

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

Yearly Meeting 2020

Agenda & notes

Compiled for Yearly Meeting, held online, 15 November 2020

This booklet is part of '*Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain 2020*', a set of publications published for Yearly Meeting.

The full set comprises:

1. Agenda and notes, with introductory material for Yearly Meeting 2020 and annual reports of Meeting for Sufferings, Quaker Stewardship Committee and other related bodies
2. [Testimonies](#)
3. *Minutes*, to be distributed after the conclusion of Yearly Meeting
4. The formal [Trustees' annual report](#) including financial statements for the year ended December 2019
5. [Tabular statement](#)

If these do not meet your accessibility needs, or the needs of someone you know, please email ym@quaker.org.uk.

All *Quaker faith & practice* references are to the online edition, which can be found at <https://qfp.quaker.org.uk>

1 Introduction and information

1.1 Introduction

Yearly Meeting is when Quakers in Britain come together to worship, make decisions and spend time as a community.

It's also when we can learn, practise, improve, and take back to our local meetings ways of conducting business which are rooted in Quaker tradition and our own experience, yet also meet contemporary challenges.

The purposes and functions of Yearly Meeting are described in *Quaker faith & practice* 6.02–6.11, which also gives the background to the business agenda.

You can send comments to Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee by writing c/o the Recording Clerk, or by emailing arrangements@quaker.org.uk

1.2 General contact details

Events & Committee Services
Friends House
173 Euston Road
London
NW1 2BJ

Telephone: 020 7663 1040

Email: ym@quaker.org.uk

Website: www.quaker.org.uk/ym

Facebook: www.facebook.com/bymevent

Twitter: @bymevent #YM2020

2 How does Yearly Meeting work?

2.1 Discipline of Yearly Meeting

The principles of the Quaker business method are the same for Yearly Meeting as for area and local meetings. Please read the guidance found in chapter 3 of *Quaker faith & practice*.

“In our meetings for worship we seek through the stillness to know God’s will for ourselves and for the gathered group. Our meetings for church affairs, in which we conduct our business, are also meetings for worship based on silence, and they carry the same expectation that God’s guidance can be discerned if we are truly listening together and to each other and are not blinkered by preconceived opinions.”

Quaker faith & practice 3.02

Yearly Meeting has a large number of Friends present, and this can be a powerful spiritual experience. With large numbers, it is usually the case that not everyone who wishes to give spoken ministry is called. It is useful to remember this:

“Not all who attend a meeting for church affairs will necessarily speak: those who are silent can help to develop the sense of the meeting if they listen in a spirit of worship.”

Quaker faith & practice 3.05

2.2 Spoken ministry

When offering spoken ministry, “try to sum up what you have to say in as few words as possible. Speak simply and audibly, but do not speak for effect.” (*Quaker faith & practice* 3.10)

Each contribution will be heard in silence. It will help the meeting if you speak clearly and slowly and try to express your message briefly.

After each contribution, there will be a pause to allow reflection. When the clerk feels the time is right for a further contribution, they will say so. If you have tested your ministry and feel that the meeting needs to hear it in order to reach unity, you should indicate you wish to contribute at this point. Remember that the clerk must ‘seek to assess the value of individual contributions’ (*Quaker faith & practice* 3.16). The clerk will also seek to ensure that different voices are heard.

When the clerk discerns that the time is right, they will say they are ready to draft a minute. Whilst the minute is being drafted, please uphold the clerks in prayerful silence.

When the clerk presents a draft minute to the meeting, please reflect on whether the minute is good enough. If you are clear that an amendment is necessary, indicate your wish to speak and wait to be called; however, do not present fresh material at this point.

‘When we unite with a minute offered by our clerk, we express, not a sudden agreement of everyone present with the prevailing view, but rather a confidence in our tried and tested way of seeking to recognise God’s will. We act as a community, whose members love and trust each other.’


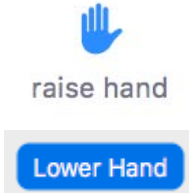

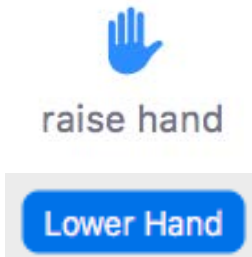
Quaker faith & practice 3.06

2.3 Practice for online discipline

The online meeting will be held using Zoom. To help create and maintain a gathered meeting online, it would be helpful if Friends arrived in good time and avoided arriving late, leaving early or moving around. The Quaker business method is a discipline in which all present should be focusing on worship and discernment of the matter at hand. Please avoid any activity that detracts from this discipline.

