the pool to Search Groups, at their first meeting of the year.
 - v. We suggest Search Groups are made up of 3 people, but it could be 2 or 4 or more, at CNC's discretion.

This with ensure that:

- The work of searching for nominations is distributed evenly across members of the Committee
- The work of searching of nominations is shared with some people beyond the current membership of the Committee
- The Search Groups are well-formed and able to do their work in a well-planned way

H. Search group processes

We have drawn on our experience of nominations processes, centrally and locally, to imagine how the search groups will work. The following fictional statements are meant to convey the feeling we hope will be created by this process.

"I'd never thought of myself as having anything to offer central work, but after I found being an Elder satisfying someone suggested to me that I should fill in a QSIF, so I did. About six months later, someone on a CNC search group phoned me to talk about what I was interested in and whether I'd be willing to serve nationally. She was serving on the committee they wanted me on, so she was able to give me a really clear picture of what would be involved and why the work would be interesting. It was clear that this was just an exploration, that I could say no and that I might not be nominated if I said I was willing."

"There were no suitable names in the database for an important role, so my search group thought we'd try another approach. We ask the communications subgroup to include the role in their next piece in the Quaker Life email, and when it went up online everyone in the search group shared it on their Facebook pages and in their Area Meeting newsletters. I got a couple of people asking me about it at Area Meeting the next month and someone messaged me on a

Facebook asking for more information – all people I wouldn't have known would take an interest in central work if we hadn't publicised it in this way."

We recommend:

- i. Each Search Group plans how best to reach the Friends needed. This could include advertising in the Friend, contacting Scotland GM, Meeting of Friends in Wales, or YFGM and asking them to send an email round, searching the QSIF database or any other method. Routes for finding names will vary depending on the role; SGs are at liberty to discern the appropriate routes for the role they are considering. The Search Group carry out this work, supported by the communication sub-group, nominations staff or (for any publicity to a mass audience) the communications team at Friends House.
- ii. The Search Group produces a shortlist of names and the preferred nominee is ideally contacted by a member of the search group. The conversation focuses on recognising the gifts and potential of individuals and matching these to the needs of the committee.
- iii. There is a risk that open conversations can potentially cause confusion or hurt through misunderstanding or perceived pressure. Such conversations can be clear, gentle and tender, and well prepared for – and a risk worth taking.
- iv. The Search Group reports its discerned decision to Central Nominations Committee. It also reports openly and fully on the process used to find and discern the name. CNC does the final formal discernment on the name, scrutinising the search and discernment process.
- v. CNC or Search Groups coordinate with other central nominations committees. It is valuable to share information on (for example) approaches being made (to nominees and supporting Friends), where individual Friends are on their journeys, confidential information that isn't appropriate for the database, and on good practice. This could happen via staff, and/or nominations liaison group, or in other ways.
- vi. Staff (ideally the CNC secretary) are included in each Search group's process at some point, before individual Friends are sounded out or approached.
- vii. Search Groups each choose their own ways of working; some may prefer to meet in person, while other groups will be comfortable on the telephone or online. Ensuring that the discernment is in right ordering and that all members of the SG are able to participate fully and without undue difficulty are the top priorities.

This will ensure that:

- The focus of the nomination procedure is on the gifts and spiritual journey of the individual as much as the needs of the community
- The willingness of someone to serve is considered before their name goes to Central Nominations Committee for final discernment, cutting down time

spent by the whole Committee on names which often transpire to be unsuitable.

- The discernment is more often based on a direct, personal connection with the Friend involved, through a conversation (we know God through speaking or being with one another). This will lead more often to better quality discernment, than discernment based on second or third hand reports (e.g. from a supporting Friend via a search group member into a CNC committee meeting).
- The Search Groups can be flexible and adjust their methods to suit the needs of their own members and the role for which they are seeking a name
- CNC as a whole will be in the habit of openly and lovingly challenging one another on the search and nominations processes. This will bring into the Light any difficult or painful concerns about how names are found or discerned. We can share these burdens and vulnerabilities with one another.
- CNC has the time to reflect on and share the most effective practical ways to reach names, and identify difficulties/solutions.
- Staff are empowered to pass on useful information, advice and suggestions to search groups and committees, as needed.

I. No name

There may be times when no names can be found to fill a vacant post, no matter how extensive and committed the search.

We recommend:

- i. Where no name is found, Central Nominations Committee reports this officially in two ways: to the body with a vacancy and to Meeting for Sufferings, which may in some cases need or prefer to refer the situation to Yearly Meeting.
- ii. It is not the responsibility of Central Nominations Committee to discern the appropriate action in such cases, although it is free to offer observations and recommendations if led to do so. It is not the responsibility of Central Nominations Committee or a Search Group to seek to force the movement of the Spirit when careful research and discernment does not lead to a name. Consideration may be offered of possible helpful changes, whether practical – for example, changing timings of meetings, or more fundamental – is our Yearly Meeting still led to do this work?

This will ensure that:

- The Spirit is free to use the nominations process to lead us towards laying down work as well as taking it up
- Inappropriate nominations are not made. We may have to take what we can get but we do not have to accept that anybody, however unsuited to the role, is better than nobody.

- The appointing body is made aware of cases where nomination is impossible or unusually difficult, and can review the nomination request accordingly – or make any other changes that might be needed

J. Communications subgroup

Central Nominations Committee needs to ensure clarity and effectiveness in its communication, and coordinate with other groups and the communications staff team at Friends House.

We recommend:

- i. A Communications subgroup is formed of two (or more) members of CNC. This group will work with the CNC secretary and the Communications Department to publicise particular roles, and nominations generally – basically any communications to be sent out to mass audiences (rather than individuals). It also attends to communications sent out to individuals on the QSIF database (either by writing those communications itself or asking staff to do so). The sub-group's role will be noticing what is needed, or being asked for help by a Search Group, and making sure it happens by liaising with staff, rather than doing it all themselves.
- ii. CNC has an explicit responsibility to publicise and make transparent our nominations processes and is asked to take any steps to do this, as it feels led. This might be effectively done in partnership with other organisations or departments.
- iii. The Communications Sub-group maintains an awareness of the changing nature of communications and of the many paper and digital media by which Quakers can learn about Quaker structures. In particular, the Communications Sub-group should consider the demographics of various media and of the QSIF database, and ask whether it is appropriate to publicise the work of Central Nominations Committee in locations likely to reach groups not currently well-represented in the database and on central committees.
- iv. Database members (those who have offered service via a QSIF) should be kept in touch with. We suggest a 6 monthly newsletter or similar, specifically for this group, to say 'we know you are there, we've not forgotten you!', and perhaps to promote particular vacancies or opportunities, or remind members about the need to update their information. It would work well if this was part of the (BYM) communications strategy overall.
- v. Other potential tasks for the communications group could include liaising with staff and Quaker Life over use of the Quaker Life network to publicise roles, and writing reports, if needed, for MfS etc.

This will ensure that:

- Communications with the wider body of Friends are overseen and appropriate, well-targeted and -presented, and coordinated with other communications coming out of Friends House.
- Communications with the wider body of Friends are improved, with an increased awareness of the work of CNC and other central bodies resulting from this
- Volunteers are only requested in cases where this is an appropriate way of seeking a name for a role
- Search Groups and CNC as a whole are supported in their work, both in seeking nominations and in seeking to increase offers of service
- The impetus to serve can come from the individual Friend, or e.g. from their overseer, seeing and being inspired towards a particular service.
- A wider range of Friends are reached and inspired to offer service
- Friends already on the database are more aware that their gifts are valued and used
- The quality of the data is improved by being more up to date

K. Supporting Friends

The issue of “Supporting Friends” is one with which we have struggled.

At best, the role of the Supporting Friend is that of helping an individual to find their place, a place where they can contribute and learn, and of helping them to discern their role within our Yearly Meeting’s work. We see their contribution as one of value. As such, it is necessary, when they are contacted, for them to be candid and thoughtful, aware of the needs of both the role, and the individual, under discussion. It is also necessary for them to be aware that they have been viewed in this context when the relevant QSIF is submitted. Their contribution can be helpful.

On the other hand, some asked to serve in this capacity find it very hard to enunciate what they perceive as negative comments. There are administrative difficulties in keeping relevant information current. We have observed, however, that some may wish to retain this process – feeling, for example, that a good Supporting Friend(s) can bring insight and objectivity to the process. There are concerns about contacting alternative Friends for background information, such as AM clerks who may not know individuals well. We have therefore aimed to resolve difficulties by opening it up.

We recommend:

- i. The QSIF should state that the giving of the details of Supporting Friends is optional, that alternative strategies that CNC might use could include speaking to the relevant Area/Local Meeting Clerk, or Clerks of other committees on which the Friend concerned has served.
- ii. The QSIF should say what Supporting Friends are for, and what they would be asked.

This will ensure that:

- The need to provide the names of Supporting Friends does not create a barrier which prevents Friends from submitting offers of service
- There is a clarification about what Supporting Friends do and why their names are requested
- There is an option to provide this information where it is useful – this is especially important for Friends who may be primarily involved in Quaker groups other than their local or area meetings

L. Patterns of meetings

CNC has traditionally often met on the same weekend as Meetings for Sufferings. Alternative patterns of meeting would help to facilitate the inclusion of a more diverse membership. Including weekend-long meetings would help Friends and their staff to know each other better.

It is important for such a Committee – one which focuses on small-group working – to come together periodically. Face to face meeting helps the Spirit to flow. We recognise that the work of Search Groups including Friends outside of CNC will be counter to this principle.

We recommend:

- i. CNC and MfS do not (necessarily) meet on the same weekend.
- ii. The Central Nominations Committee chooses its own pattern of meetings, one which meets the needs both of its members, its tasks and its resources.
- iii. MfS recreates its own nominations group for internal MfS appointments. CNC would still make nominations to Arrangements Committee.
- iv. There is no specific need for any CNC members to be drawn from MfS members.

This will ensure that:

- The work is made more efficient and effective, and is given suitable oversight
- The Central Nominations Committee becomes more independent and is able to utilise the full range of options open to it, as outlined above
- The Spirit is free to flow where it will.

Britain Yearly Meeting

Central Nominations Committee

"Everyone has a gift. The church needs to call out the gifts in individuals. [Dietrich] Bonhoeffer said: 'The church cannot afford unemployed people.' ...gifts are a way of being employed and ... also a way for building the body. That is what gifts are for. They are meant for the community."
Thomas Swain

Terms of Reference

1. Summary of Purpose

- 1.1. Central Nominations Committee uses a corporate discernment process in order to call people to their roles as children of God, working with others to create the kingdom of God. Effective working of a Nominations Committee is therefore manifested in a community which is spiritually resourced, empowered and joyful. This is the aim of the work of our Central Nominations Committee.
- 1.2. Central Nominations Committee is responsible for finding names for most of the appointments made by Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings, and for overseeing and developing nominations procedures within its purview. (See also *Quaker faith & practice* 6.21).

2. Authority, Delegation and Relationships

- 2.1. Central Nominations Committee is appointed by Yearly Meeting on the nominations of Yearly Meeting Nominating Group.
- 2.2. The committee should report annually to Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings on the progress of its work and on any other matters from the perspective of nominations which require the attention of Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings.
- 2.3. Central Nominations Committee's annual report should ensure that Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees are able to adjust their nomination requests in light of current experience.
- 2.4. The committee may communicate by minute with Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Nominating Group, Yearly Meeting Committee on Clerks, Meeting for Sufferings, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, and other Central and Standing Committees of Britain Yearly Meeting.
- 2.5. The committee have the ability to establish subgroups and search groups as required.

- 2.6. The committee are responsible for the work of these groups and each group must contain at least one serving member of Central Nominations Committee per sub/search group.

3. Duties

- 3.1. The committee shall bring forward to Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings, as required, names of Friends to serve:
- on committees of Yearly Meeting;
 - on Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee;
 - on Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group;
 - as Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees;
 - on Quaker Stewardship Committee;
 - on central committees, other standing committees and Trusts appointed by Meeting for Sufferings;
 - as representatives to various bodies on which Meeting for Sufferings, or Yearly Meeting, is represented;
 - on ad hoc groups;
 - for other tasks as requested by Yearly Meeting;
 - for other tasks requested by Meeting for Sufferings where membership should be drawn from outside Meeting for Sufferings' current members.

Where no suitable name can be found this should be reported to the appointing body in a timely manner.

- 3.2. The committee shall see that a calendar for all regular appointments is maintained and regularly updated.
- 3.3. The committee shall liaise with the committees and other bodies for which it is seeking names to ensure that up-to-date terms of reference and other information required are obtained in good time. Having undergone such liaison, the committee will seek nominations on the basis of its own discernment and in line with the general guidance on nominations in *Quaker faith & practice* 3.22 – 3.25.
- 3.4. The committee shall seek names for nomination with due regard for equality, including in consideration of age, gender, geographical spread, experience and length of service, balancing the predetermined criteria for each appointment with the gifts of Friends who could serve.

- 3.5. The committee shall nominate only members of the Society¹ for appointments to standing committees of Meeting for Sufferings or Britain Yearly Meeting, or as representatives to other Quaker bodies or to the outside world. Exceptions to this general rule shall be clearly indicated and supported by reasons for nomination².
- 3.6. The committee shall maintain an overview for the bodies for which it brings forward nominations. It should advise Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings (as appropriate) if it feels that an adjustment or review of the purpose or operating terms for any appointment are necessary considering the gifts of Friends who could serve.
- 3.7. The committee shall seek to ensure that the widest possible range of names are available for consideration as potential nominees, keeping procedures to this end under regular review. The committee shall make use of a nominations database kept by staff.
- 3.8. The recording of information by Central Nominations Committee should be undertaken with the upmost regard to the safety and protection of individual's personal information, as well as compliance with legal requirements.
- 3.9. The committee shall have a mechanism for rapid response to urgent requests by Meeting for Sufferings, including a between meetings procedure.
- 3.10. Search groups
 - i) The committee delegates much of the work of its discernment on names to search groups.
 - ii) The committee shall establish search groups which ascertain the needs, views and suggestions of the body nominated to and its secretary, and then bring a discerned name and a report on the discernment process to Central Nominations.
 - iii) Central Nominations Committee shall assure itself by the reviewing of reports that the discernment of search groups is in right ordering.
 - iv) The committee will maintain a pool of names for service on search groups.
 - v) To enlarge this pool, Central Nominations Committee may liaise with the bodies nominated to and other nominating bodies, and make use of Britain Yearly Meeting's channels of communications with its members.
 - vi) The committee shall allocate Central Nominations Committee members and Friends from the pool to search groups at the first meeting of the year.

¹ The term 'Society' is used rather than 'Britain Yearly Meeting' as on occasion members of other yearly meetings may be appointed.

² As agreed by minute 8 of Meeting for Sufferings held 4 April 1992, in which the recommendations of a working group were accepted.

- 3.11. The Committee shall establish a communications subgroup which:
- attends to the communications which are sent out to individuals who have offered service via a Quaker Service Information Form (either by writing those communications itself or asking staff to do so);
 - consults on and approves communications sent out widely by search groups;
 - may choose to publish material about the work of the committee general through appropriate channels;
 - raises awareness of opportunities for service.

4. Membership and attendance

- 4.1. The committee comprises 15 ordinary members and 2 clerks. Members are appointed on rotating triennial basis by Yearly Meeting on the recommendation of the Nominating Group appointed annually for that purpose.
- 4.2. Nomination for a second term of service is possible through the nomination of Yearly Meeting Nominating Group, and a term of service may be preceded or followed by service on one or more Search Groups. There is a maximum of six consecutive years' service in Central Nominations Committee and Central Nominations Committee-adjacent roles (i.e. on Search Groups). No further re-appointment is possible without a gap of at least one year.
- 4.3. The committee appoint the clerks from within their membership to serve for one or more years depending on their circumstances and the committee's needs. Clerks can serve as such for an extra year on top of their ordinary term of service. The clerk serves ex-officio on Meeting for Sufferings. The clerks of Central Nominations Committee will maintain effective communications with other clerks of nominating groups.
- 4.4. The Recording Clerk may attend ex-officio. The clerks of Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings may attend exceptionally with the agreement of the committee or on the direction of Yearly Meeting/Meeting for Sufferings.
- 4.5. The Committee may invite other Friends or specialists to help on particular issues on its behalf.
- 4.6. A member of staff, designated by the Recording Clerk, will normally attend committee meetings to act as secretary to that committee. The secretary will help coordinate and pass information between nominations committees e.g. suggesting names. The Recording Clerk is responsible for ensuring there are

sufficient staff resources to support the work of the committee. Meeting without the secretary should only be with that person's or the Recording Clerk's agreement.

5. Frequency of Meeting

- 5.1. The committee shall meet as frequently as required to meet the requirements placed upon it. Meetings should fit within the calendar agreed with the Recording Clerk.
- 5.2. A proportion of the committee also needs to be present during Britain Yearly Meeting in session, to be available for any ad-hoc nominations required during the Yearly Meeting.

6. Agreement of the Terms of Reference

- 6.1. The committee shall work within these terms of reference under the authority of minute ... of Britain Yearly Meeting held dd mm yyyy.
- 6.2. The terms of reference should be reviewed at least triennially and may in the interim be amended by minuted decisions of Britain Yearly Meeting in session or Meeting for Sufferings.³

³ Unusually, the clerks of Yearly Meeting and of Meeting for Sufferings should not have the right of ex-officio attendance as there should be clear separation between the table of Yearly Meeting/Meeting for Sufferings and the nominating process to committees and other bodies.

Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) Annual Report to Meeting for Sufferings, Nov 2015

Introduction

QLCC welcomes the opportunity to meet with Meeting for Sufferings, to report on its work in the last 12 months and to discuss further where and how we can help Meeting for Sufferings in its discernment. We also believe that these occasions should not just be one-way reporting events but a consideration of topics or issues that concern both bodies (and maybe also the wider body of BYM). Is Meeting for Sufferings ready to interact with QLCC in this way? We have welcomed the attendance of M for S Clerks at Representative Council this year, and recognise the usefulness of having representation on M for S; both these help mutual understanding and benefit Britain Yearly Meeting.

Statement of Purpose

QLCC recently articulated its purpose as:

Quaker Life Central Committee's purpose is to support and strengthen Quaker life throughout the Yearly Meeting to help deepen our experience of God's grace, its consequent expression in our lives and in all our meetings, and to increase awareness of and interest in Quakers in Britain. This remit covers faith and practice, spiritual nurture and the practical tasks required for the running of our Quaker meetings.

Our Work

During the last year Quaker Life Central Committee has undertaken the following pieces of work:

1 As a Committee

- a) We carried out an audit of the skills and experience that we had between us on the committee and forwarded a summary of this audit to Central Nominations Committee (CNC) to help them see where we lacked expertise. We also obtained a copy of the material that CNC sends out to potential new members and updated it. We commend these practices to other committees. Since committee membership turns over (typically three or four a year out of 12 are newcomers) we should repeat the skills audit from time to time.
- b) We reviewed the Quaker Life Network at our September meeting, looking especially at the Clusters that support our work around Mental Health and on Conflict in Meetings. The Network continues to grow steadily. About 1200 or 77% of the Network members have not had previous links with 'central work', so we believe the Network is providing a significant bridge between 'them' at the centre and 'us' in our local meetings. It is also a valuable source of Friends

who are willing to offer service and be engaged with wider work in the Society.

- c) We made input to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee and to the development of 'Our Faith in the Future', expressing our belief in the crucial importance of the spiritual underpinning of all our witness and activities, and how in turn our witness and other activities feed into our worship. We hold and cherish this heart of BYM, and part of our role, we judge, is to help Friends develop and articulate this spiritual underpinning in their lives. The mutually reinforcing relationship between our experience of the spirit and its manifestation in our work and witness has recently been expressed through: the development with QPSW of the 'Be the Change' resource for young people; Representative Council in April when Izzy Cartwright (QPSW) was the keynote speaker at a weekend on the theme of Conflict; the theme of Quaker week and the upcoming Outreach conference.
- d) Junior Yearly Meeting has been independently reviewed and the Central Committee received the review report at its June meeting. As with Quaker Life's other work with Children and Young People, we were struck by the positive impact that this work has on the lives of young people.

2 Together with our Working Groups and Committees

- a) We have established a working group on 'End of Life Issues' and it has now had two meetings. They are working on resources to help Friends share 'stories' around end of life issues. We hope that this will enable Friends to engage with these issues in a supportive and sensitive way. The Group are also developing a list of resources for Elders and Overseers. One the Representative Council meetings next year may be on this theme.
- b) Zelig Gross's book 'With a Tender Hand', commissioned by QLCC, has been published. The first print run of over 1000 copies sold very quickly; a further print run was organised and copies are once again available. This book is a resource for all Friends (and Elders and Overseers in particular) on how to develop our meetings as inclusive and grounded communities.
- c) Following Britain Yearly Meeting at Bath (2014), where there was concern about the care of Friends and Attenders who are geographically mobile and unable to apply for membership of a geographically defined Area Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings asked us to carry this work forward. The Terms of Reference of a Working Group have been agreed and the members of this group are now being sought. We anticipate this will be a long term piece of work, but we will report back to Meeting for Sufferings in due course.
- d) Quaker Life has recently taken on the oversight of the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee. We have consolidated our support of prison and other chaplains and arranged a conference at Woodbrooke in March. Our Prison

Chaplains Committee provides regional training and support for prison chaplains, and an annual national conference at Woodbrooke in October.

3 Together with our Staff

- a) We know that other churches are exploring “New expressions of being church”. New Expressions of Quakerism is an innovative resource from Quaker Life to help meetings explore new shapes and ways of being a Quaker community, examining what it means to be a Quaker meeting and how we might share our Quaker experience with others in our localities. A conference was held in October to introduce Friends to this, and this maybe something that Meeting for Sufferings might wish to explore in future.
- b) We re-affirmed our vision for work with Children and Young People. We were pleased that our staff arranged another Participation Day for young people alongside Meeting for Sufferings. We look forward to the publication (in the New Year) of Living our Beliefs – a book capturing the Quakerism of young people that came out of the Participation days. We were encouraged that 33 children aged 8-11 went on a residential adventuring weekend (the first time we had run an event of this kind for this age group) and 20 young people went on a ‘Pilgrimage’ to the 1652 Country at half term in October
- c) There are now 1,077 subscribers to ‘Journeys in the Spirit’; it is published bi-monthly, alternating with Topical Activities. Quaker Life continues to offer workshops about working with children in meetings and held 12 in 2015 at which over 50 local meetings were represented. At Britain Yearly Meeting in May, over 130 children and young people participated in age appropriate programmes organised by Quaker Life staff.
- d) Quaker Life staff (working with Friends from the Quaker Life Network) provide a range of support for meetings and office holders in meetings. This November (in partnership with Woodbrooke) we are due to run a residential conference for Area Meeting Clerks. At our September meeting we reviewed our work in supporting Area Meetings; Quaker Life has worked in specifically to strengthen our Area Meetings in the following ways:
 - A Representative Council on the theme of Strengthening Area Meeting using appreciative enquiry – this has been followed up by a number of meetings,
 - Work with Elders via the triennial conference and training on how to develop Area Meetings as spiritual communities,
 - Promoting different ways of developing Area Meeting as a community – such as an article in Quaker Voices on the Northumbria model,
 - Created a Cluster within the QL network for AM Clerks,

- Created a triennial residential conference for AM Clerks, with annual day conferences in the intervening years.

However, despite the work that Quaker Life and others do to support Area Meetings, anecdotal evidence would suggest that many Area Meetings are struggling to function effectively. They often have great difficulty in finding Friends willing to serve and are regarded as irrelevant by many Friends whose first allegiance appears to be to their local meeting. We wonder whether it could be helpful for Meeting for Sufferings to return to their 2011 question: “Are our AM’s clear about their purpose and are they fit for purpose?” and consider whether our current structures are in fact working adequately?

- e) For Quaker week in 2016 Quaker Life Central Committee agreed a theme of ‘acting and witnessing together as Quaker communities’. We are pleased that many meetings participate in Quaker Week and we anticipate reviewing it (in the context of our strategic plan) in the near future. We are also pleased that our new resource to help meetings integrate new attenders, A Day with Friends – events for Enquirers, will be published in November in good time for our Outreach Conference in February 2016.

4 Together with our partners

- a) Quaker Life and Woodbrooke have jointly set up a working group on the future development of the Libraries at Friends House and Woodbrooke. We anticipate testing the recommendations of the Group with Meeting for Sufferings.
- b) Quaker Life Central Committee is participating in the Woodbrooke - BYM Trustees group that is setting up the initial pilot of the Vibrancy project. We hope that there will be good links with this project.
- c) We also work with Woodbrooke on the provision of training for office holders and on the development of learning resources such as the ‘Being Friends Together’ on-line resource. Subscriptions indicate that there are currently around 175 meetings with subscriptions to Being Friends Together. We were pleased that Simon Best, the Head of Education at Woodbrooke was able to attend our September meeting and we look forward to him joining us in February 2016 when we consider roles training.
- d) Quaker Life Representative Council continues to be greatly appreciated by its members, and is a significant way of supporting grass roots Quakerism. It serves as a source of spiritual nourishment and offers encouragement by giving participants an opportunity to discuss with Friends from other parts of the country issues affecting their local meeting. Evaluation shows that Reps return home strengthened and with ideas and suggestions for ways to approach problems and take forward the themes of the weekends. Nearly all AMs send representatives. It also continues to be a good way for QL to

disseminate information to Local and Area Meetings, and for Quaker Life to understand what is actually happening in meetings around the country.

- e) We continue to link with Charney Manor, with Quaker Quest who now facilitate Enquirers weekends at Charney Manor and with the Kindlers. Our staff also link with a number of ecumenical (and other) bodies associated with specific areas of our work.

