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Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of
Friends (Quakers) in Britain

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

15 November 2017

Dear Friends,

Our meeting on 2 December runs in parallel with the Young People's Participation Day and so I hope that you know who will be attending this from your Area meeting and that you have shared information about arrangements for travel and for lunch (we are hoping there will be a good opportunity for inter-generational dialogue informally over lunch!). We will be meeting in the Large Meeting House and the young people will be with us for opening and for closing worship.

You will see from the agenda that the main item that we must consider is the report from the Book of Discipline Review Preparation Group (paper 07), which we will take in the morning. The recommendations are fairly clear in the report but we should consider them prayerfully. There is the main recommendation that the time is right for a review to be undertaken and then the group recommends additional guidance as to the revision. What does Meeting for Sufferings think about these and what do we wish to say to YM 2018 in this regard?

We also expect to receive a revised Sanctuary Everywhere manifesto that we will consider (paper 09, which will be circulated in a second mailing) and, if so moved, can adopt within our minutes. We have four minutes from Area Meetings (paper 6a) and there is guidance in the papers as to what we expect to do with these at this meeting in December.

Included in the papers (paper 14) is a draft of the annual report to be sent by us to Yearly Meeting 2018 – there will need to be additions following our December meeting but we need to approve this in principle. Are there any specific changes needed otherwise? We will also be hearing from General Meeting of Scotland and Meeting of Friends in Wales to help us know each other better throughout Britain Yearly Meeting and we receive some amendments to Quaker Faith and Practice from our Church Government Advisory Group but these should be self-explanatory. We may not have time to do more than receive the reports from European Yearly Meetings but I hope you find these interesting as we are part of the world family of friends.

A letter is attached for your own benefit, giving guidance on data protection for us, members of Meeting for Sufferings, in accordance with BYM policy – again it should be self-explanatory. However if you have any queries or doubts, about this or any

other business connected to Sufferings and your role as a representative, please get in touch via sufferings@quaker.org.uk

So plenty to prepare for, Friends, and I look forward to our meeting in December.

In peace



Anne Ullathorne,
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

Papers enclosed with this mailing
Agenda
MfS Forward Agenda
MfSAG November 2017 meeting minutes
MfS 2017 12 05 Court and Prison Register
MfS 2017 12 06a Minutes received from Area Meetings
MfS 2017 12 06c Church Government Advisory Group
MfS 2017 12 07 Revision of the Book of Discipline
MfS 2017 12 10 Meeting of Friends in Wales
MfS 2017 12 11 European Yearly Meeting reports
MfS 2017 12 12 Quaker Recognised Bodies
MfS 2017 12 13a Operational Group budget 2017
MfS 2017 12 13b BYM Trustees minutes September 2017
MfS 2017 12 14 Meeting for Sufferings Annual Report
Data safety information

the following papers will be made available in a second mailing:
MfS 2017 12 09 Sanctuary Everywhere Manifesto (2nd mailing)
MfS 2017 12 13c BYM Trustees minutes November 2017 (2nd mailing)

n.b. the following paper/s will be available on the day of the meeting:
MfS 2017 12 03 Membership
MfS 2017 12 08 Appointments

Data Protection

Meeting for Sufferings

Britain Yearly Meeting Data Protection Policy
An update to Meeting for Sufferings representatives

As a member of a committee, covered by Britain Yearly Meeting's data registration you need to be aware of the Yearly Meeting's policy on data protection.

Data which you collect for your own use, including minutes of committee meetings and membership information (including personal details of members of your committee) must be kept and used in accordance with Britain Yearly Meeting's data protection policy.

You must obtain explicit permission for the listing or processing of personal data from individuals who are not members or for details of children and young people under 18.

Guidance on data safety, including the BYM policies is given in Data Safety and Information Security Guidance Notes for meetings (4th edition 2014).
In brief, the main guidance for committees is:

- Contact information about members may be used by the constituent bodies of the Yearly Meeting for their legitimate business. It is accepted that lists of committee members' contact information may also be used to help members contact one another and be shared with other central or standing committees as appropriate to facilitate the centrally managed work.

- Information on attenders and non-member partners may also be held but used only with their explicit consent. Information on children and young people under 18 may only be used with the consent of their parents or guardians.

- All members of BYM have a responsibility to protect personal information that they collect. This includes contact lists, books of members, papers, electronic files and information held by your meeting, committee, staff or passed to other organisations.

- You are responsible for ensuring that the principles of data protection are observed if you delegate responsibility for maintaining a membership or mailing list or other records or for completing the compliance form to another person – a member of the meeting, committee or to staff. If you ask another organisation to use the personal details that you hold, for example to produce an address list or a mailing, you need to make it clear to them what they can and cannot do with the information that you provide to them.

If you have any further queries, please contact Graham Spackman, Communications Officer, grahams@quaker.org.uk

Yearly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends
(Quakers) in Britain

Agenda information

Meeting for Sufferings 2 December 2017

Large Meeting House, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ

	Item	Paper
09.00	**Arrivals**	
10.00	**Session starts**	
1	**Opening worship** We will be joined for opening and closing worship by members of the Young People's Participation Day.	
2	**Welcome and introductions**	
3	**Membership (Tabled paper)**	**MfS 2017 12 03** (to note)
4	**Agenda** Adoption and acceptance of the agenda	
5	**Court & Prison Register**	**MfS 2017 12 05** (for information)
6	**Minutes received from Area Meetings** • **Kendal & Sedbergh AM** regarding *For The Common Good.* • **Devon AM** and **Sussex East AM** asking that BYM Trustees exclude investments in any company that is profiting from the occupation of the West Bank. • **Sussex East AM** asking that Quakers nationally undertake legal action regarding the payment of taxes for terrorism and war. • **Staffordshire AM** regarding concern about the poverty of the public services in the UK. **Minutes received from other bodies** • **Church Government Advisory Group** regarding proposed changes to *Quaker faith & practice*.	**MfS 2017 12 06a** (to forward to other bodies for attention) **MfS 2017 12 06b** (to approve)

	Short Break (please hold the silence in the meeting room)	
7	**Review of the Book of Discipline** Adwoa Bittle, Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group Assistant Clerk, will speak to the Group's report.	**MfS 2017 12 07** (for decision)
12.30	**Lunch in the restaurant**	
	Informal lunchtime gatherings • Meet the clerks of both General Meeting for Scotland & Meeting of Friends in Wales, both in Waldo Williams. • Meet members of the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group in Ada Salter 1 • 'God, words and us' - book launch in the Quaker Centre Bookshop, with Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group	
8 **13.45**	**Appointments (Tabled paper)**	**MfS 2017 12 08** (for approval)
9	**Sanctuary Everywhere Manifesto** To expect to receive the manifesto from Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee *(an anticipated minute, which will be circulated as a late paper)*	**MfS 2017 12 09** (for decision)
10	**General Meeting for Scotland & Meeting of Friends in Wales** Adwoa Bittle, clerk of General Meeting for Scotland, and Christine Trevett, clerk of Meeting of Friends in Wales, will present reports.	**MfS 2017 12 10** (for information)
11	**Reports from other European Yearly Meetings** To receive reports from Friends appointed to attend other European Yearly Meetings as BYM representatives in 2017.	**MfS 2017 12 11** (for information)
12	**Quaker Recognised Bodies** To register some further Quaker Recognised Bodies.	**MfS 2017 12 12** (for approval)
	Short Break (please hold the silence in the meeting room)	
13	**BYM Trustees report** Ingrid Greenhow, clerk of BYM Trustees, and Peter Ullathorne, BYM Treasurer, will update MfS on the operational plan and budget headlines and speak to the minutes of their September & November meetings (*minutes of the latter will be circulated as a late paper **MfS 2017 12 13c***).	**MfS 2017 12 13a, b and c** (for information)
14	**Meeting for Sufferings draft Annual Report** Margaret Bryan, assistant clerk of Meeting for Sufferings, will introduce this report.	**MfS 2017 12 14** (for approval)
15	**Young People's Participation**	

	A chance to hear about the Young People's Participation day activities, before shared closing worship.	
	Closing worship	
16.00	**Close. Tea, coffee and departures**	

MEETING FOR SUFFERINGS FORWARD AGENDA – Dec 2017

The following items are currently proposed or being considered by Arrangements Group for our final meeting in 2017. These plans may change.

Representatives will see that reports from all four standing committees are now scheduled to come to the same meeting. Arrangements Group sees this as an opportunity for MfS to consider all the work together; and hopes this will help MfS in its role of setting priorities across the centrally-managed work.

Feb '18	Report from **Quaker Life Central Committee** Review of **BYM Sustainability Group** **Yearly Meetings:** YM 2018 agenda; note names of clerks for YM 2019; dates of YM 2020
April '18	Final report of the **Group to Review Appeals Procedures** **Letter to Ireland YM**
July '18	**New Triennium: induction** **Yearly Meeting 2018**: reflections and follow-up
Oct '18	with the **Young People's Participation Day** **Diversity and inclusion**
Nov '18	**Residential weekend, Woodbrooke** **Reports from:** • Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee • Quaker Life Central Committee • Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations • Quaker World Relations Committee

Other matters expected to return in due course:

- **Pastoral and spiritual support to people who are not able to regularly attend local meetings** – sent to Quaker Life, for advice in February 2015
- **Gender Equality and the Tabular Statement** – sent to Recording Clerk March 2015
- **Government sponsorship of Cadet Forces in Scottish State Schools** – forwarded to QPSWCC in October 2016
- **Integrity, accountability and truth in public affairs** – QPSWCC has indicated it is considering this and may wish to come back
- **Central decision-making processes in BYM** – sent to MfS Arrangements Group in July 2017

Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ
3rd November 2017

Minutes

Present: Margaret Bryan (convenor), Ursula Fuller, Sue Goodson, Anne Ullathorne Juliet Prager and James Johnson, Cat Waitaka (item 5 only)

Prevented: Jane Pearn

1. Welcomes and Introductions
Jane Pearn has asked General Meeting for Scotland for release from her appointment as MfS representative, for health reasons. As this is very late in the triennium we recognise that it may not be possible to find another Friend to serve. We would welcome a new appointment as soon as practical; our next arrangements group is on 2 March.

2. Reflections on MfS in Manchester
We have received feedback from the MfS Support Group and also some responses to the survey of reps. The response to meeting outside London was generally positive.

Feedback received so far will help us plan any future meetings.

3. Meetings attended by clerks
The MfS Clerk(s) have attended meetings as follows:
8-10 September Book of Discipline Review preparation group
16-17 September QLCC
13-15 October QL Rep Council, plus 3 x clerks meeting
3 November YMAC clerks

Ursula Fuller also attended part of YMAC's meeting on our behalf on 28 October.

4. Forward Agenda
We have reviewed our forward agenda and note that QLCC, at their request, will not be reporting to us in December 2017 but in February 2018.

We agreed to the proposal to receive all the Central Committee reports together at our residential meetings in November 2018 and October 2019 and to continue to review this with the Central Committee clerks.

5. Planning December's agenda
Cat Waitaka joined us for this item, and we made arrangements for the day.

6. MfS Handbook
We ask Anne Ullathorne, in liaison with Ann Banks (support group) to bring a revised draft to our January meeting.

7. MfS report 2017
We considered the first draft of a report to YM in May and made some amendments. There will be further additions after MfS on 2 December.

8. Data protection
We received an update on the BYM Data protection policy.

8. Date and time of next meetings (11-3.30pm)
8 January 2018
2 March 2018
21 May 2018

Margaret Bryan
Convenor

Court & Prison Register

Introduction
Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) was established in 1676, to consider the sufferings experienced by Quakers for their faith. Gradually the practice of recording Friends' names in the 'Great book of Sufferings' lapsed; but in 1997 MfS decided to maintain a register of Friends before the courts or imprisoned for matters of conscience.

In advance of this meeting, we have received two communications relevant to the court and prison register.
a) Ian Bray (Brighouse West Yorkshire Area Meeting)
b) Barbara Penny (York Area Meeting)

a) Ian Bray

Ian Bray, an attender at Huddersfield Meeting (Brighouse West Yorkshire AM) was arrested in London on 30th October, as part of an action undertaken by 'Rising Up' to highlight air pollution in London. Along with three others, he pleaded not guilty to charges of criminal damage and obstruction of the highway, and was sentenced to one week in prison.

b) Barbara Penny

In December 2015 (minute MfS/15/12/06 refers) Meeting for Sufferings recorded that in August 2015, 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. Further to this, York Area Meeting has sent the following minute:

York AM held at Thirsk 9 September 2017

Min. 4 Quaker witness: Barbara Penny v Steven Higgins in Leeds Crown Court
York AM Min 2015.9.31 recorded the injury sustained by our Friend Barbara Penny of Harrogate LM on 11 Aug 2015 in the course of her Quaker witness outside the Menwith Hill American Air Base near Harrogate.

Further to this matter, the driver of the vehicle which injured her, has been prosecuted for Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH). Barbara Penny, with additional comment from Lindis Percy, has given us a strong flavour of the trial itself. Steven Higgins was found not guilty of GBH at Leeds Crown Court on 17 August 2017.

Both our Friends feel comfort in their inner conviction of the truth of what happened. We have heard from others present at the trial that Barbara succeeded in twice making clear to the court that her peaceful protest was grounded in Quaker testimony. We are very glad to hear of Barbara's inner strength in now feeling able to move forward in faith.

We offer our loving care to Barbara and to all those continuing their Quaker witness outside the Menwith Hill base. We send this minute to update Meeting for Sufferings.

Barbara Windle, Clerk

Meeting for Sufferings 2017 12 02 – AM minutes received

a) Staffordshire AM minute 07/2017/8 regarding concern about the poverty of the public services in the UK.

b) Kendal & Sedbergh AM Minute 17.09.07 from the AM held on 17 September regarding *For The Common Good.*

c) Devon AM minute 80/2017 asking that BYM Trustees exclude investments in any company that is profiting from the occupation of the West Bank.

d) Sussex East AM minute 70.17 in support of the previous minute from Devon AM.

e) Sussex East AM minute 68.17 from the AM held on 14 October asking that Quakers nationally undertake legal action regarding the payment of taxes for terrorism and war.

a) Staffordshire AM held 8 July 2017

Minute 07/2017/8 - Concern about the Poverty of the public services in the UK

"We learn almost daily of the difficulties affecting our public services from reports written by official, authoritative, non-political bodies. The NHS, including Mental Health provision, is a "burning platform"; bed-blocking in the NHS happens because of a shortage of care facilities in the community (where care for the elderly has been greatly reduced); the police are short of officers and other staff; the prison service lacks so many officers that prisons are dangerous; state schools ask parents for money to support basic educational activities; social housing is grossly deficient and support for the youth service, libraries, parks, sports facilities and the arts is reduced or ended.

All these public services are struggling to be viable; some have reached the tipping point. Yet we have often been told, particularly in the referendum debate, that the UK is the fifth richest country in the world. These two facts should not go together, but the society we have created is competitive rather than co-operative. It is clear that our public life is being impoverished by an ideology of selfishness when it comes to the funding of our public services. There is a risk that continued refusal to listen to these warnings, coupled with continued austerity, will seriously damage the fabric of community life in Britain and will create an even more unequal society.

Though organisation and attitudes are important, as a society and nation we must realise we can only get the services we pay for. Surely the time has come for us to re-invest in our public life. If that means asking, first, the better-off to pay more tax and, next the government to ring-fence that extra income for the services mentioned, then so be it. We recognise that other approaches beside putting in more money need to be addressed.

Thirty years on we refer back to Yearly Meeting in 1987 when a public statement was issued on inequality and its effects; (*Qf&p* 23.21). Our Quaker testimonies to equality, peace and truth would justify our Society in again seeking to make common cause with other faiths and humanitarian bodies to enhance the quality of life of all citizens. (We dislike the words "ordinary people".) In "Our faith in the future" we wish to see Quaker values being active in the world, Quakers working collaboratively and Quakers being well known and widely understood. This concern could provide one opportunity to forward our vision. We ask Meeting for Sufferings urgently to seek discernment on this matter."

This concern will be forwarded to Meeting for Sufferings with a copy to Quaker Peace & Social Witness.

Bryan Cleary, Minute Clerk

Arrangements Committee suggests that Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) could be asked to consider this minute, and to send advice to help MfS consider this matter next year. Information about QPSW's current work, and how this concern might relate or add to what is already being done, would be welcome. This will inform MfS consideration at a future meeting.

b) Kendal & Sedbergh AM held on 17 September 2017

Minute 17.09.07 For the Common Good.
Sally Ingham spoke about her positive experience on behalf of 'For The Common Good.' We thank her for her report (which is attached). She raised a number of issues that require the attention of AM:

- We have agreed to devote a section of the website to 'For the Common Good,' which will be managed (but not edited) by Steve Timson. All contributions should be sent to the AM Clerk.
- We agree to support the grant application to QPSW.
- We have agreed to provide the following minute to go to Meeting for Sufferings:

The group 'For the Common Good' first came to Kendal and Sedbergh Area Meeting's attention in November 2015, then known as 'Not in Our Name,' when we received a Minute from Brigflatts Local Meeting. The group had expressed its frustration both at the way state structures are being used to harm those considered to be of no value and also at the lack of a clear and direct Quaker statement. Part of AM's minute reads:

Minute 15.11.04. After deep and moving consideration, we unite with the concern to awaken and inspire our own and the national consciousness… we strongly encourage Friends to work with other local and national organisations.