The meeting starts at 2pm and the full timings are in section 4 of this document. The clerk will formally open Yearly Meeting at 2pm; please aim to arrive before that time so that the meeting can gather in silence beforehand.

The following notes explain how Yearly Meeting will be conducted through Zoom.

Your name: how it should appear	
	<p>Use <u>'rename'</u> to ensure your screen name includes both your first name and surname/family name.</p> <p>Add the name of your area meeting (attenders can add either their area meeting if known or local meeting or other worshipping community).</p>
How to indicate you wish to speak	
	<p>Use the <u>raise hand</u> feature in Zoom to indicate you wish to speak or minister.</p> <p>Wait until invited to contribute by a clerk who will call you by name. If the clerk calls another Friend all other raised hands will be lowered. If the clerk invites further ministry and you still wish to give ministry, you will need to raise your hand again.</p> <p>If you are called, your microphone will be 'unmuted' by a technical support staff member and then you may speak. Please tell everyone who you are and where you worship before you begin your ministry (e.g. 'x area meeting' or 'attending xx local meeting or worshipping community'). When you have finished, your microphone will be muted and your hand lowered by technical support staff.</p>
Note about microphone controls	
	<p>A red diagonal line through the microphone shows your microphone is muted and you cannot be heard. A microphone without a diagonal line shows your microphone is 'live' and you can be heard.</p> <p>For Friends who are familiar with using Zoom, at Yearly Meeting, you will not be able to 'mute/unmute' your own microphone. This can only be done by a technical support staff member on instruction from a clerk.</p>
How the meeting will agree minutes	
	<p>Clerks will offer draft minutes and ask if they are acceptable. If you wish to comment on a draft minute, use the <u>raise hand</u> feature and wait until invited to speak by a clerk.</p> <p>If you are called, your microphone will be 'unmuted' by a technical support staff member and then you may speak. Please tell everyone who you are and where you worship before you begin to speak (e.g. 'x area meeting' or 'attending xx local meeting or worshipping community').</p> <p>When you have finished, your microphone will be muted and your hand lowered by technical support staff.</p> <p>If the clerk offers a draft minute and there are no raised hands, the minute will be considered acceptable to the meeting.</p>

The 'chat' feature of Zoom – a way to write messages to other individuals or the entire meeting – will be disabled. As a gathered Meeting for Worship for Business, this feature is not needed.

2.4 Elders at Yearly Meeting

The role of Yearly Meeting Elders is to help Yearly Meeting be a good Meeting for Worship. Yearly Meeting elders prayerfully support the meeting and take responsibility for the right holding of meetings for worship, including those for church affairs.

It is laid upon elders ... to promote the right holding of meetings for worship, remembering that responsibility for the meeting, including the fitness of the ministry, is shared among all the members of the worshipping group

Quaker faith & practice 12:12 [extract]

Elders at Yearly Meeting 2020 were appointed at Yearly Meeting last year and are:

- Gloria Dobbin, Luton & Leighton AM
- Tess James, Dorset & South Wiltshire AM
- Jane Mace, Gloucestershire AM
- Barney Smith (convenor), Bristol AM

3 Explanation of business to be taken at Yearly Meeting

This short Yearly Meeting will be able to deal only with the most essential business. Consideration of substantive topics will be deferred until Yearly Meeting 2021.

Draft minutes have been included in the notes to the agenda, to assist in completing the business in the time available. The clerks do not intend to read out any text published in advance.

3.1 Nominations and appointments

Each year, Yearly Meeting appoints Friends to serve in different capacities at that Yearly Meeting/Gathering and to serve on committees and groups working throughout the year.

This year Yearly Meeting will delegate the making of most appointments to Meeting for Sufferings, but there are some appointments that Yearly Meeting will make itself.

Yearly Meeting Nominating Group (see *Quaker faith & practice* 6.22).

Yearly Meeting normally invites nominations and makes appointments for Yearly Meeting Nominating Group during Yearly Meeting. In 2019, nominations were brought forward and Friends were appointed to serve from the end of Yearly Meeting 2019 until the end of Yearly Meeting 2020 (Yearly Meeting 2019 minutes 10 and 42).

This year, with the time available it will not be possible to ask for nominations to be brought forward and appointed during Yearly Meeting. It is proposed to extend the period of service of the group appointed in 2019 for an additional year.

Nominations from nominating committees

The nominations being brought to Yearly Meeting are set out in the in agenda and notes (section 4 of this document).