5 Future Work not already referred to

- a) The immediate and major piece of work for the Committee is developing a new strategic plan for QL work. We consulted Area Meeting Representatives at Quaker Life Representative Council in October and at our November meeting will be preparing for a special Away Day with staff and invited guests in January. We hope to make significant progress on this work in the first half of 2016. We will be using 'Our Faith in the Future' as a key document and may want to test our vision and/or plan with Meeting for Sufferings
- b) The Committee will consider Minute 36 from BYM (the Call to Equality) at its meeting in November 2015 and we will continue to consider how we can best represent the Yearly Meeting's concern in this area in our work.
- c) When we reported to Meeting for Sufferings a year ago, we raised the topic of how Meetings identify and test what might be Quaker Concerns. Such themes will continue to be at the heart of our work and we might want to consider together with Meeting for Sufferings how to engage further with this particular issue.
- d) At our November 2015 meeting we shall be engaging with Quaker theology and considering our role in this respect in the context of the work being done by the Quaker Committee on Christian and Interfaith Relations and the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group. Other Quaker Yearly Meetings and other religions and Faiths in the UK, with their different insights and emphases, offer comfort and discomfort to BYM's expressions of faith and practice. We hope that in 2016 we can hear from some BYM Friends who will have attended the FWCC Plenary Meeting (formerly known as a Triennial) in Peru in January to help us see our faith and practice with fresh eyes.
- e) Eldership and Oversight is at the heart of the life of our meetings. A triennial Elders and Overseers conference to be held in 2016 is being planned. Its theme is 'Abundant Life: Re-Sourcing our meetings'. In 2016 we will be considering the issues arising from this conference and discerning which we should take forward.
- f) We would like to strengthen links with the QF&P Revision Preparation group and any future QF&P revision work, with Woodbrooke (especially sharing information about the support of local meetings), Quaker Peace and Social Witness and with the developing Vibrancy project.

g) We have been exploring developing a Service Level Agreement with Friends House Hospitality Limited for the day to day management of the Quaker Centre bookshop. However, we expect overall responsibility for this work to remain with Quaker Life. We also look forward to engaging with Friends House Hospitality Limited around the outreach work at Swarthmoor Hall and the new arrangements for that.

Jocelyn Burnell,
Acting Clerk, Quaker Life Central Committee
November 2015

Quaker Life

Working to strengthen and sustain the fabric of Quaker life within our Yearly Meeting



We provide training, advice and support and welcome comment and information about best practice in meetings. We have a Network of Friends to support our work and help Friends learn from each others experience.

Quaker Centre at Friends House

Including a café, bookshop, Worship Space and information point. We stock a wide range of Quaker and non-Quaker books, distribute outreach materials and supply book boxes for events. We also provide opportunities for volunteering and the Worship Space is open to all.
020 7663 1030/1031
quakercentre@quaker.org.uk
www.quaker.org.uk/quakercentre

Quaker Voices

A bi-monthly publication for the spiritual nurture of individuals and meetings. Bringing together thought-provoking articles, poems and pictures, plus the best from Area and Local Meeting newsletters. Subscriptions:
020 7663 1143
qv@quaker.org.uk
www.quaker.org.uk/quaker-voices

Employment and Wardenship

Support and advice for Quaker employers & their employees and with all aspects of running a Quaker Meeting House.
020 7663 1096
wardenship@quaker.org.uk
www.quaker.org.uk/employers

Outreach

Raising public awareness of Friends nationally and locally, encouraging and supporting Friends and meetings in speaking confidently about their Quaker faith and sharing it with others, being more visible in the communities around them and deepening the spiritual life of meetings.
020 7663 1017
outreach@quaker.org.uk
www.quaker.org.uk/outreach

Children and young people's work

Providing resources, training and advice to support local/regional meetings in their engagement with children and young people. Offering a range of events for children and young people, as well as opportunities for young people to participate in the running of these events.
020 7663 1013
cypadmin@quaker.org.uk
www.quaker.org.uk/cyp

Library of the Religious Society of Friends

The largest library of Quakerism in Britain, established in 1673. An exceptionally rich resource including printed materials, archives, pictures, photographs and museum objects. Staff can also provide advice on how to run a meeting library or look after the meeting's records.
020 7663 1135
library@quaker.org.uk
www.quaker.org.uk/library

Pastoral care

Offering support to meetings responding to specific issues including support for Eldership and Oversight, Diversity and Inclusion and Safeguarding (Child Protection) and the Quaker business method.
020 7663 1023
michaelsb@quaker.org.uk
www.quaker.org.uk/pastoral-care

Quaker Marriages

Support on marrying in Quaker Meetings and specifically to Quaker Registering Officers
020 7663 1023
michaelsb@quaker.org.uk
www.quaker.org.uk/ro

Quaker Life Network

Quaker Life Network connects Friends who have time, energy, skills and experience to share with other Quakers. It helps to support Quaker Life in developing and sharing good practice.
020 7663 1007
qlnetwork@quaker.org.uk
www.quaker.org.uk/qlnetwork

Chaplaincy

Offering support and resources, networking opportunities and conferences for all Quaker chaplains.
020 7663 1017
andrewo@quaker.org.uk
www.quaker.org.uk/chaplaincy
020 7663 1143
marleens@quaker.org.uk
(for prison chaplains)
www.quaker.org.uk/qpc

Quaker Life, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ
020 7663 1143 qladmin@quaker.org.uk www.quaker.org.uk

Home Groups

Meeting for Sufferings – December 2015

We will be spending some time in home groups, formed on a 'geographic' basis (as for Meeting for Sufferings in July).

We invite you, as far as is practical, to sit with other members of your Home Group during the Friday evening meal. We hope this will be a way to start getting to know each other. After this, Home Groups will spend time together on:

- Saturday morning
- Saturday evening
- Sunday morning

During the weekend, you will be given information about Home Group activities.

We hope that each Home Group will have two facilitators. It may not be possible to identify two facilitators for each group, before the weekend: we ask everyone to take responsibility for listening to each other; involving everyone; ensuring everyone has a chance to contribute and is heard; and reaching agreement about how the sessions are structured.

Scotland and Wales – Garden Room

Alastair Reid	BYM Trustee
Barbara Robinson	West Scotland AM
Robin Waterston	East Scotland
Henry Thompson	South East Scotland AM
Jane Booth	North Scotland AM
Jane Pearn	General Meeting for Scotland
David Jones	Mid Wales AM/Meeting of Friends in Wales
Frances Voelcker	North Wales AM
Julian Rutherford	Southern Marches AM
Liz Muir-Edwards	South Wales AM
Lyn Moseley	BYM Trustee
Deborah Rowlands	Yearly Meeting

North and North West England - Art Room

Christopher Bullard	Kendal & Sedbergh AM
David Day	Cumberland AM
Graham Taylor	BYM Trustee
Jane Nicholls	Teesdale & Cleveland AM
Jennifer MacLennan	Lancashire Central & North AM
Michael Long	Northumbria AM
Robert Straughton	Swarthmoor (SW Cumbria) AM
Andrew Backhouse	East Cheshire AM
Jennie Barnsley	Hardshaw and Mann AM
Angela Seddon	Manchester & Warrington AM
Wendy Hampton	Pendle Hill AM
Dori Miller	Wirral & Chester AM
Sarah Donaldson	BYM Trustee
Diane Furber	Manchester & Warrington AM
Isobel Dunbar	QLCC

Yorkshire – Eva Koch

Ann Banks	Brighouse West Yorkshire AM
Christine Fellowes	Pickering & Hull AM
David Olver	BYM Trustee
Rici Marshall	Leeds AM and Young Friends General Meeting
Judy Nicholls	Wensleydale & Swaledale AM
Ruth McTighe	Central Yorkshire AM
Sarah Allen	York AM
Sue Goodson	Sheffield & Balby AM
Sylvia Boyes	Craven & Keighley AM

Midlands and East of England - Cadbury Room

Jenny Mattingly	Leicester AM
John Cockcroft	Central England AM
Nicky Hoskin-Stone	Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire AM
Peter Ullathorne	BYM Treasurer
Robert Horton	Staffordshire AM
Alison Ironside	BYM Trustees
Angela Pivac	Thaxted AM
Debbie Cates	Cambridgeshire AM
Deirdre Haslam	Mid Essex AM
Avril Dawson	Ipswich & Diss AM
Jenny Routledge	Norfolk & Waveney AM
Mark Lilley	Lincolnshire AM
Robert Parkes	Southern East Anglia AM
Sheila Gatiss	BYM Trustee
Anne Bennett	QWRC

South Midlands – Quiet Room

Doreen Osbourne	Mid-Thames AM
Judith Mason	Banbury & Evesham AM
Janet May Bowles	Chilterns AM
Colin Burns Brown	Gloucestershire AM
Kim Noy-Man Jackson	Hertford & Hitchin AM
Gloria Dobbin	Luton & Leighton AM
Karen Draycott	Northamptonshire AM
Bridget Walker	Oxford & Swindon AM
Michael Phipps	BYM Trustee
Virginia Pawlyn	BYM Trustee
Douglas Butterfield	QCCIR

London – Library

Anne Smith	North East Thames AM
Claire Farrier	North West London AM
Gillian Turner	South London AM
Joan Bulmer	Kingston & Wandsworth AM
Jo-Anne Fraser	South East London AM
Anna Smith	North East Thames AM
Simon Risley	London West AM
Joycelin Dawes	North London AM
Ingrid Greenhow	BYM Trustee

South of England – Hugh Lawson

Chris Bemrose	Sussex West AM
Graham Dragon	Hampshire & Islands AM
Kim Ashcroft	Sussex East AM
n/a	West Kent AM
Peter Morris	Surrey & Hampshire Border AM
Rosemary Elias	West Weald AM
Stuart Yates	Bournemouth Coastal AM
Ursula Fuller	East Kent AM
Christine Habgood-Coote	Central Nominations Committee
Jennifer Barraclough	BYM Trustees clerk

South West England – Holland House

Julie Taylor-Browne	Cornwall AM
Aubrey Hill	North Somerset AM
Gill Greenfield	Mid-Somerset AM
Jane Fowles	Dorset & South Wiltshire AM
Lin Patterson	West Wiltshire & East Somerset AM
Miriam Yagud	Bristol AM
Nick Francis	BYM Trustee
Kathy Gollin	West Somerset AM
Robert Lovett	Devon AM
Tim Southall	BYM Trustee

Our Area Meetings today

'The area meeting is the primary meeting for church affairs in Britain Yearly Meeting.'
Quaker faith & practice 4.02 (part)

1. Introduction

Our consideration of the nature of the life of our AMs at our December meeting has been prompted by the 'Meeting for Sufferings Roadshows' which took place in 2014 and 2015. (See section 9 for information about a review of this initiative.)

Travelling around Britain, and meeting Friends from different areas, the MfS clerks and other members of Arrangements Group learned something about the life of different area meetings. Friends shared some of the joys and challenges of organising Area Meetings, working within them, co-ordinating and connecting with each other.

We feel it is important to bring these reflections back to Sufferings, for shared consideration.

2. Preparation for this session

We hope representatives will be able to prepare for this session by:

- reading this paper and the attachments
- considering the questions raised at the end of the paper
- talking with your Area Meeting clerks
- talking with your Area Meeting Quaker Life Representative
- ... and if possible, asking other Friends

3. Area Meetings – in an ideal world

We start in this place because Area Meeting (AM) is the keystone for Meeting for Sufferings. For most of the year they are the point of connection between local Friends and, their engagement with Quakers more widely and with central work. AMs are at the heart of British Quaker structures. It is the AM that we join when we become members. Locally, they are the legal entity, and they carry a range of responsibilities:

- Oversee and support local meetings
- Hold the list of members
- Appoint elders and overseers
- Conduct Quaker marriages
- Record deaths
- Own and manage buildings, finances, and employment
- Set safeguarding policy

- Can communicate on behalf of local Quakers with Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting
- Send a representative to Meeting for Sufferings

AMs are not simply expected to fulfil specific tasks: they are asked to support and nurture Quakerism locally. Section 4.02 of Quaker Faith and practice which starts with the sentence quoted above and continues:

Its [the AM's] role is to develop and maintain a community of Friends, a family of local meetings who gather for worship and spiritual enrichment. It should provide that balance between worship, mutual support, administration, learning, deliberation and social life which can make its meetings enjoyable occasions and build up the spiritual life of its members.

Area meetings act as facilitators and co-ordinators, ensuring that their constituent local meetings have access to opportunities for fellowship, spiritual development, and spiritual and pastoral care, including the care of children and young people. They also provide mutual support through the shared testing of concerns.

So an ideal AM will be full of life, spiritually uplifting, have well-organised and supported projects and events and consisting of growing, vibrant local meetings.

4. Area Meetings – a snapshot

There are 71 AMs in Britain, and they vary widely in size and nature:

- **People** - the smallest has just over 70 members and attenders (Wensleydale and Swaledale), and the largest over 800 (Central England).
- **Meetings** – there are 2 local Meetings in Wensleydale & Swaledale AM, and 3 in each of Southern East Anglia and Wirral & Chester. North Scotland, Devon and South Wales have 13 each and Central England has 16.
- **Geographic area** - some AMs cover a relatively small geographic area – North London is probably the smallest, geographically – and it's relatively easy to travel from one meeting to the other. Others (North Scotland in particular) cover a huge area.
- **Frequency of meetings** – some AMs meet every month – Central England is one - while others have at most four meetings a year.
- **Constituency** – many AMs are centred on one or two larger inner-city meetings, surrounded by smaller meetings, while others are primarily rural. They might be in poorer or more affluent areas of Britain.
- **Resources** – while some AMs have inherited significant investment portfolios and beautiful, well-kept buildings, others have extremely limited resources; and many own buildings which have become a burden.

5. Area Meetings – the reality?

The ideal picture as envisaged in Quaker Faith and Practice probably exists in only a minority of AMs.

Certainly, some AMs are lively and energetic. Many Friends have learned of the initiative of Northumbria AM, which decided to re-energise its meetings, and has shared news about this widely. It now meets four times a year, with a programme including include Meeting for Worship, workshops, children's activities and a provided lunch as well as Meeting for Church Affairs.

In other parts of Britain, AMs are barely operational. Some find it difficult to appoint clerks – indeed, several don't have one appointed clerk, and instead have a 'rotating' arrangement. Attendance can be low, with some members never present.

Anecdotally, we know that for some Friends, AM is in the wrong place, at the wrong time. They don't feel connected, feeling it is about 'them', not 'us'; some find the process too technical, archaic or complicated, and might even describe it as boring. Elders and Overseers are AM appointments; but in many areas, Elders and Overseers are effectively only active in their own local meeting. Some areas don't appoint Elders or Overseers.

In all the 'Meeting for Sufferings Roadshows' participants told us it was hard to engage people for whom the local Meeting is all that matters. Our religious structures can't survive if the majority favour congregationalism. When Friends don't feel fully engaged with their AM – to which members belong – this also raises questions about the nature of membership. In the 21st Century, are Quakers more focused on individual than on creating a covenant with the worshipping community to which we belong?

6. What about Meeting for Sufferings?

That many AMs are struggling has a direct impact on Meeting for Sufferings.

- A few AMs find it hard to send a representative to every meeting.
- Representatives find it difficult to bring reports back to an AM which is small, unrepresentative, and pushed for time. For many local Friends, Area Meeting and the central structures seem irrelevant.
- AM clerks often feel over-burdened, and resent information coming from 'the centre'. Some lack an understanding of our structures. Even those who are knowledgeable, engaged and energetic can struggle to make 'Meeting for Sufferings' relevant to local Friends.
- Some AMs are struggling with the process of discernment. Quaker Life has told Meeting for Sufferings it sees a limited understanding amongst British Quakers of how to test concerns, and how to articulate concerns as a spiritual leading. This is confirmed, when AMs send 'un-tested' minutes to Meeting for Sufferings.

7. Helping to strengthen AMs

Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC)'s report to Meeting for Sufferings this time describes recent efforts to help AMs, including:

- In 2011, a Representative Council focused on Strengthening Area Meeting
- There is an email Cluster for AM Clerks within the QL network
- QL organises a conference for AM clerks every year – usually a one-day event, but residential every three years
- Sharing positive experiences, and encouraging Elders through conferences and training

8. Meeting for Sufferings - previous consideration

In 2011, at about the same time Quaker Life was focusing on Area Meetings, Meeting for Sufferings spent some time exploring the issue of 'Strengthening Area Meetings'. The first minute (April 2011) is copied here because of its reference to a minute from North Wales AM, and to Quaker Life Central Committee's consideration.

S/11/04/10: Strengthening Area Meetings

Further to minutes S/10/01/8 of 15-17 January 2010: 'Nurturing the Spiritual Life of Meetings' and S/10/03/3 of 27 March 2010: 'What makes meetings grow?' we receive minute 28 of North Wales Area Meeting held 8 January 2011 concerning Quaker faith & practice 4.02

We also receive minute 11/107 of Quaker Life Central Committee held 18-20 February 2011.

The clerks have noted the points shared today and will send them out with the minutes.

We will return to this matter at our meeting in October 2011.

When the Meeting returned to this in October 2011, it minuted:

S/11/10/8: Strengthening our area meetings

Further to our minute S/11/04/10 of 2 April 2011, we receive further minutes on this matter from the following meetings: Meeting of Friends in Wales (paper S/11/10/mc i c), Hampshire & Islands AM (paper S/11/10/mc i d), Ipswich & Diss AM (paper S/11/10/mc i e), Kingston & Wandsworth AM (paper S/11/10/mc i f), North Wales AM (paper S/11/10/mc i g), West Scotland AM (paper S/11/10/mc i h) and Luton & Leighton AM (paper S/11/10/mc i p).

We have received a paper prepared by the Recording Clerk, offering some queries to help focus our discernment on this matter (paper S/11/10/D).

The purpose of area meetings is to build communities living under the guidance of the Spirit, - worshipping together, supporting each other, testing concerns, being inclusive of attenders and visitors, and enjoying social time together.

We believe that worshipping together is central to this, and that the Quaker business method with good clerking are essential. Elders bring prayerful support to this, and encouragement to all Friends, but especially to those who attend conferences or are representatives on committees.

We know that life is generated by warmth and caring. We will be strengthened by the fun and social events we include.

We have heard about telephone conferencing and video conferencing. Advice is available from Friends House and West Scotland Area Meeting. Area meeting trustees could perhaps take some routine items off the area meeting agendas. How can we involve young people more directly in our Area Meetings? Advice and help are available from Quaker Life on this.

We commend to area meeting clerks the conference at Woodbrooke, 16-18th November. We ask our representatives to take back to area meetings the paper S/11/10/D, which we have received from the Recording Clerk, and challenge them with the three questions at the end of the paper:

- *Are our area meetings clear about their purpose?*
- *Are they fit for purpose?*
- *What support and advice would meetings welcome to help change the things which need changing?*

9. Other reading

These papers are available on the Meeting for Sufferings website or on request from Graham Spackman (grahams@quaker.org.uk, or 0207 663 1021)– please read them beforehand, if you can:

- QL Rep Council 2011 introductions (Paul Parker, Linda Murgatroyd)
- QL Rep Council 2011 accompanying notes (Linda Murgatroyd)
- QL Rep Council 2011 questions for AMs handout
- MfS October 2011 - Strengthening Our Area Meetings (paper MfS/11/10/D)
- Meeting for Sufferings regional events programme 2014-2015 (review)

10. Questions for Meeting for Sufferings

We hope representatives will come to Meeting for Sufferings prepared to explore three sets of questions. It will help if you can talk beforehand with your current (or recent) AM clerks and QL Representatives, and other Quakers in your area.

A. Picking up the threads

- Did Friends in your AM follow up Meeting for Sufferings' consideration in 2011? Did you consider paper MfS/11/10/D?
- If your AM has considered itself recently, what have you learned?
- Has anything been changed and what difference has that made?

B. Identifying and articulating the problems

- We see some strong, growing AMs, but more which are struggling – is this interpretation correct?
- What works well in your AM?
- What problems are facing your AM?
- What underpins these problems?
- Why do some AMs work, and others don't? Can you identify particular factors?

C. What might be done?

- What can we, in our different roles, do to help Area Meetings?
- How can we strengthen the links between Meetings locally – and between local Meetings and the centre?
- Could Our Faith in the Future be helpful?
- Should we consider more radical solutions?
- What could be done? By whom? And how?

Ethel Livermore, MfS Clerk
Anne Ullathorne, MfS Assistant Clerk
Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk
November 2015

**Reports from the Britain Yearly Meeting representatives
attending European Yearly Meetings in 2015**

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting - Arthur Pritchard

France Yearly Meeting – Rose Oliver

German Yearly Meeting – Jonathan Hodgkin

Ireland Yearly Meeting – Ann Floyd

Netherlands Yearly Meeting – Anne Bennett

Norway Yearly Meeting – Alick Munro

Sweden Yearly Meeting – Jennifer Maclennan

Switzerland Yearly Meeting – Barbara Windle

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting: 8 - 10 May

The annual gathering of Quakers in Belgium and Luxembourg was a joyous reunion and a rich and spiritually invigorating experience. Returning to La Foresta near Leuven, formerly a monastic training centre for Roman Catholic clergy, on my second visit as BYM representative, I reflected on the coincidence that the two British Friends, Helen Meads and Andrea Freeman, who would lead the theme of the gathering *Leaning into the Silence: Experimenting with Light*, were both members of my own meeting in West Yorkshire.

Belgium and Luxembourg Friends, largely formed from the Brussels group, are fortunate in being able to construct yearly meeting as an opportunity to grow together in the Spirit, minimising formal business in an effort to foster fellowship in a group ranging widely in age and create a community with its own special dynamic. Helen Meads led the first session, which explained the origins of *Experiment with Light* based on the research and explorations of Rex Ambler in BYM into early Friends. Light groups use the method to facilitate access to the Light within, as they attempt to experience the powerful truths that early Friends discovered that would transform their personal lives. Andrea Freeman then introduced Friends to the collage materials for Saturday's response to the Experiment.

On Saturday morning, Helen led a guided meditation, a fuller version of the text used by some Light groups, based on Fox's own words. Otherwise, no word would be spoken from the finish of breakfast until Friends were to meet in small sharing groups; once a deep state of engagement was reached all would be able to express their responses to the meditative experience through art, using pastel, collage with found materials, cuttings, tissues, swatches of fabric. The experience was novel and challenging, and after a long period of immersion in deep reflection, faced with a blank sheet of A2 and infinite possibilities, Friends found a creative impulse that seemed to come from the deepest places.

After the sharing, the art was displayed around the room. Friends gazed, intrigued, admired and reflected. Later when the injunction to silence was lifted, Friends tried to articulate their experiences in a plenary worship sharing and then in a further session shared with children and young people. Something special had happened, a shift in perception, perhaps, or a glimpse of a mystery. From experiences that were deeply personal, it seemed that a deeper understanding between members of the group had been achieved.

Or, as the epistle expressed it, 'Holding the stillness, maintaining the silence – even at coffee times and meal times: this has challenged us, but also allowed us to grow in our knowledge of one another, and of the Spirit within. Our challenge, now, is to apply these insights to deepen our worship and action in the world.'

Arthur Pritchard

France Yearly Meeting: 16 - 19 July

Dear Friends,

In the month of July this year, France Yearly Meeting took place at the Centre des Naudières in Nantes. The location was poignant; Nantes was the main slave port in France during the 1700's to early 1800's and a visit on the Saturday afternoon to the 'Abolition of Slavery Memorial' gave Friends much food for thought.

The official theme of France Yearly Meeting was "What is it to be a Quaker in France today?" Many discussions and meetings were held on exploring how to communicate the Quaker experience, more specifically the French Quaker experience. The children brought fresh and insightful questions to the adults in meeting, encouraging all ages to engage in exploring some of the harder questions about people's personal journeys. Such questions included, "How did you know you were a Quaker?" "What brought you to Quakers?" "For you, is the silence in meeting a time for prayer or reflection?"

The responses to the theme were wide-ranging and passionate. Firstly, a need was felt to remind others that French Quakers have their own unique identity aside from the Anglophone Quaker culture. It was felt that Friends would do well to communicate with non-Quakers differently depending on their audience's varied understandings, beliefs and interests. During one threshing meeting, Friends spoke of how they felt driven by their faith. They found that silence leads to action and that they were glad to let their lives speak. As one Friend ministered, "Faith requires action, actions require faith. Alone they are nothing."

Being geographically dispersed, Friends in France have found some creative ways to support one another and to continue as an active faith community. Yearly Meeting was an opportunity for several Friends to share their local meetings' news and projects. The Centre Quaker de Congénies near Nîmes continues to be used for residentials, retreats and regular meetings. Quercy Meeting now have a period of Afterwords, where people are able to share messages which did not quite rise to the level of ministry but were perhaps insightful or of interest to the meeting. They enjoy holding discussions. Some meetings such as Toulouse consist of many different nationalities and are very active. Several Friends now form part of the "Experiment with Light" group, which meet online via Skype. One inspiring Friend from Limoges spoke of how she continues to hold a meeting each week, even if she is the only member present. Another representative spoke of how their meetings took place on week days (not Sundays) as many of their members are also practising Catholics and Protestants.

There are a few key figures who are undertaking a lot of work on behalf of France Yearly Meeting. Friends spoke passionately about the work on their nationally-

available information booklets, the Lettre des Amis newsletter and the website. A call was heard for more individuals to take part in these projects, although no nominations process or nominations committee was formed during the Yearly Meeting.

At the beginning of the weekend, Friends celebrated our Quaker discipline of silence and of listening to one another without needing to prepare a response. Sadly, this discipline seemed to be forgotten over the course of the weekend. Some Friends voiced their concerns over recorded minutes which did not reflect the feeling of the meeting, worrying that decisions were made out of fear of inaction, rather than through the process of discernment.

It has been a privilege to spend time with F/friends as well as getting to know representatives from several other countries. Meeting in person is a powerful experience. There will always be challenges as well as creative and inspiring moments at these meetings, and I am grateful to continue to be shaped by these experiences as I meet with F/friends around the world.

Rose Oliver

German Yearly Meeting: 22 – 25 October

In the wonderfully warm atmosphere of Bad Pyrmont, German and Austrian Friends joyously greeted each other for their 85th Yearly Meeting. About 150 members and Friends of Friends, as well as some 40 children and Young Friends attended. Thinking of this as about 75 % of the current members of German and Austrian Quakers, it is very evident as to why from the start we had the feeling that we were being welcomed both as representatives and also as guests to the German family of Friends.

German Yearly Meeting is held every other year at the only building actually owned by German Quakers with a full time warden. There has been a Quaker Meeting house on the Bad Pyrmont site since 1800. The original building was taken down and a new one built there in 1932. So naturally it has much historical links to many German Quakers.

Each person was given a pre-prepared label, giving not only the given name, but also the meeting at which they worshipped. We learned that there were representatives from France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland as well as visitors from Britain YM, Netherlands YM, Hungary, Ireland and Georgia.

We began with an initial silent Meeting for Worship. After this everyone was encouraged to stand and move together, somewhat like a gentle version of doing the hokey-cokey and then a glorious rendering of the round, Dona - Nobis - Pacem. In the first evening, it is the tradition that epistles sent by Quaker meetings from around the world are read out.

Each day then began with two Meetings for Worship, one in the same manner as Britain Yearly Meeting and a second one, described as a Moving Meeting for Worship, at which most of the younger Friends participated as well as quite a number of adults. For this we first stood in a silent circle outside the meeting house, then for about half an hour walked in silence around the peaceful surroundings of the meeting house. As had happened the previous year, we ended the forty-five minute of silence with a second period again standing in a circle. This year was beside the plaques that had the names of past members of German Quakers whose ashes were interred there. We then joined with the other Quakers who had remained for worship in the Meeting House.