Since then the group has developed and achieved a great deal, advised and supported by the Area Meeting, staff at Friends House and 'Turning the Tide.' They organised a very successful and uplifting four day Pilgrimage from Sedbergh to Barrow including non-Friends, with the message "Quakers in Kendal and Sedbergh Area Meeting are concerned that recent changes to the welfare state are deeply wounding to the very fabric of our community and are hitting those who are the most vulnerable in our society. This challenges our belief in equality, peace and social justice."

At Yearly Meeting Gathering they had stalls and displays on four different occasions at which they engaged with Friends. They are developing a network of people throughout the country, who want to be involved. At Easter next year there are plans for a 'ride* for equality and the common good' inspired by Margaret Fell's journey to London from Swarthmore Hall. Margaret Fell carried a declaration for Charles II informing 'the governors of this nation, high and low, that we are a people that desire the good of all people, and their peace.' 358 years later 'For the Common Good' want to harness enthusiasm throughout the country, not only among Friends, "to end the dismantling of the welfare state and the suffering of those who are affected by the changes, renew the welfare state ensuring a safety net for us all and ask for commitment to act for equality and the Common Good."

We in Kendal & Sedbergh Area Meeting continue to unite with the 'For the Common Good' concern to bring fairness and justice to the dispossessed. Whilst we will continue to give them our support locally we believe their cause and energy deserves and needs support from Friends nationally.

We send this Minute to Meeting for Sufferings.
Jo Jaffray, Clerk

*Note: The word 'ride' is intended to include a broad range of modes of transport.

Arrangements Committee understands that QPSW's Network Co-ordinator is working with Kendal and Sedbergh AM's 'For the Common Good' group, offering help and working with the group to clarify what would be most useful. The Vibrancy in Meetings Local Development Worker for the North West is also supporting the AM.

MfS representatives may wish to share news about this initiative with their own AM, and to consider whether they might want to participate in or support it.

c) Devon AM

80/2017 Report from Area Meeting working group on Palestine and Israel
The working group also proposed that we ask BYM to consider adding to their current list of exclusions for investment purposes any company that is profiting from the occupation of the West Bank. The working group suggest that this is done along the lines outlined in their paper in Documents-in-advance "Proposal for BYM to divest from companies with interests in the West Bank". This action is part of a campaign being organised by Kairos, "calling on churches to divest from any companies which profit from either the settlements and their associated economy, the building or servicing of the illegal separation barrier and associated checkpoints or the exploitation of Palestinian natural resources".

We agree to this and ask our Clerk to send this Minute and the paper to Meeting for Sufferings for their consideration.

Juliet Morton
Clerk to Devon Area Meeting

e) Sussex East AM from the AM held on 14 October 2017

Minute 70.17 - Proposal that BYM should divest from companies with interests in the West Bank
We support Devon Area Meeting's proposal that BYM divests from companies that profit from the occupation of Palestinian territories, as called for by Kairos. We thank Lewes Meeting for bringing this to AM, and we agree to send this minute to MfS.

Arrangements Committee feels this matter will need some agenda time. MfS will need to be informed in its consideration by input from three committees:
- QPSWCC (which oversees BYM's work in the Middle East);
- Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (which is responsible for keeping BYM informed of opportunities for dialogue and co-operation between churches, between faiths, and between faiths and churches); and
- BYM Trustees (and its Finance and Property Committee, which has responsibility for BYM's investments).

They suggest sending the minutes from Devon and Sussex East AMs to these committees, asking them to send information and advice for MfS to consider next year.

Devon AM's minute was accompanied by background information including a report from the AM's Working Group on Palestine and Israel. This helpful material will also be sent to the committees, and included in MfS papers when this is considered.

f) Sussex East AM from the AM held on 14 October 2017

Minute 68.17 Sussex East Area Meeting is concerned at the way the UK is involved in wars and other state initiated violence, which is on the increase.
Study and Discernment of Chris Coverdale's concern that: Quakers are leaving Peace Testimony initiatives to individual members and are doing little to organise effective joint corporate action to end the UK's illegal involvement in war.

We ask Meeting for Sufferings to co-ordinate a joint legal action [judicial review/declaratory ruling] with the peace movement to establish whether the offences in sections 15 – 19 of the Terrorism Act 2000 that make it an offence to demand, collect or pay money if it is to be used for the purposes of terrorism, and the offences in section 52 of the International Criminal Court Act 2001, exclude the payment of tax.

We ask MfS to work with QPSW to collaborate and co-ordinate work from other peace organisations, such as CND, CAAT and Peace Pledge Union, to further our concern.

We understand that groups such as Crowd Justice could help with funding; and there are independent solicitors and barristers who may take such challenges pro bono.

We attach Rye LM's minute to SEAM 7.17

Rye Meeting's minute:
7.17 Taking Chris Coverdale's concern forward
Over the last year or so Chris Coverdale has brought to Rye Meeting his concern for a renewed commitment by Friends collectively to our Peace Testimony.

We recognise that Chris is right to believe that his action has been "Laid upon him by God". We therefore willingly commend to Area Meeting for further discernment, his concern as expressed in the four suggestions in his paper Persuading Quakers to take collective action to end war.

These are as follows:
(i) take a fresh look at our Peace Testimony and revise it to reflect 21st century realities and establish where we stand and what we will do together to end war and the use of force;
(ii) ascertain what it is in our society and systems of government that causes us to wage illegal war and behave collectively in ways that none of us would tolerate individually;
(iii) identify what we as Quakers can do collectively to prevent our political, civil and military leaders from violating treaties and using military force as an instrument of foreign policy;
(iv) work with the peace movement to co-ordinate systemic financial, political, educational, legal and organisational action to end all wars and prevent the resort to armed force.

Peter Aviss, Clerk

Arrangements Group suggests that MfS sends this minute to QPSWCC, asking for advice.

Church Government Advisory Group: Proposed amendments to *Quaker faith & practice*

Introduction
Church Government Advisory Group (CGAG) is a working group appointed by Meeting for Sufferings. Its role is to identify and draft any church government amendments required to the current Book of Christian Discipline of Britain Yearly Meeting (currently *Quaker faith& practice*).

CGAG has sent minutes which propose:
a) Amending sections about Six Weeks Meeting, which has now become the London Quakers Property Trust (*Qfp 5.09, 6.25, 7.01 and 7.04*)
b) References to Data Protection (*Qfp 8.21, 11.06 and 11.25*)

Church Government Advisory Group

Held in Friends House, Thursday 28 September 2017

CGAG 17/24 Six Weeks Meeting/London Quakers Property Trust
Further to minute 17/18b, we have received paper CGAG 2017 09 06, showing where in *Quaker faith & practice* there is reference to Six Weeks Meeting, and proposed new text which takes account of the laying down of Six Weeks Meeting and the foundation of the London Quakers Property Trust. We accept this wording.

We forward this minute and the final text to Meeting for Sufferings for its consideration, recommending that they approve the text and forward it to Yearly Meeting for its consideration and decision.

CGAG 17/28 Change to Data Protection Legislation
We have considered the references to Data Protection in Quaker faith & practice (Paper CGAG 2017 09 08a and b) and recommend the following three changes:
8.21 Change the second to last paragraph to: The Recording Clerk is responsible for ensuring that the recording and processing of data held by the yearly meeting conforms with the law. (4.45)
11.06 and 11.25: change ‘the Data Protection Act’ to ‘data protection legislation’ in both cases.

We forward this minute and the final text to Meeting for Sufferings for its consideration, recommending that they approve the text and forward it to Yearly Meeting for its consideration and decision.

CGAG 17/29 Text sent to Meeting for Sufferings
We authorise the outgoing and incoming conveners to work with the secretary on any minor changes that might be needed to any text submitted to Meeting for Sufferings.

Catherine James, Convener

Further to minute CGAG 17/24 Six Weeks Meeting/London Quakers Property Trust

Six Weeks Meeting is mentioned in Quaker faith & practice sections 5.09, 6.25, 7.01 and 7.04. The text offered is based upon the premise that the same group of Friends form the new organisation so no changes of relationships with other parts of the Yearly Meeting are suggested. Proposals for changed wording are given below:

Current text	*Proposed text*
5.09 Six Weeks Meeting	**5.09 London Quakers Property Trust**
Six Weeks Meeting, dating back to 1671, does not fit neatly into the modern pattern of area meetings, general meetings and gatherings. It is made up of representatives from the area meetings within the London region. Its main objective is to maintain, preserve and insure the places of worship of the constituent area meetings, and their contents. It is accountable to the constituent meetings for the stewardship of the funds and assets it holds on their behalf. It may communicate formally by minute with the constituent area meetings, Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting through its agenda committee. The names of constituent area meetings in 2013 were Kingston & Wandsworth; London West; North East Thames; North London; North West London; South London and South East London. Each appoints an agreed number of representatives to Six Weeks Meeting (currently three). The normal period of appointment or re-appointment is five years. The Friends appointed are individually managing trustees of the properties and financial assets in the care of Six Weeks Meeting (15.03).	London Quakers Property Trust is the successor body to Six Weeks Meeting which dated back to 1671. Its main objective is to maintain, repair, preserve and insure the places of worship of its member area meetings, and their contents. London Quakers Property Trust, a registered charity, is a company whose founding members are seven London area meetings: Kingston & Wandsworth, London West, North East Thames, North London, North West London, South East London, and South London. The company board is made up of representatives appointed by each of its member area meetings and is accountable to these area meetings for the use, maintenance and stewardship of the assets and pooled funds which it owns on their behalf. Quaker meeting houses within these area meetings are assets of London Quakers Property Trust. London Quakers Property Trust may communicate formally by minute with Meeting for Sufferings, and with Yearly Meeting through its agenda committee.

Current text	*Proposed text*
6.25 (paragraph 1)	**6.25 (paragraph 1)**
Any communication to the Yearly Meeting from an area meeting, from General Meeting for Scotland, Meeting of Friends in Wales, Six Weeks Meeting or Young Friends General Meeting shall be in the form of a minute signed by the clerk of such meeting, as shall communications from Meeting for Sufferings and from committees of the Yearly Meeting.	Any communication to the Yearly Meeting from an area meeting, from General Meeting for Scotland, Meeting of Friends in Wales, **London Quakers Property Trust** or Young Friends General Meeting shall be in the form of a minute signed by the clerk of such meeting, as shall communications from Meeting for Sufferings and from committees of the Yearly Meeting.

Current text	*No proposed changes*
7.01 (first paragraph)	
The yearly meeting's local organisation was settled in the years 1667–9. The 1670s saw the development of central organisation. Apart from Yearly Meeting (1668), three bodies deserve special mention – the Six Weeks Meeting (1671), Morning Meeting (1673) and Meeting for Sufferings (1675). All were basically meetings of London Friends; all, to a greater or lesser extent, undertook national responsibilities. The Six Weeks Meeting was the most metropolitan of the three, though even it engaged on occasion in such national business as the wording of the marriage certificate…	This is a purely historical section, so the reference can stand, so no change to this text suggested.

Current text	*Proposed text*
7.04	**7.04**
Area meetings, General Meeting for Scotland, the Meeting of Friends in Wales, Six Weeks Meeting, Young Friends General Meeting, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and the standing committees appointed by Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings may communicate with Meeting for Sufferings by minute signed by or on behalf of their clerk. Such meetings or committees may request that Friends other than members of Meeting for Sufferings be allowed to speak to such minutes.	Area meetings, General Meeting for Scotland, the Meeting of Friends in Wales, **London Quakers Property Trust**, Young Friends General Meeting, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and the standing committees appointed by Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings may communicate with Meeting for Sufferings by minute signed by or on behalf of their clerk. Such meetings or committees may request that Friends other than members of Meeting for Sufferings be allowed to speak to such minutes.

Further to minute CGAG 17/28 Change to Data Protection Legislation
There are several places where the phrase Data Protection Act appears in Quaker faith & practice. The following changes are suggested by Church Government Advisory Group.

Current text	*Proposed changes*
8.21 (penultimate paragraph)	**8.21 (penultimate paragraph)**
The Recording Clerk serves, for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 1998, as Data Compliance Officer and is responsible for ensuring that the recording and processing of data held by the yearly meeting conforms with the law (4.45).	The Recording Clerk is responsible for ensuring that the recording and processing of data held by the yearly meeting conforms with the law (4.45).

Current text	*Proposed changes*
11.06 (second sentence)	
The applicant and their representative or supporter, when relevant, should be party to any written report prepared as part of the process, which must be compliant with legal requirements such as the Data Protection Act (see 4.45).	Change “the Data Protection Act” to “data protection legislation”
11.25 (final sentence)	
Overseers are reminded that where information is supplied in confidence the Friend concerned has the right under the Data Protection Act to see any correspondence (see 4.45).	Change “the Data Protection Act” to “data protection legislation”

Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group

Report to Meeting for Sufferings

Summary

This report recommends that Meeting for Sufferings recommend to Yearly Meeting 2018 that the time is right for a revision of our book of discipline, starting with the church government sections. It lays out the reasons why the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group is making that recommendation, and explores some of the recommendation's main implications.

Contents

- What is this all about?
- The range of options
- Approaching a full revision
- Recommendation
- Appendices:
    1. Yearly Meeting minutes from 2014
    2. Draft terms of reference for a potential revision committee
    3. Final statement from theology think tank group
    4. Church government conclusions paper
    5. Gathering the Threads: a report on responses to the Reading *Quaker faith & practice* programme.

What is this all about?

Quaker faith & practice, our current book of discipline, was approved by Yearly Meeting in 1994, and minor changes have been made to it in most years since then. These changes cluster in the 'church government' sections of the book – those chapters which lay out how things should be done within our local, area, and yearly meetings. The other chapters, including those which describe our history, testimony, and faith, and the one containing *Advices & queries*, remain unchanged.

In 2014, Meeting for Sufferings, following a consultation with area meetings, recommended to Yearly Meeting that the time was right to begin a revision of the book of discipline, Yearly Meeting considered the question, but was unable to reach a decision in 2014.[1] It was clear that the matter needed to be returned to them in the future, but not when that should be. The two major stumbling blocks seemed to be fear that work on a revision would exacerbate religious differences among Friends and a sense that our priorities should lie in the problems in our world not the problems in our book. This is the context in which the Revision Preparation Group started their work, including a more detailed exploration of some of the issues raised in the consultation.[2] The group's insight was that Friends lacked familiarity with our book, including its dustier corners, and so set up our Reading *Quaker faith & practice*

[1] See appendix 1

[2] The relevant minutes of Meeting for Sufferings are 2014 02 06, 2014 04 05, 2014 06 09, 2014 09 07, and 2014 09 13.

project. It is the result of this group's process and its recommendations which are summarised in this report.

Our journey to these recommendations has required patience and openness. We have sought to be in contact with the length and breadth of the yearly meeting through casual conversations, meetings and formal consultations. Our work on church government topics has been informed by meetings with Church Government Advisory Group, a survey about who uses these sections of the book and how, as well as general feedback from other sources. Our work on the book as a whole has been hugely supported by the extensive take up of the Reading *Quaker faith & practice* project, and by the feedback we gathered through a survey at the end. Throughout, the process of Reading *Qf&p* prompted a wide range of reflections on the beauties, usefulness, and shortcomings of our current book of discipline. We heard these from individuals, local, regional and area meetings and from Young Friends General Meeting.

Another significant process was the convening of the Theology Think Tank, a group of about twenty people who explored the nature and implications of our religious diversity. The resulting book, *God, words and us*, gives a full report. The key finding, reflected in our recommendations is that sharing experience honestly in our own words can lead to friendship and mutual understanding without a need to force either agreement or division.

<u>The range of options</u>
The group's terms of reference asked for a consideration of the pros and cons of three options for the book of discipline:

a) future full revision
b) interim or partial revision to serve for a number of years
c) no substantive revision in the foreseeable future

Having reviewed all three options and considered the pros and cons in detail, the group's conclusion is that the full revision is the best option. In particular, a full revision should start with work on 'church government' chapters, such as those dealing with the organisation of local and area meetings.

The drawbacks of avoiding a revision at all are very serious. Although it has some superficial benefits, such as lower costs and less work, these decrease over time as the problems with the church government sections increase. At present, these sections continue to need annual revision by Yearly Meeting in session, a difficult, dull and inefficient process which could take up more and more time as they become more outdated and previous patches have to be patched up.

The group was highly aware throughout our work of the difficulties presented by the possibility of the potential loss of Christian language, the risks of damaging division over theological issues, and a desire in some parts to avoid this discussion. However, through a 'think tank' process in which we faced head-on the questions raised by nontheism and other forms of theological diversity in our yearly meeting,

we have become confident that these risks can be managed, and clear that there are also benefits to the process of dialogue.[3]

Although the urgency of the church government work makes a partial revision appealing in some ways, the group concluded that it cannot be done in parts. Our processes are not arbitrary, but arise from our spiritual experience and convictions. Our marriage regulations, for example, cannot be separated from our experiences of close relationships, and the new version of chapter 16 (Quaker marriage procedure) produced under our current procedures needed to draw in material which might have sat more comfortably in chapter 22 (Close relationships). If we are to revise, and if that revision is to be coherent and read well, the whole book needs to fall within the scope of the Revision Committee.

In our consideration, we tried to get a sense of the visceral and emotional reactions Friends are likely to have. There is a sense of safety about not revising, and the experience of the previous revision shows that there will inevitably be a sense of loss if changes are made. The feedback from the Reading Project suggests that once Friends had actually read more sections of the present book, they both understood more clearly why a revision was needed and deepened their affection for certain parts of the book's current text. In any process of change, it will be important to reassure the yearly meeting as a whole that the current book is not taken away from them, but a new book added. It is important to stress that not revising carries some risks as well – in particular, that Friends who perceive that their experience and theology is not reflected in the current book at all may feel alienated. The process of revision also brings benefits: opening conversations about our faith and practice involves making ourselves vulnerable, but this can be a source of great strength.[4]

Taking all these elements into account, the group concluded that a full revision is appropriate. We therefore turned our attention to the details of a possible full revision, which are outlined in the next section.