These Friends have been identified after a careful and prayerful process of discernment. Their names are published in this document.

If you see a problem with the service of any of the Friends nominated, you should:

- before Yearly Meeting, contact Zoe Prosser by email at nominations@quaker.org.uk

3.2 Receipt of annual reports

Yearly Meeting is the final constitutional authority of the Religious Society of Friends. Consequently Yearly Meeting receives the annual reports of the committees appointed to carry out its business between Yearly Meetings.

With the time available this year, Yearly Meeting will receive reports from Meeting for Sufferings and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees. Receipt and scrutiny of the remaining reports will be delegated to Meeting for Sufferings.

Annual reports to be received by Yearly Meeting:

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees are responsible to the yearly meeting for the right stewardship of the centrally managed work and the assets and property of the yearly meeting. See *Quaker faith & practice* 8.16–8.19.

Meeting for Sufferings is the body entrusted with the general care of matters affecting Britain Yearly Meeting and, in the intervals between Yearly Meetings, the making of decisions and issuing of statements in the name of Britain Yearly Meeting. See *Quaker faith & practice* 7.02–7.06.

Annual reports to be delegated to Meeting for Sufferings:

Central Nominations Committee is responsible for bringing the names of Friends for service to both Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings. See *Quaker faith & practice* 6.21.

Quaker Housing Trust is the yearly meeting's own national housing charity. It makes grants and loans to social housing projects. Independent of BYM funds, its income comes directly from Friends and meetings. See *Quaker faith & practice* 8.15.

Quaker Stewardship Committee gives help and guidance to area meetings in meeting the requirements of charity law in the stewardship of finance and property. It also certifies annually to Yearly Meeting that every part of Britain Yearly Meeting is producing proper financial accounts and property records. See *Quaker faith & practice* 14.36–14.42.

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee is responsible for planning the agenda for and use of premises during each Yearly Meeting. Agenda Committee reports on the planning of Yearly Meeting and sets the agenda in context. See *Quaker faith & practice* 6.18.

3.3 Yearly Meeting Epistle

The Yearly Meeting Epistle, also called the General Epistle, is the letter sent from this Yearly Meeting for Friends everywhere: to other yearly meetings worldwide and to local meetings in Britain. It is sent to all local meetings immediately after Yearly Meeting so that it can be read out at meeting for worship at the first available opportunity.

There will not be the opportunity to draft an Epistle in the usual way for approval during this Yearly Meeting or for Friends to comment. Arrangements Committee instead intends to offer a short Epistle in the form of a letter of greeting from this Yearly Meeting to Friends everywhere.

4 Agenda and notes

With printed draft minutes shown in italic text.

The clerks do not intend to read out any text published in advance. If Friends have substantive comments they should be sent in advance of Yearly Meeting to arrangements@quaker.org.uk

Sunday 15 November

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

Begins at 14.00

1. Appointment of Clerks

Draft Minute A: Clerks

The Yearly Meeting Committee on Clerks nominates the following Friends to serve as clerk and assistant clerks for Yearly Meeting 2020, serving until the first session of Yearly Meeting Gathering 2021:

Clerk, Clare Scott Booth, London West AM

First Assistant Clerk, Siobhan Haire, North London AM

Second Assistant Clerk, Adwoa Bittle, East Scotland AM

2. Welcome to all

Welcomes and introductions, which may include approval of the following draft minutes:

Draft Minute B: Yearly Meeting 2020

Further to minute 48 of Yearly Meeting 2019 we record with sorrow that we were prevented from holding Yearly Meeting Gathering at the University of Bath from 1-8 August 2020, due to public health concerns arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead this Yearly Meeting is being held virtually online. We are saddened by the loss of this and many other opportunities to meet physically together, and thankful for the access to technology that has enabled us to remain connected with one another as Friends.

We note that Meeting for Sufferings, by its minute MfS20/06/09, called this Yearly Meeting and agreed to a proposal to hold Yearly Meeting Gathering in 2021 at the University of Bath from 31 July to 6 August 2021, in place of the Yearly Meeting previously called for 30 April to 3 May 2021. Britain Yearly

Meeting Trustees, Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee and staff will continue to monitor risks and act upon public health advice as their planning for this gathering develops.

We record that due to the nature and short length of this Yearly Meeting, some aspects of our usual practice set out in chapter 6 of Quaker Faith & Practice are not possible or appropriate on this occasion, noting in particular sections 6.16 (Time of Meeting), 6.17 (Yearly Meeting Committees), 6.23 (Epistle Drafting Committee) and 6.24 (Committee to Examine Minutes).