An annual lecture, similar in style to the Swarthmoor Lecture, is delivered each year, named after an American Quaker, Richard Carey, who had supported German Quakers in the early 20th century. Entitled "Of Roots and Wings; being free to grow in the community of Friends", it was given this year by Esther Kohring, a Young Quaker. She described her path of learning about and then joining Quakers in Germany. She made a passionate plea for Young Friends not to be viewed just as the future of the German Quakers but very much as the here and now membership.

She said that all that joined in membership of the Quakers in Germany, whether young or older should be given the space to be free to grow. She quoted from a poem written by Rose Auslander:

*To invent an island
Multi-coloured like the light.
In the shadow
welcome
the earth
Ask her to host us
in gardens,
where we are free to grow.
Fraternally
Human to human.*

She said that being free to grow is a blessing that can hardly be stopped as long as one has the essentials. But facilitating each other's growth, human to human, is also the task through which we become a real community.

A presentation of the accounts of German YM was made the following morning. The question was made as to what kind of community German Quakers should be. As happens probably to almost all organisations run for and by volunteers, a plea was made for more funding from the members. We were told that a letter had been sent to Angela Merkel thanking her for her willingness to welcome refugees to Germany.

The suggestion of investigating the feasibility of making a new translation of George Fox's diaries was also raised. We were told that the present translation is rather incomplete and the period of his life prior to 1652 had not been fully translated. It was felt that this would be of real benefit when providing information to new enquirers. As often happens, the feasibility of this project was referred to their Literature Committee.

We were told of the grant that was to be made to fund Friends who were proposing to go to Paris to protest against an Arms Fair there. Again a session was spent on Quaker Hilfe, the Quaker trust that gives aid to projects in AVP in Moscow, Bolivia, Burundi, Kenya, Mexico and the Quaker school in Ramallah, Palestine. We were also told of the grant that was to be made to refugee children coming from Syria and other countries to help them to learn a second language and thus enable them to be more quickly integrated into their new locations.

Another session that took place on the Saturday afternoon was presentations by three elderly Quakers of their experiences and reminiscences of their early lives. The one that made the strongest impression on my wife and I was by a 92 year old Quaker Gisela Faust, a member of Berlin meeting. She spoke of her early life when

she recalled the life her father had lived during the first world war and having to live in trenches and then when retreating to obey the orders to carry out a scorched earth policy. She also spoke of having to live under the SS in the Second World War and their command to make the salute "Heil Hitler" everywhere. Apparently her father had met and worked with Corder Catchpool and his wife Gwen and her parents subsequently gave her Gwen as a middle name.

We were really welcomed there and most glad to have worshipped at their meeting house in Bad Pyrmont.

Jonathan Hodgkin

Ireland Yearly Meeting: 9 - 12 April

Theme: Knowing God's Creation - *I have taught you wisdom and the right way to live. Nothing will stand in your way if you walk wisely, and you will not stumble when you run.* Proverbs 4: 11-12

(a) Was there anything that struck you about the ways in which things were done, whether familiar or novel?

- Biblical focus: I was prepared for this, though it was more pronounced than I had anticipated. As well as the theme itself, which was often returned to, there were two Bible study sessions as well.
- All-Ireland: It was good to see the two parts of Ireland being one Quaker family.
- No Overseas Visitors Tea: I was made to feel very welcome without that. Of course it is much easier not to get lost in a relatively small gathering (perhaps 200 people) but I remain unsure about the effectiveness of our welcoming Tea.
- Ministry and Oversight session: I was interested to see a session actually called this, together with a committee to support it. Three Friends each spoke for 20 minutes about what Truth meant for them, and others also could minister if they felt moved to do so. BYM has 'prepared ministry' elements too, but I don't remember experiencing this particular approach there.

(b) What aspects of the programme stood out for you?

- The Ministry and Oversight session: I mentioned this above, because of the session's title. I don't know whether this particular example was the usual format for an M&O session, but whether it is or not, it seemed to me to be a way of enabling us to hear three different pieces of prepared ministry, on the same topic. I found the juxtaposition very enriching, and would value more such experiences. I wonder about the potential in relation to the BYM/Woodbrooke vibrancy project, as well as in AMs/LMs. I could see it working well in Quaker Quest (or similar) events – it's a bit like 'Three Quakers and...'
- The interest group on Irish neutrality: a particular current concern is that Ireland is allowing US military planes to pass through Shannon Airport, and that the government has told guards not to inspect these flights. So rendition could be happening, and cargoes are likely to include military equipment. There is a regular demonstration, 'Shannon Watch', outside the airport, protesting about this. IYM minuted its concern about such uninspected flights, stating that this conflicts with the principle of Irish neutrality.
- The environmental strands: there were three. Eco-Quakers is an all-Ireland committee whose purpose is to enhance Quakers' input into Irish public life on

environmental matters. They seek to do this in three ways – directly, through making public statements etc., indirectly, through informing and helping meetings to act in their own contexts, and thirdly, through linking with Friends worldwide. The second strand was through membership of Eco-Congregations, an Irish ecumenical body, particularly concerned with fracking (a big issue in Fermanagh and Omagh). The third strand was the newly established Foinse Project, a cross-border scientific research initiative, which IYM agreed to start supporting.

- Learning about the two service agencies, in the Republic and the North: They have very different foci and operate on very different scales.
- Irish Quaker Faith in Action (Republic, IQFA) has some initiatives of its own, but its main activity is giving grants, notably to Christian Aid and other development projects: its grants in 2014 totalled about €40k.
- Quaker Service (Northern Ireland) is focussed on communities at home, and spent £880k on this in 2014. Many issues persist in Northern Ireland, and austerity has intensified this.
- Irish work with QCEA: IQFA is a regular contributor (about €3k annually). The Irish representative to QCEA challenged Irish Friends to inform themselves better about QCEA's work and the issues it is addressing. In particular, she mentioned the ongoing negotiations between the EU and the US on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and how there was a real possibility that corporations would be able to sue governments if their actions caused reduced profits. QCEA is very active on this, and Irish Friends were urged to inform themselves better – the Irish Government has thrown in its lot with the corporations, not the citizens, she said.
- Learning about Bessbrook: a Quaker village long before Bournville.

Young People: two aspects struck me.

- The work of the youth co-ordinator: five years ago IYM appointed a youth co-ordinator. Youth clubs are doing well, except in Dublin. She has had many 1-1 meetings with older Young Friends (18+) and run six EFM-like sessions with them. She also arranged a pilgrimage to New York, North Carolina and Philadelphia, describing this experience as 'having fun while serving others'.
- Young Friends Epistle: this called for more activism and speaking out – summed up as Too much silence: where is the Quaker Voice?

(c) Have you had, or do you plan to have, follow up contact of any kind?

At BYM 3 weeks later I saw several Irish Friends I had met. I am following up a number of contacts, in connection with the Quakers in the World portal.

Overall experience as a BYM representative

It was a heart-warming experience from the warm welcome right through to the end. People knew I was a BYM representative because of introductions in the opening session, and also because I read out the letter from Meeting for Sufferings in that session. I did not speak in any of the sessions, though I would have responded if asked. I felt that the business was theirs and not mine, and that informal conversations and interest groups were the appropriate ways for me to interact. There were plenty of informal opportunities and I had many interesting conversations. A memorable one was about membership, which is of course a live issue for BYM too. The interest groups on AVP and Irish Neutrality were two further opportunities.

Although Alistair Reid and I were the only official representatives we were not the only British Friends present – Anne Bennett, Chris Skidmore and Mike Floyd were also there. In addition Arthur Pritchard and Mike Casey (Plain Quakers) came on the Saturday evening to perform their new play on conscientious objection.

There were also nine US Friends of different Quakerly persuasions, who seemed to be doing a kind of tour of yearly meetings – I saw many of them at BYM three weeks later. It was interesting to talk with them too. There was one Irish expatriate representing France Yearly Meeting.

Ann Floyd

Netherlands Yearly Meeting: 29-31 May

Theme: Working for peace, our Peace Testimony in the 21st century

1. Was there anything that struck you about the ways in which things were done, whether familiar or novel?

- Considerable thought had been put into making visiting Friends from other Yearly Meetings feel welcome. All the papers and programme had been translated into English and as a visitor it was easy to be quickly absorbed into the activities. We were all part of a Base Group which, for me, not only gave us a space to discuss emerging issues in English but also formed the working group for domestic duties around the Yearly Meeting which provided us with the opportunity to get to know each other better.
- A sophisticated but unobtrusive system of simultaneous translation was organised which enabled visitors to engage with the business of the Yearly Meeting without the words interfering with others who had no need for it.
- There was a lovely ceremony for all who had applied for membership. Each person was introduced by a member of the Yearly Meeting and some details of their life, work and spiritual path were given. Individually they were welcomed formally into membership by the clerk. It made the process feel like adoption into the family of Quakers in the Netherlands.
- The small number of children were involved in the Yearly Meeting activities including preparation of evening snacks for sale and a time when all the adults joined them around a bonfire.
- A skilled artist had prepared a number of 'cartoons' which decorated the programme, other papers, posters and cards to be sent to those ill and unable to attend NYM. His skill and the messages within the cartoons which he produced during the gathering greatly enhanced the event.
- The Yearly Meeting was held in a peaceful and beautiful woodland setting. It was refreshing to walk in the woods, alone and with others. Friends had set out a maze with an accompanying sheet to enable meditation while walking the route to the centre. It was an opportunity to quietly reflect on peace on a personal and group level.
- As Clerk of Trustees of my own Area Meeting it was interesting to sit in on sessions at the Yearly Meeting when issues of property, old buildings and their use were discussed. I found that although it was a different setting, the issues raised sounded very familiar!

2. What aspects of the programme stood out for you?

- The talk given by an Evangelical Quaker Pastor from Hungary who spoke passionately about his churches' work with the marginalised, especially the Roma people.
- There was a talk and photographs of the Wall Museum in Bethlehem where the stories of Palestinians are mounted on the wall separating the two communities. It was a moving presentation followed by a series of discussions about practical responses to 'hate crimes' within the Netherlands and elsewhere.
- The theme running through the Yearly Meeting was the Peace Testimony and how it is lived out in our own lives. This was explored in the large group, small interest groups and in our Base Groups. Many of the contributions were challenging and uplifting, including a session when all joined in singing a 'Prayer for Peace'. There was time to hear, listen and think.

3. Have you had, or do you plan to have follow up contact of any kind?

- I have been in contact with the clerk of NYM several times since the Yearly Meeting concerning a range of practical issues. I also met with a number of those who had been at the Yearly Meeting when we met at the FWCC-EMES gathering in Birmingham in June. It was good to see them again and to feel so well connected to another Yearly Meeting and its concerns.
- I am hoping that it will be possible to meet up with whoever represents NYM at Britain Yearly Meeting next year

4. Your overall experience as a BM representative

- It was a very positive experience to attend NYM on behalf of BYM. It is a small Yearly Meeting where everyone wears many different 'hats' and willingly engages with anything and everything that needs attention. I was welcomed into what felt like a large family and made to feel very much at home.
- It has reinforced my feeling that BYM is a large and often quite impersonal gathering, especially for visitors. It is really important to recognise their needs and provide them with the information and hand of friendship – whether this is additional information, help with language/translation provision. The Overseas Visitors Tea is one way of addressing this, as a first step to make them feel as welcome as I was made to feel at Netherlands Yearly Meeting.

Anne Bennett

Norway Yearly Meeting: 25 - 28 June

Norway is beautiful. The 200 or so Quakers there are hospitable, supportive to one another, knowledgeable and alive to the problems of the world and bringing their faith to activity that will improve matters.

Those reading this may be aware that the first Norwegian Quakers were seamen imprisoned in England during the Napoleonic wars, and won over by the kindness and simple faith of the English Quakers they met. They and their successors endured ostracism and worse from the rigid Calvinist establishment for many decades after their return to Norway.

The three area meetings around the long coastline have many isolated Quakers to sustain. Post and e-mail are important to them as is the annual opportunity to enjoy three days of family fellowship at their Yearly Meeting.

In Stavanger in 2014 and in Kristiansand (where the ferries leave for Denmark) in 2015 we met at centres designed for school-leavers to enjoy a gap year of cultural and artistic activities, discussion and preparation for tertiary education. I have Penny Heymans and other bilingual Norwegian Friends to thank for quiet help in understanding the proceedings.

We heard of the work of the central core of Friends who maintain communications, documentation, arrangements, premises and accounts in and among those area meetings.

We heard of the work of Kvekerhjelp, the charity started by Norwegian Quakers to support peacebuilding in Rwanda and social and educational support in Ramallah, Palestine. David Bucura from Rwanda spoke with joy and enthusiasm of the work of the Great Lakes Peace Trust, helping schoolchildren learn skills of peacebuilding and peace maintenance, and those released from prison after convictions for involvement in violence, reintegrate into society and live peaceful lives.

We planned a Quaker Quest in Bergen, to increase awareness of what Quakerism has to offer, with visitors from elsewhere in Norway leading discussion of what Quaker testimonies have meant in their lives.

We in Britain may not have thought of England as a place of pilgrimage, but recently Perlag van Haukeland led a group of Norwegian teenage Friends on a trip to see Swarthmoor Hall, Pendle Hill, and Woodbrooke. We heard from Perlag and from the teenagers of their experiences, and I hope that we in England will be generous with our time and our hospitality, so that pilgrimages to places that are important to Quakers can become a commonplace.

In Stavanger we visited Stavanger Meeting House, in a second-floor flat by the harbour and the Quaker graveyard where Friends have been buried since the mid-19th century. In Kristiansand we enjoyed a snail's pace walk through the woods and by the lake, appreciating the richness of nature with a new intensity. We made circles with our fingers and peered through them at the bark of trees and the forest floor to know what beauty there is in the infinite detail.

In the evenings the children made artistic and craftwork presentations and we were led in singing and games and then found ourselves in happy discussion of shared hopes and experiences. It was simple. It was joyful.

Norway Yearly Meeting has a *Quaker faith & practice* to call its own. We can all learn from studying the discernments that have taken root among Friends in other lands. I came away from these Yearly Meetings uplifted by all that I had seen and heard.

Alick Munro

Sweden Yearly Meeting: 25 - 28 June

The 81st Yearly Meeting of Swedish Quakers was held near Gothenburg in the peaceful setting of Wendelsberg Folk High School where the accommodation and generous hospitality contributed to a rich and enjoyable four days of worship, fellowship and business. About forty adults and children shared focused sessions, group work, keynote presentations and social times in this warmly welcoming and active community of Friends.

The theme of Equality - Approach and Application was addressed by Martin Wilkinson, a British Quaker who explored the issue, using the book *The Spirit Level* by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, (2010) which has been widely read in Britain and provided the research findings demonstrating the negative social impact of inequality in all its forms. In small groups we continued our reflections on our own experience of inequality and its impact on our lives. The task of finding ways forward which could facilitate an equal distribution of power and resources, was challenging and these sessions were engaging and very sobering. The Publications Committee had produced a booklet with articles on chosen theme of equality, unfortunately not yet available in English.

When I attended Sweden YM for the first time last year, the report of the Quaker Service Sweden, which is the YM development agency was moving and impressive; so much effective work done by such a small community of Friends. Once again this year, presentations under the heading 'Sowing the Seeds' showing ongoing work which challenges inequality in Burundi, Russia, Georgia and Bangladesh were alive with individual examples of the difference being made to communities in each country. The projects ranged over gender equality, environmental issues, growing crops, providing books, cattle insemination and in each case we were hearing and seeing reports of Friends amongst others, making the difference.

Swedish Friends continue to be involved with issues of peace and a moving letter was read to us and translated by the team of very competent translators who worked throughout the YM. Swedish Quakers have written to the Swedish Government challenging the proposal that Sweden should allow NATO to place troops and arms in Sweden, including nuclear arms. Discussion followed on this matter and there was some optimism that Friends had been heard respectfully, from correspondence received.

Throughout the YM the gathering was also reporting on business matters, property decisions and effective outreach. The website develops and new worship groups have been started during the year including Meeting by Skype for isolated Friends. Three Friends had died in the year, and a Meeting to mark the life of an elderly Friend took place on the first evening of the YM. Elders described Sweden YM as vibrant and living and recorded four applications for membership. The warm name used for Attenders is friends of Friends and throughout the Elders' report, the

inclusive and familial sense of this Swedish Quaker community was clear. The care for each other, for a widespread community, for new enquirers and for former members is clear.

The report on the numerous activities supported through the year included retreats, open days, sustainable development work, storytelling, educational and spiritual development: up to 200 people had been involved overall in some of the projects. A discussion following the Treasurer's report discerned with care the use of resources and the commitment to transparency. The hardworking Treasurer was also clerking this meeting and gratitude was expressed for her service.

The evening of shared entertainment was welcomed and Friends produced much evidence of their creativity and sense of fun. A reading of his mother's account after the Anschluss in 1938, was read by a Friend and was particularly memorable. She had been in Wendelsberg Folk School where we were meeting now, with her young friends as the clouds of war gathered and she wrote of their sad partings from this beautiful place and each other.

Leaving the Folk School for us was a very different experience. Fond partings and a sense of work well done was widely shared. I left with these words from Sweden Yearly Meeting 2015 Epistle in heart and mind:

In everything we do, we try to seek God's leadings in a spirit of worship like Samuel we ask "Speak, for your servant is listening".

It has been a joy to share this community's Yearly Meetings.

Jennifer Maclennan

Switzerland Yearly Meeting: 22 - 25 May

As last year, this was held 'on the Herzberg', an idyllic mountain setting above Aarau; each day I awoke to hear only birdsong and cowbells, while even a moment's stroll led to alpine meadows rich in a dazzling variety of wild flowers. The Yearly Meeting was an event of real fellowship and sharing. It was helpful to attend for a second year, allowing me to feel fully more integrated into the 'family' of a Quaker community smaller than that of my own meeting.

'Business' this year occupied a smaller proportion of the time; the system (agreed in 2014) of leaving the programme in the hands of each language group in rotation was starting well. (I enjoyed reading the Swiss representative's report of BYM2015 and his astonishment at 15 hours! (Sic) of business there.) SYM decisions of interest to BYM & QWRC included a very positive response to Marisa's message hoping they would send a participant to the Peru Triennial 2016. SYM heard the EMES news that Bologna Meeting is now officially recognised and responded by sending a warm message of greeting.

We were shown the new SYM website. There was useful discussion of what it should include, what restrictions might be needed, and whether it gave enough information for newcomers to Quakers.

The Peace theme ran strongly through the event, ranging through and beyond Quakers. One session introduced us to the first female winner of the Nobel Peace Prize (1905), Bertha von Suttner, feminist, fiery intellectual, passionate peace campaigner, author of anti-war novels and founder (1891) of the Austrian 'Friends of Peace'. Her 1880s novel 'Lay down your arms', (*Die Waffen nieder!*), describes graphically the horror of warfare, down to its smells, cholera, the dogs scavenging among the corpses. She took her campaign for an International Court of Justice right to the Austrian emperor and was an organiser of the first Hague Convention. It was all a revelation.

Other opportunities for learning and enrichment included first a comprehensive overview of the development of liberal Quakerism in Britain and the Eastern USA. Later there was a moving session on Quakerism's transforming power, which started from one Friend's personal testimony and was followed by group sharing of our own individual experiences. This went deep.

Finally we heard from a Congolese non-Quaker, now a UN Representative of Child Soldiers working with Paix pour L'enfance and 91 orphaned children. He also goes into schools for prevention work. Junior, who was being hosted by two Swiss Friends, told of his ten years as a compelled child soldier in the Democratic Republic of Congo. (His book will soon be coming out in English.) It was deeply shocking. Aged 12, he and his classmates were abducted from boarding school, made permanently identifiable by razor cuts (which spread diseases), told he was now an adult able to

marry, and trained to kill, rape and fight. Training included readiness to kill their own friends if any tried to escape. Their captain told them that they were like film actors, and couldn't die. In fact, child soldiers are cannon fodder; they are the front line, on whom the opposition expend all their ammunition, then becoming the victims of the experienced adult soldiers in the rear of the children. Junior knew survival meant kill or be killed. Taking prisoners was not allowed.

We learned that the re-integration of former child soldiers into civil society is extraordinarily difficult, because right at the start they were forced to return to their own homes & kill villagers there, thus branding themselves enemies.

Meanwhile arms manufacture affects millions and new weapons are designed to be ever lighter because they are actually created to be easier for children to use.

Clearly Junior is already receiving support from individual Swiss Friends (maybe from the group) and they want to help him now to learn English. I will be sharing my hopes about how some in BYM may be able to assist.

I am very grateful to have attended Switzerland Yearly Meeting and I marvel at the commitment to faith in action shown by this small band of Friends.

Barbara Windle

Long Term Framework Group

The Long Term Framework Group reported to Meeting for Sufferings in September, presenting a paper explaining how it had worked, along with the draft document, *Our faith in the future*. Our minute MfS 2015/09/07 records:

Julia Gordon, clerk of the Long Term Framework working group, has introduced the draft framework, titled 'Our faith in the future' (paper MfS 2015/09/03 revised).

We agree to adopt this text, to replace A Framework for Action 2009-2014, as a guide for our future discernment and decision-making. We ask staff to prepare appropriate versions for use by a wide variety of Quaker groups. We commend it to Local and Area Meetings. We forward it to BYM Trustees and to central and standing committees, asking them to use it as a template for their work and to reflect on progress with it in their reports to us. We forward it to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee for information.

We thank the Group for their work and look forward to receiving their final report.

The Group has now completed its final report. The paper is 20 pages long, and repeats some of the information presented in September; so it is not being included in full in the Meeting for Sufferings papers. Any Friend is welcome to see it – for a copy, please ask Graham Spackman (grahams@quaker.org.uk; telephone 0207 663 1021). Below is a summary of the points included.

Process

Commenting on the process:

- All of the Group felt invigorated and privileged to part of the exercise, writing 'what a wonderful job the nominations group did in finding such a diverse range of Friends to participate. We truly felt that the Spirit was with us. When difficult situations faced us a way opened.'
- The Group felt supported by Quakers in Britain. They appreciated Quakers engaging positively, 'even though some were moaning about it'.

- The Group was geographically spread, so used current technology such as conference calls, emails and the Q-Groups web-based facility; although this was not always straightforward.

Inspiring Contributions

Many responses to the consultation contained statements the Group felt were worthy to be shared. These will be passed to the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group.

Significant Issues

The Group also noted a number of issues referred to by Friends as significant. Of course they are included in Our faith in the future, but not explicitly. The 330+ responses are currently in a complex format, so they will be passed to Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group to be processed.

Conclusions

The Group notes: 'What came out the consultation very clearly is that we are and always want to be a Society based on Love.' They picked up a deep concern that Quakers must act very fast in a number of areas including Economic Justice, Sustainability and Climate Change.

The Group strongly recommends that all Friends consider each individual aspirational paragraph, and ask if they really understand what is asked, of themselves and their Meetings. Members of The Long Term Framework Group are willing to be invited to work with Friends to help them explore Our Faith In The Future.

Meeting for Sufferings will now use Our faith in the future to help assess and guide its work.

Meeting for Sufferings can now lay down this Group.

Meeting for Sufferings 2015 12 04 – minutes received

1. West Somerset AM minute 2015/80 from the AM held on 18 July 2015 regarding the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.
2. Britain Yearly Meeting Housing Threshing Event held at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 11-13 September 2015 report (for information).

West Somerset AM minute 15/66 regarding the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

15/66 Local Meeting Concerns

Taunton Meeting has discussed the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the decision to be taken about this soon by our politicians. They heard Jefferson Horsley share deep concern about the likely effect of this treaty on democracy, trade with emerging nations and the freedom of our government to legislate in the future to improve the lives of citizens and the environment, in cases where their decisions could have a negative impact on the profits of very large companies. Kathy Gollin and Joe Burlington have spoken to this matter and encourage us to write to Meeting for Sufferings and the Recording Clerk expressing our continued support for Pickering and Hull AQM's original concern. Their minute to Meeting for Sufferings follows:-

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)

We have heard of the Concern regarding the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) brought to us by Scarborough Local Meeting. A copy of the minute is attached. The TTIP contains clauses, particularly the Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provisions, which we believe are contrary to the Quaker testimonies of truth and integrity, equality and justice. The ISDS arbitration process is not a court, there being no judge or jury; its deliberations are held in secret; and there is no right of appeal. It is presided over by three individuals over whom there is no democratic oversight or control. The arbitration process is made available solely to corporations and multinationals, enabling them to operate outside national judicial systems, and the judgements made take precedence over national judiciaries, thereby creating a serious imbalance in law. The lack of transparency surrounding this process seems both cynical and deliberate. As an Area Meeting we unite behind the need to take prompt and collective action to defend the principles of democracy and equality before the law, which Quakers have upheld since the earliest days of the Religious Society. We urge all Friends, at local and area level, to consider whether they are convinced of the rightness of this Concern and to take action accordingly. In the meantime, we urge all Friends to take up the matter with MPs and MEPs, and to discuss it with Friends in other areas.

We agree to ask our clerks to write to both of these parties encouraging them to express our solidarity on this matter by asking QPSW in conjunction with QCEA and QUNO to speak out against this proposed partnership.

Gilly Lee
Ann Jackson
West Somerset AM Co-clerks

Background note:

The clerk of West Somerset AQM sent this message with the minute:

I am writing on behalf of West Somerset Area Quaker Meeting following our meeting on July 18th. We heard from our Representatives to Meeting for Sufferings of the concern sent to MfS by Pickering and Hull AM regarding the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. We wish to support Pickering and Hull in their concern to express a Quaker voice in opposition to TTIP. We believe this to be an important and urgent matter and one on which Quakers should speak out with a clear voice.

Please would Meeting for Sufferings progress the concern from Pickering and Hull AM by asking QPSW in conjunction with QCEA and QUNO to speak out against this proposed partnership.

At the July Meeting for Sufferings in July, without more comprehensive introductory information, and with very limited time, the Meeting was not able to consider this matter in full. Meeting for Sufferings agreed this minute:

MfS/15/07/12 Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

We receive minute PHAQM/AM/2015/9 of Pickering and Hull AM held on 8 March 2015, expressing the Area Meeting's concern regarding the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

We have learned that Quakers in Britain are working on this issue through QPSW's Economics, Sustainability and Peace programme, nationally, and that QCEA and QUNO also have a role internationally. We support them in this work and encourage Friends locally to engage with these issues, including taking the matter to their MPs and MEPs where appropriate.