<u>Approaching a full revision</u>

The group's recommendation is that a full revision begins with a focus on the procedural or church government sections of the book of discipline. There are many ways in which it could be approached, but the current continual need for minor points of church government to return to Yearly Meeting in session seems to us to be a poor use of time and results in a lack of stylistic unity, confusion about the latest version, older and newer sections awkwardly juxtaposed and sometimes the preservation of accidental errors.

Our proposal is that a Revision Committee rewrite the church government sections entirely, as the starting point to a revision of the entire book. We propose a new model for organising this text. We recommend that these sections contain descriptions of the principles which inform our practice together with extracts describing related examples of Friends' experience. Much current detailed material would be contained in supplementary texts which give the latest guidance and talk

[3] For more about this work, see Appendix 3, and at more length, the publication *God, words and us: Quakers in Conversation about Religious Difference.*

[4] Something widely recognised in the yearly meeting: see BYM 2015 minute 36 "Canterbury Commitment"

Friends through everything they need to know. This supplementary text would be approved at an appropriate level - Meeting for Sufferings, another committee, or entirely by staff - but would not require session time at Yearly Meeting.

The book of discipline would focus on statements of principles and extracts from Friends' experience. The statements of principles would explain in a readable way the basics of *what* we do but also *why* our discipline is as it is. They would say, for example, how to hold a meeting for worship for business and why we hold meetings for worship for business as we do. Extracts on what it is like to be a clerk could accompany these statements. Detailed advice for clerks about how to write a minute, however, might be moved to a handbook for clerks, which could also contain up-to-date best practice around topics like data protection and archiving.

This model – core text and supplementary material – has already been tested by the group on several key chapters. In the example of marriage, most of the text included in *Quaker faith & practice* chapter 16 now would move to a handbook and the core text would focus more on the basics of and the principles underlying our marriage procedures, such as the fact that we hold a special meeting for worship for marriage. In another example, the current text about trusteeship is already modelled in such a way that detail is included in the trustee handbook with principles in the book of discipline. The chapters that don't focus so much on church government, for example those focused on the Peace Testimony, could start with extracts from Friends' experience and go on to provide statements of principle that arise from these.

This proposal was outlined in our report to Yearly Meeting 2017. It was noticeable that before the report was given there was feedback from quite a number of Friends about the structure of a revised book of discipline, with some Friends favouring one book, others arguing for a return to two books. After our proposal had been described in a Yearly Meeting session, the conversation about whether to have one book or two largely stopped. We interpret this as meaning that our proposal answers the points made by both groups of Friends.

<u>Recommendation</u>
The Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group recommends that the time is right to begin a revision of our book of discipline.

This revision should:

1. begin with, but not be limited to, church government, namely the sections which focus on our procedures and corporate discipline.
2. divide material between that in the main body of the book, which lays out principles, and supplementary material, which gives details.
3. draw on the richness of theological thought in our yearly meeting, now and historically, seeing diversity as fundamental to our community, not as a flaw
4. give a Revision Committee the freedom to be creative while remaining in close contact with the yearly meeting.

Lesley Richards,
Clerk,
Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group

November 2017

Appendix 1 Yearly Meeting minutes from 2014

YEARLY MEETING
OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS) IN BRITAIN

AT THE YEARLY MEETING GATHERING
HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BATH
2 – 9 AUGUST 2014

Minute 20: Revision of the Book of Discipline
We receive Minute S/14/02/06 of Meeting for Sufferings held 1 February 2014, together with a briefing note in *Documents in advance* (appendix X), which has been introduced to us.

We note that the book of discipline, *Quaker faith & practice*, was last revised in 1994, although the last full revision of the church government sections was undertaken in 1967. The request for a revision originated with area meetings minutes in 2012, which initiated a formal consultation which was completed in November 2013.

Our consideration this evening has not reached the point where we can respond to Meeting for Sufferings' minute. Some Friends are urging that we proceed to a revision now but we have also heard a number of voices calling for caution, and time to resolve certain differences within the Yearly Meeting. There are also those who feel that we as a yearly meeting are simply not ready.

We agree to return to this matter later in this Yearly Meeting.

Minute 42: Revision of the book of discipline (continued)
Further to minute 20, we have heard an introduction describing Meeting for Sufferings' decision process in bringing this matter before us and its plans for a preparation group.

With some regret we find ourselves in the position through lack of time where we cannot reach unity on whether to initiate the process of revision, although some Friends feel that we need to start immediately. However, we are aware that Meeting for Sufferings through its preparation group will already be starting a process of discernment. We encourage it in this service and look forward to engaging with the work.

We ask Meeting for Sufferings to bring the matter back to Yearly Meeting when it feels that the time is ripe for a Revision Committee to start its work.

Signed

Chris Skidmore
Clerk

Appendix 2 Draft terms of reference for a potential revision committee.

Book of Discipline Revision Committee: Proposed Terms of Reference.

1. Summary of Purpose

To bring to a future Yearly Meeting, a draft text for consideration for adoption as Britain Yearly Meeting's book of discipline, together with proposals for its publication.

2. Authority, Delegation and Relationships

2.1 The Revision Committee is appointed by Meeting for Sufferings on the nomination of the Central Nominations Committee.

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 the Revision which require the attention of Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings.

2.3 The committee may communicate by minute with Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, Meeting for Sufferings, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, General Meeting for Scotland, Meeting of Friends in Wales and Young Friends General Meeting, other Central and Standing Committees of Britain Yearly Meeting, the Church Government Advisory Group, and Yearly Meeting Publications Group.

2.4 The committee is encouraged to consult widely with individuals, post-holders, groups and bodies within the Yearly Meeting for relevant advice and counsel.

2.5 The committee may establish working groups and subgroups as required. The committee is responsible for the work of these groups and each group should normally contain at least two serving members of the Revision Committee.

2.6 The committee has the authority to draft, or commission, new material, as well as to draw on existing Quaker writings.

3. Duties

3.1 The committee shall undertake work necessary in order to bring to a future Yearly Meeting a draft text, possibly including written, visual and other material, for consideration for adoption as Britain Yearly Meeting's book of discipline, together with proposals for its publication.

3.2. In particular, the committee should undertake, in whatever way seems best, a comprehensive revision of the text of church government, resulting in:

- a core text, carrying the authority of Yearly Meeting as at present, which will describe clearly the principles underlying each area of Quaker practice and give a simple description of the practice accompanied by extracts recording the lived experience of Friends in this area.
- supplementary material, issued in the name of the Yearly Meeting, but approved at an appropriate level, including detailed legal and practical guidance for Friends, which will not form part of the core text, and which

may take various forms.

3.3. In fulfilling 3.2 above, the committee – consulting as necessary – will need to determine where text is supplementary and thus where its creation and approval could be delegated to Meeting for Sufferings, another committee, or entirely to staff. In making such judgements, the committee should balance the need for collective discernment with the need for simplicity and flexibility. Particular care should be taken to avoid burdensome processes for the approval of practical material that can best be produced or commissioned by committees or staff.

3.4. Be bold in the rewriting of church government text, bearing in mind:

- the needs of the whole church in Britain - including (though not limited to) newer Friends unfamiliar with our discipline, and smaller local and area meetings
- that the rewriting should seek to express our discipline more clearly, rather than to change the nature of that discipline.

3.5. If it should prove necessary, request new guidance from Meeting for Sufferings or the Yearly Meeting on matters of discipline, where the Committee judges it is not possible in good faith to produce new text without such consideration, for example because of profound differences between current written discipline and actual practice.

3.6. Gather, with the help and participation of Friends across the Yearly Meeting, materials and extracts from Quaker writings that illustrate and illuminate Quaker faith experience, insight, disciplines, practice, structures and governance paying due attention to new Light and new experience that may have emerged since the last revision, while also recognising the value of familiar and unfamiliar texts from earlier times.

3.7 Select and order the anthology materials, with additional introductory, explanatory or linking text as required particularly to aid accessibility and understanding.

3.8. Prepare a final draft text, including church government and anthology materials, for presentation to a future Yearly Meeting for its consideration and decision. The final draft text should be made freely and widely available to Friends, with sufficient time for reading and reflection, prior to consideration in Yearly Meeting sessions.

3.9. Consult on, and bring proposals for the format and publication of the final text, bearing in mind:

- paper and electronic formats available at the time
- the needs of all Friends, including those who may find accessing some formats difficult, e.g. because of having limited or no sight.

3.10. Throughout this process, give due attention to:

- the need for clear two-way communication with Friends throughout the Yearly Meeting, explaining how the work is developing and how Friends can engage with it, and listening to concerns - particularly from quieter voices
- the need to build community and trust within the committee itself in order to

support each other in this extensive task.
- the need to allow sufficient time for reflection and discernment on difficult issues, while maintaining momentum with the work as a whole.

4. Membership and resourcing

4.1 The committee will consist of 24 members, with the initial clerk and assistant clerk to be named by the appointing body. At least 8-10 of the members should have the skills, confidence and commitment to convene active working groups. The Recording Clerk may attend ex-officio. The Recording Clerk will name a staff member to act as Secretary to the group.

4.2 As far as is possible, the membership should reflect the breadth of the Yearly Meeting in terms of gender, age, abilities, geographical location and other factors. Committee members should be in tune with the theological diversity of Friends in the Yearly Meeting, but should not be selected to represent any point of view, and should be able to understand and work with and within that diversity.

4.3 Within the committee membership, there should be Friends who can bring relevant subject knowledge (e.g. church government, history, theology, testimony/witness, worship/spiritual practice, community/pastoral) technical knowledge (e.g. document management, online and print publication), and familiarity with BYM at national, regional and local level, including experience of different sizes of meetings.

4.4 Appointment will be by Meeting for Sufferings. Appointments will be for the full life of the committee, although Friends may ask to be released. Replacement appointments will not automatically be made if committee members are released from service. The committee may request the appointment of additional or replacement members, up to a maximum of 28 committee members.

4.5 The Committee may invite other Friends or specialists to help on particular issues. The Committee may appoint Friends on to working groups or sub-groups.

4.6 BYM Trustees, through the Recording Clerk are responsible for ensuring there are sufficient staff and other resources to support the work of the committee. This includes not only routine administrative support, but also support with specialist activities such as historical research and referencing, information and document management, commissioning and communications.

5. Agreement of the Terms of Reference

5.1 The committee shall work within these terms of reference under the authority of minute XX Britain Yearly Meeting held X to X May 2018.

5.2 The terms of reference may be amended by minuted decisions of Meeting for Sufferings.

Appendix 3 Final statement from theology think tank group

Theology think-tank: where we've got to as a group

We agree that the Religious Society of Friends is a community centred on the practice of waiting, listening Meeting for Worship. We agree that differences of understanding about what it is we listen to or worship do not prevent us from practising Meeting for Worship together.

We agree that the community can benefit from the presence of a diversity of spiritual paths. We have used the image of a caravan travelling together through the desert – some in the centre, carrying luggage and supplies; others scouting the way or exploring nearby routes; all visibly travelling as part of the same body. Open and honest discussion of our understandings and the things which help and harm us has brought the group closer, and we have found that it is better to be direct rather than evasive about our differences. In particular, we have become clearer that labels people claim for themselves can sometimes be helpful, although they are not always necessary, while labels applied to other people can be hurtful and misleading. We have heard that in general, 'nontheist' is a label people claim for themselves, while 'theist' is applied by others to those who are not nontheists.

The use of any binary pairs of terms or opposing categories seems to us to misrepresent a much more complex situation. Within our Society, there is a kaleidoscope of experiences and expressions, of presence, of absence, connections, separation, within, outwith, beyond, past, present, future. To reduce this marvellous collection of shifting shapes and colours to a simplistic 'black and white' model of two possible positions is to lose or disguise much which is potentially enriching. Instead, we can consider the range of spiritualties within our Religious Society using other, richer models. Within the group, we have explored *via positiva*, experiencing connection*; via negativa*, letting go of assertions and assumptions; *via creativa,* gaining insight through creative activity; and *via transformativa,* a surrender to the process. These can be understood as different forms of consciousness, apparently contradictory but not in fact antithetical. We have also heard about a third, second or first person experience of the divine, in which God can be spoken of as It, Thou, and I; fictional, personal and impersonal understanding of God; God as a verb as well as a noun; focusing on our shared story and practice, or other dimensions of religion besides belief; and many other possibilities.

Our experience as a group is that we can be helped and at times transformed by deep listening to one another. Even where we continue to disagree, which we certainly do, we have been able to understand one another better through listening and ourselves better through the challenges others provide.

Agreed by think-tank group via e-mail, August 2016

Appendix 4 Church government conclusions paper

Church government group report about core and supplementary material

This paper aims to briefly and accessibly collate and summarise the position that we have reached as a committee. Our thinking is set out in greater detail in our minutes and other supporting papers. For simplicity, references here are to a 'book' but this should be read as referring to all future formats in which our book of discipline may be available.

Need for a holistic revision

The Book of Discipline Revision Preparation group has considered the role of church government in our current book, and how it might work in any future revision. The committee has explored this topic through full committee work, through a sub-group, and through consultation with Church Government Advisory Group.

Church government text was, by conscious choice, not significantly revised in the 1994 revision process. Although care and effort has been taken to update particular parts of the text in response to our changing corporate discipline (for example on marriage equality, and stewardship) and changes in the law, there has been no holistic revision since 1967. We have now come to the considered view that the church government text in the current book of discipline is no longer fit for purpose (RPG 16/09/16).

Some church government sections do not serve our meetings large or small. Where meetings try to follow it, they too often fail and are demotivated. Our church government is at odds with our practice and is both overwhelming and inadequate. *Written for a generation for whom much was implicit and part of a shared culture, it has become a burden rather than a support for our Yearly Meeting now* (RPG 16/09/16).

The Revision Preparation Group has also concluded that church government text should be comprehensively revised, rather than simply updated.

We see this comprehensive revision of church government as being an integral part of a wider revision of the book of discipline. *However, we see the greatest urgency of revision in church government and we think that a revision group might start its work with church government – while not being constrained to confine itself to this area – and sequence the work on the anthology sections later in its work programme* (RPG 16/09/16).

Separating principles and detail

We recommend that a future book of discipline should focus on describing and explaining the enduring principles of our church government, together with anthology examples of our practice.

Friends today – many of whom are new to Quakers – have greater need than previous generations to articulate why we do things as we do and the theological base for them. This will be challenging, but we see it as exciting and necessary. (RPG 16/09/09)
We envisage that this church government text in a new book of discipline would be text that could be changed only by the Yearly Meeting in session and would be

expected to serve for the life of the version of the book, so that new editions would not be required.

Detailed material, such as current legal requirements and practical guidance, would not be in the main book of discipline, but instead be contained in handbooks and other texts *The process of producing handbooks needs to be planned and resourced in parallel with producing a revised book of discipline.* (RPG 16/09/16). Further work would be needed on the authority, maintenance and presentation of this supplementary information, so that it has visibility and credibility with Friends.

We appreciate that church government has many aspects – historical, constitutional, local and national. Work on each chapter would present different challenges. The structure of the overall book would be different from now.

The text that will be needed for this new structure will not necessarily exist. *The terms of reference should enable the revision group to draft, or commission, new material as well as collating what already exists.* (RPG 16/09/16).

Advantages and challenges

The advantages of such a model include:

- Such a book would not normally need to be changed between full revisions
- The handbooks could be kept up to date much more easily so that we could be sure that regulatory information was accurate
- The book would be more accessible to read if it concentrated on principles and lived experience without detail

We recognise possible risks in that

- the book might become stale if it were changed less often (though the next generation of Friends would still be able to revise when led)
- Friends might ignore the handbooks, or be unable to find them, as they would have a lower status

We also do not underestimate that such a comprehensive revision will entail a huge commitment of time, money and people. The writing and editing process to make the material current, coherent and relevant to a range of meetings is difficult in itself. There are also certain issues within church government (notably our understanding of membership, and perhaps membership of CBTI) which are likely to require consideration of our underlying corporate understanding and discipline.
We see this as the task that is required.

Appendix 5 Gathering the Threads: a report on responses to the Reading *Quaker faith & practice* Programme

Introduction

For eighteen months, from October 2015 to April 2017, Friends were encouraged to follow a programme of monthly reading and reflection travelling through the whole of *Quaker faith & practice*. Towards the end of the programme Friends were asked to answer one question: What have you learnt from the process of reading *Quaker faith & practice*? Our small group were asked, by the Revision Preparation Group, to 'Gather the threads' from the responses, look for patterns and anything that might help Yearly Meeting see whether the time is right to revise or not.

We have received feedback from 119 Meetings with two overwhelming messages emerging: appreciation of our 'Red Book' and a feeling that it is time for another revision. Other common threads have been gratitude for the programme and a better understanding of how the Society functions. This report will look at these and other 'threads' in more detail, weaving comments from Friends throughout each section.

We have been deeply touched by the richness that we have found among the responses. We feel a responsibility to hand on as much as possible in a way that is useful, including an appendix containing thoughts specific to a possible revision, and another with personal reflections on involvement with the "Talking Wall" at Yearly Meeting Gathering.