The Friends appointed by Minute 7 of Yearly Meeting 2019 to serve as Elders until the end of Yearly Meeting Gathering 2020 are serving as Elders during this Yearly Meeting. Other Friends appointed to service until the beginning or end of Yearly Meeting Gathering 2020 will instead come to the end of their terms of service at this Yearly Meeting.

We receive and accept the agenda as listed in section 4 of the Yearly Meeting Programme.

Draft Minute C: Welcome to all

We welcome everyone who is attending any part of Yearly Meeting this year.

This year ... people have registered in advance, to attend.

Of this number, there are ... non-members and ... representatives and other visitors from yearly meetings and Friends' groups around the world.

3. Nominations

Friends should refer to guidance on page 8.

Draft Minute D: Report of Yearly Meeting Committee on Clerks

The Yearly Meeting Committee on Clerks brings forward nominations to serve as follows:

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Position	Name	Area Meeting	Term of service
Clerk	Caroline Nursey	London West	1 January – 31 December 2021
Assistant Clerk	Graham Torr	York	1 January – 31 December 2021
YM Treasurer	Linda Batten	Sheffield & Balby	1 January – 31 December 2021

Draft Minute E: Yearly Meeting Nominating Group

We reappoint the following Friends to serve as the Yearly Meeting Nominations Committee from the rise of Yearly Meeting 2020 until the rise of Yearly Meeting 2021.

Name	Area Meeting
<i>Elizabeth Backhouse (convener)</i>	<i>East Cheshire AM</i>
<i>Margaret Burt</i>	<i>London West AM</i>
<i>Rachel Frith</i>	<i>South East Scotland AM</i>
<i>Sasha Lawson-Frost</i>	<i>Young Friends General Meeting/Oxford LM</i>
<i>Janet Scott</i>	<i>Cambridgeshire AM</i>
<i>John Sheldon</i>	<i>Central England AM</i>
<i>Kellie Turner</i>	<i>Manchester & Warrington AM</i>

4. The work of our national representative body: receipt of Annual Report from Meeting for Sufferings

The written report including a further report from the clerks of Meeting for Sufferings can be found at Appendix A and Friends should refer to page 9 for an explanation of the role of the committee. We expect to take items 4 and 5 together with introductions from both clerks.

5. The work of our yearly meeting trustees: Receipt of annual report from Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

The [annual report including financial statements](#) is published as a separate document. (The annual review for 2019 '[Our Faith, Our Work](#)' is also available.) A further report from the clerks of BYM Trustees can be found at Appendix B and Friends should refer to page 9 for an explanation of the role of the committee. We expect to take items 4 and 5 together with introductions from both clerks.

6. Review of Central Nominations Committee and Committee on Clerks

In 2017 Yearly Meeting asked Meeting for Sufferings to review Britain Yearly Meeting Committee on Clerks (see *Quaker faith & practice*, 6.19). Meeting for Sufferings formed a review group for this purpose in 2018. In November 2018, Meeting for Sufferings asked for a review of the terms of reference for Central Nominations Committee (see *Quaker faith and practice*, 6.21). As a result of these two reviews, Meeting for Sufferings accepted recommendations for approval by Yearly Meeting. These recommendations asked:

- Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees to bring forward nominations for Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and Yearly Meeting Treasurer to Yearly Meeting. These appointments would be for a term of three years. Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees to appoint its own Assistant Clerk from amongst its number.

- Central Nominations Committee to take on the work of both Central Nominations Committee and the residual work of Committee on Clerks.

New terms of reference for Central Nominations Committee have been accepted by Meeting for Sufferings.

These recommendations and revised terms of reference for Central Nominations Committee are before Yearly Meeting for its approval.

Details can be found at Appendix C.

Draft Minute F

Further to Minute 23 of Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017, we receive minutes MfS 19/12/15 and MfS 18/11/17 of Meeting for Sufferings which set out work done to review the terms of reference of Central Nominations Committee, and the recommendations of a review of Committee on Clerks.