Friends may find it helpful to know about some ways that Quakers locally, nationally and internationally, have been working to raise awareness of this issue:

- In June 2014, Meeting for Sufferings heard from its representative to Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) about the work it was doing on TTIP: the minute encouraged Friends to familiarise themselves with it. QCEA has published several papers and articles on TTIP including a recent one focusing on TTIP and health (www.qcea.org)
- There have been public meetings, regionally. For example, in September 2014, Suzanne Ismail, QPSW's Economics Issues Programme Manager, visited Westmorland Regional Meeting and spoke about TTIP at a public meeting in Lancaster. London Quakers also held a meeting on the subject.
- In April 2015, Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) published an article on the Quakernomics website and Earth and Economy newsletter by David Malone (Pickering and Hull AM) who explained about TTIP and why he believes Quakers

could take this on as a core concern (<http://old.quaker.org.uk/earth-and-economy-april-2015>)

- BYM's General Election Guide 2015 included a section about TTIP, to help Quakers raise questions with candidates. For those who wished to find out more, the Guide also provided the name and email address of the relevant QPSW Programme manager, and information about partner organisations
- Friends who attended the Salter Lecture preceding Yearly Meeting in 2015 will recall comments from Judith Kirton-Darling, MEP for the North East of England and a Quaker, who spoke about the complexities surrounding TTIP, and the difficulty of taking a straightforward campaigning line. There has also been news about this in The Friend.
- This October, QPSW published an article on the BYM Website by Tom Leimdorfer (North Somerset AM) about his raising concerns about TTIP (<http://old.quaker.org.uk/stories-witness-north-somerset-am>)

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group suggest forwarding West Somerset AQM's minute to Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC), as requested.

Britain Yearly Meeting Housing Threshing Event

Introductory note

This year, Yearly Meeting considered Housing, as an example of a tested concern (minute YM2015 25 – which can be found at <http://old.quaker.org.uk/ym2015-minutes>). Subsequently, a group of Friends gathered at Woodbrooke 11th to 13th September, to take this forward. During the weekend the group wrote a minute, which it sent to Meeting for Sufferings.

Formally, an informal group of this kind cannot communicate by minute with Meeting for Sufferings. Arrangements Group felt it was right to share this minute with the Meeting, encouraging Friends to take it back to their Area Meetings.

Meeting for Sufferings receives a report every three years from the Quaker Housing Trust. The most recent report was in October 2013, so we can expect another in the next twelve months. Area Meetings may wish to consider this paper, and learn more about Quaker Housing Trust (www.qht.org.uk) before then.

“Though the materials we work with are bricks and mortar and money, our concern is for people. And though people have pressing material needs in the world, our concern is with the spirit.”

Quaker Housing Trust

Background

Yearly Meeting this year included a session on housing as a tested concern, recognising the yearly meeting’s long history of involvement with housing and homelessness. This concern arises from “our belief that all are equally children of God and our experience that a home is essential for our spiritual wellbeing not just for our physical and mental health”. The minute of the session concluded with the words: “We need both to examine our own lives and to seek to influence public policy to support equality. The problem is not an insoluble one and our voices can be heard.”¹

A group of 17 Friends has met together this weekend, to consider how we may help Quakers in Britain to take forward the work, exploring ways of strengthening our collective response, and enabling our voices to be heard. We have begun by hearing of each other’s experiences and the issues which seem to be particular obstacles for us as individuals and organisations in trying to find a way forward.

Our group has brought together Friends with widely differing experiences, including work with housing associations and local authority practitioners, town planning, environmental activism, support for homeless people, and personal experience as landlords. We have identified some of the contributing factors to the housing crisis,

including political obstacles such as the austerity programme, the proposed housing bill and reduction of rented social housing stock, and current and proposed welfare reforms introduced by the current UK government. Although landlord/tenant relations are regulated, tenants do not receive robust protection from unfair practices. There are many other models of providing secure, affordable, rented accommodation, and we have looked at examples of good practice both within the UK and further afield.

We are at a point of crisis in housing. We have heard anger that one line in the Summer Budget 2015 proposing an annual reduction of rents in social housing undermines the business models of housing associations. Inequality of housing opportunity is one of the biggest gulfs in our society, and is increasing. We are deeply disturbed by speculation in property, setting privilege in concrete and seeing houses as financial investments rather than as homes.

In thinking of alternative models we have ranged widely: suggesting housing and land projects in which Quakers could invest; identifying policy areas on which we could campaign; reflecting how meetings can support individuals emotionally and practically in making decisions about downsizing, or sharing their home with others; commissioning research, funding pilot schemes, and sharing good practice; identifying allies and partners, perhaps in unexpected places, who might help us take these matters forward. In all these, we have identified a clear link between Quaker testimonies, sustainability, and our work on housing. How we work and why is as important as what we do.

Whatever else we do, we must go on saying that people's value is not dictated by their wealth or their housing.

Where next for Britain Yearly Meeting?

Out of our threshing process, we have felt a sense of momentum, pushing us forwards. We have begun to identify different strands which we feel it right to work on at this time. These are not discrete themes, so should not be seen as isolated issues, but are interconnected, and more linkages are emerging as we work. In particular we have heard two key ideas: positive investment in sustainable housing, and an ethical landlords' association.

1. Positive investment in sustainable housing

Many Friends are accumulating unearned housing wealth owing to the rapid growth in house prices over recent years. This is potentially a considerable sum, some of which could be used to fund both the provision of affordable, sustainable housing and to help ensure that both new-build and retrofitted properties reach the highest possible environmental standards. We urge Friends to consider giving or lending to Quaker Housing Trust (QHT), as this is the yearly meeting's channel by which

Friends can support social housing. Other options include funding local housing projects, and investing in positive investment options linked with sustainable housing. As more Friends donate and invest, more can be accomplished, and this in turn can spark more publicity and encourage others to replicate what has been done. We ask all Friends to be champions and advocates for ethical investment in housing, both within and beyond the Society of Friends.

2. Ethical landlordism and tenants' rights

We have heard from Friends who are private landlords, whether through business decision or accidental inheritance, and their concern to behave ethically and promote good practice. We know that longer term lets, and secure and affordable rented accommodation are vital, and that current legislation would severely restrict the ability of housing associations and local authorities to provide it. We are aware that the role of private landlords is becoming still more significant. We see a distinctive role for Quakers in establishing an ethical landlords' association, initially informally, by Friends acting under concern. We are grateful to Sarah Fishpool and Alastair Cameron for agreeing to take this forward and support them in this work. We do not regard this as a solely Quaker enterprise, and hope that it would become adopted more widely. It would both develop and trial good practice and model the type of regulation we would like to see.

We have also considered tenants' rights, and have heard that although regulation exists, it is not applied robustly, and that many tenants are disadvantaged and are vulnerable to inadequate housing and abrupt eviction. We ask QPSW to consult with Housing Justice about their work, and to advise Friends on the work of tenants' rights groups, and how Friends may support this.

In addition, there are other themes which we have discerned and which we would wish to commend to Friends:

3. The value of undertaking research/funding pilot schemes/sharing good practice

We know that a lot of research into housing needs and sustainable, affordable provision of housing already exists both within the UK and in other countries. A review of what is already under way may be valuable, but we think the main emphasis should be on sharing good practice rather than setting up new research projects. We urge Friends and meetings to consider that an important part of their work is to publicise it to others. We encourage QHT to consult with the Economic, Sustainability and Peace programme (ESP) of Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) about developing something along the lines of the Quakernomics blog, with a view to establishing a good vehicle for Friends to share information about their activities.

4. Downsizing or resizing our homes: how much space do we need?

We know that different housing is needed at different stages of life, and that change, especially when faced alone, can be difficult. We ask Friends to help each other think about and prepare for moving to more appropriate homes, and how former homes can best meet others' housing needs. This may then link back with positive investment in sustainable housing. A course at Woodbrooke or a day conference could perhaps be offered on this subject. A contribution from Quaker Life on the pastoral element, and the practical and emotional support which Friends may need, may be valuable.

5. Quaker Housing Trust

We note that 2017 will see the 50th anniversary of the founding of Quaker Housing Trust, and that 2016 is the 50th anniversary of the International Covenant on the Right to Adequate Housing. We encourage QHT to give some thought to the opportunity these anniversaries give us to promote discussion and awareness throughout our yearly meeting and beyond.

6. Allies and partnerships

We all need to think more broadly and imaginatively about the kind of partnerships and alliances we can make. If we feel the government does not listen to what we say, we have been encouraged to find and talk to the people whom the government does listen to. This is as true at the local as at the national level. We have heard the suggestion, for example, that liaison with local business leaders might gain support for affordable housing for workers. Talking to the financial institutions which fund social housing projects about the implications of changes to Housing Association business models may encourage them to lobby against these changes. We recognise that BYM Fund Managers are a key part of the yearly meeting's witness. We encourage BYM Trustees to consider ways in which as a yearly meeting we can utilise all our communication channels with financial institutions, to further this concern. We encourage Friends and meetings to consider how they might explore creating alliances and partnerships at every level.

7. Recycling property wealth

Friends and meetings need to look continually at ways in which they can release some of the value currently locked up in property. We have heard the suggestion that if a Friend bequeaths their house to their meeting, the money comes from housing and should perhaps be returned to it.

8. Sharing space

We are interested in the idea that sharing homes could be a way of linking those with different needs, for example an elderly home owner with a key worker needing accommodation. Other examples could include co-housing and co-operative living models. We would like to encourage Friends who have experience of these to write about them, perhaps in *The Friend*.

As a country we have adopted a frame of mind in which life is assumed to be an upwards trajectory through higher earnings and larger houses, even though this is not necessarily the actual experience of many, perhaps most, people. For example, we have heard that the commonly used phrase 'getting a foot on the property ladder' is impossible to be translated into German. There are different frames of mind, and we need to open ourselves to a radically different approach. Housing should always be adequate, appropriate and affordable, whatever that might mean at each stage in our lives.

Minute 36 of Yearly Meeting 2015 included the words: "The damaged and damaging structures of the world are not the only influence on our lives: there is also the power of faith and the leadings of the Spirit, which if followed will lead us, will push us, towards a better world. That, then, may be the first action we need to take: to be more faithful." This has been our experience during this weekend. Working and worshipping together has both re-grounded us and inspired us to renewed efforts. We commend this concern to Friends, and forward this minute to Meeting for Sufferings. We copy this minute to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee, Quaker Life Central Committee, Quaker Housing Trust and Woodbrooke Trustees.

Lis Burch and Lucy Parker, Clerks

¹ Both quotes taken from Minute 25 of Yearly Meeting held in London 1-4 May 2015.

Minutes of a meeting of BYM Trustees

Held 11- 13 September 2015 at Edinburgh Central Meeting House

Present: Jennifer Barraclough (Clerk), Sarah Donaldson, James Eddington, Nick Francis, Sheila Gatiss, Ingrid Greenhow (Assistant Clerk), Alison Ironside, Roy Love, Lynn Moseley (from minute 9), David Olver, Virginia Pawlyn, Michael Phipps, Alastair Reid, Graham Taylor, Peter Ullathorne (Treasurer)

Prevented: Tim Southall

In attendance: Georgina Bailey, Recording Clerk's Office Intern (minutes 1-15, 22-25), Mairi Campbell-Jack, Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer (minutes 1-3), Phil Lucas, General Meeting for Scotland Parliamentary Function Group (minutes 1-3), Paul Parker, Recording Clerk (except minute 26); Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk (except minute 26)

BYMT-2015-09-01 Welcome, agenda check, conflicts of interest check, minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 29-31 May 2015 have been placed in the minute book and have been signed by the clerk.

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We confirm our agenda.

We welcome Georgina Bailey, Recording Clerk's Office Intern; Mairi Campbell-Jack, Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer; and Phil Lucas, of the General Meeting for Scotland Parliamentary Function Group.

Virginia Pawlyn will report back to Tim Southall.

Part of §25.12 from *Quaker faith & practice* was read during our opening worship.

BYMT-2015-09-02 Consent agenda

(a) Minutes received

We record the receipt of the following minutes:

- Employment Committee 2vii15 (BYMT-2015-09-02i)
- BYMT Finance & Property Committee 18vi15 and 30vii15 (BYMT-2015-09-02ii,iii)

- Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd 4vi15 (BYMT-2015-09-02iv)
- Quaker Life Central Committee 5to7vi15 (BYMT-2015-09-02v)
- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee 29-30v15 and 18vii15 (BYMT-2015-09-02vi,vii)
- Quaker World Relations Committee 4vi15 (BYMT-2015-09-02viii)
- Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee minute 2015/07/20b ref how Trustees' report is received at Yearly Meeting (BYMT-2015-09-02ix)
- Quaker Committee on Christian & Interfaith Relations 26-28vi15 (BYMT-2015-09-02x)

(b) Woodbrooke separated minutes

We record the receipt of the following minutes sent to us for information:

- Minute 2015.13 "Joint library development proposal" (BYMT-2015-09-02xi)
- Minute 2015.28a "Joint working with BYM" (BYMT-2015-09-02xii)

(c) Gold papers

We receive a report proposing gold minutes and papers for 2015 from James Eddington (BYMT-2015-09-02xvi).

We agree to the suggestions put forward.

BYMT-2015-09-03 Quakers and Scottish civil society

Mairi Campbell-Jack, Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer, and Phil Lucas, a member of General Meeting for Scotland's Parliamentary Function Group, have joined us for this item.

Phil Lucas has spoken to us of the background to his personal engagement with Scottish issues; of the detail of changes to Parliament in Scotland and their effects on Friends and the use of the meeting house; and of church representations to Parliament. The latter led to the creation of the Parliamentary Function Group to represent Quaker standpoints, especially where we are not in accord with other churches (e.g. in issues of criminal justice or same-sex marriage), and to the appointment of Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Mairi Campbell-Jack, who has now been in post for eight months. We have heard a description of representation and the pattern of meetings, together with comment on the dismay

felt at media coverage of the referendum which, it is feared, has led to a spread of misunderstanding.

Mairi Campbell-Jack has introduced her work, which currently has four priorities: Trident; militarism; social and economic justice; and the general and Scottish elections. She has detailed the major issues and concerns in each of these areas, and reminded us of ways in which Scottish devolution can influence opinion and action throughout the UK. Mairi has been able to make links with a wide range of other bodies, and to speak at a variety of events, particularly on militarisation in schools. Work is building up for the Holyrood elections in May 2016, and will include publications, blogs, media links and attendance at party conferences. Liaison with staff at Friends House and BYM committees is regular and useful.

We are pleased to note that the First Minister recently called an interfaith summit which created informed and valuable dialogue and at which Friends were present. Scottish Friends are in a position to comment on the many bills currently coming from the Scottish Parliament and are aware of the imperative to prioritise response in order to be most effective.

We have been able to explore questions of cultural change, different attitudes to political engagement in Scotland, the importance of sharing lobbying experience and supporting existing networks of Friends, and the ways in which different churches and factions are affecting political decisions.

We thank Phil and Mairi for their contribution to our meeting this weekend, and for reminding us of the need to keep ourselves well-informed and supportive of each other. We are glad to note that this pilot partnership project to strengthen advocacy in Scotland is bearing fruit. We send this minute, with our warm regards, to General Meeting for Scotland and its Parliamentary Liaison Function Group.

BYMT-2015-09-04 Clerks' report

We have received reports from our Clerk and Assistant Clerk (BYMT-2015-09-04). This also includes information on the handover prior to Ingrid Greenhow becoming clerk on 1 January 2016.

We note that Meeting for Sufferings approved a public statement on the refugee crisis at its meeting on 5 September.

Other trustees have reported on their between-meetings work, including website development and speaker training, and in relation to the Heritage project.

BYMT-2015-09-05 Recording Clerk's report

We have received a report from the Recording Clerk (BYMT-2015-09-05) which gives an overview of recent activities at Friends House, a reminder about being champions, news about art exhibitions, Swarthmoor Hall, Friends House Garden, and visits to meetings, as well as reporting on the Lobbying Act, strategy developments, staff matters and relationships with other organisations. Appendices include an update on the garden, a speaker visits report, the usual staffing update, the current position on zero-hours contracts and the project proposal from New Philanthropy Capital.

We are pleased to hear that the first art exhibition held in the refurbished Large Meeting House was successful in a number of ways: the co-operation between the curator, artist and Friends House hospitality staff; the effectiveness of the space used in this way; and the significant opportunity it provided for outreach.

BYMT-2015-09-06 General Secretary Finance & Property appointment

We record the appointment of Lisa Kiew as General Secretary Finance & Property.. Her employment with us will start on 16 November.

BYMT-2015-09-07 Quaker Council for European Affairs

The Recording Clerk has reported to us that the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) is conducting a strategic review. We ask Sarah Donaldson and Sheila Gatiss to be available for liaison between QCEA and BYM Trustees during this review, and to bring any recommendations to a future meeting as required.

BYMT-2015-09-08 New Philanthropy Capital

The Recording Clerk has reported to us on a possible collaboration with the charity New Philanthropy Capital on a project to explore the characteristics of faith-based charities in Britain, focussing on how the faith basis affects the foundation, culture, practices and effectiveness of the charity. We agree to support this project, including a modest financial contribution.

BYMT-2015-09-09 Risk

Further to minute BYMT-2015-05-20b, we have received a paper by Roy Love and David Olver (BYMT-2015-09-06) on risks identified by Trustees in the 2015 Operational Plan. This paper includes a complete table of risks for the departments that do not have their own Risk Register.

Trustees and staff are enabled by the operational plan to create a coherent approach to risk management.

We have been reminded that a risk register is an active document; noting a risk is not sufficient – an organisation must be prepared to take action when necessary.

We have conducted a short exercise to help us understand how to use the concepts of impact and likelihood to assess the level of risk. This has served to add to the analysis of risk issues detailed in the paper.

We ask David and Roy to maintain the overview of this matter; key staff to consider the risk register prepared so far; and the Recording Clerk to bring a recommendation to our next meeting for a means by which staff and trustees can work together to make assessment and management of risk an integral part of the operational plan.

We note that this document is complementary to the existing risk register, and not a replacement for it. Our Audit Committee is also a location for consideration of risk.

BYMT-2015-09-10 Operational Plans

We have received paper BYMT-2015-09-07 on the 2015 and 2016-2018 Operational Plans.

(a) 2015 Operational Plan: progress

Paper BYMT-2015-09-07 includes a progress update on the 2015 Operational Plan which gives an overview on how the work is progressing. A final update will be produced soon after the end of the year.

We have been glad to hear that the plan is proving welcome and useful, and have asked some questions prompted by the detail presented in the current document.

(b) 2016-2018 Operational Plan

Staff are currently working to complete the 2016-2018 Operational Plan which we will be asked to consider and approve at our November meeting.

BYMT-2015-09-11 Vibrancy in meetings

Further to minute BYMT-2014-11-10, we have received a project bid for the Vibrancy in Meetings Initiative (BYMT-2015-09-08), a proposal, developed in partnership with Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, to employ new staff working locally in 3 or 4 regions supported by a national co-ordinator.

We note that Woodbrooke Trustees are also considering this proposal at their meeting this weekend.

We have been reminded of the length of time during which this project has been under consideration, and the consistency of its intention to support the life of meetings in a substantial and re-energised way. It draws on the experience of central departments, Woodbrooke's connections with the Yearly Meeting, and a sense of readiness for change. We are also, thanks to the health of legacy funding, in a strong financial position to consider this work.

We have addressed a series of questions to help us discern the right response to this proposal. We are clear that there is a valid underlying need and that it is reasonable to suppose that this project is capable of meeting that need, acknowledging that absolute certainty is beyond our reach. We do not think that any other project is compromised by a commitment to this one. We are aware that, put simply, success and failure alike constitute the major risks; but that to go forward with faith and enthusiasm is the right decision. We hope for strengthened relationships with and between meetings, and for an embodiment of the aspirations of Our Faith in the Future.

We therefore agree to a figure of £675,492 to support the pilot stage of this project, expecting to last up to three and a half years. We are aware that an increase to this sum may be required, but prefer to see the initiative given some testing first.

We expect this project to require its own steering group. The make-up of such a group should be no more than 6, with members who have a practical knowledge of operating projects and who have the confidence of both organisations, rather than be constituted on a purely representative basis. We ask the existing Vibrancy Reference Group to act as a nominations group to bring forward names for appointment by both trustee bodies (Woodbrooke and BYM). We ask our staff to prepare draft terms of reference for the new steering group.

We send this minute to Woodbrooke trustees, in a spirit of appreciative cooperation and with great hope for the benefits this collaboration will bring.

BYMT-2015-09-12 Being a Quaker workplace

We have received an update on the explorations of staff at BYM on being a Quaker workplace (BYMT-2015-09-09) covering the staff survey, the staff working group, all-staff conferences and events.

We are pleased to hear that work in this area is continuing and to hear of the success of the recent 'staff beano'. We are encouraged to hear that more staff are willing to share their faith journeys, both Quaker and non-Quaker.

We ask Nick Francis to attend the planned all-staff conference to be held at Friends House on 19 December on behalf of BYM Trustees.

BYMT-2015-05-13 Our faith in the future: responding to the long-term framework

We have received Our faith in the future (BYMT-2015-09-10).

We have spent time together in a period of worship-sharing, considering what this means for us as local Friends, and for our work as BYMT Trustees. We are moved and challenged by the 6 points in the document which give us a clear context for our work.

BYMT-2015-09-14 Supporting strategic management at BYM

We have received paper BYMT-2015-09-11 to help us prepare for a discussion on using the opportunity of the departure of Gina Fenton as Head of Communication & Services, and the replacement of Vincent Poupard as General Secretary Finance & Property, to reshape the way strategic management works.

Trustees are committed to strengthening BYM's sense of itself as a single organisation. We have looked at ways in which areas of strategic responsibility are currently shared; what is working well; and what kinds of culture and structure would deliver what is required.

We ask the Recording Clerk to work further on this, consulting with Management Meeting, and to report back to us at a future meeting.

BYMT-2015-09-15 Requests for financial support

We have received paper BYMT-2015-09-12 detailing requests for financial support.

(a) Friends World Committee for Consultation Plenary Meeting: bursary funding

Alastair Reid declared an interest and withdrew for this item.

BYM will be sending 6 Friends as appointed representatives to the FWCC World Plenary Meeting in Peru in January 2016. Quaker World Relations Committee requests that we consider setting aside a small amount of bursary funding to allow additional British Friends to attend on open places so no Friends are prevented on

grounds of cost (minute QWRC/2015/06/12a). Friends would be encouraged to seek financial support locally first.

We ask staff to make appropriate provision for this in the 2016 budget, and to work with QWRC to apply the funding appropriately.

We send this minute to QWRC.

(b) Friends World Committee for Consultation: World Office and Europe & Middle East Section

Alastair Reid declared an interest and withdrew for this item.

Quaker World Relations Committee has forwarded a request for additional funding for FWCC World Office to us (minute QWRC/2015/06/12e). Although the letter and minute refers only to the World Office we are encouraged to review the level of the grant to EMES (Europe & Middle East Section) at the same time.

The Recording Clerk has recommended that Finance & Property Committee set these grants at approximately the current level for the time being so as not to leave FWCC and EMES in a position of financial uncertainty.

We appoint Alison Ironside and Peter Ullathorne to explore this further with FWCC, supported by staff and QWRC, and make recommendations for the future.

We send this minute to QWRC.

(c) Interfaith Network for the UK

Quaker Committee on Christian & Interfaith Relationships has asked to increase our contribution to the Interfaith Network from its current annual level of £500 to £1000 (minute QCCIR/15/37). Staff recommend increasing this figure up to £3000 pa, a higher level than the committee has proposed. This is affordable and would send a helpful signal to other funders that national churches are willing to take interfaith issues seriously.

We ask staff to make provision for this in the 2016 budget.

We send this minute to Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations.

BYMT-2015-09-16 Relationship with central committees

We have received Quaker Life Central Committee minute 15.43 “Ensuring a balanced committee” together with a paper updating the information to be given by Central Nominations Committee to prospective QLCC members (paper BYMT-2015-09-13).

We expect that the meeting planned between our appointed representatives and members of Quaker Life Central Committee will soon take place.

BYMT-2015-09-17 Financial reports

We have received the financial reports for periods 6 and 7 (BYMT-2015-09-14i & 14ii).

BYMT-2015-09-18 Finance & Property Committee minutes not taken elsewhere on the agenda

(a) Legacy income

We receive BYMT Finance & Property Committee minute FP15/38 concerning the cut off figure for legacy income in the annual budget. We note the recommendation of our Finance & Property Committee that this should rise to £1.8m from 2016, and expect this to be reflected in the budget laid before us at our next meeting.

(b) Risk awareness: Q logo

We note part of BYMT Finance & Property Committee minute FP15/25 concerning the use of the ‘Q’ logo and the risks associated with this. We agree to include this in our overview of risks, and ask the Recording Clerk to advise on how the risks identified can be mitigated.

(c) Yearly Meetings and Yearly Meeting Gatherings: financial planning

We note minute FP15/37 concerning financial planning for Yearly Meetings and Gatherings, and the Recording Clerk has reassured us that many of the questions raised are already being addressed. We have heard that our clerks will be discussing with the clerks of YM Agenda Committee how Trustees can more appropriately be consulted about resource implications at the planning stage of Yearly Meeting Gatherings, and look forward to hearing more at a future meeting.

BYMT-2015-09-19 Pensions Trust: update

Further to minute 2015-05-23, we have been updated on the situation with the Pensions Trust. The discharge of our liabilities is in hand.

BYMT-2015-09-20 Finance & Property Committee changes

We have received BYMT Finance & Property Committee minute FP 15/39 on their structure from 1 January 2016 and the necessary adjustments to their terms of reference (paper BYMT-2014-09-16).

We agree the changes to the Finance & Property Committee terms of reference as set out in their minute.

We ask our Nominations Group to bring forward names as required for the re-structured committee.

BYMT-2015-09-21 Employment Committee terms of reference

We receive draft terms of reference for BYMT Employment Committee which acknowledge the responsibility now undertaken by Management Meeting on policy development and implementation and the Recording Clerk's role in relation to the workplace union and negotiation processes (paper BYMT-2015-09-17ii) together with. Management Meeting minute MtM-2015-08-05 (paper BYMT-2015-09-17i).

We approve these terms of reference, with the amendments discussed in our meeting.

We send this minute to BYMT Employment Committee.

BYMT-2015-09-22 Name of Small Meeting House

We receive part of BYMT Finance & Property Committee minute FP 15/30 as Property Policy Group has suggested we might consider changing the name of the Small Meeting House to something more appropriate in line with other rooms in Friends House (paper BYMT-2015-09-18).