Valuing the Contents of *Quaker faith & practice*

'Quite simply, I have learnt to value this book more. It is an important document for the Society and fulfils many functions. I particularly appreciate how it links Friends as a community across the miles and across generations. It speaks to our relationships with each other, with ourselves and with God. It holds a mirror up for us to consider our collective history as well as representing Quaker faith and values in the world. It is a source of wisdom; of legal and practical information as well as inspiration and having read it alongside Friends I feel both challenged and upheld.'

Quaker faith & practice is hugely valued as an on-going resource providing comfort, wisdom, inspiration and guidance, with different parts of the book speaking to us at different times; reminding us that Quakerism is 'not a notion but a way'. Time and again Friends have described it as a 'treasure trove' and a 'precious gift'. There have been many positive comments about the value of reading the entire book; the reading programme has been a time of discovery and rediscovery leading to an increased recognition of the immense spiritual value of the resource. Favourite passages have been shared, read in new ways and wonderful gems have been discovered for the first time. 'It reminded me that reading it isn't a once for all experience, but something to be kept up continuously.**'**

Spiritual Refreshment: learning from and with each other

'Our differences have challenged us as we think it possible that we may be mistaken and we grow in respect for that of God in each other.'

Friends have described a sense of joyful awareness and unity knowing that many other reading groups were following the same programme. Whilst some Friends were already very familiar with the contents of the book, many others have described how they have been prompted to read it with more care and how they have discovered unknown passages. Friends have found their spiritual lives deepen, learning from each other, challenging each other and having fun together. Several Meetings plan to continue similar studies together and some feel that a similar programme should become a regular event.

Attenders and new Friends have found the programme helpful and, in at least one case, it has been a contributory factory in deciding to apply for membership.

Appreciation of Quaker History

'…wise advice from a historical perspective, with some real gems of wisdom contained in the pages. We are often amazed to discover that the historical writings bear so much relevance to this present day.'

'It's hard to know where you are unless you know where you have come from.'

Friends have expressed an appreciation of continuity from hearing voices from the past speaking to us today. The faithfulness and example of earlier Friends remains powerfully relevant, inspiring and challenging. The programme has given many a better sense of the principles and methods of our radical tradition and an awareness of the important contribution Quakerism has made to the world.

Some Friends have commented on the way language has changed and there has been careful consideration about whether some of the passages, containing more archaic language and images, should be removed. 'We came to the conclusion that doing this would seriously weaken the book. The richness of our heritage is best appreciated if we accept all forms of expression and make the effort, when we come across difficult or strange language and ideas, to pay attention to their underlying meaning.'

Greater Understanding of how the Society Functions

'Reading the chapters on church government has reminded us that the answers to questions of right ordering are there to be found.'

'I feel like my contributions are better directed now.'

Friends have said that the reading programme has been a reminder of our responsibilities and provided sound advice on the correct way to conduct our meetings. They have appreciated the useful guidance on practical and administrative matters and have reported that they now have a greater

understanding of how the Society functions, its overall structure and how to ensure right ordering at area and local level.

Appreciation of the Structured Programme/Being Friends Together

'The process of following the suggested calendar imposed a beneficial discipline.'

The calendar of readings was found to be very useful and led Friends to explore 'the dusty and unvisited corners of the text', reading the focused chapters with more care than previously. A few Friends followed the programme independently, appreciating the knowledge that groups throughout the country were also reading the same chapters. Some groups consistently used the supporting material from Being Friends Together whilst others dipped in and out or led sessions in their own way, sometimes in order to make a more complete study of a chapter than would otherwise have been possible.

An opportunity to begin to think about a possible revision of *Quaker faith & practice*

'I feel strongly that responding to a continuing revelation we should joyfully and with our most careful discernment put down what we have been hearing in this our generation for the benefit and aid of our Friends, for a witness to the world, and for those generations that follow, as indeed we have been helped by those who put down these words for us.'

'There have been many internal and external factors which have changed since this book was published in 1994 and it is for this reason that we think that the time is right to consider a revision of our book of discipline. It is one of our Quaker principles that we are an evolving faith community that should be open to new light.'

Although the intention of the reading programme was to 'discover together how our book of discipline can speak to our condition and deepen our spiritual lives', a very large number of responses commented on whether there should be a revision, and there were some very specific recommendations as to what might be amended, taken out or included in the future. Whilst it is not appropriate to include these in this report, we are attaching an Appendix which includes general comments about the structure of the book, its language, the possible revision process and suggestions relating to each chapter.

The Value of the Process

Many responses conveyed a real sense of the value of the **process** and of being on a journey together. This goes beyond 'getting to know each other better', or being challenged and affirmed in our faith. Friends have all been encouraged to engage in study and learning on the same task at the same time. Is this exercise unique in Britain Yearly Meeting?

The clear message is that these particular Quaker faith & practice groups provided a distinct discipline and environment that was safe and

> *structured. They encouraged participation by being a specific task for a specific time and purpose.*
> *There needs to be a need to give focus, purpose and discipline. The context is important for study groups and opportunities. Where are we going? We need to be rooted/ be clear on the perspective. We need spiritual challenge.*

The potential value of continued engagement in the process of revision was also expressed. So the question may not simply be 'Is the time right to revise our book of discipline?' but 'What benefits might there be for the Religious Society of Friends in undertaking such a challenge?'

> *The present generation.... could be best served by.... having the opportunity of having its own careful look at how it 'speaks to itself'. A full revision process could help to achieve such an end, and thereby serve at least two purposes simultaneously: giving attention to updating the whole volume, and the benefit of everyone being involved in such a fundamental process..... [It] would be an enormous undertaking, of course, but I think it offers a tremendous opportunity for new learning, for the gaining of fresh insights, for close co-operation on a major challenge....*

Might such an undertaking help us discern what is essential and what our unique contribution as Quakers today might be? Might it strengthen the bonds between us, building 'unity in diversity', as we seek a common purpose?

August 2017

Meeting of Friends in Wales

A report to Meeting for Sufferings

Wrth i mi gyflwyno'r adroddiad yma sylweddolwn mai dyma'r gyntaf o'i math ac felly yn ddatblygiad pwysig ym mywyd Cyfarfod Blynyddol Prydain ac efallai fod hyn hefyd yn arwydd o wendid sef na fu i'r Cyfarfod Blynyddol roi digon o sylw i Gymru yn y gorffenol. Edrychwn ymlaen at adrodd yn flynyddol yn y dyfodol.

(Introducing here the first report from MFW to Meeting for Sufferings seems an important development in the life of BYM, a pointer, perhaps, to Yearly Meeting having given insufficient attention to Wales in the past. We are looking forward to reporting annually in future.)

2017 marks twenty five years of Meeting of Friends in Wales's existence. If you have been avid readers of The Friend recently, you will know this. Those twenty five years have brought change to Wales due to the advent of devolution and that in turn has shifted the focus and responsibility of Meeting of Friends in Wales to some extent and brought it additional work. The Assembly has become more important in the lives of Quakers, as of others in Wales, though not everyone recognizes that importance.

MFW is an independent registered charity and it is not a representative body. Rather its membership comprises all Quakers who live and/or worship in Wales, for membership is not wholly determined by Wales's borders. Some Friends live in England and worship in Wales and vice versa. It is with that muddied situation in mind that MFW is seeking the provision of a tabular statement for Wales as an entity, such as does not exist at present, and the provision of maps in that statement which reflect the national borders.

The Meeting has received an increase in its grant which has enabled it to increase the administrator's working hours. Both the level of incoming communication and the Meeting's responsibilities have grown. This funding increase has also allowed us to cover the additional costs of simultaneous translation in our meetings, as the Friend who was a professional translator and who has given his services free over many years, has finally retired. We are unique in ensuring simultaneous translation in our meetings and some outreach activities, enabling parity of ministry for English and Welsh speakers. Trying to create such parity, for the purposes of inreach and outreach alike, is an important element in MFW's work.

In Wales Quakers were instrumental in fostering the links between CYTÛN (Wales's equivalent of CTE and ACTS) and the Wales Assembly Government. Friends are represented on its Board of Trustees and its Board of Finance. Through the work of CYTÛN's policy officer and through our MFW appointed representative on its Laser group of denominational Church and Society policy officers there can be monitoring of, and response to, the work of the Wales Assembly.

This is now the third year in which the Three Countries' Clerks will have met annually to consider matters of interest and concern. For the second time the clerk of Meeting for Sufferings will be present also. We look forward to the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding between BYM, General Meeting for Scotland and Meeting of Friends in Wales in the near future. We are conscious, though, that the Three Countries' Clerks meeting is a misnomer, as neither the Recording Clerk nor the Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings stands in relation to England as do the clerks of Scotland's and Wales's Meeting stand to their nations. BYM has its own kind of West Lothian question.

We are presently considering an all-Wales gathering for appraising structures and governance among Friends, conscious that our present practice is not releasing, and may be hindering spiritual energy and witness. Other MFW-initiated gatherings to enable Wales-wide input may also be considered, on matters of concern such as refugees and sanctuary and on Quaker chaplaincy. Our ongoing work includes creation of a Welsh language policy for Britain Yearly Meeting in light of The Welsh Language Act and the provision of such policies by other religious groups in Wales.

Our witness in Wales has embraced gatherings for spiritual nurture, substantial publications for inreach and outreach purposes and for use in Welsh and English medium schools. Such work will continue. Also the need is growing to provide resources for outreach to annual events in Wales. To the National Eisteddfod and the Royal Welsh Show we now add the institution of the Hay festival of literature and the arts. Looking back at our work we have realized that we have not entirely lived up to the vision offered in the Spiritual Hospitality Project which MFW published in 2003. This research document contains recommendations which are worth revisiting and by those beyond Wales also.

When they are asked, it is heartening to hear from Friends who attend that MFW provides nurture which they say is important to them in their spiritual journey. They can recall highlights in such nurture. We keep this in mind as we go forward and end on a positive note, and with an englyn, a poetic form in Welsh which would take too long to explain but which involves a carefully disciplined use of internal rhyme, assonance, alliteration, syllable counting and more. Only its basic meaning and not its sound migrates into a translation.

This englyn is by Dic Jones:
Ymlaen, er na wn ymhle, - mae gemog
Gwmwl hardd ei odre,
Uwch y niwl a duwch ne'
Darn o'r haul draw yn rhywle

'Onward, though I know not where, there is a sparkling, wondrous cloud which is above the mist and heaven's darkness, a piece of the sun somewhere to be glimpsed.'

Christine Trevett, clerc/clerk, Catherine James, clerc cynorthwyol/assistant clerk
Cyfarfod y Cyfeillion yng Nghymru/Meeting of Friends in Wales.

MfS 2017 12 11

Reports from Britain Yearly Meeting representatives attending European Yearly Meetings in 2017

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting – Marion Fairweather
France Yearly Meeting – Joshua Habgood-Coote
Ireland Yearly Meeting – Josephine Matthews (Brennan) & Marilyn Higgins
Netherlands Yearly Meeting – Rachel Ramaker
Nordic Yearly Meeting – Fred Ashmore
Switzerland Yearly Meeting – Jane Mace

Our representatives to other European Yearly Meetings have sent written reports, which are followed, below, by the epistle from each Yearly Meeting if available. (German Yearly Meeting was held recently, in October, and we haven't yet received a written report.)

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting 2017

Maldegem Youth Hostel, Belgium 12-14 May 2017

"Quaker lives, personal lives- what can I say?"

Belgium and Luxembourg YM was held in a peaceful youth hostel in the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium, half an hour away from Bruges, attended by 29 Friends and attenders.

One of the most striking parts of the week was the planning the weekend using an "Open model of organisation". On the first night Friends were invited to offer to facilitate sessions in the weekend, the sessions on offer were very varied from exploring how best to reach out to the Flemish community, Quakers spirituality and the blues and the chance to watch the film "Shawn the Sheep". The timetable for the weekend grew out of these sessions, with participants able to move sessions around the timetable to try and ensure that everyone was able to attend the sessions they were most interested in. This method had been trialled at 2016 BLYM and had been a revelation allowing Friends to share their skills, interests and experiences and for everyone to have an input into the process, rather like in Meeting for workshop- everyone was able to have an active role in it.

While the main language of the event was English, there was a great deal of conversation in French and Dutch (or Flemish) and this became one of the themes of the weekend. Friends spoke of their concern that they have felt that they "ought" to speak in English in Meetings and that, to better welcome new attenders a greater effort needs to be made to use their native tongues and to encourage multi-lingual Meeting for worship. BLYM are working with Friends in the Netherlands to develop Quaker Faith in Practice in Dutch and they also hope to develop it in French so that new Friends can read it in their mother tongue. Two Friends are getting married this summer and their wedding will be in French and English, allowing all their friends and family to feel a part and, if they are called to, give ministry, regardless of what is their first language.

Since I've been back I've swapped pizza recipes and given holiday tips for Friends visiting Scotland this summer. At the BLYM over meals, there was a lot of discussion around Brexit and the impact that it will have, particularly for Friends from the UK who are working in Brussels and are facing the uncertainty around whether they can continue to stay and work in Belgium. Friends were very touched by the letter of greetings from Meeting for Sufferings and the warm sentiment of fellowship and unity which it expressed, regardless of the outcome of last year's referendum. Over the course of the weekend I learned more about the on-going work for the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) and will be speaking on behalf of QCEA for the June special collection.

I felt very privileged to have been able to take part in what one Friend described as a "pearl" of an event, it felt particularly important that Friends reach across borders to each other and that bonds between yearly meetings are strengthened.

Marion Fairweather – West of Scotland AM

Belgium & Luxemburg YM 12-14 May 2017 Epistle

Greetings to Friends everywhere from the Belgium & Luxembourg Yearly Meeting,

We held our residential yearly meeting for the second consecutive year at Maldegem in East Flanders, from 12 to 14 May 2017. The guiding theme of this year's gathering was “Quaker lives, personal lives – what can I say?” Twenty-six adult Friends attended, as well as three children. We were pleased to be joined by Friends from Britain Yearly Meeting, France Yearly Meeting and Netherlands Yearly Meeting, as well as by a representative of the Europe and Middle East Section of the Friends' World Committee for Consultation, who brought a message of greetings from the EMES. We also received a message of greetings from the FWCC's World Office. We began on a joyful note by welcoming a young Friend into membership.

We adopted an open model of organisation: Friends attending the gathering were invited to put forward subjects for workshops which they wished to hold and these were put into the timetable: there were three or four such sessions for each timeslot and Friends could choose freely which groups they wished to take part in, with the possibility of moving between workshops.

The subjects of the workshops could be divided into four broad groups: nurturing and developing our meeting; examining our faith; living our faith; and living as Quakers in the world. In considering the holding of meeting for worship, while trying to strengthen Quaker practice, we are minded that we should not only tolerate but embrace each other’s differences, strengths and weaknesses. Although we have a thriving Quaker community we are mindful that constant effort is needed to maintain this and to reach out to people in the different language communities. At this Yearly Meeting some workshops naturally moved into languages other than English.

Although we have no creeds, we have Quaker testimonies, but these must not be imposed on Friends as a substitute for a creed. Our faith is grounded in silent worship and comes from leadings from within. We spent some time discussing theological terms, especially those used in Christianity, and we found that they opened up a deeper debate. One result of this workshop was a resolve to see how this discussion can be taken forward in future deepening sessions. As Quakers we can find inspiration in many places and a workshop on blues music and Quaker spirituality surprised us with new insights. We also learned that even simple questions such as “who am I?” can lead to thought-provoking responses.

It has never been more important to speak truth to power and we resolve to continue the discussion on how we can improve our visibility and influence, amplifying our voice in order that we can live our faith in the world more effectively.

There is a need and a desire for Quaker values in the world and we note that many people, especially the young, share our concerns. We are convinced that there is an important role for Quakers and for organisations such as the Quaker Council for European Affairs in an increasingly troubled world. It is up to all of us to increase our efforts to meet this need.

In and on behalf of Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting
Ruth Harland, Clerk; Chloé Tan, Assistant Clerk

France YM, 21st-24th October 2017

France Yearly meeting was held on the 21st-24th October 2017 at Notre Dame de l'Abbaye in Carcassonne. 50 friends attended the meeting, coming from around France, with Friends in attendance from around France, and a large number coming from the nearby meeting in Toulouse.

The theme of the Meeting was Foi en Practique (Faith in practice) which was addressed in several sessions, including sessions on Environmental activism in Scotland, work in Refugee camps in Calais, and a threshing meeting on the question Est-ce que les Quakers en France devraient travailler sur un projet commun ? (whether Quakers in France ought to have a joint project).

The main sessions of the meeting were:

- Reports from various Quaker organisations across Europe and some other yearly meetings;
- A couple of presentations on some of the historic connections between Quakers, Cathars, and les Couflaïrs (a precursor group to Quakers in France);
- A session run by Vérène Nicholas around how to live out faith in one's life;
- A presentation by Alistair McIntosh on his work on Environmental activism in Lafarge in Scotland;
- A presentation by Renke Meuwse on his work with Migrants in Calais;
- A threshing meeting on the question of whether Quakers in France ought to have a joint project;
- A closing general meeting, which covered a lot of items of business from last year.
- There was also a workshop on publications, which unfortunately I had to miss due to work commitments during the weekend.

I had a feeling that the theme of the Yearly meeting reflected a good deal of motivation within the YM to take on a communal project, and the organisers of the meeting has clearly put quite a lot of time into thinking about how to prepare the ground for Friends to discern on this issue. However, there didn't seem to be a clear feeling within the threshing meeting that the meeting was being led toward any particular project.