Meeting for Sufferings, Central Nominations Committee and Committee on Clerks have been working on this for some time, along with Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees for the recommendations concerning Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees' Clerks. We are thankful for this careful process of discernment on our behalf, and accept their work and recommendations as follows:

- *Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees should bring to Yearly Meeting nominations of Friends to serve as Clerk of BYM Trustees and Yearly Meeting Treasurer. These appointments will be made for a term of three years. BYM Trustees should appoint their own Assistant Clerk from amongst their number.*
- *Central Nominations Committee should take on the work of bringing nominations for the clerks of Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings.*
- *Central Nominations Committee will establish subgroups and standing search groups, with additional Friends brought in to serve on them as needed. This will enable expertise and capacity to nurture Friends before and during service.*

Accordingly we lay down the Committee on Clerks, giving thanks for the work of the many Friends who have served to nominate clerks, and we accept the new terms of reference for Central Nominations Committee.

7. Call for Nominations to Meeting for Sufferings

Representatives to Meeting for Sufferings are appointed by Yearly Meeting to serve for three years. Yearly Meeting in 2021 expects to appoint members to serve for the next triennium.

Draft Minute G: Meeting for Sufferings: Call for nominations for the Triennium 2021-2024

In accordance with sections 7.05 – 7.08 of Quaker faith & practice,

- a) *Area meetings are required to nominate representatives to Meeting for Sufferings for the triennial period from Yearly Meeting 2021 until Yearly Meeting 2024.*

Representation from area meetings is on the basis of two Friends per area meeting, one designated as the representative and the other as an alternate.

- b) *The following standing committees are required to nominate representatives and alternates to Meeting for Sufferings for the triennial period from Yearly Meeting 2021 until Yearly Meeting 2024:*

*Quaker Life Central Committee
Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee
Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations
Quaker World Relations Committee*

- c) *The following bodies are asked to nominate representatives and alternates to Meeting for Sufferings for the triennial period from Yearly Meeting 2021 until Yearly Meeting 2024:*

*Young Friends General Meeting
General Meeting for Scotland
Meeting of Friends in Wales.*

All nominations will come to Yearly Meeting 2021 for appointment. Area meetings, committees and other bodies making nominations are reminded of the requirements and advice contained in sections 7.05 – 7.08 of Quaker faith & practice.

8. Delegation to Meeting for Sufferings

Draft Minute H: Delegation to Meeting for Sufferings

We ask Meeting for Sufferings to act on behalf of Yearly Meeting on the following matters:

Receipt of any further reports from our nominations committees requiring attention before Yearly Meeting in 2021

Record of Meeting for Sufferings membership changes

Receipt of the Tabular Statement

Receipt and consideration of reports of:

- *Central Nominations Committee*
- *Friends Trusts Ltd*

- *Quaker Housing Trust*
- *Quaker Stewardship Committee*

Receipt of any other reports requiring attention

Any other matters requiring attention before YM 2021.

Extended shuffle break and opportunity for worship – 15.00-15.30

During this time there will be the opportunity to hold the worship together or/and to take a screen break. We invite you to hold the silence on Zoom or in your home for part or all of this time. If you are taking a break from the screen or from holding the silence, please switch off your video. Friends joining in the worship may wish to select “Hide non-video participants” during this time so that you see only other Friends who are also holding the silence with you.

Yearly Meeting will resume at 15.30

9. Meeting for Worship

Friends, meet together and know one another in that which is eternal, which was before the world was.

George Fox, 1657 (*Quaker faith & practice* 2.35)

This extended period of worship will be clerked, in order to manage the technical aspects of ministry in a very large meeting, as well as to help us balance silence and ministry.

Please refer to page 6 for information for information on offering ministry.

It will help the meeting if you speak clearly and slowly and try to express your message briefly.

10. Receipt of Yearly Meeting Draft Epistle

Friends should refer to section 3.3 on page 9 for information about the Epistle.

11. Minute of Record: Epistles

Draft Minute J: Epistles

We have received greetings from Friends around the world via epistles from 39 yearly meetings and other bodies, available on the website of Friends World Committee for Consultation and listed in Testimonies (page 5).

12. Minute of Record: Testimonies

13. Thanks

Draft Minute K: Thanks

We record our thanks to all those who have made this meeting possible, and to our staff and volunteers who have served us so well in difficult circumstances over the past year. We uphold those working on the planning for our Yearly Meeting Gathering in 2021.

14. Naming of Clerks for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2021.

Draft minute L: Naming of Clerks for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2021

The Central Nominations Committee/Yearly Meeting Committee on Clerks expects to bring the following names to serve as Yearly Meeting clerks for 2021:*

Clerk: Clare Scott Booth, London West AM

First Assistant Clerk: Siobhan Haire, North London AM

Second Assistant Clerk: Adwoa Bittle, East Scotland AM

**depending on approval of Draft Minute F*

15. Concluding minute

Expected closing time: 16.30

5 Appendices

Appendix A: Annual Report of Meeting for Sufferings 2019

Meeting for Sufferings is the body which is entrusted with the general care of matters affecting the Yearly Meeting in its life and witness. It seeks to discern spiritual values and vision to guide Friends' corporate commitment and actions.