We have heard of the changes which have been made to this room, which is no longer used extensively as a meeting house. We see that there is an opportunity to make its name more congruent with other rooms, such as the George Fox, Margaret Fell and William Penn rooms.

We invite suggestions from our Hospitality staff, who are most engaged with its current use, and will then gauge the necessity for change and consultation.

BYMT-2015-09-22 Nominations and appointments

(a) BYMT Audit Committee

BYMT Nominations Group has brought forward the names of the following Friends for service on the BYMT Audit Committee:

- Jean-Marc Le Tissier – Kingston & Wandsworth AQM – 1 January 2016-31 December 2018 – renomination
- Val Ferguson – Oxford & Swindon AQM – 1 January 2016-31 December 2018 - renomination

We appoint the Friends named accordingly.

(b) BYMT Finance & Property Committee

BYMT Nominations Group bring forward the following Friends to form the new Finance & Property Committee as agreed at our September 2015 meeting.

Trustees

Roy Love (Clerk) (Sheffield & Balby) to December 2016

Alastair Reid (West Scotland) to December 2016

Non Trustees

Dugan Cummings (North West London) to 31 December 2016 (subject to consent)

Rachel Ashton (Chilterns) to 31 December 2016 (subject to consent)

Sandy Horsfall (London West) to 31 December 2017 (subject to consent)

Delia Suffling (Cambridgeshire) to 31 December 2017 (subject to consent)

Simon Bond (Mid Thames) to 31 December 2016 (subject to consent)

Susan Seymour (North West London) to 31 December 2016 (subject to consent)

Alan Keith (West Somerset) to 31 December 2017 (subject to consent)

Mervyn Dobbin (Luton & Leighton) to 31 December 2017 (subject to consent)

(Peter Ullathorne, Treasurer ex officio)

These names being acceptable, we appoint the Friends accordingly, subject to consent as indicated.

(c) Preparation of Trustees Annual Report & Financial Statements for the years ending 2015 and 2016

We appoint Virginia Pawlyn to assist with the preparation of our annual report and financial statements for the years ending 31 December 2015 and 2016.

BYMT-2015-09-24 Dates for 2017

Meeting for Sufferings accepted the dates proposed for its meetings in 2017 at its meeting on 5 September. We accept the dates for our meetings in 2017 as proposed in paper BYMT-2015-09-20.

The dates for our meetings and for Meeting for Sufferings in 2017 are therefore:

4 February 2017	Meeting for Sufferings
17-18 February 2017	BYM Trustees (London)
31 March 2017	BYM Trustees awayday / training day + acceptance of Annual Report & Accounts
1 April 2017	Meeting for Sufferings
3 June 2017	Meeting for Sufferings
9-11 June 2017	BYM Trustees residential (outside London)
29 July – 5 August 2017	Yearly Meeting Gathering (University of Warwick)
22-23 September 2017	BYM Trustees (London)
7 October 2017	Meeting for Sufferings
17 November 2017	BYM Trustees (London)
2 December 2017	Meeting for Sufferings

BYMT-2015-09-25 Reviewing the meeting

We have reviewed the meeting.

BYMT-2015-09-26 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

BYMT-2015-09-27 Closing minute

We thank Edinburgh Friends for their warm welcome this weekend. We intend to meet again on 13 November 2015 at Friends House, if nothing occur to prevent.

Jennifer Barraclough
Clerk

Minutes of a meeting of BYM Trustees

Held on Friday 13 November 2015 at Friends House

Present: Jennifer Barraclough (Clerk), Sarah Donaldson, James Eddington, Nick Francis (Assistant Clerk this time), Alison Ironside, Roy Love, Lynn Moseley, David Olver, Virginia Pawlyn, Michael Phipps, Alastair Reid, Tim Southall, Graham Taylor, Peter Ullathorne (Treasurer)

Prevented: Sheila Gatiss, Ingrid Greenhow

In attendance: David Burnell, Trustee from 1 January 2016 Helen Drewery, General Secretary Quaker Peace and Social Witness, (minutes 1-7 and 9-12); Lisa Kiew, incoming General Secretary Quaker Finance & Property, (except minute 22); Ric Moore, HR & Training Manager, (except minute 22) Paul Parker, Recording Clerk; (except minute 22); Vincent Poupard, General Secretary Finance & Property, (except minute 22) Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk, (minutes 1-9 and 13 -21) Minutes 9-12: Rowena Loverance, Assistant Clerk Quaker Committee on Christian & Interfaith Relations and Anne Bennett, Clerk Quaker World Relations Committee (Quaker World Relations Committee)

BYMT-2015-11-01 Welcome, agenda check, conflicts of interest check, minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 11-13 September have been placed in the minute book and have been signed by the clerk.

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We confirm our agenda.

We welcome David Burnell to our meeting. We will also be welcoming Rowena Loverance and Anne Bennett, who will be presenting the annual reports of Quaker Committee on Christian & Interfaith Relations and Quaker World Relations Committee respectively.

We ask Nick Francis to act as Assistant Clerk for this meeting.

Virginia Pawlyn will brief Sheila Gatiss on this meeting and Nick Francis will brief Ingrid Greenhow.

Part of 26.39 from *Quaker faith & practice* was read during our opening worship.

BYMT-2014-11-02 Consent agenda 1: minutes received

We record our receipt of the following minutes:

- Finance & Property Committee 3ix15 (**BYMT-2015-11-02a**)
- Minute FP 15/45 "Finance Department re-organisation" (**BYMT-2015-11-02b**)
- Finance & Property Committee 5xi15 (**BYMT-2015-11-02c**)
- Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd 17ix15 (**BYMT-2015-11-02d**)
- Quaker Life Central Committee 11-13ix15 (**BYMT-2015-11-02e**)
- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee 18-20ix15 (**BYMT-2015-11-02f**)
- Minute QPSWCC 15/90 "Strategic use of resources" (**BYMT-2015-11-02g**)
- Minute QPSWCC 15/92 "External review of QUNO" (**BYMT-2015-11-02h**)
- Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee minute 2015/10/13 "Discernment of agenda topics for Yearly Meeting..." (**BYMT-2015-11-02i**)
- Audit Committee 22x15 (**BYMT-2015-11-02j**)

BYMT-2015-11-03 Consent agenda 2: items to be taken on draft minute

(a) Continued minutes

We receive the latest version of our continued minutes (**BYMT-2015-11-03a**).

(b) Procurement annual report

Further to minute BYMT/13/06/17i we receive a report on our procurement, which is part of our sustainability policy at Friends House (**BYMT-2015-011-03b**).

(c) Legacy treatment review

We receive a paper reviewing time-limited (legacy) project funding by Michael Phipps and Tim Southall (**BYMT-2015-11-03c**).

This report suggests that it is too early to undertake a full review of the scheme and recommends this happens in 2017. In the meantime the scheme's detailed operation should continue to be fine-tuned where necessary with a view to reaching a steady-

state mode by 2016, and that BYM Trustees and Management Meeting should continue to keep an eye on considerations such as sensitivity and risk when approving and monitoring projects.

We agree to review the legacy funding arrangements in 2017.

(d) Trustee training day

We receive a paper from Paul Parker (**BYMT-2015-11-03d**) suggesting that our training day on 1 April 2016 should be used for a review exercise about the effectiveness of the trustee body, also taking the opportunity to carry out a skills audit. There will also be a small amount of required business, notably the acceptance of the Trustees' Annual Report & Financial Statements for forwarding to Yearly Meeting.

We are happy with this approach.

(e) Nominations report

We receive an annual report from our Nominations Group (**BYMT-2014-11-03f**).

(f) Register of interests

We confirm that our annual check and update of our conflict of interest forms has been completed.

(g) Housing threshing event

We note receipt of a minute from the BYM Housing Threshing event held 11-13 September 2015.

BYMT-2015-11-04 Clerks' report

We have received the Clerks' report (**BYMT-2015-11-04**) covering the meetings in which they have been involved and the statements the clerk has signed.

Other trustees have spoken to their work on behalf of the trustee body.

BYMT-2015-11-05 Recording Clerk's report

We have received the Recording Clerk's report (**BYMT-2015-11-05**) covering:

- An overview
- Staff matters (Management arrangements in Communications & services, Zero hours contracts issues)

- News and updates (All-staff survey and conference, Our faith in the future, Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine/Israel, The garden, Legacy-funded short-term projects, Swarthmoor Hall, Bee news)
- Strategy developments (Communications strategy, Use of LMH for Quaker events), Risk and the operational plan, Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017)
- Relationships with other organisations (Quaker Council for European Affairs, Claridge House, General Meeting for Scotland, Growing our presence in the third sector/position in civil society, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Joseph Rowntree Foundation & Housing Trust)
- Visits (Meeting for Sufferings roadshows, Equality Conference)

The appendices to the report cover: Confidential staffing update, Current position on zero-hours contracts, Garden update, Legacy-funded short-term projects review and the press release from Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust with supporting news articles.

Since our last meeting we have received Management Meeting minutes for 22 September, 13 October, 27 October and 10 November and Extended Management Meeting minutes for 29 September.

BYMT-2015-11-06 BYM Trustees' terms of reference

Further to minute **BYMT-2015-01-15** we receive proposed revised terms of reference with a covering note from Quaker Stewardship Committee (**BYMT-2015-11-06**), and a commentary prepared by David Olver and Roy Love to advise us.

We have discussed these, and ask the Recording Clerk with David Olver and Roy Love to convey our comments to Quaker Stewardship Committee.

BYMT-2015-11-07 Budget and Operational Plan 2016

Further to minute **BYMT-2015-09-10b** we receive paper **BYMT-2015-11-07** covering Management meeting minute **MtM-2015-10-10**, Budget 2016, and the Operational Plan 2016. We receive also Finance & Property Committee **minute FP15/56**, which recommends acceptance of the budget, and **minute FP15/62** concerning legacy funding.

We accept the budget and operational plan for 2016. We agree to make available £1m for time-limited project-funding in 2016 from legacies, of which up to £400k may be allocated by Management Meeting under the delegated arrangement. We

approve the carrying-forward of any unspent amounts from the 2015 legacy allocation as additional to the 2016 figure.

We record our appreciation of the care which has gone into the preparation of the budget and operational plan, and the confidence this gives us in the support available for the work the Yearly Meeting is being called to do.

BYMT-2015-11-08 Finance

(a) Financial reports

We have received the financial reports for period 8 (**BYMT-2015-11-08a**) and period 9 (**BYMT-2015-11-08b**).

(b) Strengthening relationships with grant-making trusts

We receive Management Meeting minute **MtM-2014-10-04b** on strengthening relationships with grant-making trusts (**BYMT-2015-11-08c**).

This minute outlines plans to develop more focused and structured contacts with 10 Quaker trusts with Management Meeting working with the Grants and Contributions Manager to deliver pilot activities. The pilot will be reviewed in early 2017 to inform thinking in developing these important relationships.

(c) Tax justice

We receive **minute FP15/55** from our Finance & Property Committee (**paper BYMT-2015-11-08d**), together with minutes of Investment Committee, which refer.

We endorse the statements from our Investment Group and Finance & Property Committee and ask our Treasurer to speak to this at Meeting for Sufferings in December.

(d) Budget overspends

We receive **minute A/15/10/09** of BYMT Audit Committee "Financial situation" on the two overspends against budget in 2014 – Friends House Garden and Yearly Meeting Gathering (**BYMT-2015-11-08e**).

We note **minute FP15/52** of Finance & Property Committee, which responds to this, and we note that suitable follow-up is in hand.

BYMT-2015-11-09 Quaker Committee on Christian & Interfaith Relations: annual report

Rowena Loverance, Assistant Clerk QCCIR, and Anne Bennett, Clerk Quaker World Relations Committee, are with us for this item.

We receive the Quaker Committee on Christian & Interfaith Relations' annual report **(BYMT-2015-11-09)**.

We have reflected on how to encourage local engagement when meetings have limited numbers of Friends involved in interfaith work; on the changes to QCCIR's ways of working as a result of its changed terms of reference; and on the resources needed to support the work of this significant committee, especially in a rapidly-changing atmosphere towards other faiths.

We hope that this committee might explore more flexible ways of working, using staff, committee and networking possibilities.

We encourage QCCIR to come back to us during 2016 when it is ready to offer further proposals from its strategic review.

We thank the committee for its report and send it this minute.

BYMT-2015-11-10 Quaker World Relations Committee: annual report

Anne Bennett, Clerk QWRC, and Rowena Loverance, Assistant Clerk, Quaker Committee on Christian & Interfaith Relations, are with us for this item.

We receive Quaker World Relations Committee's annual report **(BYMT-2015-11-10)**.

The Clerk has reported on QWRC's busy schedule in 2015, including establishing new working practices in a smaller committee, responding to both expected and unexpected events during its first year, and building new contacts. Committee members are proving adept at finding effective methods of working in pairs, using Skype and email, developing wider networks and delegating extensively.

Attendance at the forthcoming World Plenary Meeting in Peru is creating opportunities to prepare BYM attendees for the challenges and stimulus they will encounter in such a gathering.

We are encouraged to hear of the drive and energy the new committee is showing. We have made comments on networking and workloads.

We thank the committee for its report, and send this minute to QWRC.

BYMT-2015-11-11 Relationship with Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) and Europe and Middle East Section

Alastair Reid has declared an interest and has withdrawn for this item.

Peter Ullathorne and Alison Ironside have reported to us on their discussions with FWCC about their funding (requested by minute **BYMT-2105-09-15b**).

They recommend that the grant is continued with an increase of 1.5% (in line with other grants) in 2016, making a total of £48,770. Trustees have already sanctioned bursary assistance for British Friends attending the World Plenary Meeting in Peru in January 2016, We agree to offer a further amount of £5000 as a one-off grant in support of Friends from less financially resourced YMs.

They further recommend that we continue dialogue over the next year to ascertain what would be the right level of grant for 2017 and beyond.

We agree to this recommendation.

Looking at BYM's contribution to EMES, Peter and Alison found the work funded by us has continued to be well-managed. However, it is clear that to maintain this work, an increased level of funding is required. The EMES budgets for 2015 and 2016 indicate a structural deficit of some £7,000 a year which would mean that the free reserves would reach an unsustainable level within 3-4 years. As the largest YM in the Section, we feel that we should contribute to bridging this gap by an increase (over and above the 1.5% uplift already agreed) of £3,000 to £20,904 for 2016 and that this should be the base level for consideration in 2017. Even allowing for this, we expect that EMES Executive Committee will need to pursue the economies that it has under consideration.

We agree to this recommendation.

BYMT-2015-11-12 Numbers attending Yearly Meeting

We receive Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee's **minute 2015/10/15** and their paper YMAC 2015 10 14 (**BYMT-2015-11-12**).

YMAC agree that some restriction in numbers may be required for both Yearly Meetings in London and Yearly Meeting Gatherings. They have asked the Recording Clerk to consult with Church Government Advisory Group, Meeting for Sufferings

clerks, Britain Yearly Meeting clerks and ourselves to take forward the necessary amendments to Quaker faith & practice.

We are content with the approach presently being taken.

We send this minute to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee.

BYMT-2015-11-13 Health & safety: annual report

We receive the annual health & safety report **(BYMT-2015-11-13)**.

BYMT-2015-11-14 Strategic management

Further to minute **BYMT-2015-09-14** we receive a paper on strategic management **(BYMT-2015-11-14)**.

We have taken forward our consideration at our September meeting of what strategic responsibilities lie with senior staff and how these responsibilities might be grouped together.

We affirm the approach set out in the paper and agree to work with the Recording Clerk and other governance bodies and committees to take this forward. We recognize that in saying this, we are committing ourselves to a process which builds on skills, commitment and trust, and which brings about an effective management of resources. It arises from our response both to practical issues and to the leadings of the Spirit

We agree with the recommendation not to recruit a new Head of Communication & Services at this time.

BYMT-2015-11-15 Vibrancy in meetings

We receive Meeting for Sufferings minute **Mfs/15/09/14** and paper **Mfs 2015 09 08 (BYMT-2015-11-15a)** and Woodbrooke Trustees minute **2015.47 (BYMT-2015-11-15b)**.

We receive draft terms of reference for the Vibrancy in Meetings Steering Group, and now approve these, noting that Woodbrooke Trustees will be considering these too at their meeting later this month.

We note that members of the Steering Group are appointed by both Trustee bodies, and agree that our clerks may act between meetings to make such appointments as set out in the terms of reference.

We send this minute to Woodbrooke Trustees.

BYMT-2015-11-16 Quaker Life Central Committee: relationship with BYM Trustees

We receive Quaker Life Central Committee **minute 15.83** "Affirmation of our summary of purpose" (**BYMT-2015-11-16**). We agree to include this affirmation in the Committee's terms of reference.

We have heard that Jennifer Barraclough, Sheila Gatiss, Ingrid Greenhow and Virginia Pawlyn attended a meeting with three members, Jocelyn Burnell, Douglas Butterfield and Barbara Davey, of Quaker Life Central Committee on 2 November 2015 to discuss the working relationship with the committee.

BYMT-2015-11-17 Book of discipline revision preparation project

We receive paper **BYMT-2015-11-17** which describes work to be undertaken by the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group established by Meeting for Sufferings, together with **minute FP15/63** of Finance & Property Committee, which recommends the approval of this application for time-limited project funding.

We affirm this decision to provide £120,760 for preparation work over a 22-month period, and inform Meeting for Sufferings accordingly.

BYMT-2015-11-18 Meeting for Sufferings: preparation

We have spent time preparing for Meeting for Sufferings to be held 4-6 December at Woodbrooke.

BYMT-2015-11-19 End of year review 2015

We receive from the clerk paper **BYMT-2015-11-19** giving a reminder of what our 2014 annual report identified and a brief summary of progress in each area.

BYMT-2015-11-20 Appointments

BYMT Nominations Group recommend the following appointments:

Annual return to the Charity Commission 2015 and 2016

David Burnell

Audit Committee

Chris Willmore - 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018 (subject to consent)

Elders

Sarah Donaldson - 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016

Lynn Moseley – 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016

Employment Committee

Sarah Donaldson – 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018

Margaret Burt (London West AM) - 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018

Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd

Nick Francis – 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016

David Olver – 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016

Miranda Bird (Cornwall) – 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018

Val Brittin (Worcestershire & Shropshire AM) – 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018

Gold papers 2016

James Eddington

Tim Southall

Senior Staff Grievance & Disciplinary Group

David Olver – 1 January to 31 December 2018

Trustees Annual Report and Accounts

David Burnell - 2016 and 2017 TARA

Audit Committee review

One-off appointment – approximately 3 months from January 2016

Trustee – Virginia Pawlyn

Non-Trustee – Michael Sturge (York AM)

We appoint the Friends nominated accordingly.

BYMT-2015-11-21 Trustees Nominations Group

We appoint the following Friends to serve as our Trustees Nominations Group:

Roy Love - 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016

Lynn Moseley - 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2017

David Burnell - 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2017

BYMT-2015-11-22 Reviewing the meeting

We have reviewed the meeting.

BYMT-2015-11-23 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

Jennifer Barraclough

Clerk

Listed Informal Groups

Background

In June 2014, Meeting for Sufferings agreed to review the Listed Informal Groups arrangement, and to set up a Group to do the necessary work.

The Listed Informal Groups 'system' is set out in Quaker Faith and Practice 13.19, and at present, there are 49 Listed Informal Groups.

The Review Group first met towards the end of 2014, and has spent time gathering information and consulting, as well as reflecting together. The Review Group's report, which contains clear recommendations, follows.

Friends will need to read the paper in full, but in summary, the Review Group proposes a new **Quaker Recognised Bodies** system which aims to be inclusive and enabling, acknowledging that these groups contribute to a rich and diverse Quaker community in Britain. They recommend:

- Recognition of groups in three broad categories:
 - linked (to other Quaker bodies – typically AMs or Central Committees);
 - externally regulated;
 - free-standing;
- Registration (and, where appropriate, de-registration) by Meeting for Sufferings, once the criteria have been checked by staff;
- Improved oversight, with clearer links to centrally-managed work and agreements about the benefits and responsibilities of recognition;
- Regular reviews.

Proposals for changes to Listed Informal Groups arrangements

"The existence of the Religious Society of Friends may be seen as a testimony to the spontaneity of the relationship between human beings and God. It is a warning against institutionalism and the confinement of the human spirit." (Abbot of an Anglican monastery quoted by Harvey Gillman in A Light that is Shining)

Introduction

At its meeting on September 6th 2014 Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) approved terms of reference to establish a Review Group of Listed Informal Groups (LIGs). It subsequently appointed a Review Group of Joycelin Dawes (clerk), Jennifer Kavanagh, David Lewis and Martin Schweiger with Juliet Prager (assistant recording clerk).

The primary task of the Review Group is to review the arrangements for Listed Informal Groups and bring to MfS by the end of 2015 recommendations to clarify and strengthen positive relationships. These recommendations should include:

1. Whether or not some sort of recognition of Quaker-related bodies by Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) is appropriate; and, if so, to:
 - a. clarify the benefits to, and responsibilities of, both BYM and recognised groups
 - b. propose new guidelines for recognition
 - c. clarify the process of adding to/removing groups from the list.
2. How to re-negotiate the relationship between BYM and Quaker-related bodies, and whether this would need committee oversight.

Review process

The Review Group considered the background to the establishment of this review and decided to gather information from a wide range of Quaker-led groups before considering any recommendations.

We circulated an online and paper survey to current LIGs, schools and centres, and placed notices in The Friend and the monthly LM mailing inviting any other Quaker-led group to participate. We gathered information from 94 groups, including two-thirds of current LIGs. We used the information received to consider how groups might be encouraged and supported in their contribution to the life of BYM whilst

responding to and upholding the questions and concerns expressed in the terms of reference set out by MfS.

Our draft recommendations were shared with a sample of 16 groups, the clerk or assistant clerk of MfS and YMAC, and key staff at Friends House. We invited their response to the feasibility and acceptability of the proposals. There was a broad welcome to the proposals and numerous useful comments and suggestions incorporated into the final recommendations.

Rationale for reviewing Listed Informal Group arrangements

The Review Group is responding to the concerns of MfS that led to this review, namely:

- That the principles of the current structure of LIGs, as described in QF&P 13.19, and the advice regarding public statements described in QF&P 3.27, are not sufficiently detailed to provide for the complexity that has grown up in the arrangements of LIGs.
- That there are wide variations amongst current LIGs regarding, for example, their size, governance arrangements, process of appointing officers, and oversight.
- That there is currently no means to review the groups and their accountability to the Society. Once listed there is no process for removing a group. Thus the list includes, for instance, some LIGs that are no longer active and some that do not consider themselves Quaker.
- That there is inconsistency about the benefits and responsibilities of being listed as a LIG. At the same time there are numerous groups similar to LIGs which do not have access to the same benefits as a LIG.

MfS has been concerned about the need to manage reputational risk: an organisation calling itself 'Quaker' acting inappropriately can impact on other Quaker bodies, such as the many LIGs who carefully nurture and uphold their Quaker identity.

What the recommendations hope to achieve

As the Review Group explored these complexities, we discerned that the part that groups play in the life of Quakers in Britain relies to a considerable extent on an underlying spirit. We hope our recommendations will clarify the understanding that:

- For many Friends, much of the heart and energy of the Society lies in the formation of these groups, a number of which cross Local and Area Meeting borders. Their passion and commitment to particular areas of interest both strengthen and deepen the life of the Society and can breathe new energy into more formal structures.
- Members of a Quaker Recognised Body (QRB) community share obligations, benefits and responsibilities for which they are accountable to their members, to BYM, Quakers and to each other. Clear relationships enhance the contribution groups make to the Society, clarifying what the relationship both offers to and asks of the parties, and how each can offer its contribution.
- It matters to Friends, and to the Society corporately, that groups uphold a Quaker ethos - core Quaker ways and values, sometimes popularly called the 'Q-bit'. This is particularly relevant where groups interact beyond BYM and their work may be taken to be representative of BYM as a whole. Within its timescale the Review Group cannot develop proposals on upholding the Quaker ethos, but we suggest it merits consideration, and signpost examples of resources.

We hope that the structure, registration and review of the groups will be reasonably self-evident to Friends and as straightforward as possible; it needs to be acceptable to appointing bodies and BYM formal structures as well as to the groups; it needs to be economical in any additional demands it makes on Friends House (FH).

The recommendations focus on broad principles and consider implementation only to the extent it affects the feasibility of the recommendations.

We do not suggest a timeline for implementation as this depends on the decision made by MfS and subsequent agreement of how its decision is implemented.

We see this review as offering an affirmative direction for BYM to be strengthened by the vibrancy of Friends' (and others) commitment to interests represented by the groups. Thus we envisage the emergence of a community of Quaker Recognised Groups (QRBs) (see below) that explores new ways to "meet together and know one another in that which is eternal".

Quaker Recognised Bodies

We recommend that groups are designated Quaker Recognised Bodies (QRB) to distinguish the new arrangements from LIGs. We further recommend that any group

wishing to register as a QRB, including all current LIGs, register through the same process. This entails some administrative work for the groups, for AMs or overseeing Quaker body and for Friends House but this is largely a once-only effort that will enable MfS and QRBs to be confident that the issues identified by MfS are addressed.

Registration as a QRB should be as inclusive as possible, open to all groups who can respond affirmatively to the definition and criteria for registration. The purpose of registration is to:

- create a QRB community which celebrates its mutual richness and upholds the accountability of its members to each other and the Society in ways that are explicit yet fair and transparent
- promote the visibility of groups in the Society
- uphold the Quaker ethos of such activity
- establish clear relationship
- uphold benefits and responsibilities
- provide an opportunity to further consider routes for such groups to contribute without over-burdening the formal structures of the Society.

Registration includes a definition of a QRB and criteria for recognition and registration – gatekeeping – and establishes the ways in which the QRB community and its constituent groups contribute to the life and witness of the Quaker community in Britain - relationship. Once a group is registered it participates in a periodic review which confirms its recognition and registration and establishes clear steps by which MfS can remove from the list a group that has, for instance, become inactive.

Groups will be encouraged to register as this is the route to recognition and listing on a QRB page on the BYM website. We note, however, that there are a few groups with a Quaker heritage or particular relationship with the Society, where there is a mutual wish for an on-going relationship with BYM, and for whom registration as a Quaker Recognised Body is not the appropriate route. We suggest that any such group continues, as now, to address this independently with the Society.

1. What is a Quaker Recognised Body (QRB)?

1.1 Definition of a Quaker Recognised Body

A QRB is an independent group through which concerned Friends (and others) may share a common interest, seek affirmation or carry out witness. It wishes to be recognised as a Quaker organisation because its Quaker roots are an important part of its identity.