Although I am sure that this is a conversation which will be on-going within the YM, I suspect that Friends in France are finding themselves caught between Friends putting energy into smaller project, and having enough capacity to take on communal project. (I guess I suspect this because I've seen elements of this dynamic elsewhere in Quakerism, and I certainly don't think that this challenge is unique to France). One way out of this tension might be by the YM taking on some of the work which is already in process as a joint project.

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

Two things stood out particularly for me: the bilingual nature of much of the proceedings, and the differences in discipline in the meetings.

Although the majority of the participants in the meeting were not native French speakers, most of the sessions and ministry was given in French or bilingually. On the whole I was hugely impressed by the level of French of the organisers and the participants, and their ability to give witness bilingually, or to translate on the fly. Spiritually speaking, one of the powerful features of this practice was that it

foregrounded the need and difficulty of finding the right words to talk about complex spiritual issues. It was common to find a Friend struggling to find the right words in one or other language, only for other members of the meeting to help them find the ways to express themselves. I thought that there was something really powerful and important about this communal support for Friends finding the right way to give witness and express themselves.

There were a couple of sessions in which the French levels of speakers posed problems to comprehension, which reminded me of the importance of humility in owning one's limitations, which is something that I myself needed to do more in the lead-up to the meeting. Although I had intended to give my report in French, at the last minute I realised that conveying my meaning clearly was beyond my capacities, and I gratefully took up the offer of a translation.

There were also some differences in the discipline of the meeting to what I am more accustomed to from meetings in Britain, for example holding hands and rising rather than shaking hands at the end of a period or worship, and a slightly different approach to minuting. The threshing meeting had notes taken rather than minutes per se (although I see with a quick google that BYM recommends not taking any notes at all), and the clerks didn't ask the meeting whether a minute was acceptable. I am aware that these may well be differences of style, or that have a history and a clear rationale, but they did stand out to me.

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

I was really impressed by the way that the organisers of the yearly meeting had put together sessions that really helped to build community, as well as laying the groundwork for the topic of the threshing meeting. It was very nicely done to include both reflections on the relation between faith and taking action, as well as more practical experiences of Friends with living their witness. I also thought it was really helpful to have a session that grounded the meeting the history of Quakers and other groups in the area.

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

I had a couple of ace meals with some of the younger friends present, and I plan to stay in touch with them, as it definitely felt like they were in a very small minority in the YM.

d) Your overall experience as a BYM representative

Overall, I had a really positive experience with a very warm and welcoming group of people, and learnt a lot in all of the sessions. It was a rich and valuable experience. However, I think that when I accepted the nomination I had some mix of lack of knowledge of the level of French required, and overconfidence in my own abilities (I am a decent conversational French speaker, but haven't spoken it regularly for six years or so). I missed some nuance, and in some of the longer sessions, I found myself really struggling to follow the thread of the conversations. That said, there were a lot of sessions, and part of this may just have been general tiredness. I am aware that nominating for this kind of meeting must be hard, and that getting someone with both good knowledge of French, and of Quaker procedures must be a serious challenge.

Joshua Habgood-Coote, East Sussex AM

Ireland Yearly Meeting 2017

The High School, Dublin, 20-23 April

"*Live simply, so that others may simply live* – Mahatma Gandhi".

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

We were really struck by the sense of cohesion – of this being an "All Island, All Ireland" Meeting. We were also aware of the differences between approaches of Friends in the North and the South, and intentional practicing of discernment to overcome them. This was expressed by the quotation of the "triple purpose" of Ireland Yearly Meeting, that is, understanding the past Quaker history in Ireland, embodying Quaker spirituality in the present moment throughout the gathering, and tending to Quaker Business, which sets the future course from here.

On a practical note, we were also very aware of the dominance of the lecture style layout of the room, and how much this affected the quality of presence in the room. Being so used to the more circular format of Quaker Meetings, this was a stark reminder of the impact that layout has on the quality (and equality) of presence of a gathered Meeting.

Although this is a familiar theme amongst Friends, the whole weekend reinforced the idea that speaking from one's personal experience is extremely powerful. Examples that stick in our minds and moved us deeply are the session on being alone, the stories from immigrants and the public lecture by Rachel Bewley-Bateman.

We were reminded of how important Woodbrooke is as a resource for Irish Friends, who appreciate the support offered in many contexts.

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

"There is no greater act than to make a fundamental difference in someone's life" Sister Mary Rose O'Grady.

EcoQuakers – Ireland's EcoQuakers have done a superb job of inspiring all meetings into action in response to Minute 40 of 2016, regarding sustainability. We were struck by how much they have achieved from the ground up, getting every meeting across the country to prepare a Sustainability Plan, no matter how simple, through a beautiful invitation booklet sent out to all meetings, to do "Something no matter how small." This has been a powerful example the testimony to simplicity being embodied in service of the testimony to sustainability. See https://quakersireland.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/responding-to-iym-2016-final-pdf-for-web.pdf

Ethical Investment – There was consensus that Ireland Yearly Meeting should be investing in sustainable and peaceful companies and that Ireland Yearly Meeting should divest from destructive companies. That said, there was acknowledgement that there is a learning curve for Ireland Yearly Meeting on how to achieve this. It was suggested that Friends draw on BYM Sustainability Group for support and get in touch with Thames Valley Area Meeting who has implemented the divestment decision.

Quaker Council for European Affairs – This session gave an appreciation of the critical importance of Quaker work in Europe, particularly given the normalization of

defense and security in response to the refugee crisis, and the even greater need for Quaker work in a post-Brexit Europe.

Quaker Action – We were shown a short video "Star Thrower", which highlighted the significance of taking individual actions because they reach a critical mass.

- Vision without action was merely a dream
- Action without vision is merely passing time
- Vision with action has power to change the world.

A New Life – Insights into Forced Migration – Irish Friends have been very active in welcoming migrants and promoting an inclusive society. Efforts at providing friendship and informal spaces to meet have been much appreciated by many. Personal stories of migration and how Friends had helped were very moving.

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

1. Sweden Yearly Meeting Representative, Anneli Ortqvist, on Sustainability & Spirituality
2. EcoQuakers – Ask for Ireland's booklet of all Meeting's Sustainability Plans – to share across all meetings in Britain for inspirational examples to do "Something no matter how small."
3. Ethical Investment Team – We have suggested they get in touch with Thames Valley Area Meeting as an example of a meeting who has taken the decision and implemented divestment.
4. Contact was made with the two Irish representatives who will attend Yearly Meeting Gathering at Warwick University in August so that we can give them a reciprocal warm welcome there.
5. We were able to help out at a workshop on Becoming Friends, given our personal experience of the material. This is a new initiative in Ireland that has been piloted by Cork Friends, who expressed interest in following this up with us.

d) Your overall experience as a BYM representative

The opportunity to attend Ireland Yearly Meeting was really appreciated, as it gave a broader sense of Quaker structures and processes in Ireland as a whole. Given that Britain Yearly Meeting is so much bigger, this experience was helpful to get a sense of the whole Quaker organization in such a way that often appears quite complex in Britain.

The warm welcome by Ireland Yearly Meeting and the sense of collective gathering amongst other representatives from across Europe were particularly valued. Given the short notice, it was not possible due to childcare constraints to remain "in-residence", however, it was obvious amongst representatives throughout the event that their experience of staying in the same location increased their bonds significantly.

Attendance at another Yearly Meeting is a wonderful way of deepening our Quaker spirituality, helping us see shared beliefs across the world as well as different ways of doing things. Seeing how much Irish Quakers have been able to achieve has been inspirational and their extremely warm welcome to us is much appreciated. The practice of appointing a British Friend to attend for two years definitely helps deepen the experience, since the second year of attendance can build on earlier contact.

Josephine Matthews (Brennan) - Chilterns AM
Marilyn Higgins - South East Scotland AM

Ireland YM Epistle

To Friends Everywhere

We send warm greetings from Ireland Yearly Meeting, held from 20th -23rd April 2017 at the High School, Rathgar, Dublin. The theme of our Yearly Meeting was a quotation from Mahatma Gandhi “Live simply, so that others may simply live”. This theme was reflected in many of our sessions and special interest groups covering sustainability, ethical investment, tax justice, peace witness and the need for an inclusive society. We also tried to bring it forward into the practicalities of our meeting by requesting more local/organic produce, simpler meals including more vegetarian options and by considering the sustainability of our gathering.

Our Eco Quakers Committee reported on the progress made by individual meetings in developing Sustainability Plans. Our Investment Committees are bringing forward strategies to align our investments with our commitment to be sustainable by divesting of fossil fuel shares and considering positive social investments.

In response to a request for more spiritual reflection during our Yearly Meeting, we commenced each day with 30 minutes of silent worship in plenary session. We also met in small groups at the end of each day to reflect on the day’s proceedings. We continued, as in previous years, to facilitate worship sharing and bible study groups in the early mornings and candlelit worship in the evenings.

In our Ministry & Oversight session, the topic was “Feeling Alone”. We were deeply moved to hear the stories of Friends’ loneliness at particular times in their lives and how they came to an acceptance of being alone. We were encouraged to be sensitive to the situation of friends and to listen. The words of our Lord from Isaiah 41:10 “Be not afraid, I am with you” brought – and continue to bring – comfort to Friends.

Our Public Lecture, given by Rachel M. Bewley-Bateman, was entitled “The way, the truth and the life – what does this mean for us today?” Rachel took us on a journey through history, tracing the origins of Quakerism and the impact of this on her personal journey. We reflected on the importance of truth and integrity as part of our Quaker witness in the world.

We welcomed visitors from a number of other Yearly Meetings and worship groups and sought to look outside our Yearly Meeting. We heard about the important work being done on our behalf internationally by the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) and by the Ecumenical Accompaniers in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). Our Welcoming Refugees Group organised an information and discussion session on “A new life – an inclusive society – insights into enforced migration” which included speakers from Syria and Afghanistan. We heard that some refugees feel like trees that have been uprooted from country to country and they need our welcome and friendship to help them settle in.

As we reflect on our theme, we realise that it can sometimes take longer than we wish to introduce all the changes necessary to “Live simply”, even though some of these changes may be simple. We are reminded that the challenge is as much a spiritual call as a material one and that our vision of sustainability must extend beyond our meetings to our own lives, our families and our communities.

“Vision without action is merely a dream; action without vision just passes the time, but vision with action can change the world” (Joel A. Barker).

Signed on behalf of Ireland Yearly Meeting
E Heather Bewley - Clerk
Bairbre NicAongusa - Assistant Clerk
Clodagh Davis - Assistant Clerk

Nordic Yearly Meeting 29th June 2017 – 2nd July 2017

Nordiska Folk High School, Kungälv, Sweden

The theme of Nordic Yearly Meeting 2017 was from Genesis: *Am I my Brother's Keeper?*

Fred Ashmore of Kingston Local Meeting, Kingston and Wandsworth Area Meeting, was privileged to be among 123 Friends of all ages who attended this meeting of the four Nordic Yearly Meetings.

The atmosphere was full of friendship and joy, and the arrangements showed how Nordic Friends valued the right holding together with the work being done. There was a practical flexibility of arrangements, and worship drove the proceedings. The atmosphere was helped by a delightful and very well run venue.

The outstanding part of the meeting for me was a Meeting for Worship for Confirmation. Young Norwegians overwhelming (90%) take a confirmation, either in a church or in a humanist ceremony. This weekend, three young Norwegians who have prepared for membership in Norway YM through their three-year youth "confirmation" program were the focus of a Quaker Meeting in which they could affirm their commitment to Quaker ways. The occasion felt like a marriage. I wondered, not for the first time, why there is so little celebration about taking membership in Britain Yearly Meeting.

I made several very welcome contacts and I fully expect that some of these will ripen into continuing friendship. Some of those who were at Kungälv will be at our Yearly Meeting Gathering next month. Although I did not identify Patience Cowie, the Friend named in my briefing letter, Leena Lampela the Clerk of Finland YM will be at YMG and I look forward to meeting her again.

This was an excellent, enjoyable and growing experience in which I felt very much welcomed and cared for. The language side of the plenary sessions is not for the faint hearted. With three languages in use and a translation service which occasionally stuttered, I struggled at times, not helped by being somewhat deaf. But treating the occasional loss of the thread as an opportunity to accompany in worship felt thoroughly worthwhile as a substitute for full understanding. Also, nearly everyone there spoke English well enough to explain what was happening. I very much hope that Quaker World Relations Committee will find someone for the meeting in 2020 who can find the level of enjoyment and interest I experienced and with much better hearing.

Fred Ashmore – Kingston & Wandsworth AM

Nordic Yearly Meetings' Epistle 2017

We send our warmest greetings to Friends around the world from our combined Nordic Friends yearly meeting of 2017.

The Nordiska Folkhögskolan near Gothenburg, Sweden, was founded 70 years ago to manifest the peace in the wake of World War II. It rests in an idyllic setting on a hill overlooking a remnant of warfare: medieval Bohus Fortress (1308). The fortress is in ruins, while the school continues to carry forward a tradition of education, featuring a flourishing inter-Nordic curriculum, for all ages post-high-school.

The venue chosen for the Nordic Friends Yearly Meeting 2017 was appropriate not only for its practical and scenic qualities but also because of the fact that Jeanna Oterdahl (1879-1965) – a writer, educator, and Friend – was a co-founder in 1947. Jeanna taught here and also was on the board for 20 years. We have read her poetry and sung her songs in our meetings.

The theme for the gathering "Am I my brother's keeper?" was chosen to address our concern for the condition of the world today, where violence is too often normalized in our societies: in politics, film and TV, by the multinational war machine and it consequences, and with the erosion of the social contract in a world of rising conflict.

The theme was explored in a talk by Finnish Friend Jaana Erkkilä-Hill (in no less than four languages: Swedish, English, Finnish, and Norwegian). She helped us to see that our societies are full of Cains, who feel they are entitled to more and have the right to take it by force; and also the many Abels, the innocent victims, and how few Jobs, who accept the ups and downs in life with the gentle attitude that they deserve neither the good nor the bad. She also touched upon what can be done for the Cains we encounter, besides explaining their ill deeds by saying that they too were slighted. How do we nourish the good in Cain? Jaana concluded that Cain and Abel represent two sides of each human being, and each of our societies, in patterns of both active and passive violence. In addressing this complex and difficult picture, our first response is to be "quietly waiting on God".

We had workshops, in some of which we were using our thoughts and words to fathom the theme, in others motion or silence brought us to new kinds of consciousness.

The Friends Service Committees of Norway and Sweden focused our awareness through a quick series of learning stations covering their work in Central Africa, Bangladesh, Gaza, and other places. They had us write postcards and tweets urging those in power to ameliorate problems in these places –one offered the foreign minister an air ticket to visit Gaza.

We held a celebratory and welcoming worship for young Friends who have prepared for membership in Norway YM through their three-year youth "confirmation" program. It was a joyous and rich occasion of prayer, ministry and song.

Again we have appreciated the spiritual enrichment and extended fellowship of this gathering of the four Nordic Yearly Meetings. With large and small we have been one hundred and twenty-three souls, including visitors from six other European countries, India and USA. We look forward to meeting again in three years' time, and leave with the hope that we may make positive contributions to peace wherever we go.

With our warmest salutations,
Hanne Hognestad, Norway
Wilhelm Dahllöf, Sweden
Leena Lampela, Finland
Jessica Klaphaak, Denmark

Netherlands Yearly Meeting 19-21 May 2017 Bennekom

Living the Transformation

Around 45 Dutch Friends met for their Yearly Meeting at a Nature Friends Hostel in the middle of a forest. The Yearly Meeting had themed blocks as well as Meeting for Business sessions. Friends from different parts of Europe were present, many of whom often come every year to be amidst this close knit and welcoming group of Friends.

We were all divided into base groups and each group was expected to help with the setting up and clearing away from meals too. A lot of thought had gone into the sourcing of sustainable food products. This year Friends were invited to share a text at the start and end of each session, an idea adopted from Ireland Yearly Meeting. I shared 29.01 from Quaker Faith and Practice.

There was a small group of children present and the older children ran an evening 'bar' to raise money for a Quaker charity. There was also a table where people sold home made products and second hand items for Quaker charities. I brought some of my linocut prints to be sold. During the weekend there were opportunities for walks, tai-chi and guided bird watching.

On Friday night the Gathering started with a welcome and an introduction of the theme. In groups people worked together to build bridges from paper.
On Saturday morning the letter with greetings from Britain Yearly Meeting was read out. It mentioned bridge building which linked in beautifully with Friday's activity.
It became clear during the first session that there are concerns for the future of Quakers in the Netherlands as the numbers are too low to cope with the available posts. Throughout the weekend valuable contributions were given about outreach and inreach and there was a feeling of hope and possibilities for change. Dutch Quakers agreed to meet again this year to discuss this further at an extension of Yearly Meeting.

In the afternoon we explored the theme further with the help of 4 speakers on the theme, Inclusive Security. Johannes Borger and Kees Nieuwerth have been working together, talking with small peace organisations and bringing them together in support of working towards inclusive security. This is the idea that we can only be safe if everybody else in the world is safe. This means we look at all the global problems such as poverty, refugees and sustainability. They have developed a website together to promote this idea. http://samenveilig.earth/. Maarten van der Werf from Christian Peacemaker Teams talked about his presence at am arms fair and how to address the problem of the arms trade on different levels such as talking to politicians and help people deal with fear.

Andrew Lane spoke about the work of the Quaker Council of European Affairs and how different Quaker organisations work together with others in this field.
We took away from the theme that we need to work practically together, growing and learning from each other. It is important to work with other smaller groups as we are so small in numbers. We need to talk with others about inclusive peace, especially in our different social circles.