Quaker faith & practice 6.28

Meeting for Sufferings is made up of about 100 or so members, drawn from the wide geographical and demographic spread of all 70 Area Meetings, Young Friends General Meeting, young adult Quakers, General Meeting for Scotland, and Meeting of Friends in Wales. Representatives of Quaker World Relations Committee, Quaker Life, Quaker Peace & Social Witness, Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations and Central Nominations Committee all attend our meetings. Britain Yearly Meeting trustees, senior staff and the Yearly Meeting clerk are ex officio members, and we regularly receive visitors.

We are now (at the time of writing) about half-way through the present triennium of appointments. We only meet 5 times a year, and a representative or an alternate may attend, so it takes time for Friends to get to know one another. Past experience has shown that the residential meeting is greatly valued and we decided in 2018 to plan for one weekend at Woodbrooke in each of the three years.

There are pros and cons to this. On the one hand, reps appreciate the time and space for extended consideration of issues, but a full weekend away does mean the additional cost and the extra burden it places on staff – and reps. As we look at all our work through the lenses of 'sustainability' and 'simple church/simple charity' we expect to review this carefully when planning for the triennium that begins in 2021.

December saw the latest in the annual series of Young People's Participation Days. We were delighted to welcome around thirty 13-18 year olds, three of whom spent the whole day in meeting with us. After worship and introductions together, the Young People went into their own programme, which was built on the theme of discernment. Their closing minute, shared with us at the end of the day, spoke of the value of engaging with Friends of all ages, and of what they learned about the process of discernment.

"... we thought about the differences between Witness and Discernment. We ended with a reflection on how discernment is used in our own lives and how can we access the support of Quaker communities in this process.

Reaching a decision through discernment was described as finding a place where we are settled as individuals and as a whole community. We explored where the promptings that lead to discernment come from, is it prompted by God within us or

by an extension of our own beliefs? The Young Quaker Participation day was a great opportunity to explore how discernment can bring together the community in decision making and can support our personal decision making. Participants felt that they were a part of the Quaker community and they were able to reflect on Quaker decision making process”.

Our work in 2019

In 2019 our Prison and Court register continued to record the witness of Friends, many of whom were involved in the actions of Extinction Rebellion. A minute came from York AM asking us to review the parameters of the register, which is such an important link with our Quaker ancestors and their witness to the truth. After seeking guidance from the Recording Clerk, MfS looked afresh at the purpose, parameters and processes of the Prison and Court Register.

Our consideration in October resulted in a statement of principles which form part of a Gold Minute that has been sent to all meetings. In it we emphasise the importance of witness being grounded in faith, and the need rigorously to test one’s concern. We do not act in our own strength alone.

Reports from Committees

We continued in 2019 with the experiment of taking all the central committees’ reports at one meeting to offer representatives the chance to hear about the breadth of BYM’s centrally-managed work on one occasion. Central and standing committees gave very brief snapshots of their work and the issues most exercising them at this time.

Relationship with Churches Together in England (CTE)

Just before the last meeting in 2019 our ecumenical relations were in the spotlight following Churches Together in England’s rejection of our nomination for the 4th presidency of their organisation. We continue to strive to keep the channels of dialogue between churches open despite this setback.

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, all of whom are members of MfS, keep us informed after all their meetings and ask for our discernment on matters of policy. We all benefit from this close relationship.

The legacy-funded Vibrancy in Meetings pilot project began in 2016. In April 2019 Trustees shared the initial findings of the independent review. Representatives responded with enthusiasm to the idea of extending this work throughout the Yearly Meeting. Our response was taken into account by Trustees. In June, we heard of their decision to collaborate with Woodbrooke in working rapidly towards more local support for Meetings, with a local development worker within reach of every meeting in Britain within 5 years. We will also begin to experiment with new regional bases, hubs or clusters. We look forward to hearing more about this exciting development in the coming months.

Matters laid upon MfS by Yearly Meeting

Sustainability has been on our agenda at three meetings in 2019 and underpins much of our discernment. MfS is responsible for overseeing our corporate witness and our recently appointed Sustainability Monitoring Group is tasked with checking progress towards becoming a low carbon sustainable community. Sustainability was the central theme of the meeting of committee clerks which took place in July 2019 and at MfS in October we heard a full report on the work, set out under the following headings and themes.