1.2 Registration criteria

A group is eligible to register if its Quaker values and witness are upheld through its

1.2.1 Objectives, which might include one or more of the following:

- a) to provide a discerned Quaker voice and action on a topic (theological, political, social or environmental), or geographical area (such as 'China')
- b) to offer an opportunity for Friends to meet and develop a Quaker perspective and their interest on a topic
- c) to provide practical and spiritual support to Friends in BYM or to the Society as a whole, whether in Great Britain or overseas
- d) to provide services founded on Quaker values that make it eligible for registration.

1.2.2 Governance:

- it has aims, purpose and manner of proceeding consistent with Friends' testimonies, such as ways of running business meetings and nominations; and
- it appoints at least a clerk or convener who is a member or attender listed by an Area Meeting, and a Treasurer;
- non-Quaker members of QRBs are welcome for the richness and insight they bring from other sources. However, for a QRB to confirm its Quaker ethos in a manner that enables its registration, sufficient of its management committee, trustees or governors must be members or attenders listed by an Area Meeting.

1.2.3 Arrangements:

- It meets at least once a year;
- it is accountable for the funds it holds from subscriptions or donations.

2. Gatekeeping – the process of registration

2.1 Different types of QRBs

The Review Group proposes that groups meeting the definition of a QRB may register as one of three types of Quaker Recognised Body: – a Linked Group, an Externally Regulated Group or a Free-standing Group.

Each registering group identifies the type of registration it wishes to take up, which determines which type of QRB they are listed as. All types of groups share broadly similar benefits and responsibilities, but there are different modes of oversight for each.

2.1.1 Linked Groups have been set up by, or have a formal link to, a body in a formal relationship with BYM; examples of possible links are to one or more AMs, central committees, Meeting for Sufferings, General Meeting for Scotland, Friends in Wales. This body may typically appoint trustees or members to the group and define the term of service. There is an expectation that the trustees or members keep their appointing body informed about the work of the Linked Group and seek to maintain a good relationship between the Linked Group and the relevant Meeting or committee. Some measure of oversight/ eldership is present in the relationship (the nature of this oversight may need clarification once MfS has made a decision on how these changes will be implemented).

It is not intended that groups appointed by an AM/Quaker body for its internal purposes should be eligible to register as a QRB. A group that is eligible to register as a linked QRB will either draw its appointed members from more than one Quaker body (e.g. AM) - with those bodies agreeing which is the registering body and providing oversight - and accept members from across BYM, or if appointed by a single Quaker body, it will be able to show that its membership and activities are available to all Friends and attenders across BYM, or it has non-Quaker beneficiaries.

The proposed arrangement supports BYM by recognising groups whose appointment and activity is held within BYM formal structures.

In summary, in addition to the general requirements to uphold Quaker values and carry out their business in a Quakerly manner, a Linked Group is expected to:

- a) work with their appointing AM/Quaker body, or committee to uphold oversight and eldership together with the Quaker ethos of the group
- b) take any concerns from the group to their appointing body for consideration and testing and not take them directly to MfS.

2.1.2 An Externally Regulated Group has its own board or management committee, a clear constitution and is regulated or supervised through an external body such as the Charity Commission, Companies House (where a charity is also a registered company), OFSTED or the Care Quality Commission.

We recognise that Externally Regulated Groups are required to meet governance and other standards elsewhere. However, this supervision is not related to their Quaker ethos; registration as an Externally Regulated QRB provides an opportunity for such Quaker oversight at the same time as offering the group a route to recognition in BYM.

Thus, in addition to the general requirements to uphold Quaker values and carry out their business in a Quakerly manner, an Externally Regulated Group is expected to demonstrate that it wishes its ongoing commitment to its Quaker connection to be upheld by the process of registration and periodic review.

2.1.3 Free-standing Groups are Quakers who have come together to learn about or work on a particular topic, but have not been formally appointed to this task by a part of BYM. The group is likely to have members who are geographically dispersed and have a membership open to, but not necessarily restricted to, all interested Friends and attenders. The group would normally have at least a clerk or convener and a treasurer, meeting a minimum of once each year and producing an annual report and accounts or statement of activities and use of its funds.

This is a very diverse set of groups. Recognition of these groups affords BYM an opportunity to offer oversight and upholding and offers guidelines for a group's Quaker processes.

2.1.4 New and emergent groups (not yet ready to meet the criteria for registration) may request temporary listing for up to two years until they are ready to apply to register as a QRB. In this period they would normally be considered as Free-standing Groups unless clearly a Linked or Externally Regulated QRB.

Thus, in addition to the general requirements to uphold Quaker values and carry out their business in a Quakerly manner, a Free-standing Group is expected to respond to requests from the QRB 'officer' at Friends House for information to confirm continued registration and for periodic review.

2.2 Registration

The recommendations propose a new structure and registration process. At the point of change to QRBs all groups, whether currently registered as a LIG or not, will have to register. This will clear up anomalies in the present LIG list.

2.2.1. The process of registration is initiated by the group. However, BYM may wish to encourage groups to register since participating in oversight and periodic review helps to manage reputational risk.

2.2.2. The group downloads a registration pack from BYM website or obtains a pack from the designated member of FH staff.

2.2.3. At first registration, groups are required to include a minute accepting the requirements of registration, oversight, periodic review, management of reputational risk and ongoing inclusion as a QRB. The application of a Linked group is accompanied by a minute from its registering Area Meeting/overseeing Quaker body accepting the requirements of registration etc. Applications from Externally Registered or Free-standing Groups are accompanied by a similar minute from their management committee, trustees or members.

2.2.4. The application is sent to the designated FH staff member. The staff member checks that the information provided meets the criteria of registration and on that basis forwards the application to MfS for approval.

2.2.5. If an application seems inappropriate, advice may be taken from trustees, MfS Arrangements Committee or other central groups and, once shared with the applying group, consideration given as to whether a revised application may be suitable.

2.2.6. An annual update of the QRB list is carried out by FH staff. The list comprises Linked Groups (whose details are forwarded to FH staff by their AM/overseeing Quaker body), Externally Regulated and Free-standing groups whose updated information is sent to FH staff. A new or emergent group is included as if a Free-standing Group for up to two years. The list is published in the Book of Meetings and a BYM webpage.

2.2.7 We recommend an annual reminder through Friends House (FH) mailing to encourage groups to register, an annual reminder to those registered to provide updated information and a cut-off date for new registration/information for inclusion in the QRB list for the following year.

2.3 Oversight and review of membership on QRB list:

2.3.1. Registration as a QRB is subject to periodic review.

2.3.2. Oversight of a Linked QRB is carried out by the AM/Quaker body that registered the group; where the management committee or trustees of a Linked QRB are appointed by more than one body, it is assumed they agree which of them registers the group and provides oversight. Oversight of a QRB that registers as Externally Regulated or Free-standing is carried out by FH staff.

2.3.3. Oversight consists of checking that each QRB confirms or updates its information by the date requested, and is still eligible for registration.

2.3.4. When a group no longer meets the criteria for recognition it is listed for twelve months as 'dormant'. In that time either the AM/Quaker body (for a Linked Group) or FH staff (for an Externally Regulated or Free-standing Group) advises the group on how it may continue its registration. If this is not resolved within twelve months MfS is informed either by the AM/Quaker body which provides oversight or Friends House staff with a recommendation the group is removed from registration.

2.3.5. All types of QRB cease to be eligible for registration if any of the following apply:

- a) It has been inactive during the previous 12 months, i.e there has been no meeting of its officers or members;
- b) It has not sent the information requested for two successive years in response to the annual FH mailing notice; it has not responded to being moved to a 'dormant groups' section of the QRB list; once it has not responded for two years it is automatically referred to MfS with a recommendation to MfS that it be removed from the list;
- c) A group's activities or constitution has changed in a way that would make it ineligible to register if it were applying for the first time.

2.3.6. A Linked QRB is removed when a minute from its registering AM/Quaker body is confirmed by MfS. An Externally Regulated or Free-standing QRB can only be removed from the QRB list by MfS minute.

2.4 Management of reputational risk

The purpose of managing reputational risk is to uphold a Quaker ethos and procedures in QRBs so that we are confident in our accountability to each other, and to the Society. This is managed by linking registration and periodic review for QRBs

to upholding key Quaker principles and responsibilities, including confirmation that the group's aims, purpose and manner of proceeding:

- a) are consistent with Friends' testimonies and methods;
- b) uphold Friends' convictions and testimonies;
- c) commit to uphold sections of QF&P that cover the role of QRBs and to public 'speaking out' statements as set out in QF&P 3.27 and advise their linked AM/Quaker body or FH of any potential reputational issues (QF&P will need to be revised once MfS approves changes to Listed Informal Group arrangements);
- d) uses Quaker Business Method;
- e) understands that its activities may be seen as representative of BYM as a whole or its formal constituent meetings, and refrains from activity, statement or behaviour that may bring the Society into disrepute;
- f) accepts that any statement it makes, whether or not formally published, represents solely the views of its members and does not speak for BYM or its constituent meetings or committees; where a group speaks on behalf of such a committee, that this has been expressly approved in a minute by BYM or its constituent meetings or an appointing AM/Quaker body.

3. Relationship between QRBs and BYM

We envisage that registering as a QRB offers benefits, alongside responsibilities to uphold a Quaker ethos and provide information to Area or Yearly Meeting at regular intervals and an offer to contribute to witness in the Society, such as skills and connections.

3.1 Benefits:

3.1.1. The benefits most valued by LIGs would continue – listing on a dedicated webpage and in the Book of Meetings to enhance groups' visibility amongst Friends; access to space at the Groups Fair. We suggest that the process for requesting space to arrange Special Interest Group meetings are reviewed in this context.

3.1.2. Gathering QRBs within a QRB community will enhance opportunities for information sharing and joint activities.

3.1.3. Central staff may provide advice and support to QRBs on governance issues such as charity registration or trustee appointment, and possibly property and legal matters (this may incur costs).

3.1.4. At the implementation stage consideration may be given to QRBs having access to BYM communication vehicles such as Quaker News and other publicity opportunities.

3.1.5. We recommend exploring a unique logo for QRBs indicating their registration; the right to use this logo itself becomes a benefit.

3.2 Responsibilities

In addition to the registration criteria and governance expectations for a QRB set out in Section 2, we suggest that:

- Linked QRBs are asked to share their annual report and accounts (or summary of their activities and funds) with their Area Meeting;
- Externally Regulated QRBs are asked to confirm that their audited report and accounts are publicly available through external regulators;
- Free-standing QRBs are asked to forward a summary of their activities and funds to the staff member at FH (implementation requires consultation with AMs, central staff and Quaker Stewardship Committee);
- A QRB would be expected to inform either its AM clerk or oversight committee or Friends House staff of any potential issue involving reputational risk.

3.3 Offer and contribution

3.3.1. We note that Linked QRBs have a possible link into BYM structures through their Area Meetings but currently no such opportunity is available to other groups. We suggest reviewing the possible channels to access the work of central committees and a way of communicating their priorities and work to Agenda Committee and MfS. However, we are mindful that this possibility is fraught with challenges – time, over-use, expectations etc. The Review Group has yet to discuss this in detail with the committees.

Some groups work closely with staff at Friends House and where this works well, it could be extended and regularised.

3.3.2. QRBs (and currently LIGs) may have knowledge, skills and contacts that complement those of central staff. Using these skills would enable the Yearly Meeting to do more Quaker work. Another consideration is that QRBs, being smaller groupings, may be more flexible and energetic and could respond more easily in dynamic situations. In addition, a QRB could provide a test-bed for a central committee to initiate new ways of working and witness. Some QRBs may be able to work on joint projects with central staff and others may be thought eligible to bid for legacy funding (perhaps with support from a central committee). Legacy funding comes from the proportion of legacy money received each year that trustees put aside for projects (usually over three years) not in the already agreed workplan. QAAD's existing relationship with central work is a model for some projects of this kind.

4. Quaker Ethos

A central quality of a QRB is that it values and nurtures its Quaker ethos – Quaker values and ways - such as use of Quaker Business Method. We consider that tools and resources to help them reflect on and nurture their Quaker ethos can be helpful in establishing greater shared understanding of what it means to be a Quaker group. We offer a list of some useful sources and materials that can be developed and supplemented later.

Suggestions of resources:

- The Q-bit – an inquiry into our Quaker identity by the trustees of Quaker Social Action – available to download from:
www.quakersocialaction.org.uk/Pages/FAQs/Category/our-publications
- Wilson, Roger (1949) Authority, Leadership and Concern, Swarthmore Lecture, Quaker Books, London
- Testimonies: www.quaker.org.uk/more-about-testimonies
- Eccles, Peter (2009) The Presence in the Midst, Swarthmore Lecture, Quaker Books, London
- Ambler, Rex (2013) The Quaker Way – a rediscovery, Christian Alternative Books, UK
- Larrabee, Arthur (2007) Leadership and Authority in the Religious Society of Friends, Walton Lecture, Southeastern Yearly Meeting, Florida
- Mace, Jane (2012) God and decision-making – a Quaker approach, Quaker Books, London
- Quaker identity and the heart of our faith Conference papers and study material for use in meetings for learning, based on a Quaker Life Conference held in April 2008, available at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/files/Faith-and-practice-proceeding.pdf>
- Kaal, Felicity The Future of Quakerism in Friends Quarterly (May 2010)
- A new course at Woodbrooke 18th-20th November 2016 “Being of Good Heart” for groups and organisations (details to come in the Woodbrooke 2016 programme)

Meeting for Sufferings Annual Report 2015 (Draft)

Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

John 15 v 4.

Meeting for Sufferings, our national representative council, is a '*central body which can act on behalf of the Society (i.e. Britain Yearly Meeting) between Yearly Meetings*'. It has a function 'in drawing together and relating to one another the different strands in the yearly meeting's life and service.'

The role and functions of Meeting for Sufferings are laid down in *Quaker faith & practice* Chapter 7. There are about one hundred members of Meeting for Sufferings and we operate on a triennial basis with a new group of Representatives being appointed at Yearly Meeting 2015. Consequently we have had two meetings of the old triennium, in February and March, and three meetings of the new, in July, September and then a residential meeting in December 2015. We usually meet in the George Fox room at Friends' House, London but in July we met with representatives and alternates in the newly-refurbished Large Meeting House and in December, we were at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre for a weekend. In September we were accompanied during our opening worship by young friends from around the Yearly Meeting who had come to Friends House for a Participation Day.

Some of the business which Yearly Meeting entrusts to Meeting for Sufferings consists (according to Chapter 7.02) of: making decisions and issuing of statements in the name of Britain Yearly Meeting, exercising discernment on priorities and receiving reports for information and consultation on the work of the BYM Trustees. It has a part to play in developing a visionary and prophetic role for the yearly meeting and in fostering communication throughout the organisation.

Making decisions and issuing statements

Decisions have been made in respect of the following:

- 1) **Refugees and Asylum seekers:** We received minutes from seven Area Meetings at our March meeting, and heard from Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network. We then asked Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee to develop a public statement that can be used in working with national and local governments. In July we received a briefing on migration within Europe that can be used in our work with other churches and faith-groups; and in September we adopted a statement that has been circulated widely and used by Friends throughout BYM in speaking out on this issue.

- 2) **The Church: Towards a common vision** (World Council of Churches Consultation paper): Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations brought a draft response to this document, in February, entitled *The Spirit-led Church*. A revised version came to us in September which we were able to agree, on behalf of BYM, to send to the WCC and to use within our meetings, with a linked study guide, to help explore issues of our faith and to articulate what we can say, as Quakers, to the wider Christian church.
- 3) **Prison and Court register:** We have recorded the imprisonment of a Friend and noted the arrest of another; upholding these Friends who have acted under conscience, in our prayers. [*to be revised following the December meeting*]
- 4) **Quaker faith & practice Amendments:** We considered revisions to Chapter 16, and to Chapter 3.27, which were forwarded to Yearly Meeting 2015.

Exercising discernment on priorities

Our key work this year has been to hear interim and then final reports from our Long Term Framework Working Group who brought to us in September, the final draft for our new articulated vision entitled 'Our Faith in the Future.'

Friends throughout BYM will have seen this brief document and we can use it to guide our activity at every level within the Yearly Meeting. At Meeting for Sufferings, we will use it as a guide for discernment and decision-making. There will be further supporting material and opportunities to discuss its implications for us all in our local meetings as well as in Meeting for Sufferings. Our six aspirations are that:

- Meeting for worship is the bedrock of living as a Quaker
- Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all-age
- All Friends understand and live by Quaker discipline
- Quaker values are active in the world
- Quakers work collaboratively
- Quakers are well known and widely understood

Receiving reports for information and consultation

We have received regular reports from BYM trustees who are also members of Meeting for Sufferings. We have ensured time during the year to consider in more depth what our Central Committees have to share with us: we heard from Quaker Peace and Social Witness in September, from Quaker Life in February (for 2014) and in December (for 2015) and from Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations in February.

Playing a part in developing a visionary and prophetic role for the whole yearly meeting

There have been three specific strands of work:

- 1) **Call for Equality (YM Minute 2015/36):** Yearly Meeting has asked Meeting for Sufferings to *‘take the work on social and economic injustice forward, co-ordinating the work of local and area meetings who might wish to become more deeply involved, and encouraging the deep spiritual and intellectual searching that could underpin a ‘true social order’ for our age.’* We plan to spend time in early 2016 responding to this task.

- 2) **BYM Sustainability (YM Minute 2011/36)** – In 2014 Meeting for Sufferings set up the BYM Sustainability Group (BYMSG) to support the Yearly Meeting in its commitment to become a low carbon sustainable community. The group works closely with QPSW, Woodbrooke and Living Witness to maintain an overview of progress in four areas:
 - strengthening our community,
 - changing our lifestyles,
 - Quaker core activities and property, and
 - taking political action and promoting system change.

There has been some encouraging progress as a growing number of local meetings have engaged with the commitment, exploring what it means to them and making changes to their buildings and practices. However, progress throughout the yearly meeting has been varied, and continuing support is needed to help Friends in making their lives and meetings low carbon and sustainable.

At the same time, Quakers have been developing an increasingly clear voice in the world, for example in QPSW’s advocacy for disinvestment from fossil fuels.

The most substantial work directly undertaken by BYMSG itself relates to strengthening our community. The Group organises a national gathering at least every two years with one planned in Swanwick in March 2016. It has also begun work on a project to nurture Friends’ sustainability ministry in a wide variety of forms, with a series of events planned from 2016. It is hoped that this work will help to encourage a fuller understanding of the yearly meeting’s concern for sustainability, and the spiritual leading underlying it.

- 3) **Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group (MfS 2014/04/05)** - this Group has been working to test and thresh issues identified within the process of considering revision of our Book of Discipline. *[Text provided by the group to be inserted here.]*

Fostering communication throughout the yearly meeting.

At every meeting, we have received minutes from our Area Meetings and have been able to consider how these may be taken forward – this has been an opportunity not only to refer work to the Central Committees but also to share information and encouragement amongst our Area Meetings. We cannot all do everything but we can

inform ourselves and commit ourselves to what we are led to do, personally and within our structures. Issues such as Quaker values in education, the abolition of torture, and Islamophobia in our society have been some of the topics that we have addressed.

Communication has also been key in the programme of visits of members of the Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group to groups of Area Meetings, which has been ongoing with 18 such visits being made from Inverness to Machynlleth, from Norwich to Exeter. There has been helpful exchange and we hope we can continue to build on our 'Being Quaker Together.'

Other matters

We have recorded the transfer of Chorley Local Meeting from Lancashire Central and North Area Meeting to Pendle Hill Area Meeting.

We have heard from the Review Group for the Terms of Reference of Central Nominations Committee and are making proposals to Britain Yearly Meeting to help the nomination process. We have also had a report from the Listed Informal Groups Review Group and expect further developments in the regularising of our recognition of Quaker bodies whose organisation lies outside our main national structures.

In all our meetings we strive as a large and diverse group to follow the leadings of the Spirit and to adhere to Quaker discipline, knowing that if we remain faithful our work will bear fruit.

Draft - 15th November 2015



Yearly Meeting of
the Religious Society
of Friends in Britain

To: Members of Meeting for Sufferings

9 December 2015

Meeting for Sufferings 4-6 December 2015

Dear Friends

I hope you all got home safely after Meeting for Sufferings.

I heard a lot of positive comments about the weekend. I hope you agree that it helped us to get to know one another better, building a sense of community. I feel that we shared deep worship together during the weekend. We also worked hard and got a lot done!

Going through the agenda and the minutes there is a lot to take back to your AM:

- **Amendments to *Quaker faith & practice*:** as mentioned on Sunday morning, part of our role is to ensure Friends understand that we have considered these amendments in detail and that Friends likely to attend BYM should look at these in advance...
- **Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group:** please encourage area meetings to appoint someone to attend the conference, and all Friends to get involved in reading *Qf&p!*
- **Central Nominations Committee review:** although not specifically for action, I heard from a couple of representatives at the weekend that they are planning to pass it on to their AM nominations committee. Please also encourage Friends to complete the Quaker Service Information form.
- **Quaker Life Central Committee:** again, no specific actions, but lots to share with Friends about the work of Quaker Life and resources available to Friends and Meetings.
- **Reports from other European YMs:** we were encouraged in the meeting to share this reports with Friends locally. Linked to that is the letter that QWRC

sent to Friends on France and the fact that the next FWCC World Plenary Meeting is happening in Peru in January - we are all one family of Friends!

- **Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership:** as promised there are more details below. These have been shared via the AM Clerks cluster.
- **Housing:** links to YM minute 25 & the Quaker Housing Trust website are below.
- **Review of Listed Informal Groups:** again, this is not specifically for action locally, but any Friends involved in an existing LIG or a potential Quaker Recognised Body might be interested to hear about this.
- **Area Meetings:** Attached are copies of the notes from the home groups, and there is a link below to details of the Northumbria model. Our minute encourages representatives to “find ways to take it back to their AMs”. Some of this might be done by feeding in to different groups within the AM (nominations as mentioned above, elders, overseers etc.) as well as through a formal report.

It was a full weekend and there is a lot to potentially feed back to your area meeting. The challenge is to work out how to get the various messages to the relevant people – good luck!!

Ethel Livermore

Ethel Livermore,
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

Quakers and Housing – the QHT website is at www.qht.org.uk. YM 2015 minute 25, Responding to social inequality and injustice: housing as a tested concern, can be found at: <http://old.quaker.org.uk/ym2015-minutes> or sent to you in a leaflet with an introduction, by Paula Harvey - paulah@quaker.org.uk

A **Northumbria Area Meeting** paper – ‘Changing our ways – revitalising Area Meeting’ is included in this mailing. Also see www.northumbriaquakers.org.uk

The **Quaker Service Information Form** can be filled in online at <http://old.quaker.org.uk/quaker-service-information-form> or ask for a paper copy from Fran Owen, 0207 663 1115, email nominations@quaker.org.uk

The following papers are also included in this mailing:

- December 2015 Minutes
- Photos of the Home Group ‘flipchart reflections’. (We hope they are readable, but apologise that the quality is not wonderful.)
- Names and email addresses of members of Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings held at Woodbrooke

Friday 4 to Sunday 6 December 2015

MfS/15/12/01 **Opening worship**

Section 3.05 of *Quaker faith & practice* has been read in our opening worship, and we have remembered former members of this meeting who have recently died.

MfS/15/12/02 **Apologies**

We receive apologies from Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC), Lincolnshire and West Kent AMs, which have not been able to send a representative on this occasion.

We also receive apologies from Helen Drewery and Richard Summers, members of Management Meeting.

MfS/15/12/03 **Minutes**

The minutes of our meeting held on 5 September 2015 have been signed.

MfS/15/12/04 **Membership of Meeting for Sufferings**

Since our last meeting we have received the following nominations and requests for release for Meeting for Sufferings until the rise of Yearly Meeting 2018:

Nominated:

Joycelin Dawes	Representative	North London AM
Martin Ford	Alternate	Leeds AM

Release requests received:

Charlotte Allen	Alternate	Leeds AM
Robert Steele	Representative	QPSWCC

We appoint the Friends named and thank the Friends released for their service.

Visitors invited to represent area meetings/committees in the absence of appointed representative and alternate:

Rici Marshall	Leeds AM
Sarah Donaldson	Manchester & Warrington AM
Sheila J. Gatiss	Cambridgeshire AM
Douglas Butterfield	Chilterns AM

Taking up service through appointment from 16 November 2015 - Management Meeting:

Lisa Kiew, General Secretary, Finance and Property

Released from service on his retirement from 31 December 2015 – Management Meeting:

Vincent Poupard, General Secretary, Finance and Property

Other visitors:

Simon Best – Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Head of Learning

Alison Breadon – Review Group for Terms of Reference of Central Nominations Committee

Jocelyn Burnell – Quaker Life Central Committee, Assistant clerk

Gerald Hewitson – Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group and Review Group for Terms of Reference of Central Nominations Committee

Catherine James – Church Government Advisory Group, Clerk

Lesley Richards – Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group

Helen Rowlands – BYM staff

Mfs/15/12/05 Adoption of Agenda

The clerk has introduced the draft agenda, and we have agreed to this.

Mfs/15/12/06 Court and prison register

We receive minute 93/15 of Sussex East Area Meeting, informing us that Chris Coverdale, an attender at Rye and Hastings Local Meetings, was imprisoned in October as a result of his decision not to pay taxes because he considers the use of taxes for military purposes a breach of the United Nations Convention.

We have also learned that Sylvia Boyes of Craven & Keighley AM was given a conditional discharge by Reading Magistrates Court on 20 October 2015 after she had been arrested for attempting to enter the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Burghfield on the 70th anniversary of the dropping of nuclear bombs on Japan. Sylvia Boyes felt compelled by deep personal conviction to draw attention to the illegal weapons of mass destruction kept at the base.

We receive minute 2015.09.30 of York Area Meeting informing us that on Tuesday 11th August, whilst carrying out Quaker Witness at Menwith Hill in accordance with agreed procedures and alongside the Campaign for Accountability of American Bases, Barbara Penny was hit by a car leaving the base. Barbara was physically injured and the Crown Prosecution Service is currently considering whether to prosecute.

We also note that David Amos, a member of Kingston and Wandsworth Area Meeting, was physically hurt in October, while volunteering in the West Bank with the Olive Harvest Trust, when the group he was with was attacked.

We agree to note these incidents in the Court and Prison register. We hold the Friends concerned in the light.

MfS/15/12/07

Quaker faith & practice: draft amendments

Catherine James, clerk of Church Government Advisory Group, has introduced paper MfS 2015/12/03.

a). 3.27 - Authority for Public Statements

Further to minute MfS 2015/07/08, Church Government Advisory Group has reconsidered the recommended changes which were forwarded to Yearly Meeting in 2015, and has brought us a revised draft of Section 3.27, and a new paragraph to be inserted after that as 3.28, now titled 'Guidance on making public statements'.