In the evening there was a campfire with the children and later on Andrew Lane held his interest group there on QCEA. This was an opportunity for the younger Quakers to

connect too which was valuable.

On Sunday morning base groups came together to explore what the theme had meant for us. I felt much empowered by it as it made realise how our small decisions in life can make such a big difference.

After Meeting for Worship the epistle was read out. All weekend friends had had the opportunity to sign cards for absent F/friends and these were now given out for Friends to take away and bring to the absent Friends which is such a wonderful tradition.

During the weekend I had the chance of talking with Hans Weening who will be visiting BYMG as representative of the Dutch Quakers. I am looking forward to welcoming him here.

It was wonderful to be part of the Dutch Yearly Meeting with many F/friends I have known all my life and many new contacts too. It is inspiring to keep feeling hope for better a future thanks to the faith and dedication of even a small number of Quakers.
Was there anything that struck you about the ways in which things were done, whether familiar or novel?

I like the way ideas from different Yearly Meetings were incorporated. Young people and members without a responsibility were very present through the initiative of letting them read texts at the start and ends of the different programme elements and the Wunderbar that was run by the young people. Like at Friends House, the sourcing of food had been given a lot of thought. I like the charity shop where Friends bring things to sell to raise money for the Quaker initiatives. The system of greeting cards for Friends who are prevented is a lovely well established practise.

What aspects of the programme stood out for you?
The programme was well balanced with business, theme and free blocks. I thought the four speakers on the theme were very inspiring and each able to highlight the theme from a different angle.

Have you had, or do you plan to have, follow up contact of any kind?
I met Hans Weening during the weekend and met up with him at BYMG during the international visitors' welcome sessions.

Your overall experience as a BYM representative
I felt very at home and welcomed. It was very familiar of course as this used to be my Yearly Meeting.

Netherlands YM Epistle

Held at Natuurvriendenhuis De Bosbeek, Bennekom on 19 – 21 May 2017

To Friends everywhere,

In the shady woods around Bennekom we gathered in De Bosbeek for our Annual Gathering on the 19th, 20th and 21st of May, 2017.

60 Quakers from The Netherlands and abroad, among them 6 children, assembled to contemplate the theme ‘Living the Transformation.’ On Friday evening we worked in small groups on ‘building bridges’ (an extension of our overall theme) in a playful and creative way. With childlike enthusiasm, coupled with much laughter, we constructed bridges using blank sheets of paper, tape, staples and markers. We went through a hands-on process of design to achieve our goal; a pleasant alternative. At the presentation the final products were much appreciated by all Friends present.

The new international theme, ‘Inclusive Safety,’ developed further by two of our members, was presented from different points of view by four Friends, including Andrew Lane of the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) and Maarten van der Werf of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT). Johannes Borger and Kees Nieuwerth also shared about their activities, both in the Netherlands and internationally, to bring peace activists together, using this theme as a foundation. With fascination we listened to all four speakers, after which we split up into groups to dive deeper into the theme.

A crucial question was put forward during the weekend: how do we shape both our in- and outreach? This question requires further elaboration.
Saturday evening started with a campfire and singing, followed by Friends dispersing into 5 interest groups.

During the Meetings for Business, interludes with inspirational contributions of poetry, prose, images or music invited us to do more silent contemplation.
Being gathered with so many Friends, the Meeting for Worship on Sunday morning was a rich experience.

It was a beautiful and fruitful weekend.

Marlies Tjallingii
Clerk

Switzerland Yearly Meeting 2017, 2-5 June
Herzberg Centre, near Aarau

Background notes
From two Yearly Meetings with Swiss Friends, papers in advance, their website and conversations at this most recent weekend, this is the picture that I now have of their worshipping community today.[1] Comparing in size to one of our smaller Area Meetings, Swiss Yearly Meeting consists of some 150 Quakers (100 members, and 50 'friends of Friends') who regularly worship in these places:

- Geneva Monthly Meeting, 10.30 every Sunday
- Riviera Area Group (location in Lausanne) – 10.30, 1st Sunday of the month
- Bern Group, 2nd and 4th Sundays, 5pm
- Zurich Group, 2nd and 4th Sundays, 10.30am
- Basel Group, 1st Sunday of the month, 10am

This year's Yearly Meeting
The theme this year – marking 500 years of reformation among protestant churches - was: **'An exploration of roots and what may be growing from them'.** The idea was to explore how Quaker roots may carry the ideas of the Reformation – dating this back as far as twelfth century Europe - and what the future for Switzerland YM may hold.

As before, the event was held in English, German and French, with translation during sessions between at least two of these. The programme included a) three speakers each giving one-hour talks on the Reformation b) three half-hour evening sessions, each with a Bible reading chosen to express ideas of 'old' and 'new' and c) three business sessions, to include nominations and appointments for a new clerks' team. There were also two sessions on 'Quaker practices', and a children's meeting with a focus on 'listening' and 'silence'.

Attendance at the different sessions of the weekend varied, with some Friends only able to stay for a day. On Friday evening it felt very small: at the first plenary on the Reformation (as seen by a historian) there were barely fourteen listeners present. By late Saturday afternoon, there were some thirty-five Friends, reducing again by Monday morning - the climax for a key item of business for the weekend: nominations and appointments.

In the papers in advance, hidden away in pages 11 and 12, was this startling note from business meetings held earlier in the year: 'We decide to continue to have Switzerland YM as an organisation'. With its suggestion that there had been serious thought given ***not*** to continue, this was the first inkling of a crisis. Something about the timings in the weekend's programme made the significance of the meetings for worship for business, too, feel similarly hidden – two of them being scheduled in the late afternoon of Saturday and Sunday. Just half an hour into the first one, current co-clerk Anne Lotte

[1] Their origins lie in the 1920s, with individuals who found an affinity with Friends through their involvement in peacebuilding, conscientious objection and service, some of them after visits to Woodbrooke and acceptance as individual members of London Yearly Meeting. Having held their first annual meeting in Berne in 1934, continuing to meet annually under the umbrella of London Yearly Meeting, in November 1939 they were recognized as a Regional Meeting with the independent Switzerland Yearly Meeting coming into being in 1947.

Heyn Cossalter looked up from the clerks' table and said: 'We' (Michel Megard and she) 'are the acting clerks until now. After Monday, we have no clerks'.

The meeting then agreed to appoint an *ad hoc* group to bring proposals to the next business session (on Sunday afternoon). Presented the next day by Denise Vosseler (first in German then in English) these were for a clerking committee of four people, of whom two would be seasoned and two 'younger in Quaker years', with treasurer, auditors and the acting clerk rotating once a year – and a reduction in workload. The Nominations Committee, now consisting of just two Friends, was asked to go away and find names.

On Monday morning, after the reading of the Epistle and discussion of reports, Rori Nazareth (the only remaining Nominations Committee member present) had the unenviable task of reporting back that they had been unable to bring the four names for appointment – the Friends they had approached each having answered they would be only willing to accept the nomination in a year or two. She asked the meeting for more time. When she returned after the break to say that there were now just three possible appointments, suggesting this should be acceptable until the autumn business meeting, there was protest that this was not following Quaker process.

At this stage, there was a perceptible feeling of low energy and tension in the meeting. Denise, as elder, then stood and asked for a few moments' silence and for the clerks to sit back and listen to the meeting, both to what was being said and what was not being said.

After a pause, Thomas Gorr of Zurich meeting stood up and said that, as a novice, if it was acceptable for him to do so, he would volunteer to be a trainee clerk member of the committee until the autumn. Others looked up. It felt as if the spirit had moved.

Reflections

Probably those stages of discernment were particularly moving for me to witness in this Switzerland YM as I am currently serving my third year as an Area Meeting clerk and very aware of the concern in my own and many other British AM nominations committees to find Friends willing to accept nomination as clerks. Serving as BYM representative at this YM gave me the experience of being an accompanier to their discernment in this and I was touched to be told afterwards that I had been able to be of some support in this during the weekend.

There were two highlights of the programme as a whole:

1. Children's meeting and ministry: on Saturday, sitting on the grass outside considering their topics of silence and listening, the two children present at the time with their parents came up with the offer of two questions* for adults to explore over lunch and dinner, put up postit replies on the flipchart paper. Having a half-hour plenary session on Sunday let this time by four of them, they took turns to report back and then challenge the adult circle, first with responses to the two questions, then with a third, concerning action they felt Quakers should take. It was a lively time.
*'*What if anything to you is special about Quaker silence?' 'How much do you think listening involves giving as well as taking?'*

2. Bible reading and discussion sessions with Denise: her invitation to us to read and hear each of these texts and consider our responses to these felt very hospitable to

discernment and leading us to consider, among other things, the need to remember/see what the past has already revealed; the value of radical change for new growth; the idea (or illusion) of there being a future where all will be well; and the idea of punishments for wrongs done.

As last year, I was also impressed with the skilful interpreting going on between the three languages – including a presentation of extracts from other YM epistles, conversations about bridging French and German contexts, and jokes about Geneva meeting giving spoken ministry in English and once a month 'making silence in French'.

But as indicated, the shape of the whole weekend's actual business was disappointing, with energy feeling too much taken up with the three talks on 'the reformation'. It made me come away with a renewed commitment to refresh my own faith and practice in our nominations process, with the poignant question from the Swiss Nominations Group still in my ears: 'How much discernment can you do when there is a shrinking pool of people?' The key purpose of the weekend – to resolve the question of a clerkless YM – seemed to be only explored by the meeting as a whole on Monday morning, leaving a sense of a missed opportunity for Friends to engage with the issue in a more lively way from the start.

Last year, Swiss Friends turned their energies to their ministry around refugees and a sustainable world. This year, the gathering felt more inward-looking: more vulnerable, but at the same time more aware of the need for mutual care. I am grateful for the opportunity this gave me to recognise our common commitment to the life of our religious society. I also feel confident for their future - as well as better informed about their roots.

Jane Mace - Gloucestershire AM

Switzerland YM Epistle

2-5 June 2017 – Herzberg near Aarau

This year the Protestant churches mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, a matter of special relevance to many Swiss. Yet, as we learned in our Annual Gathering this year, this was part of a much longer process of revitalization beginning in the 11th century and out of which Quakers too emerged. Three speakers – an historian, a theologian, and a specialist on the Waldensians (one of the early reform movements) — spoke to the theme of "An Exploration of Roots and What May be Growing from Them". They described how these early reformers, distressed by how Christianity was currently being lived, were led to call for a return to the simple teachings of Jesus. What they proposed bears striking similarity to the principles we Quakers espouse: simplicity, equality, commitment to the truth, pacifism, and direct experience of the Divine. Luther proclaimed that it is God who works in us through his Spirit when we open ourselves in trust.

Renewal and revitalization is also the immediate challenge now facing Swiss Friends. Swiss Yearly Meeting is comprised of several Worship Groups and one Monthly Meeting. Our declining membership, the strain on our Clerks and committees, and our deep concern about the state of our world pressed us to think about the future of our Yearly Meeting and how we can best strengthen it. Putting our minds to it, we came up with ways to streamline our administrative structure and processes. We proposed to create a Team of Clerks to share the work more widely and to reduce the number of committees while maintaining commitment to inclusiveness. A number of ideas arose for simplifying the decision-making process and promoting connections among dispersed Friends.

Despite the challenge of three languages – German, French, English – we found much in common. During our three days together, we enjoyed a rich array of workshops on Quaker practice, dreamwork, our identity as Quakers, and the very impressive work of Quaker United Nations Office.

Even the meetings for business were a surprising source of new insights and knowledge of Quaker practice that we do not ordinarily learn in the silence of Meetings for Worship. In the evenings, we considered the multiple messages in selected Bible readings. We sang and our more talented members told stories and played music. It was Young Friends who brought an especially precious contribution to the spiritual side of the Meeting. Their Epistle accompanies this one.

Kid's epistle
This weekend our main topics were: silence, listening and action. On Saturday, we started with silence. We discussed inner and outer silence, what silence is for Quakers or others, and how it influences daily life. Finally, we asked ourselves whether being in a group or alone affects silence.

Next was listening. We discovered that it's not only taking but also giving and finding a balance. We also played games to experience it physically.

The last thing was action. On Sunday morning, we led a session with the rest of the meeting. After this, we understood that many Quakers believe change or action does

not need to be big and/or bold to be important. We took from this that small actions in everyday life can make a change in the world.

We also enjoyed a lesson of calligraphy with Michel, we sang a few pretty songs with Senovio, and made bookmarks to sell to support Junior Nzita

Quaker Recognised Bodies MfS 2017 12 12

Request for recognition

The following seven organisations have applied to become Quaker Recognised Bodies.

Five appeared as listed informal groups in the 2016 Book of Meetings:

1. Association of Talking Friends
2. Give Peace a Chance Trust
3. Glebe House (Friends Therapeutic Community Trust)
4. Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network
5. Quaker Peace Studies Trust

The other two are well-established organisations, beyond the stage of being considered “emergent”, but have not previously been included in the Book of Meetings.

6. Experiment with Light
   (This organisation was considered last time, but not approved, as no contact name was provided. The documentation is re-submitted, this time with a Friend named as the contact.)
7. Quaker Service Memorial Trust

Staff have looked at the documentation provided by each of the organisations and consider that the criteria for listing them as Quaker Recognised Bodies have been met.

The notes below give more details to support the applications.

The Association of Talking Friends

Constitution: The Association of Talking Friends is a registered charity no. 299656, it has a formal constitution.

Governance: Trustees must be in Quaker membership and are appointed by Central England Area Quaker Meeting.

Type of Group: External.

Foundation: 1988.

Aims: The object of the Association is to provide audio versions of Quaker periodicals.

Publications and activities: Since 1988, The Association of Talking Friends has circulated recordings of Quaker publications to visually impaired Friends and attenders in Britain Yearly Meeting. The cost to subscribers is kept to 50% of the print version. Membership is by annual subscription to any or all of these Quaker periodicals: *The Friends, Quaker Voices, Friends Quarterly* and *Towards Wholeness.* All subscribers automatically receive *Quaker News,* published four times a year. All recordings are supplied digitally on returnable USB sticks. They also record a number of Quaker books and can supply portable players for listening to the recordings. The circulation of the recordings is managed by Quaker Life in Friends House.

Membership: 25-30 subscribers.

Finance: Accounts are examined in accordance with their constitution.

Winding up: A winding up process exists.

Archives: None.

Current contact details: Alan Johnson (Convenor of Committee)
8 Norman Road, Birmingham B31 2EW
Tel: 0121 476 0217
Email: alan.johnson1@blueyonder.co.uk

Website: www.talkingfriends.org.uk

Staff link: James Johnson, Communications & Services Department.

Give Peace A Chance Trust

Constitution: The Give Peace A Chance Trust operates under a Trust Deed and is now a family trust. It is a charity and registered with the Charity Commission (England & Wales) no. 327038.

Governance: By the Trustees.

Type of Group: External.

Foundation: 1985.

Aims: A charitable trust set up to tell people about the history and current activities of the Peace Movement through the provision of educational facilities and the creation of a National Museum for Peace.

Publications and activities: The Give Peace A Chance Trust provides financial support for the Peace Museum established by the Trust in Bradford in 1998.

Membership: 3 Trustees.

Finance: Accounts are prepared in accordance with the Trust's constitution and the requirements of the Charity Commission. Annual turnover £18,000.

Winding up: None – continuing family trust.

Archives: With Gerald Drewett.

Current contact details: Gerald Drewett
39 Postwood Green, Hertford Heath, Hertford. SG13 7QJ
Tel: 01992 416442
Email: gerald.drewett@ntlworld.com

Staff link: Libby Adams, Head of Library and Archives

Glebe House (Friends Therapeutic Community Trust)

Constitution: Glebe House (Friends Therapeutic Community Trust) is registered charity no. 1124673; private limited company no. 652659. There is a Trust Deed and Memorandum of Association and Statement of Purpose.

Governance: Usually 8 Trustees, appointed from a number of Area Meetings through a General Meeting held in October each year. All Trustees are members of the Religious Society of Friends. There is a Nominations Committee and Area Meeting links to recruit potential Trustees. Trustees meet 6 times a year, plus one General Meeting and one Non-Business Day.

Type of Group: External.

Foundation: 1965 (first service user arrived in 1969).

Aims: Glebe House is a charitable trust that provides specialist interventions for young men between the ages of 15 and 18, with a known history of harmful sexual behaviours. This includes a residential treatment service for up to 17 young men at any one time, an independence transition service, training and consultancy, and community-based assessment and intervention work.

Publications and activities: Occasional academic and general media publications.

Membership: Usually 8 Trustees (all members of the Religious Society of Friends); approximately 50 employees.

Finance: Circa £2,000,000 turnover a year; accounts are audited in line with financial procedures stated in their constitution.

Winding up: There is a contingency plan if the Trust needed to cease to trade. This is referred to in the Audited Accounts.

Archives: Currently stored at the Planned Environmental Therapy Trust**.**

Current contact details:
Glebe House, Church Road, Shudy Camps, Cambs. CB214QH
Tel: 01799584359
Email: info@glebehouse.org.uk

Website: http://www.ftctrust.org.uk/index.php

Staff link: – Teresa Parker, Quaker Peace & Social Witness

QARN (Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network)

Constitution: QARN's constitution was adopted in 2007 and amended 2013.

Governance: QARN has a Steering Group and Treasurer, which are appointed by the AGM. Meetings are held as and when required (normally quarterly) and at least once a year (i.e. the Annual General Meeting).

Type of Group: Linked.

Foundation: 2006.