- Eldership: rooting the commitment in our Quaker faith
- Oversight: strengthening our community
- Living faithfully: changing our lifestyles
- Right ordering: Quaker core activities and property
- Witness: taking action and promoting systemic change

We were impressed by the range of work carried out and noted that there will be a major sustainability gathering at Woodbrooke December this (i.e. 2020) year.

Diversity and inclusion

There was a major national gathering on the theme of Diversity and Inclusion at Woodbrooke in January 2019 organised by BYM's legacy-funded Diversity and Inclusion Officer. She shared a report of her work with MfS in April and also at Yearly Meeting in May. We have continued to engage with these issues. The theme of gender diversity has also been important throughout the year, with both YFGM and QLCC reporting to us on the statements they have issued. We expect to return to this matter again in 2020. We have already sent representatives to the second Diversity and Inclusion conference at Woodbrooke in January 2020 and heard from them at our February meeting.

Concerns brought by Area Meetings

As always, the concerns of AMs are a crucially important aspect of our agendas

- In April 2018 Southern Marches forwarded their minutes about the erosion of truth in society. After sending them on to all AMs for consideration, we returned to the subject in February. Disappointingly for some, we minuted as follows:
"We have no doubt about the importance of this concern but only about our capacity. Great courage is needed to engage with untruth, particularly on social media and we need to encourage and support each other".
- Minutes sent to MfS from Staffordshire AM and North West London AM led to a special interest session at the residential Sufferings in October and a discussion exploring whether there is or should be a Quaker position on the subject of assisted dying. Area meetings across the country have been continuing to engage with this issue in 2020.

- Meeting of Friends in Wales shared their statement on withdrawal from the EU.

Speaking out

MfS adopted a policy on 'speaking out' in 2014. Some representatives have been eager to know more about how BYM speaks out now. At our October meeting both BYM's Media Relations Officer and our Public Affairs and Advocacy Manager gave us a flavour of their work, sharing examples of collaboration on issues such as climate change and the DSEI arms fair as well as joining with other voluntary organisations to warn of the dangers of prorogation.

Regular administrative business covers a range of work:

- Registration of Quaker recognised bodies
- Setting up of a group to review Quaker Stewardship Committee. This group has also been asked by QSC to review the Terms of Reference of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees
- Agreeing Terms of Reference for a review of MfS Arrangements Group so that the nomination of the review group can go ahead.
- Following the review of Committee on Clerks in 2018, which was partly accepted and for which further work was requested, we have recommended the new arrangements and terms of reference for a new Central Nominations Committee to Yearly Meeting.
- While a new Book of Discipline is being prepared, minute 21 of Yearly Meeting 2019 delegates responsibility for minor factual amendments in the current Quaker faith & practice to Meeting for Sufferings. Following decisions made in 2018 (concerning the Library Committee) and in 2019 (regarding CYP Work Advocates), Church Government Advisory Group (CGAG) returned to us in December with recommendations for changes to Quaker faith & practice 4.39, 4.43, 4.44 and 13.41 and 4.05. We agreed these, and report them to you accordingly. Full details are available in the online version of Quaker faith & practice at sufferings.quaker.org.uk
- Finally we also set the wheels in motion for the forming of a group to review Yearly Meeting and Yearly Meeting Gathering, as required by minute 6 of Yearly Meeting 2019.

Quaker faith & practice 7.02 lists the 20 separate functions of Meeting for Sufferings. We began monitoring this in 2018 and during 2019 we can report that the meeting has undertaken all of its functions, other than those which rely on relevant requests from elsewhere (such as agreeing changes to the composition of area meetings). The functions list is sent to representatives with the minutes after every meeting. We have spent most time on receiving minutes from AMs (7.02.j), considering how best to support the spiritual life of the yearly meeting and to further the development of its visionary and prophetic role (7.02g), reviewing and testing the existing and new concerns referred to it by AMs and others (7.02h) and fostering communication throughout the YM (7.02i). As noted above we have heard from Trustees at every meeting, and advised them as appropriate, including in relation to investment policy and the Vibrancy in Meetings project.