We endorse the proposed revision as amended in the meeting and forward it to Yearly Meeting 2016 for adoption.

b). 9.05 / 9.06 - Quaker World Relations Committee

Church Government Advisory Group recommends amendments to sections 9.05 and 9.06, to reflect the change in governance by Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and the evolving relationships between the yearly meeting and the world-wide community of Quakers.

We endorse the proposed revision to sections 9.05 and 9.06 and forward it to Yearly Meeting 2016 for adoption.

c). 9.13/9.14 - Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR)

Church Government Advisory Group recommends amendments to sections 9.13 and 9.14, to reflect the change in governance by Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and the evolving relationships within the yearly meeting.

We endorse the proposed revision to Sections 9.13 and 9.14 and forward it to Yearly Meeting 2016 for adoption.

d). 13.45 to 13.57 - Prison Ministers, Visitors and Chaplains; College Chaplains

At the request of Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee and Quaker Life, Church Government Advisory Group recommends changes to sections 13.45 to 13.57, to reflect changes in government and the prison service in both England/Wales and in Scotland.

We endorse the proposed revision to Sections 13.45 to 13.57 as amended in the meeting and forward it to Yearly Meeting 2016 for adoption.

e). Friends House (London) Hospitality Limited

Friends House (London) Hospitality Limited which was created in 2007. Currently our book of discipline does not record the role and functions of the Company or its relationship to Britain Yearly Meeting. Church Government Advisory Group proposes the insertion of a new section after section 8.15, to become section 8.16 Friends

House (London) Hospitality Limited.

We endorse this new entry as Section 8.16 and to forward it to Yearly Meeting 2016 for adoption.

f). Small changes, intended to improve accuracy

Church Government Advisory Group has recommended eight minor changes, intended to increase accuracy. They are within the following sections:

3.24i	Nominations & Appointments
4.10.t	Area Meetings
4.40	Records
6.18	Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee
10.21	Conflict within the meeting
14.23	Property
14.29	Sale and other disposal of property
14.45	Friends Trusts Limited

We endorse these recommendations and forward them to Yearly Meeting for consideration and approval.

We thank Church Government Advisory Group for its detailed work on our behalf.

MfS/15/12/08 Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group

Lesley Richards, clerk of the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group, has presented a report (paper MfS2015/12/04) and spoken to us about the work it is doing.

We thank the group for its work. We expect to return to this matter tomorrow afternoon.

MfS/15/12/09 Appointments

a) Yearly Meeting Nominating Group

Brings forward the following names for service or release:

Central Nominations Committee

To serve until Yearly Meeting 2017 to fill a vacancy

Nominated:

Michael Long Northumbria AM

For release:

Dorothy Nelson Cornwall AM

We appoint our Friend and release our Friend accordingly.

b) Central Nominations Committee

Brings forward the names of the following Friends for service or release as indicated:

Quaker Housing Trust

To serve from 1 May 2016 to 30 April 2019

Re-nominated:

Christina Birch Swarthmoor (SW Cumbria) AM

Nominated:

Annie Bellinger Wirral & Chester AM
Peter Ranken North East Thames AM
Karima Brooke Oxford & Swindon AM

Quaker United Nations Committee

To serve from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018

Re-nominated:

Stan Lee South London AM

To serve from 1 January to 31 December 2016

Nominated:

Colm O Cuanachain Luton & Leighton AM

Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee

For release:

Robert Steele Chilterns AM

To serve from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018

Re-nominated:

Liz Law South East Scotland AM
Charlotte Seymour-Smith South Wiltshire AM

Nominated:

Camilla Oelman Thaxted AM
Susan Smith Oxford & Swindon AM
Caroline Kibblewhite Dorset & Wiltshire AM

Book of Discipline: Revision Preparation Group

For release from 1 May 2016:

Gerald Hewitson North Wales AM

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations

To serve from 1 January 2016 until 30 April 2017 to fill a vacancy

Nominated:

Joel Wallenberg Northumbria AM

To serve from 1 May 2016 to 30 April 2019

Re-nominated:

Rowena Lovrance	South East London AM
Ben Wood	Leeds AM
Chris Wilson	Dorset & South Wiltshire AM

Nominated:

Gillian Court	Northamptonshire AM
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The Retreat (York) General Meeting: Members

To serve from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018

Re-nominated:

John Nurse	Southern Marches AM
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Meeting for Sufferings Support Group

For release:

Robert Steele	Chilterns AM
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Meeting for Sufferings Church Government Advisory Group

To serve from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018

Re-nominated:

Catherine James	North Wales
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Northern Friends Summer Youth Events

For release:

Tom Sayles	North Scotland AM
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We appoint the Friends named and release our Friends accordingly.

We note that the following appointment was made between meetings by our clerks.

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations

To serve until 30 April 2016 to fill a vacancy

Nominated:

Chris Wilson	Dorset & South Wiltshire AM
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MfS/15/12/10

Review Group for Terms of Reference for Central Nominations Committee

Further to minutes MfS/2014/06/08 and MfS 2014/09/12, Alison Breadon and Gerald Hewitson have spoken to the report of the Review Group for Terms of Reference of Central Nominations Committee (paper MfS/2015/12/06).

We have heard read minute 2015/11/09 of our Central Nominations Committee

(CNC) which records the joint session held last week with the Review Group.

We have been reminded that 'It is a responsibility of a Christian community to enable its members to discover what their gifts are and to develop and exercise them to the glory of God' (*Qf&p* 3.22). This is a shared responsibility.

We have heard of the aims of the Review Group and that it proposes changes that are an attempt to bring out the possibilities inherent in its current function – the hope is that the Spirit will flow more dynamically and powerfully throughout the work of CNC and that, in turn, CNC will feel empowered to speak more confidently and assuredly to Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting. We are aware of the importance of the work of CNC in the life of our Yearly Meeting.

We have also heard of the importance of encouraging good nominations practice throughout our AMs and local meetings. We look forward to the work of the CNC communications sub-group in supporting this and individual Friends' 'journeys into service'.

The report of the Review Group offers suggestions, freedom and space for CNC to work out the best ways of working. These are detailed in thirteen sub-sections covering the following areas:

- Broader vision
- Resources
- Times and places of meetings
- Clerks and elders
- Terms of service
- Search groups
- Search group membership
- Formation of search groups
- No name
- Communications subgroup
- Supporting friends
- Patterns of meetings.

Subject to three amendments made in the meeting today, we accept the Terms of Reference before us and send them to Yearly Meeting for approval.

We are grateful for the offer from members of the Review Group to continue to work with the CNC clerks to help realise the vision.

We ask CNC for an update on its new way of working after there has been a year of implementation of these terms of reference.

We note that the terms of reference and way of working will be reviewed in three years' time.

We have heard that it may be helpful for Yearly Meeting to review the Yearly Meeting Nominating Group terms of reference.

We thank the Review Group for their detailed and helpful report and for their work on our behalf, and lay the Review Group down.

We send this minute to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee.

MfS15/12/11 Quaker Life Central Committee

Jocelyn Burnell, Assistant Clerk of Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC), has spoken about the work of Quaker Life Central Committee, described in paper MfS 2015/12/07.

We have been able to reflect on the work of Quaker Life during the last year as a committee, working with sub-groups and committees, with staff and with partners, focusing on supporting and strengthening our Meetings.

We have been pleased to hear of the three loans that Friends House Library has made in the past year to the V&A (photos of child migrants in Spitalfields), to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (support to German internees in WW1) and the British Library (William Penn's tract concerning the Magna Carta).

Jocelyn has told us that the Quaker Life Network has grown to 1700 members and includes many Friends who had not previously been actively involved in national work.

We have also heard of Quaker Life's consideration of the numbers of very small local meetings. There may be the possibility of closures in the future or a need for changes in our meetings' relationships and support. The responsibility of owning a building can be a great burden and yet small meetings can have a deep spiritual life. We may consider this further in our sessions on the life of our Area Meetings.

We have heard of the future plans that Quaker Life has and look forward to its working with Meeting for Sufferings using Our Faith in the Future, responding to the Call for Equality, engaging with Quaker theology and supporting Eldership and Oversight in the life of our meetings.

We thank Quaker Life for its report and its work on our behalf.

MfS/15/12/12 Book of Discipline Revision Preparation

Gerald Hewitson and Helen Rowlands have led us through an exercise considering chapter 3 of *Quaker faith & practice*, which we have found very powerful and inspiring. We encourage representatives to be advocates in their Area Meetings of the 'Reading *Quaker faith & practice*' exercise and also to promote the conference in April.

MfS/15/12/13 Reports from other European Yearly Meetings

We receive reports from Friends who represented us at the following Yearly Meetings in 2015: Belgium and Luxembourg; France; German; Ireland; Netherlands; Norway; Sweden; and Switzerland. The reports are contained in paper MfS/2015/12/09. We thank these Friends for their service and their reports.

MfS/15/12/14 Long Term Framework

Further to minute MfS 2015/09/07, we note that the Long Term Framework Working Group has prepared a final report. We have noted the key points, set out in paper MfS/2015/12/10; the full report is available on request.

We lay down the Working Group, and thank its members for their work.

MfS/15/12/15 Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

Further to minute MfS 2015/07/12 we receive minute 15/66 of West Somerset Area Meeting held on 18 July 2015.

We have been reminded of the deep concerns about the impact of the proposed agreement. We have heard of the actions being taken on this issue by a number of meetings locally and feel the need to speak out urgently against TTIP.

We forward this minute to QPSW and ask staff to take this to Government in the most appropriate way.

We also continue to encourage Friends to engage with these issues locally.

MfS/15/12/16 BYM Trustees

We receive the minutes of BYM Trustees meetings held on 11-13 September and on 13 November, and Jennifer Barraclough, clerk of BYM Trustees, has spoken to them.

Peter Ullathorne, BYM treasurer, has given us a brief summary of the financial position for 2015, an indication of the budget for 2016, and an update on the work on tax justice that has been going on over recent months.

MfS/15/12/17

Review of BYM's relationship with Listed Informal Groups

Further to minutes MfS/2014/06/12 and MfS 2014/09/15, Joycelin Dawes has spoken to the report of the Review Group on BYM's Relationship with Listed Informal Groups (paper MfS/2015/12/15).

We agree to the group's proposal for a new Quaker Recognised Bodies system.

We ask staff to take forward the implementation of this new system. We recognise that this may happen over a number of years and look forward to receiving the applications for registration of both existing Listed Informal Groups and other Quaker bodies.

We thank the review group for its work on our behalf, and lay the group down.

We forward the paper to Church Government Advisory Group and ask it to advise on amendments to *Quaker faith & practice*, and prepare text as appropriate.

MfS/15/12/18

Meeting for Sufferings Annual Report

Anne Ullathorne has presented a draft report to Yearly Meeting 2016 (paper MfS/2015/12/16). We ask our Arrangements Group to finalise the report, in the light of comments received, and forward it to Yearly Meeting.

MfS/15/12/19

Housing

We note a minute written during a Britain Yearly Meeting Housing Threshing Event held at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 11-13 September 2015. We remind ourselves of minute 25 of Yearly Meeting 2015.

We recognise the urgency of the current housing situation and encourage Friends and Meetings to consider the matters raised in this report. We expect to receive a report from Quaker Housing Trust in 2016.

MfS/15/12/20

Current affairs

Meeting together at this time, we have been aware of events elsewhere in the world.

The United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP 21, is taking place in Paris. We uphold all those working to progress a climate change agreement, and pray that the conference outcomes enable societies around the world to address poverty, migration and conflict.

The recent attacks in Paris on 13th November, and subsequent actions and events, have also been on our minds. We receive minute QWRC 15/11/20 and are glad to note that Quaker World Relations Committee have written to Friends in France Yearly Meeting at this time. We note the statement issued on 24th November, titled

'Quakers respond to terrorism', which was sent to the Prime Minister, urging the UK Government not to undertake further air strikes.

MfS15/12/22 Area Meetings

Yesterday morning, our Clerk introduced paper MfS/2015/12/08, inviting us to consider the nature and state of area meetings in Britain. We have spent time together in home groups, and have heard this morning a collation of the issues that have been raised.

We have heard of some of the common issues experienced by many area meetings: low attendance; heavy workloads on a few Friends; property matters; commitment of Friends to the local meeting rather than the area Meeting; the relationship between area meetings and trustees; why does business feel a burden rather than a spiritual exercise?

We have also heard signs of hope, where Friends are successfully building a vibrant community within the area meeting. We have also heard some suggestions that AMs might take forward. A starting point may well be a review of area meeting to develop a clear sense of purpose: - what is AM business? - what needs to be done, and when? – looking at how to build a sense of community – fellowship, fun and food.

Communication and education are both key in taking this forward.

We forward this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee and hope it will inform its developing strategy. We also encourage representatives to find ways to take it back to their AMs.

MfS/15/12/23 Closing minute

During this weekend we have lived together as a community. We have taken time to worship together, to get to know each other, and to strengthen our meeting.

We close, hoping to meet again in London on 6 February 2016.

Ethel Livermore
Clerk

Meeting for Sufferings December 2015 – Area Meetings Home Group reflections

Gathering the Threads - feedback from Bridget Walker and Jenny Mattingly

Area Meetings Now

Attendance - age
- children
- geography
- commitment

Workload - noms, clerking, treasurer

Burdens - property
- business method
- frequency of meetings

Purpose of AM - trustees
- ? being a Quaker
- what business must be done
- sense of community
- how do we develop kids?

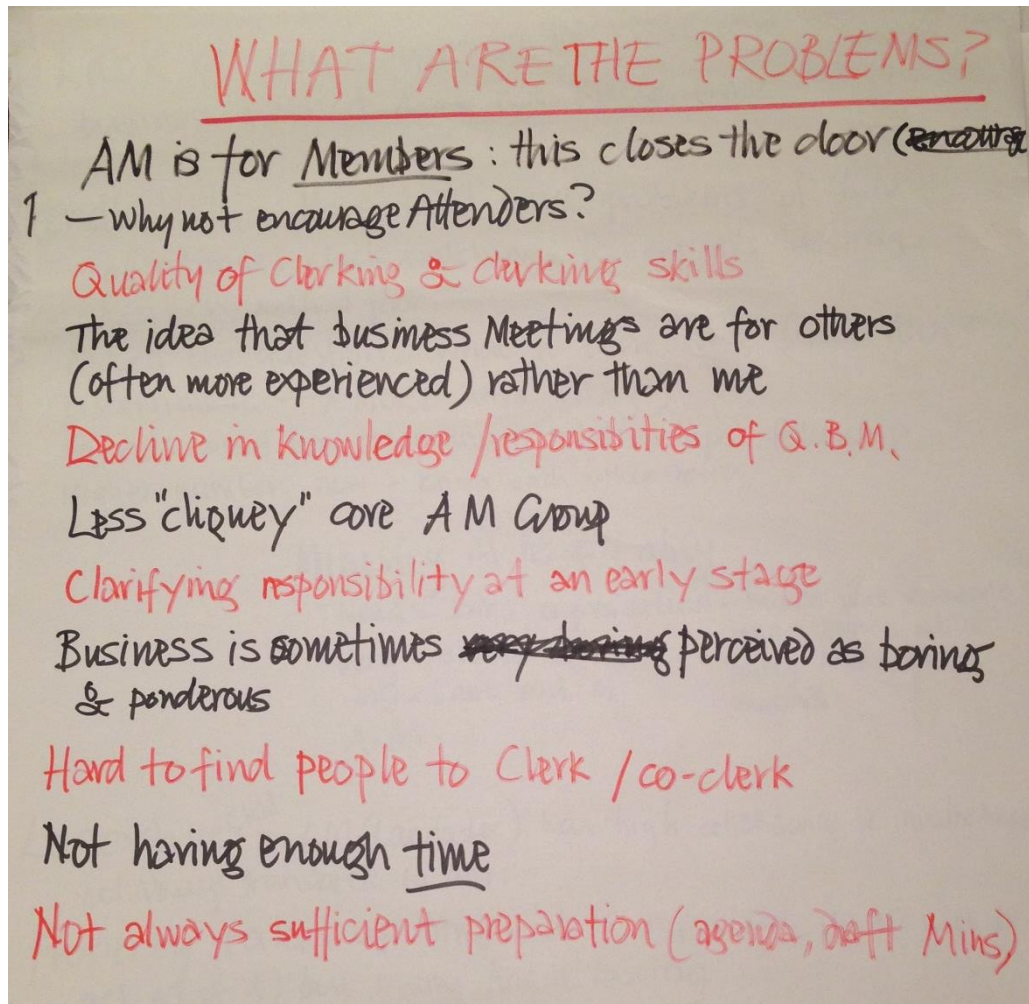
Some ways forward:

- clear sense of purpose: relationship with other Q bodies ^{LM} ^{MS}
- What is AM business?
 - How much ^{making plans to work}
 - How often ^{business} Business/gatherings
- Regular events/gatherings
 - Food + hospitality
 - special themes
 - spiritual nurture/learning
- Identify responsibilities, work out how to make jobs possible
 - sharing roles
 - IT use
- Communication - maintaining links between Q bodies

Normalizing model

Meeting for Sufferings December 2015 – Area Meetings Home Group reflections

London



Meeting for Sufferings December 2015 – Area Meetings Home Group reflections

Midlands and East of England

Centre $\xrightarrow{\text{to}}$ Suburbs
smaller growing

Large geog. area - 2hr drive
rural poor public transport

Shared clerkship

No names to follow on as clerk
Temp clerk to implement changes

 ↳ Implementation group
 (7 LM clerks)

LMs functioning well, AM not so.
 ↳ except for
 a special gathering

Happy gatherings, same core + locals when there.
Succession issues for roles. Lack of people for roles
Boring, need inspirational speakers
Trustees do the legal work, what are AMs for?
Difficult for working people

Meeting for Sufferings December 2015 – Area Meetings Home Group reflections

North and North West England

Snapshot: How is it now?

Northumbria –
4 gatherings a year; MfW + business + ^{events/activities arranged by the local meeting}
Friends are interested & want to come
The business – a Working Group meets an additional 4 times to handle some of the business
Not c. 20 but c. 80 now attend ^{Better communication of being part of a YEARLY mtg}
There seems to be a positive effect on Local Meetings but less clear ^{Feel part of a worshipping community}

Cumberland – visited Northumbria – rural travel is an issue
Impressive Also small meetings
Didn't copy Northumbria – some regrets.

Hardshaw & Mann – transport to/from IoM is v. difficult
'Standard' model 8 per yr
Poor attendance – also at local meetings
Hoped Skype would help – but not been so
Emotion of sadness around business meetings – also nearness
Hard to manage time in meetings
Business method not always great

E. Cheshire N+NW
Did use 2011 review
Had speakers
Organised social activities
Inter-visitation across the AM is important
Regional Gatherings can be more popular than AM for some AMs.

Cumbria – interest in change from 2011 – have finally managed to amalgamate 2 AMs. Still getting to know each other. Travel is hard
Still work in progress

Teesdale & Cleveland – amalgamated but still small
Lot of property to manage
Thought about 'Northumbria model' – still thinking
Lot of jobs to do – too many

Manchester & Warrington – wants to change but hasn't managed

Membership – activists attend MfW but do not wish to be in membership.

Lack of confidence to be Quaker – business method does not waste time N+NW

Pendle Hill – Have had past problems of low attendance, clock watching, feeling it's a drag, business method poor.
Asked the question: what if there were fewer AMs?
Discernment → MORE AMs (11ay) ^{to business + purely social}
Friends come for community, relationships, fellowship
Higher numbers now – know each other better

Ministry of hospitality
- Needs some organisation – make sure everyone understands what 'bring & share' means
- Very welcomed as important part of A.M.

Lancashire ^{Chal} LM (Lancaster) has high attendance & involvement not always translated to AM.
Property takes up time – it is important (ie no wish to get rid of it) but many find it boring
Feeling that 'real & life' is local, while AM has less confidence
Not necessarily a feeling of community at AM level if you are at Lancaster

Stranmillis N+NW
Have had various traumas around business method. Has held back growth. Possibly lack of understanding of Quakerism
RECAST was unhelpful
Property issues difficult
Smaller meetings may not survive
But changes would mean renewal – may be over the next!

Kendal & Sedburgh
About 30% members attend AM ^{which was not out of step with other AMs in this group}
Struggles with clerking
Strong regional meeting is positive
Property is not too troublesome
6 AMs each yr, on a Saturday.

Social geography matters –
Who are the people in the area?

Meeting for Sufferings December 2015 – Area Meetings Home Group reflections

Scotland and Wales

CHALLENGES Scotland & Wales (1)

- PUBLIC TRANSPORT ISSUES + TRAVELLING DISTANCE
- AGING MEMBERSHIP
- UPKEEP OF PREMISES *
- NOMINATIONS esp CLERKS, TREASURERS & TRUSTEES
- * UPKEEP, SIZE (TOO SMALL, NEEDS UPGRADE?)
- DECLINE IN NUMBER OF CHILDREN
- MORE ATTENDERS AS A PROPORTION
- DISBALANCE BETWEEN V. LARGE + V. SMALL REMOTE MEETINGS (TRAVEL)

OPPORTUNITIES SCOTLAND + WALES (2)

- EXPERIMENT WITH HOW CLERKING IS SHARED
- MORE ATTENDERS AS A PROPORTION
- STRENGTH OF A MEETING IS IN THE PEOPLE NOT IN NUMBERS
- ROUTINE WORK OF AM BY PHONE (ALTERNATE MTGS)
- CLUSTERS FOR ACTIVITIES
- SMALL MEETINGS TRAVELLING IN MINISTRY
- AM AS COMMUNITY / AM AS EVENT BE CLEAR IF A GATHERING; WHO HOSTING; WHO SUGGESTING THEME? (LM)
- CLERKING TEAM: SUCCESSION PLANNING

OPPORTUNITIES SCOTLAND + WALES (4)

- EVENING MTG WITH FOOD BEFOREHAND
- CONGREGATIONALISM ie BRINGING ON ATTENDERS, NURTURING THEIR DEVELOPMENT
- LISTEN TO OUR CHILDREN
- GENERAL MEETING SCOTLAND & MEETING & FRIENDS IN WALES PROVIDES A CLOSER-TO-HOME OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMUNITY
- INVITE WIDER-WORLD & VISITORS - WORKS FOR A SMALL MEETING
- VIBRANCY INITIATIVE
- USE TELEPHONE CONF. FOR NOMINATIONS
- AM ALWAYS HAVE A CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY SO PARENTS CAN COME
- CAMP DRAWS IN YOUNG
- REDUCE NO OF RULES AND SHARE JOBS
- NOMS VISIT LMS SO THEY MEET & KNOW

CHALLENGES SCOTLAND + WALES (3)

- SUCCESSION PLANNING
- DISCONNECTED LMS
- NOMINATIONS - WHEN YOU CAN'T FILL POSTS

WHAT HAS WORKED SCOTLAND + WALES (5)

- CO-CLERKING
- ? NAME 'AREA MEETING' DULL; GATHERING OF FRIENDS IN [NAME OF] BETTER
- ? "WHAT WOULD MAKE YOUR AREA MEETING UNMISSABLE"
- TELEPHONE COMMITTEE NEEDS ROUTINE MATERIAL WELL SET OUT IN DRAFT
- SHINDIG, JYM + LEAVENERS
- SUPPORTING PEOPLE LOCALLY & INDIVIDUALLY

Meeting for Sufferings December 2015 – Area Meetings Home Group reflections

South of England

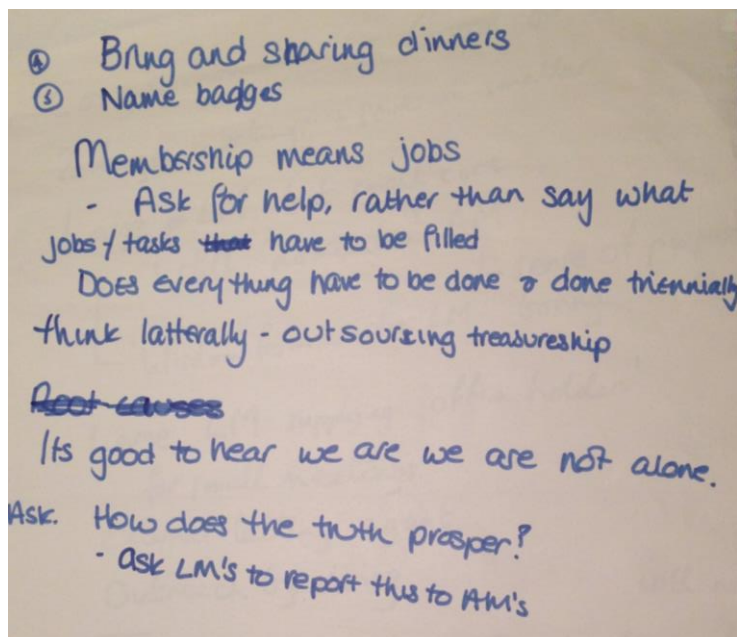
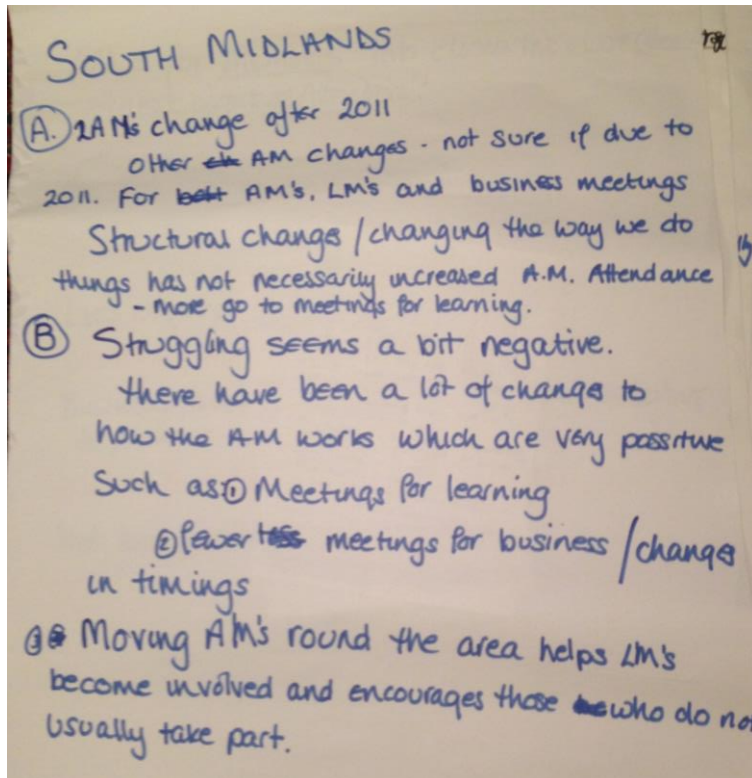
- South of England 1*
- Growing or struggling?
 - experiments with timing / Sat + Sun / affected by transport, family
 - experiment with team clerking - halted by death
 - aging Qs / younger Fds get too much to do
 - Congregationalism cause of low attendance - larger meeting less interested in other meetings
 - * - absence of children's meetings - or fewer of 8 AMs, 7 have only 2 children's meetings
 - finding a clerk - some people have done it before, or no-one is willing/experienced
 - trying experiment of correspondence clerk, + LM providing clerks for each meeting
 - * - $\frac{2}{3}$ of the 8 can fill posts ok - one shares posts with another AM (Marilyn)
 - eg Registering Officer, Prison Chaplain

- South of England 2*
- AMs are boying! despite good efforts by clerk
 - too much routine business, not much spiritual stimulation
 - experiments in time limitation, speakers, other activities
 - they need to be a day out...
 - does lower frequency of meetings inevitably mean more tedious? i.e. more routine to get through
 - congregationalism because of change from MM?
 - Northumbria model being tried: whole day, every 2 months, local meeting chooses topic, morning is for business for an hour - members area + the measure - lots processed outside AM - focusing papers - Sat or Sun
 - * - What influence does a clerk really exercise?!! confidence, energy, enthusiasm... (exhaustion...)
 - why does 'business' = boying/not spiritual for some people?