Aims:
Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network is a national network of Quakers with a concern about people seeking asylum, refugees and others in need of international protection. We are a Listed Informal Group within Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers.)
It aims to support each other as Friends acting under concern; to keep Friends in our meetings up to date with developments and to work to convince British Quakers that a principled critique of current asylum policy and practice grounded in experience and action should be part of our corporate Quaker witness in keeping with our testimony to equality. To guide Britain Yearly Meeting now that Sufferings have accepted that Asylum is a concern, to help them to work for justice and compassion in our asylum and immigration system.

Publications and activities: Regular member meetings in different centres round the UK: the website is also updated with news and other information

Membership: 150.

Finance: QARN has modest financial activity with an annual budget of about £1000. It has current reserves of about £5,000 as a result of donations from Friends. Annual accounts are produced, which are independently examined

Winding up: If the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network ceases to exist (ie does not have at least one meeting a year) or it is decided at a meeting of Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network to cease to exist, then any funds go to Britain Yearly Meeting. BYM are asked if practical to use the money for work on asylum.

Archives: None.

Current contact details: Sheila Mosley
Leicester Friends Meeting House, 16 Queen's Road, Leicester. LE2 1WP
Tel: 07751888391, Email: info@qarn.org.uk

Website: www.qarn.org.uk, it also has a facebook page.

Staff link: Tim Gee, Programme Developer, Forced Migration, Quaker Peace & Social Witness

Quaker Peace Studies Trust

Constitution: The constitution is held in the Trust Deed, dated 28 January 1972. Quaker Peace Studies Trust is a registered charity no. 529095.

Governance: Governance is by the trustees. Each trustee is appointed to serve for five years, a second term is possible.

Type of Group: External.

Foundation: 1972.

Aims: The purpose of the trust is the advancement of learning and knowledge by the study of peace and the methods by which peace can be developed. It does this by the financing of research, teaching, and enabling the study of peace studies at the University of Bradford and other institutions of higher education in the UK. It provides funds to assist students in their studies both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. QPST is a grant-making trust.

Publications and activities: Materials are published through the University of Bradford, including an Annual Report of Peace and Conflict Research at the University of Bradford. It assisted in peace conferences and in 2016 supported the Adam Curle Centenary Symposium (held at the University of Bradford) and the joint regional conference on Global Education for Peace in Africa, jointly organised by the University of Bradford and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Membership: 8 trustees.

Finance: The Trust is financed through individual donations, area and local meetings, legacies and grants. The accounts are examined in accordance with the constitution.

Winding up: Should this be necessary, our Trust Deed includes provision for winding up, following disbursement of all available funds.

Archives: There is extensive catalogued archival material held in the Pemberton Building and the J. B. Priestley Library, University of Bradford.

Current contact details:
Quaker Peace Studies Trust, Victoria Hall, Knowsley Street, Bolton. BL1 2AS
Email: qpst@quaker.org.uk

Website: Details of Quaker Peace Studies Trust can be found at: www.bradford.ac.uk/social-sciences/peace-studies/quaker

Staff link: Marigold Bentley, Head of Peace Programmes and Faith Relations, Quaker Peace & Social Witness

Experiment with Light Network

Constitution: The Network has a Partnership Agreement, rather than a constitution. It includes a clause that makes it clear that it will follow Quaker principles.

Governance: An Annual Business Meeting approves the examined accounts and appoints the members of the Steering Group and the Nominating Group and any other positions if applicable. The Steering Group organises the work in between Annual Business Meetings and meets 3-4 times per year, using Quaker Business Method and incorporating an Experiment with Light meditation into each of its meetings.

Type of Group: Free-standing.

Foundation: 2009, having evolved out of the Experiment with Light movement that started around 1996/97

Aims: To support, co-ordinate and develop the teaching and practice of Experiment with Light throughout the Religious Society of Friends within Britain Yearly Meeting and beyond; to work with the Religious Society of Friends through the channels of Britain Yearly Meeting to facilitate the acceptance of Experiment with Light as a core Quaker spiritual practice

Publications and activities: "Journal of the Experiment with Light Network" (published 4 times a year), guided meditation CDs, leaflets, booklets, workshop facilitators' handbook, online resources. The Experiment with Light Network runs workshops, retreats and gatherings at Quaker centres and local Friends Meeting Houses and a variety of sessions at Yearly Meeting Gatherings. In 2013 the EwL Network organised an International Gathering at Woodbrooke with 71 participants from 10 different countries. The EwL Network encourages Light groups to consult with and report to their Local or Area Meetings and Elders.

Membership: There is no membership structure, however the Journal is distributed to around 80 Light groups and 500-600 individuals

Finance: Funded by Quaker trusts and individual donations. The accounts are independently examined.

Winding up: No provision is in place.

Archives: At Friends House Library, London

Current contact details: Klaus Huber, experimentwithlight@gmail.com

Website: www.experiment-with-light.org.uk

Staff link: Gill Sewell, Ministry and Outreach Officer, Quaker Life

Quaker Service Memorial Trust

Constitution: The Quaker Service Memorial Trust is a registered charity no. 1142335. Its objectives are set out formally in the Trust Deed.

Governance: QSMT appoints a Clerk and a Treasurer, and meets 4 times a year as trustees. In addition, working groups meet to progress their work. All meetings are carried out using the Quaker business method.

Type of Group: External.

Foundation: 20 May 2011.

Aims: The Trust's objectives are:
(i) to maintain a memorial within the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, Staffordshire, which commemorates the wartime service of members of the Friends Ambulance Unit and Friends Relief Service;
(ii) to educate the public about the work of Friends, particularly (but not exclusively) about conflict resolution, reconciliation and peace building in the aftermath of war.

Publications and activities: The Trust holds a Meeting for Worship twice a year at the Quaker memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum, on Conscientious Objectors Day and International Day of Peace, about 20-25 people attend each time. The Quaker memorial is included on guided tours of the National Memorial Arboretum. The Quaker Service Exhibition has been available to hire since 2012 and has been exhibited in a range of locations including Meeting Houses, Civic Centres and Cathedrals. Other activities include: producing a leaflet about the Quaker service memorial; an oral history project with former members of the Friends Ambulance Unit and the Friends Relief Service; conducting activities at Yearly Meeting Gatherings., and an education pack for use in schools.

Membership: 6 trustees.

Finance: QSMT appoints a Treasurer; accounts are independently examined annually and submitted to the Charity Commission.

Winding up: There is provision in place.
Archives: These are held by the Clerk and will be formally archived at the appropriate time.

Current contact details: Quaker Service Memorial Trustees
19 Marsworth Way, Stafford, Staffordshire ST16 1UB,
Tel: 01785 250178 Email: qsmtrust@hotmail.co.uk

Website: www.qsmt.org.uk

Staff link: Libby Adams, Head of Library and Archives

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Operational Group Budget 2017

Introduction
The 2018 budget has been derived from a detailed financial review of all of BYM's activities (excluding legacy-funded projects), within the context of the Operational Plan.

Operational Budget 2018
Summary of proposed budget (see Appendix A for further detail):

	2017 Budget £'000	2017 Forecast £'000	**2018 Budget £'000**
Total Income	11,084	12,011	**11,435**
Total Costs	-11,826	-12,134	**-12,107**
Operating Deficit	-742	-123	**-672**

The proposed budget deficit for 2018 of £672k is £70k less than 2017 budget (a Yearly Meeting Gathering Year.) Strenuous efforts have been made to be both realistic about costs while maintaining a steady state for charitable activity.

While deficit budgets are not sustainable in the longer term, BYM remains a charity with robust levels of reserves and we spend for a better future rather than lay down work done in the name of Friends. The budget assumes contributions of £2.2m, an increase which will help towards maintaining our current level of activity – but clearly many Friends would actually like to see more work done in their name. A review of BYM fundraising is underway and BYM will need to invest to grow its income. A review of our grant income is already underway with an increased target set of £0.8m.

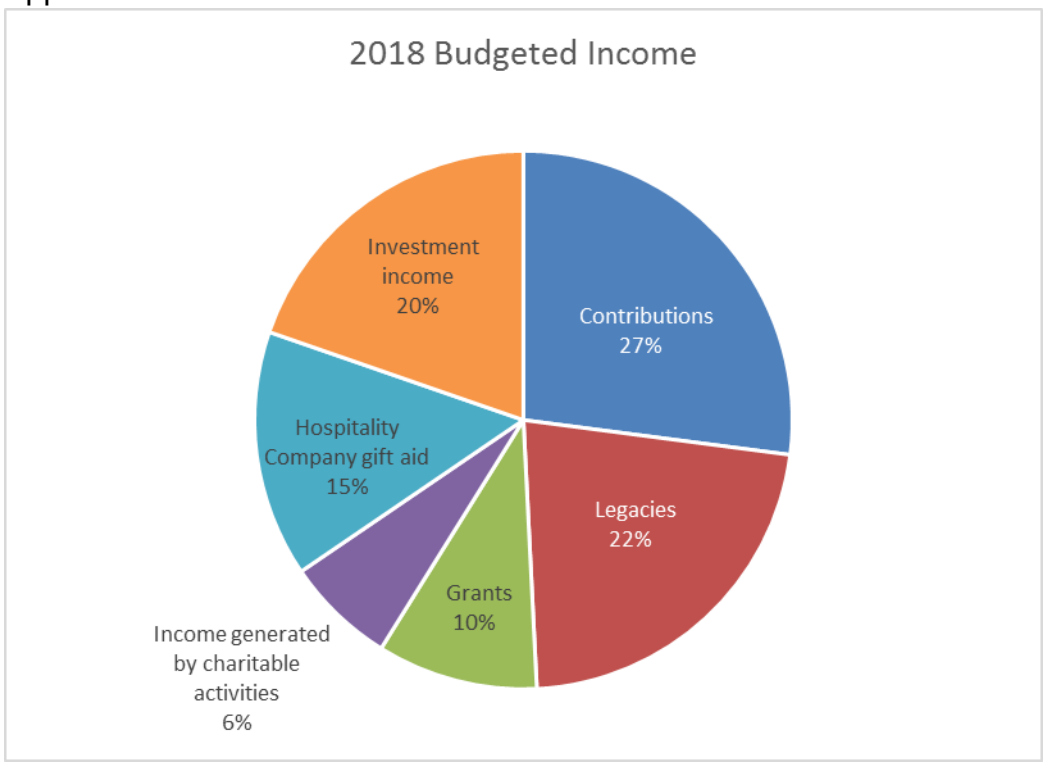
Hospitality gross income is expected to reach £4.78m in line with current business growth and will peak at around £5m by 2020-21 as the physical capacity of our buildings is reached. After covering food and staff costs relating to the Hospitality Company operations, the income will fund £2m of support costs relating to the running of Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall before generating £0.17m for charitable activities.

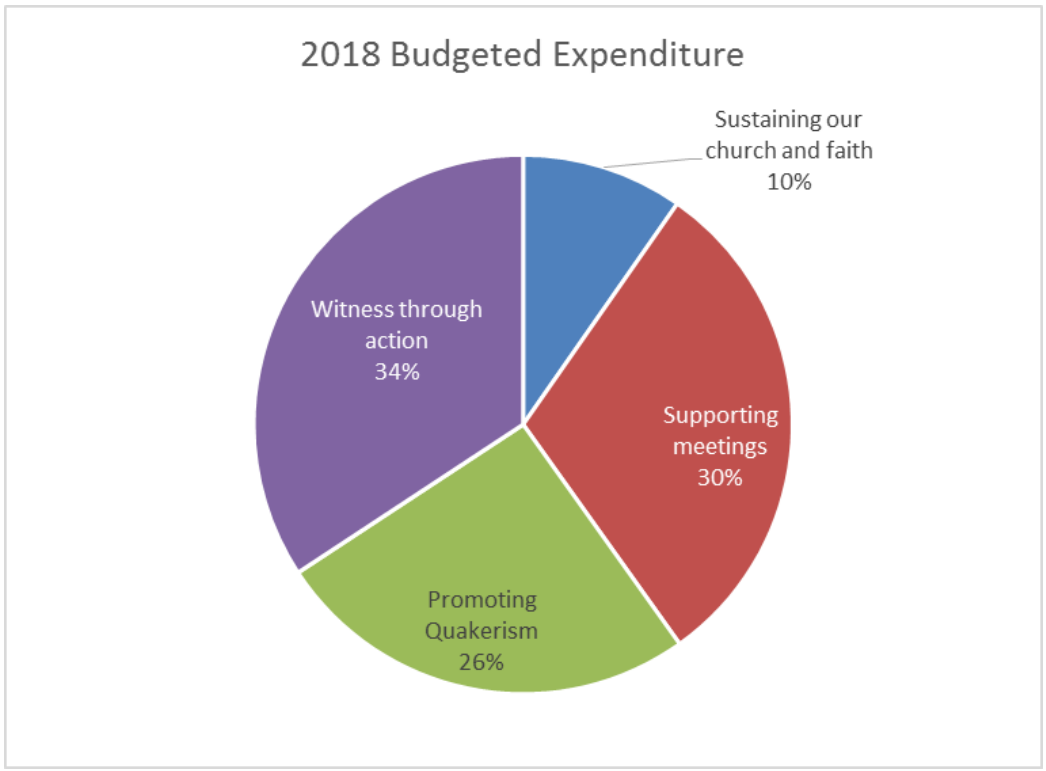
Through good stewardship and changes in the market, the valuation of our buildings has increased significantly. Properties have to be allocated a value in the accounts, in accordance with accounting rules, with these values revisited on a regular basis. The revaluations increase the designated reserves for Friends House, Swarthmoor Hall and Drayton House. The higher property values also result in higher depreciation, which increases operating costs in the accounts group forward, without increasing our income. Included in the budget is £0.4m of depreciation on our properties.

The budget figures exclude expenditure relating to legacy-funded projects which are funded by legacy income set aside for this purpose. We currently have 12 active projects with a further three due to start shortly. Trustees have also designated a further £0.5m for new

projects; along with carry forward of designated funds not committed in 2017, there will around £1m will be available for new projects to be committed in 2018.

Appendix A





At a meeting of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Friday 22 to Saturday 23 September 2017 at Friends House London

Minutes

Present: David Burnell, Sarah Donaldson, James Eddington, Nick Eyre, Nick Francis (Assistant Clerk), Ingrid Greenhow (Clerk), Roy Love, David Olver, Virginia Pawlyn, Steve Pullan, Alastair Reid, Hazel Shellens, Tim Southall, Peter Ullathorne (Treasurer), Chris Willmore

In attendance: Helen Drewery, Head of Witness & Worship (except minute **BYMT-2017-09-15**); Blake Humphries, Meeting & Donor Relationships Team Leader (Minute **BYMT-2017-09-06b**), Neil Jarvis, Governance Officer (minutes **BYMT-2017-09-01to6b**), Lisa Kiew, Head of Finance & Resources (except minute **BYMT-2017-09-15**); Caroline Nursey, incoming assistant clerk for 2018 (minutes **BYMT-2017-09-06cto15**), Paul Parker, Recording Clerk (except minute **BYMT-2017-09-15**); Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk, (except minute **BYMT-2017-09-15**), Vicky Torrance, Grants & Contributions Manager (Minute **BYMT-2017-09-06b**), Young Friends General Meeting: Kellie Turner (Clerk of Trustees), Jenny McCarthy (Co-clerk), Tim Rouse (Management Trustee) (Minute **BYMT-2017-09-07)**

Prevented: Lynn Moseley

BYMT-2017-09-01 Welcome, agenda check, conflicts of interest check, minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 9-11 June 2017 have been signed by the Clerk and placed in the minute book.

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We confirm our agenda.

We ask Sarah Donaldson, James Eddington and Alastair Reid to act as buddies for Alison Breadon, Frances Voelcker and Graham Torr respectively.

We ask Nick Francis to report back to Lynn Moseley.

During our opening worship, we have heard read *Quaker faith & practice* 21.04 and 10.15.

BYMT-2017-09-02 Consent agenda

(a) Consent agenda part 1

We note receipt of the Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee minutes for their meeting 8-10 September 2017**(BYMT-2017-09-02a)** and our continued minutes **(BYMT-2017-09-02b)**.

We receive Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd minutes of 14 September 2017.
We receive HS2 Monitoring Group minutes of 11 September 2017

(b) Consent agenda part 2

(i) **BYMT Audit Committee minutes 16 March 2017**. We receive the minutes **(BYMT-2017-09-02c i).**

(ii) **BYMT Audit Committee minutes 13 June 2017.** We receive the minutes **(BYMT-2017-09-02c).**

Whistleblowing policy

We agree to the request in minute **BYMTAC-2017-06-05** that we should receive the annual whistleblowing report, rather than the Audit Committee, as we have responsibility for the policy's implementation.

(iii) **BYMT Audit Committee minutes 4 September** We receive the minutes **(BYMT-2017-02-02d).**

Employment of Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd staff by BYM Trustees

Minute **BYMTAC-2017-09-01** asks us to revisit the rationale behind the decision to employ all staff of the charity and the Hospitality Company as BYM employees, including reference to the rates of pay of staff outside London.

We agree that the Recording Clerk should prepare a paper which can be forwarded to the Audit Committee setting out current policy where there have been recent developments.

Risk Management

Minute **BYMTAC-2017-09-03** suggests that BYM Trustees and Management Meeting increase the frequency with which we review the register, such reviews including progress on implementing mitigation and measuring its effectiveness. We acknowledge that the Risk Register should be a dynamic document and that Trustees and Management Meeting should engage with this at least twice a year.

(iv) **Investment policy** We receive Friends Trusts Limited minute **T/17/28(b)** (**BYMT-2017-09-02e**) on inconsistencies in the policy. This minute has also been sent to BYMT Finance & Property Committee. We ask BYMT Finance & Property Committee to respond to this minute.

(v) **Friends Trusts Limited: Directors of Friends Trusts Limited's Board** We receive minute **T17/46** recommending that the directors of FTL's Board, which need not be more than five, should all be members of Finance & Property Committee, without any increase in the membership of that Committee.

We ask the Recording Clerk to bring a paper on this to a future meeting.

(vi) **Submission of annual return to the Charity Commission** Paper **BYMT-2017-09-02f** is a screen shot of the Charity Commission webpage showing that the 2016 accounts and the 2016 annual return were received by the Charity Commission on 24 July 2017. All Trustees confirmed their acceptance of the information to be submitted.

(vii) **Gold minutes and papers 2017** James Eddington has reviewed the minutes and papers of BYM Trustees' meetings from September 2016 to

July 2017 and suggests those to be included in the folder of Gold minutes (**BYMT-2017-09-02g)**. We agree to this.

(viii) 2019 suggested dates Paper **BYMT-2017-09-02h** suggests the following dates for our meetings in 2019:

Friday 15-Saturday 16 February
Friday 5 April (Training day and confirming TARA)
Friday 7-Sunday 9 June (location to be decided)
Friday 6-Saturday 7 September
Friday15 November

(ix) Appointments

We receive the following Nominations for 2018 from the BYMT Nominations Group:
Elders: James Eddington, Chris Willmore
Employment Committee: Clerk yet to be approved
Trustee: Hazel Shellens
Non-trustees: Michael Langford (Cambridgeshire AM) and Chris Love (York AM).
Finance & Property Committee: Delia Suffling, Sandy Horsfall until 31 December 2018, Alan Keith until 31 December 2019, Mervyn Dobbin until 31 December 2020
Friends House (London) Hospitality Limited: Nick Eyre
HS2 Monitoring Group: Graham Torr
Senior Staff Grievance & Disciplinary Group: to be appointed
Swarthmoor Hall Review Group: Nick Eyre, James Eddington, Roy Love
These names being acceptable, these Friends are appointed accordingly.

(x) **Swarthmoor Hall Review Group terms of reference**

We accept the terms of reference (**BYMT-2017-09-02i** appendix).

(xi) **BYMT Nominations Group**

We ask Sarah Donaldson (2018-2020), Alastair Reid (2018-2019) and David Olver (2018-2020) to serve as our nominations group.

BYMT-2017-09-03 Recording Clerk's report

We receive the Recording Clerk's report (**BYMT-2017-09-03**) covering:

- Yearly Meeting Gathering (Behaviour of Friends, Diversity, Cycling to YMG)
- External relations (Reputation issues arising from the closure of Walden School, Quaker schools, Social Change Project, ACEVO Faith-based charities special-interest group, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Quaker Social Action, House of St Barnabas)
- Staff matters (Being a Quaker workplace, All-staff survey, Staff member facing court proceedings)
- Other matters (Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014)
- Deputy Recording Clerk (Communications, Management effectiveness, Impact)
- Witness & Worship (Support for Meetings Strategy, Spiritual nurture, Campaigning and movement building & advocacy, Peacebuilding, Outreach, All-age community, Sustainability)

- Operations (Recognition, Swarthmoor shop, Training our people, Bookshop, Yearly Meeting Gathering, Administration, Quaker Tapestry Roadshow, Room biographies, Signing in and out, Health & Safety policies, Suspended soup scheme, Working with offenders programme, Facilities)
- Finance & Resources (Fundraising – operational details, Data safety, Volunteering, IT, Training including health & safety, Financial Security)

Appendices to this report were the Staff report, the Recording Clerk's report to Manner of Holding YMG 2017, Summary of campaigning and activity required under the Lobbying Act, and the Executive summary of the Vibrancy Report.

We have received minutes of Management Meeting held 13 and 17 June, 11 and 25 July, 8 and 22 August and 12 September.

BYMT-2017-09-04 Trustees' News

We receive a report of the activities of Trustees since our last meeting including training undertaken (**BYMT-2017-09-04**).

BYMT-2017-09-05 Trustees' annual review and Trustees' annual report and accounts: process for production

We receive a paper from Juliet Prager and Neil Jarvis on the process for producing the Trustees' Annual Review and the Trustees' Annual Report and accounts (TARA) (**BYMT-2017-09-05**).

In reflecting on the publication of these two documents this year, various issues were identified regarding the process and areas of responsibility. The paper sets out proposals for the process and responsibilities, including how staff will contribute, the principles underpinning the process and how Trustees will contribute and maintain oversight.

We agree to the proposed process and we ask the nominations group to bring forward the name of a second Trustee to serve alongside Steve Pullan for oversight of the 2017 TARA and Annual Review. We ask the nominated Trustees to canvas our views to inform the staff producing the 2017 reports.

BYMT-2017-09-06 Finance

(a) Finance report, period 7

We receive the financial report for period 7 (July 2017) (BYMT-2017-09-06a).
We note the difficulty in recruiting staff to the Hospitality team. We note this is a newly-emerging risk and ask Management Meeting to take steps to include this in the Risk Register.

(b) Quaker Finance & Property Committee minutes

We receive the minutes of BYMT Quaker Finance & Property Committee held on 27 July (**BYMT-2017-09-06b**).

Review of property management processes (minute FP17/48)
We note the request from Quaker Finance & Property Committee for a review of our property management processes. We ask Management Meeting to address this and to report back to a future meeting.

Hope Fund (minute FP17/60)
In 1987 BYM received a donation of £100,000 for the purpose of the relief of unemployment, and it was agreed with the donor to utilise only the interest on the donation to make grants. Interest rates have now fallen to the extent that the income generated is no longer keeping pace with the need evidenced by grant applications. In June and July, Lisa Kiew wrote to the donor's contact address to ask for their permission to utilise both the interest and capital; no reply has been received and the Charity Commission has clarified that the process for converting an endowment applies in such an instance.

We receive a request for a resolution to convert an endowment into a restricted fund (BYMT Finance & Property Committee minute **FP17/60**).

We hereby pass a resolution to apply for Charity Commission consent to spend the endowment arising from the Hope Fund, on the basis that the income generated is small relative to the needs, and that the needs can be better addressed by spending the capital.

(c) Income strategy and fundraising development
We have been joined by Blake Humphries, Meeting & Donor Relationships Team Leader, and Vicky Torrance, Grants & Contributions Manager, for this item.
We receive a paper on income strategy and fundraising development (**BYMT-2017-09-06c**) which sets out the proposed principles for an income strategy as recommend by BYMT Finance & Property (minute FP17/49) and we accept these principles. For information, the paper also includes an update on the development of our approach to fundraising.

We have spent time in a workshop led by Lisa Kiew in which we have enthusiastically participated. We note that the risk of inaction is that our reserves continue to dwindle and BYM would be unable to take on new work as discerned by Friends. There is also the risk of getting the approach wrong, and hence there is a need for appropriate research and consultation. Additional resources are therefore likely to be needed.

We note that fundraising cannot be seen in isolation and must sit alongside the communication and outreach strategies that BYM is developing. Trustees, staff and committee members are all fundraisers: we need to be united behind a well-defined and inspiring message about giving. And giving is not just about money. It is about our faith and our lives as Quakers. We can encourage and embolden Friends to give what they can – with time, money and service to support the church and the charity.
We need to have regard to our responsibilities with respect to the compliance requirements laid out by the Charity Commission and the Fundraising Regulator.

We Trustees will need to see ourselves as fundraisers and advocates for the work, as well as investing in appropriately-skilled professional staff, and need to be able to describe more clearly the difference our work makes in the world and in our Quaker community. We will help Friends to live and give generously in the spirt of Advice 27.
We will return to this at our February 2018 meeting and thereafter have this as a regular agenda item at our future trustee meetings. We thank Lisa, Vicky and Blake for leading our discussion this afternoon.

We note that the terms of reference for our Finance & Property Committee need to be clarified with respect to fundraising, and we ask our clerks and the Recording Clerk to work on revised wording.

BYMT-2017-09-07 Young Friends General Meeting

We were joined on Friday evening by Kellie Turner (Clerk of Trustees), Jenny McCarthy (Co-clerk) and Tim Rouse (Management Trustee) from Young Friends General Meeting.

We receive paper **BYMT-2017-09-07** Young Friends General Meeting (their report to Sufferings in June and their report on their outreach funded by BYM).

We are encouraged to hear of the increase in numbers attending the three YFGM residential weekends a year, and that funding from BYM enables YFGM to pay travel costs for those attending for the first time, and had contributed to this growth.
We are pleased to hear of the success of the TFGM intern programme at Friends House, which enables closer contact between YFGM and other Quaker bodies.

We have been reminded that the current Quaker structures often preclude younger Friends from serving on committees.

We have encourage YFGM to make good use of its position in the BYM structures to raise matters of concern more widely.

We thank Tim, Kelly and Jenny for coming to speak to us. We send this minute to Young Friends General Meeting.

BYMT-2017-09-08 Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017/Yearly Meeting 2018

(a) Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017

We receive a paper from Paul Parker reflecting on Yearly Meeting Gathering (BYMT-2017-09-08). Additional reporting on the gathering can be found in the Recording Clerk's report (**BYMT-2017-09-0**3) and its appendix 1.

We have spent time reflecting and celebrating the success of YMG. Although we are pleased with the positive reception of the Trustees annual report, we feel that there was lack of challenge.

We are glad to hear of improvements in the budgeting process for Yearly Meeting Gathering, and look forward to considering the final figures when these are available. We recognise there were some organisational glitches which will be covered for future gatherings.

We recognise the value of Friends gathering regularly and our responsibility to resource this. We feel that the time may be right to look at the purpose Yearly Meeting in the life of the Society of Friends, including whether different formats may be appropriate in future.

We continue to encourage work on sustainability and climate change, and on greater diversity in our structures, mindful that these matters will take time.

We wish to express our appreciation to all our staff and volunteers for their hard work, good humour and commitment throughout Yearly Meeting Gathering, whether at the University of Warwick or at Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall.

(b) Yearly Meeting 2018

We have received an invitation from Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee to prepare a submission regarding our longer term planning and whether the threshing meeting held in November 2016 contributed to this, and, should YM 2018 be considering the revision of the Book of Discipline, what from BYMT's perspective needs to be considered etc. We are also invited to send a representative to their meeting on 28 October.

We agree that Ingrid Greenhow should prepare a paper and that she should represent us at this meeting.

BYMT-2017-09-09 Property strategy

We receive a paper from Lisa Kiew (**BYMT-2017-09-09a**) on a property strategy for properties owned by Britain Yearly Meeting. We also receive the Property Strategy Group minutes from their meeting on 22 May (**MtM-2017-09-09b**) and we note part minute FP17/48 of the minutes of BYMT Finance & Property Committee (**BYMT-2017-09-06b**) relating to this issue.

We note the overall strategy principles, namely:

- To have the right property from which to deliver our charitable purposes (cost efficiency, fit for purpose)
- To provide value for money and long term efficiencies (occupation and use are optimised; running costs minimised; income generated)
- To support partners and communities (building users, local community, tenants)
- To be sustainable and reduce environmental impacts (buildings, agricultural land)

We ask the group to consider the matter of necessary expertise at their next meeting. We agree to adopt the property strategy as a working document.

We send this to Finance & Property for use as a working document, and ask them to implement the strategy.

BYMT-2017-09-10 Management Meeting: process for reviewing new arrangements

We receive a paper from Paul Parker on the process for reviewing the new Management Meeting arrangements (**BYMT-2017-09-10**).

Given that the schedule of delegation is still work in progress, and is closely allied to this review, we ask Sarah Donaldson and David Olver to undertake a light-touch review of whether the new arrangements are working, and to report back to BYMT in February 2018 with any recommendations for adjustments before a fuller review is conducted, probably in 2019, alongside the schedule of delegation. This light-touch review should also take into account the concerns raised in the minute of Devon AM about post titles and make recommendations about the most appropriate response as agreed in Minute **BYMT-2016-06-11**.

BYMT-2017-09-11 Operational Plan 2017: 6-month review

We receive a paper on the 2017 Operational Plan from Juliet Prager and Neil Jarvis (**BYMT-2017-09-11**) for information. The report covers progress against the plan and also an update on the four high likelihood and major impact risks.

We are pleased to note progress, with 88% of the 382 activities either complete or on target, and thank all our staff for their work.

BYMT-2017-09-12 Meeting for Sufferings preparation

We have discussed our preparations for Meeting for Sufferings.

BYMT-2017-09-13 Reviewing the meeting

We have reviewed the meeting.

BYMT-2017-09-14 Time with Recording Clerk

We have spent time with the Recording Clerk.

BYMT-2017-09-15 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

We part, hoping to meet again on Friday 17 November 2017 at Friends House.

Ingrid Greenhow
Clerk

Meeting for Sufferings Annual Report 2017

Facing turbulent times, Quakers in Britain seek a future where Quaker values are active in the world.

Meeting for Sufferings is Yearly Meeting's national representative body. Its 100 or so members are drawn from the wide geographical and demographic spread of all 70 Area Meetings, Young Friends General Meeting, General Meeting for Scotland, and Meeting of Friends in Wales. Representatives also come from: Quaker World Relations, Quaker Life, Quaker Peace & Social Witness, Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations, and from Central Nominations Committee. BYM trustees, senior staff and the Yearly Meeting clerk are all ex officio members. In December we welcomed 13-21 year olds from the Young People's Participation Day to worship in the Large Meeting House at the start and the close of the day.

We gather in worship. The meeting is a place to which Area Meetings can bring their concerns and Sufferings may test these by its own consideration or by seeking the advice of others. It can be the place where new thinking from 'Friends on the bench' finds its way to Yearly Meeting and spreads across the Society, coming back into local Quaker lives.

Reports from groups and committees are essential elements, so it is a place to learn about work done in our name and how central committees determine their priorities; it is a channel by which information and ideas flow back to Friends in their local and area meetings, and a place where Friends from across Britain Yearly Meeting meet and get to know one another; above all it should be a place of listening and discernment.

In 2017 we gave consideration, amongst other topics, to the following concerns of Area Meetings:

- Fracking. This led to a widely used public statement;
- The role of a meeting in supporting vulnerable adults, which has been passed to Quaker Life
- Transgender and non-binary inclusion. This is now being discussed across the YM
- The decision-making process at Sufferings and in BYM around the setting of priorities. After initial consideration in June we expect to return to this matter in 2018

In October we received Minute 38 of Yearly Meeting 2017 about Diversity and Inclusion. This has started off a process of consultation in Area Meetings. We are asking Friends to consider three things: the ways in which their meeting, committee or group is already diverse, how it could be more diverse, and what help might be needed to overcome any barriers to increased diversity. Friends are invited to respond to Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group via the Deputy Recording Clerk. The results of this consultation will be shared with Sufferings in due course.

We hear regularly from Britain Yearly Meeting trustees throughout the year, and receive annual reports from all the central committees. Quaker Stewardship Committee's first report to us in June was very warmly received.

We have encouraged all these committees to link their reports with the aspirations of the vision document 'Our Faith in the Future' adopted by Sufferings in 2015. Leeds AM told us, at an inspiring session in June, that they had used this document to challenge Friends locally to think about how their meetings could aspire to the same goals through their shared ministry and the way in which they use their resources.

Meeting for Sufferings, at the Yearly Meeting's request, was responsible for the setting up of two working groups, the Book of Discipline Review Preparation Group and Britain Yearly Meeting Sustainability Group. This year we have heard from them both: With regard to the latter we were delighted to hear of some heart-warming and exemplary progress and practice in some areas but recognised that the more radical changes we all need to make will come only from our own spiritual discernment - from being more faithful to what love requires of us.

Meeting for Sufferings is entrusted with the general care of matters affecting Britain Yearly Meeting and is empowered to act on behalf of the Society between Yearly Meetings. This happens, for example, when making appointments, carrying out routine tasks such as the registration of Quaker recognised bodies, or issuing public statements. During 2017 we met five times, four times in London and once in Manchester. We were able to invite Friends from the North West to join us both socially and for the business on this occasion, and valued this opportunity for getting to know each other and one another's concerns better.

Early on every agenda is the Court and Prison Register. This represents a link with our history – the name 'Sufferings' comes from the practice of recording the sufferings of Friends for their faith in the early days of Quakerism. We continue to hear about Friends who are being prosecuted or imprisoned when acting under concern and demonstrating against injustice. We endeavour to uphold them.

The Recording Clerk makes Public statements and responds on our behalf as and when necessary; such statements will draw on already-discerned positions of the Yearly Meeting. Sometimes events call us to consider something new. At February's meeting we agreed the text of a letter to American Friends and others worldwide, in response to political developments such as the new administration's ban on Muslims entering the US.

At our October meeting in Manchester we received the Quaker Peace and Social Witness report, and a request to endorse the Sanctuary Everywhere Manifesto. QPSW's work on Forced Migration, which developed out of Friends' concerns about the refugee crisis and was made possible by the use of legacy funding, has been extended for a further two years. This manifesto is one result of the work, and its six points grew out of recent statements made by Britain Yearly Meeting. We minuted our appreciation of the work that has gone into developing the manifesto and our support for the underlying principles in it, but recognise the difficulties that may be encountered in practice. We referred it back to QPSW to make more explicit the Quaker basis behind the manifesto.

We endeavour over the course of every year to bring Friends, their concerns and our central work together; to share our knowledge and our gifts; to encourage and prayerfully support all who act in our name; to seek to know one another in the things that are eternal.