- South of England 3*
- how well does AM connect with Fds in the LM?
 - reversing the downward spiral...
 - underlying issue: we have not done enough teaching on Q structures + practice
 - how do we get to know what's really happening in LMs? needs informal opportunities to build fellowship
 - each host LM gives a 'spiritual health' report to the AM.
 - understanding what it is to have no or little paid support
 - recognising what service can mean - financial + practical
 - what about AM trustees - overall, works well (personalities...)

Meeting for Sufferings December 2015 – Area Meetings Home Group reflections

South Midlands



Meeting for Sufferings December 2015 – Area Meetings Home Group reflections

South West England

5-12-15 ①

South West Groups the AMs introduction - very busy people

- Colored brownie have read all the papers and not every band went up.
- Spoke of Es+Os &
- What does a strong growing AM look like? Some are struggling or Bink. Need to write newsletters to LM before meeting and it has retailed there.
- Nominations are a concern - don't want "nominations of desperation".
- BUT we decided to stick to the questions:
- 1. Did our AM stick to RC11 report and follow it up?
- One AM experienced it as dropping an Alkettizer into still water, inviting speakers etc. finding ways of supporting smaller meetings.
- Reduced size of AM, expanded the AM meeting into a full day, dropped the AM team of clerks and now have a clerk back for a year with apt switching each year so there is one experienced.
- Bristol had brought together scattered events

②

calendar commitments, recruiting fewer data, but longer, more productive days - well attended! But then they reverted to just "bring trainers" and attendance shrunk.

Our Arrangements Committee to support the clerks did not envision the AM.

What did work was to "act like a General Meeting" with talks & subjects, Activities can now (with the decline again) see us as come and go before there is a chance to focus on it.

- WWS meets 4 times/year meets on a Sun afternoon. Relaxed afternoon, finishing 3-4 pm. Attendance good even though a smaller AM (6 mtgs) allowing attendees to attend. "Lighten it up!". Also need to be light on our feet, to be responsive to MFS questions, etc. - WWS feels a lot on the Trustees to do a lot of business.
- Trustees can opening space for Quakers, hite.
- Now make statements more tentatively than before. Can we call extra AM mtgs?
- It's not all bad news, both success & struggle.

③ What underpins the problems?

③

relationship with Trustees can be difficult. Even just the existence of Trustees has dented the pool of people who can be clerks of AM.

- Some see AM as an awkward especially younger and new people. See as bureaucratic and administrative. Just a former Congregationalist says it can really work!
- Maybe we need to get over it? We're getting real about where we really are, and can't cling to old structures. Need to see before our last is. In the past Mostly Mtgs were just Es+Os.
- Maybe we need a different idea. Yet - How is a what can be done? growing number of friends who don't know what it means to prepare to AM? Is a Quaker.
- It's about sharing - seeing what other groups do - sharing understanding of business method.
- Meet in a central hub. More environmentally friendly
- Need to re-think what is a Quaker what tools do we need? Not be a mechanistic, be embraced.
- faith. Recognise we're not doing everything.
- We can pool strengths, so we can learn & learn from each other. Recognise AM is changing & we need to adjust, it may shrink, reduce number of mtgs to, say, 4 per year. Struggling mtgs need

④

to have + ask for help. If not enough people to do even that - start a discussion by email.

Meeting for Sufferings December 2015 – Area Meetings Home Group reflections

Yorkshire

Yorkshire Group of AMs Sat AM
BM Business Meeting

What works well (+) what are problems (-)

(-) small AM → jobs become onerous - everyone has a lot of responsibilities
(+) developing team work - jobs divided between people
- AM treasurers do LM too

(-) strongminded people - don't agree with other friends, stick in out
Central help given - who don't recognise the problems
Lie AM down? or one of strongest meetings?

(+) Well represented nationally, keep meetings lively
(-) dull, bureaucratic, stuck, strongminded people → to do smthg
(+) help from Northumbria AM, Paul Parker
(-) → 8 AM BMS → 4 AM gatherings ... didn't really work
afternoon 'spiritual renewal' ceased to happen

(+) Held on a Sunday → many more people attending
(-) Some vocal about not wanting to leave their LM on Sunday
(-) Agenda committees didn't work → laid down

(-) Difficulty of some Friends (Bosky Friends? Long standing Friends?)
to accept change
→ how can we help this change to be accepted

(+) having more threshing meetings for subjects that
need to be more 'discussed'
→ minute then sent to AM
- not always comfortable, but done with discipline → useful results.

(+) Study group from outskirts → central meeting
~~keeps members~~ higher numbers

(+) Recognising importance of communication

(+) Shorter BM by a lot of preparation before hand
→ sent out before
→ LM Clerks meet before AM to prepare
→ not giving spoken prep at BM
(-) Some people don't, but 'that's their problem'

Main issue that kept arising:
Importance of Clerks and Clerking Structure

- taking an interest in all LMs
- process of holding BM
- Clerks more 'friendly' these days (previously Friends frightened to speak)
- Maintaining BM discipline
→ can descend into arguments
- Difficult to find Clerks in first place → (getting desperate!)
- Importance of Elders to help maintain BMs

(+) Separating ~~the~~ Business and community events
(+) two LMs sharing organisation
(+) splitting up roles - teamwork
(Clerks - some ~~and~~ prefer leading meeting
some prefer behind scenes admin)

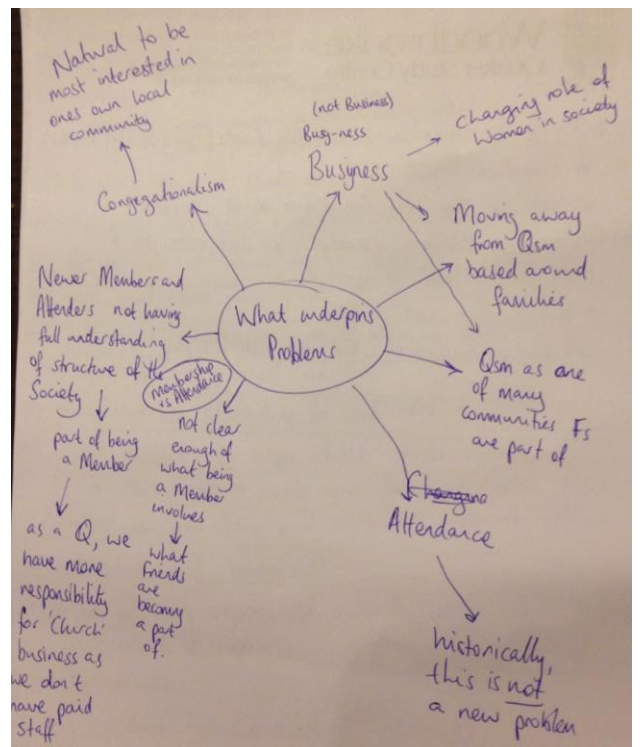
(+) Spiritual group - study groups? Really valued.
(+) Recognising challenges and working together to resolve issues
(+) Specific topic considered before BM } being reviewed
(+) espec good when personalised } too

(+) Gathering at Gledthorpe - strengthening community
espec. for very small meetings

(-) Small meetings struggling to send reps to AMs
(-) Some Members not happy about state of AM
but others do → being more positive about
what we are doing and continual revision

(-) still stuck, dull, bureaucratic
(+) A lot of very experienced older Friends
→ wealth of expertise

(-) Engagement
(+) Very enthusiastic Clerk (and ✓ efficient)
(+) Really cares about spiritual aspects of AM
(-) Congregationalism → people ~~was~~ not seeing AM as as important
→ is AM a community?



Meeting for Sufferings December 2015 – Area Meetings
Home Group Posters



FIND HOPE HERE
I AM AKTIV
IN
A M
R U?
fun food & Friends
Dates — — — —

Come to
AREA
MEETING

you don't know **WHO**
you might meet !!

'Ask not what
your Area Meeting
can do for you:
Ask what you
can do for your
Area Meeting.'

**FUN! FOOD! (AND
FELLOWSHIP...)**
— not to mention some spiritual nurture

**All at Much Blathering
Area Meeting**

AREA MEETING
 2-4pm
 DISCERN COMMUNITY
 MEET Friends (old + new)

DIVE ON PILES OF CUSHIONS

SOUP

CAKE

ENJOY!

YOUR AREA

Little Wallop LM

and food

Welcome

Bringing our friends

Bringing our dogs

YOUR MEETING

WIDEN YOUR CIRCLE of FRIENDS

AREA MEETING IS WHERE IT HAPPENS! BUT IT WON'T HAPPEN WITHOUT YOU!!



(... scan here...)

NORTHUMBRIA AREA MEETING

CHANGING OUR WAYS – REVITALISING AREA MEETING

Northumbria Area Meeting

Northumbria Area Meeting comprises eight Local Meetings. Newcastle, Alnwick, Monkseaton, Sunderland, Durham, Allendale, Hexham, Stocksfield. Newcastle is the oldest, dating from the 1670s and Hexham the newest, dating from the 1990s. Our last Tabular Statement recorded 253 members, 134 Attenders, a total of 387. Newcastle, the biggest, accounts for 38% and Allendale, the smallest, 3%.

In 2013 we are a different Area Meeting from what we were a year or two ago – why have we changed, how did we do it and what exactly do we do that might be different?

Before we began the process of change we were much like other Area Meetings. We met as a Monthly Meeting eight times a year moving from Meeting to Meeting. We dealt with the full range of Area Meeting responsibilities as described in Quaker Faith and Practice. It's quite a list! We met on Saturday afternoons, with occasional morning sessions on a Quaker theme or hosting a visiting speaker. And the Friends who attended were the hardy perennials, the stalwarts. Friends who saw Area Meeting as a responsibility of being a member, but also enjoyed the opportunity to greet old friends and "... to see each other's' faces ...". We rarely saw new faces. We rarely saw children. And the business quite often was prolonged and difficult. But the business was done, and done in good, sound Gospel Order - we were, and are a disciplined Area Meeting.

The Process of Change

The process of change began with a concern raised at Area Meeting from Alnwick LM. Alnwick Friends, a small Meeting, felt geographically isolated and wanted to be a bigger part of the Area Meeting. Alnwick Friends sensed that Area Meeting was focussed too much on its business and not enough on raising the spirits of Friends. Alnwick Friends believed that the Area Meeting could or should address the strategic challenges expressed for the Society in Yearly Meeting's Framework for the Future 2009/2014.

The need for change was consolidated by messages brought back by our representatives to Meeting for Sufferings in 2011. Sufferings wished to communicate better with Area Meetings and to give greater support to Area Meetings, knowing that many Area Meetings were having difficulties in attracting Friends to their Meetings and the spirit was drowning in the business.

These two significant prompts echoed a sense within Area Meeting that our spiritual lives could be enriched and our business made more effective if we could find a more sympathetic way of managing our Area Meeting responsibilities. We also realised that Quaker Faith & Practice is not prescriptive about the shape or format of an Area Meeting. It does describe the Area Meeting responsibilities, but does not guide Area Meetings on how they might be discharged. There is no quorum for an Area Business Meeting ... "quorum" is not in the Quaker lexicon, or in Quaker Faith and Practice.

During 2011 Area Meeting managed a wide consultation with its Local Meetings. We outlined Alnwick LM's concerns. We described Meeting for Sufferings' concerns. We asked each Local Meeting to hold conversations about the need for change and to offer to Area Meeting suggestions as to how matters might be improved. The consultation bore fruit. Local Meetings responded positively with commentary and ideas for the future. At Area Meeting in January 2012 we were

able to look at six clear proposals for change and from that Area Meeting, with just a few gentle, Quakerly tweaks along the way we have Northumbria Area Meeting as it is practised today.

Six features of the Northumbrian Way

1. Area Meetings are held on Sundays

A simple change. But with a surprising outcome. Quieter journeys to Area Meeting. A perceptive peacefulness which leads one through the day. And Sunday Area Meeting releases Saturdays for family stuff and the parking battles with Saturday shoppers. Friends are in the habit of being God and Quaker centred on First Day. It also enables Friends to join the host Local Meeting in its Sunday Meeting for Worship. This can re-energise Friends in small meetings.

2. Area Meeting meets four times a year ... not eight.

3. Local Meeting Partnerships

Eight Local Meetings are paired with a neighbouring Local Meeting to form four partnerships. This spreads the challenge of arranging the Area Meeting. Local Meetings have the opportunity to host an Area Meeting every two years – a welcome lessening of the not insignificant burden on small Meetings of being hospitable to Area Meeting once a year as previously.

4. The Alnwick Model Area Meeting

The Alnwick Model for Area Meeting on the Sunday was adopted. Its key features?

- Overnight accommodation is offered to enable Friends to join the Area Meeting hosts in morning worship. Other are Friends are also encouraged to join morning Meeting for Worship.
- Following Worship from 10.00am, a short refreshment break. A presentation, exhibition or speaker. Shared lunch. A spiritual exercise to put the Friends in a frame of mind to approach important matters.
- A smaller and shorter Area Business Meeting - that is, from 3.15pm in the afternoon.
- A big and inclusive welcome for children and children's events.

5. Area Meeting Working Group

The most significant change, perhaps, has been the creation of an Area Meeting Working Group. A term, I confess borrowed from town and parish council practice. Its key task is to absorb as much of the routine business away from the day set aside for getting to know each other as Friends, friends and as spiritual adventurers.

To understand the idea of the Working Group we have agreed **Terms of Reference** for the Working Group. In summary *see Appendix 1*, Working Group aims to progress routine items of business. To assess which business to forward to full Area Meeting. To commission our Learning Development Group to create and manage learning and development events and learning materials. To comprise, significantly, at least a named representative and alternate from each local meeting as well as a Trustee, a Standing Nominations Committee representative, an Elder, an Overseer, the Area Meeting Clerking team, a Meeting for Sufferings representative and a member of our Learning Development Committee. But all of us committed to being at Working Group. To communicate and report back to our Local Meeting or Group.

Working Group is NOT exclusive. It is open to any interested Friend to attend.

Significantly, to meet four times a year, in the month preceding full Area Meeting. This enables Area Meeting business to progress easier over the calendar year with no big gaps between business gatherings. There is a commitment to test a Virtual Working Group model to circumvent the geographical divides in our Area.

Additionally, we have agreed - after further consultation at Area Meeting and with Local Meetings and with our several Groups - a **Table of Responsibilities** see *Appendix 2* and lines of communication between the Working Group and Area Meeting.

This model, I think, lends itself to other Area Meetings if they adopt the idea of a Working Group, to agree the content of their own Table of Responsibilities. So far, our Table seems to work fine, for us.

6. Learning Development Committee

The final change has been to strengthen our Learning Development Committee. That is, with a representative from each Local Meeting - as well as any experienced Friends. The committee is tasked with telling us how our Area Meeting works, how it fits in the wider context of the Society of Friends, and producing events and publications which move our spirits.

How are our New Arrangements Working?

Area Meeting Working Group

Our Area Meeting Working Group meets four times a year at the same central venue in Newcastle. Each Local Meeting so far, has been represented at all Working Group Meetings. We appoint a proxy should a Local Meeting be unable to send a representative or alternate. Each Group, including Elders, Overseers and Trustees - so far, has been represented at all Working Group Meetings. Quakers with several hats means that Working Group has about 12 to 16 Friends attending. It feels relaxed and comfortable and is less discursive than bigger, fuller Area Meetings. We run from 6.15pm and usually finish between 7.15pm and 8.30pm. Friends can be tasked with jobs. Friends are reporting back to their Local Meeting or Groups. The Clerking Team circulate Minutes and papers to Local Meetings and some 120 Friends within two days of Working Group - circulating Minutes, Reports and Papers is an invaluable key to participation.

Area Meetings on Sundays

Our [Sunday] Area Meetings meet four times a year. We have had six so far. Our seventh is coming up in December, 2013. Participation in terms of numbers has risen to 70, then 80, then 90. Friends and young people attending. Our smallest so far has been 45, constrained only by the size of their chosen venue. Our latest, in September 2013 attracted 60 Friends. We have seen many new faces. We have seen many children – more than 20 on one occasion.

The programmes are devised and presented by the paired Local Meetings. There is no set criteria for what their occasion may be about, what it might contain or its format of the presentation. We have had puppet shows challenging our attitudes to Trident. We have created playlets challenging our attitudes to and experience of economic injustices. We have held discussion groups, worship sharing and workshops – including community singing, creative writing - and free taster sessions of complementary medicine. We have had visiting speakers – Alex Davison and “Blooming Quakers”, Sue Holden on Economic Justice. We have heard from Andrew Greaves on the

Pilgrimage for Peace and Economic Justice from Iona to London in the summer of 2013. It really has been creative, novel and indeed spiritually uplifting.

The Business Meeting from 3.15pm with its main focus on membership matters – the sending of Loving Greetings, application visitor reports, Testimonies to the Grace of God, ministry about Friends who have recently passed away – has been deep, moving and powerful. We have been grieving for dear Friends who have died. We have been tested by membership applications from prisoners serving long sentences in local jails. We have been delighted by Visitor Reports on attenders ... who we always knew to be Friends. We hear “How Truth is Prospering” in our Local Meetings. These are our annual reports from our Local Meetings and are often rich in content and stories of good Friends working hard for their Meetings, reaching in and reaching out.

The children have been fully involved in all aspects of the Area Meeting programmes and have brought a refreshing and enthusiastic dynamic to our gatherings. Hospitality is shared between paired meetings. We have discovered plain brown paper Picnic Bags - a sandwich, a piece of fruit, a juice drink, and a packet of crisps. And then, of course ... Area Meeting Tea afterwards, with cake.

Conclusion

What we have done in Northumbria Area Meeting isn't radical or revolutionary – or disrespectful to tradition. We have responded to an expressed need for better opportunities for spiritual development and to get to know each other as Friends – “... to see each other's faces ...”. This led to a look at Quaker Faith and Practice and a realisation that how Area Meetings conduct their business is not prescribed – though the matters of Area Meeting business are described. Our view is that we are at liberty - or have the freedom - to find a way of managing our business which is best for us.

The outcome has been that we have created space for spiritual development and have been able to facilitate Area Meetings events which have achieved much more participation by a wider range of Friends - and from all age groups. These new Area Meetings have all-age activities, speakers from within and without and workshops. Our practice so far, is to have these inspirational days four times a year. And, so far, they have measured up to our hopes that they would be busy, varied, engaging, inclusive, inspiring and FUN.

The mechanism or device which released our energies for our new Area Meetings is our Area Meeting Working Group. The components are appointed representatives - and alternates - from each Local Meeting who have made a commitment to attending Working Group regularly, and also representatives from Area Meeting Trustees, Elders, Overseers, Standing Nominations Committee, Meeting for Sufferings and our Learning Development Committee. In them we place great trust! As all of our Area Meetings do with their own Trustees. As all our Area Meetings do in respecting and trusting the Trustees of Britain Yearly Meeting.

We are not delegating responsibility to our Working Group. Working Group is NOT taking power over our affairs, that remains firmly with Area Meeting. We are trusting Working Group to absorb those matters of routine business which can be dealt with more effectively and efficiently by a smaller group of Friends.

What those matters are has been agreed within the wider Area Meeting through a careful, step by step process of consultation with Local Meetings. The end product has been our so-called Table of Responsibilities which sets out those matters best dealt with by Area Meeting or the Working Group. So far, it is working for us as we hoped.

A crucial dimension is that of communication.

Representatives at Working Group are expected to report back at the earliest opportunity to their Local Meeting or other Group. The Clerks send out early Agendas before the Meetings. Minutes are sent out to Local Meetings within two days of Working Group. Paper copies of reports heard or received at Working Group are also sent out. We also have a wide email circulation list which includes about half of our Members. This ensures, we believe, that Friends are informed about business which is running through Area Meeting and able to note the changes which our Minutes record.

So how are we doing? Not too bad.

We are currently reviewing our new arrangements to see if we carry them into the future. Early indications are that the new arrangements are working as we hoped. That is, Working Group is effectively absorbing routine business. And our spirit-led gatherings are providing for our spiritual hunger.

The challenges lie in the simple logistics of Local Meetings of varying sizes in being able to cope with large numbers of Friends arriving at their Meeting for Worship, hoping for lunch and ready for a spiritual adventure. This is partly solved by our partnering several Local Meetings together to facilitate these days. For example, three in Local Meetings in Tynedale come together. If we, as an Area Meeting, have work to do it in is this matter of logistics – and indeed, catering.

And finally, do take time to consider how your Area Meeting arranges its business. Do trust your Friends in your Meetings. They have much to offer. They seek no reward. Is there a better, simpler way of handling your business?

Change is always a challenge – but taken in time and at a pace comfortable with your members it can happen. Changes does prompt you to look more closely at what you do, why you do it and what spiritual direction you might wish to travel.

Getting to know our Friends in the spirit, not just in the business, has been really beautiful and enriching. Seeing so many children ... and watching them work together ... is exciting and hopeful for our Area Meeting and for the Society of Friends. The collaboration between meetings takes away some of that isolation that smaller meetings experience.

Friends across our Area Meeting are expressing great joy having experienced the simple, but profound, experience of working together.

Michael Long

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Area Meeting Working Group is enabled by Area Meeting to:

- a. **Progress** routine items of Area Meeting business. This is defined in “Table of Responsibilities”
- b. **Assess** which business to forward to full Area Meeting. This is defined in Table of Responsibilities”.
- c. **Commission** Learning Development Group to initiate learning or spirit led events and to develop learning materials to inform our Local Meetings.
- d. **Meet** on the first Tuesday in the in the month preceding Area Meeting. Members attending regularly and committed to their responsibilities. To meet at time and place at the discretion of the Group.
- e. **Test** the benefits of virtual Working Group Meetings and discussions as a means to more effective communication.
- f. **Communicate** from and back to constituent groups. This is essential if Area Meeting Working Group is to be effective.
- g. **Comprise** Area Meeting Clerk, Area Meeting Assistant Clerk, a Trustee, a member of Learning Development Committee, a Meeting for Sufferings representative, an Elders & Overseers representative, a representative from Standing Nominations Committee and a representative from each Local Meeting.

Finding Visitors to Applicants for Membership

We have reconsidered the matter of finding Visitors to applicants for membership of the Society.

Following discernment we have agreed that in finding Visitors to applicants for membership the following guidelines should apply.

1. The Area Meeting Clerk is the first point of contact for an application for membership.
2. The Area Meeting Clerk will approach the applicant’s Local Meeting Elders to find a Friend from that Meeting as the first Visitor.
3. Elders of the Local Meeting, knowing the applicant, will then approach the Elders of another Local Meeting to find the name of the second Visitor.
4. Once the two Visitors are found their names should be brought by the applicant’s Local Meeting Elders to Area Meeting Working Group for appointment.

We note that Area Meeting has clear “Guidelines for Visitors” which is provided for Visitors and applicants.

We remind ourselves and we advise Local Meetings that any Member may be a Visitor, and not just Elders and Overseers.

Agreed at Area Meeting May 2012 from Minute 14 5/12

TABLE OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Business Management	Working Group	Area Meeting
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications • Appointment of Visitors • Loving Greetings • Transfers In • Transfers Out • Data, including preparation of Tabular Statement • Bi-annual Membership Lists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor Reports • Loving Greetings • Membership recording, including deaths, marriages • Sign off Tabular Statement
Trustees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees' Reports – actions from Area Meeting 	<i>From SNC</i> Appointment of Trustees Trustees' Reports
Treasurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AM Budget • Other financial matters 	<i>From SNC</i> Appointment of Treasurer AM Annual Report and Accounts
Registering Officer		<i>From SNC</i> Appointment of Registering Officer
Prison Ministers		<i>From SNC</i> Appointment of Prison Ministers
Elders & Overseers		<i>From SNC</i> Appointment of Elders & Overseers
Records		<i>From SNC</i> Appointment of Custodian of Records
Nominations	<i>To Standing Nominations Committee</i> Other events of concern	<i>To Standing Nominations Committee</i> Other events of concern
Appointments	<i>From Standing Nominations Committee:</i> Appointment to annual, regular and new events	
Meeting for Sufferings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions from Area Meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting for Sufferings - Reports
Local Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referring actions from Working Group and Area Meetings to Local Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Report "How Is Truth Prospering?"
Learning Development Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>From SNC:</i> Appointments, Commissioning, Evaluating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to Host Local Meeting
Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receipt of Area Meeting Minutes • Receipt of Learning Development Committee Minutes • Receipt of Minutes from Local Meetings • Working Group Minutes to: Area Meeting; Local Meeting Clerks; AM Trustees; SNC; Treasurer, MfS Reps, Elders & Overseers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receipt of Working Group Meeting Minutes • Area Meeting Minutes to: Working Group; Local Meeting Clerks; AM Trustees; SNC; Treasurer; MfS Reps, Elders & Overseers
Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive Reports, including from AM Groups • Assess and refer if appropriate to Area Meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To hear reports recommended by Working Group Meeting • To hear reports specifically for Area Meeting, including BYM, BYM Gathering, JYM and Summer Shindig
Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To hear concerns in the first instance • To forward concerns to Area Meeting, if appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To refer concerns to Working Group • To hear concerns sent from Working Group and to discern appropriate action, including, forwarding to Meeting for Sufferings.
New and Impending Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing, and recommending to Area Meeting • Appropriate Actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate Actions