The ground of our work lies in our waiting on and listening for the Spirit... We are a small church with pretensions to change the world. But first we must let God change us – to empower us to be better Friends, and more active in our own work. We should not be creating structures to work for us, but empowering each other to do the work laid on each of us. However we plan... the Spirit is unchanging and will always lead us...All is connected, worship with action, wisdom with love from *Quaker faith & practice* 29.02

Update for Yearly Meeting 2020 from the Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings' work in 2020 began in the usual way. We met at Friends House in February, hearing two reports: one from our representative on the Quaker Council for European Affairs and the other, concerning the ways in which the strategy endorsed by us in 2019 is being worked out, from BYM trustees. As part of our minute says "*...some...decisions can be explored at greater length and trustees are keen to engage in more of a conversation with Meeting for Sufferings to test such matters*". Representatives were thankful for this opportunity.

As the clerks and arrangements group – along with the staff who so ably support them – made preparations for the April meeting it became clear that this would not be the year we anticipated.

The April meeting was cancelled, with procedural matters such as nominations, prison and court register and Quaker recognised bodies being held over. Some reports were circulated for information.

Meanwhile all of you across the country were coming to terms with virtual worship and business meetings, and June saw the first virtual Meeting for Sufferings which brought together over 100 representatives. Many Friends welcomed the ease of participation, saving long journeys across the country, but missed the feeling of community engendered by seeing each other in person. We heard about the practical activities going on 'behind the scenes' to support the work of Friends (see the trustees report for more detail) and shared our own experiences of the lockdown.

October's meeting brought us back to two concerns, the exploration of which Yearly Meeting has laid upon us – Sustainability and Diversity and Inclusion. The focus of the latter was Racism, as it was clear from minutes we were receiving throughout the summer from Area Meetings that this was a pressing need at this time. We expect to make this a theme of our next Meeting for Sufferings, which is also the Young People's Participation Day.

The proposals of the group reviewing the terms of reference of Quaker Stewardship Committee also came to us at this meeting, as well as a hugely exciting first report from the Book of Discipline Review Committee.

Throughout the year Area Meetings have had the opportunity to consider minutes we sent to them at the end of 2019 on the subject of assisted dying, and we will be

coming back to this soon.

Every meeting has been a chance to learn and to see what works. In the run up to October members of Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations offered an evening session for representatives which was very well received. By the time of this Yearly Meeting we hope that this experiment will be repeated with Quaker World Relations Committee before our December meeting.

This year has brought unprecedented challenge and, depending on one's perspective, has been difficult, eye-opening, rewarding and a lot of hard work. Let us all Let us remember Isaac Pennington's words:

Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.
(1667, *Quaker faith & practice*, 10.01)

Margaret Bryan, York AM

Appendix B: Update for Yearly Meeting 2020 from Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

The [Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts](#) for 2019 is published as a separate document.

Update for Yearly Meeting 2020 from Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees
2020 is proving an extraordinary year for Britain Yearly Meeting - as it is for very many organisations - and BYM Trustees have worked closely with the Management Meeting and staff of BYM to ensure that we continue to provide Friends with support in their worship and witness while we keep staff safe and conserve our funds. In March, BYM's whole way of working changed overnight. Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall closed, most staff working for the Quiet Company (the company looking after the buildings and in normal times generating income for BYM) were furloughed alongside nearly half of those working on the delivery of BYM's charitable activities, and other staff began to work entirely from home.

Despite this, staff worked flexibly to ensure that advice was available to meetings about worship in times of Covid and safe premises management as well as longer term matters such as safeguarding. And much of the work described in the 2019 annual report continued despite the pandemic.

Friends House reopened at the beginning of September with social distancing and all necessary health and safety arrangements in place. The bookshop/café is trading and Friends House meeting is again worshipping there. Swarthmoor Hall is open for self-catering only. It offers hope to us all that Friends House is open, albeit that there are very few users at the moment.

Inevitably, the Quiet Company has generated very little income this year and, partly because of this, BYM expects to have a deficit of £2.5m in 2020. Fortunately we have reserves, but the pandemic makes it more important than ever that we develop new sustainable ways of delivering and funding BYM's work so that our regular expenditure matches our routine income in 2023 and following years.

In 2019 Trustees and staff agreed to support Quaker Communities differently and this year we have seen how valuable Local Development Workers are in helping colleagues in BYM better understand the needs of Friends locally. We need Friends and Meetings to contribute this year and in future years to the cost of BYM's work so that we can continue both to support meetings in their worship and witness and to deliver or fund work that Friends want done - but cannot do locally.

I am very grateful to all the staff of BYM – whether they have been furloughed or working – for their understanding, commitment and flexibility during these difficult times.

Caroline Nursey, London West AM

Appendix C: Review of Committee on Clerks and Central Nominations Committee

Review of Committee on Clerks (see *Quaker faith & practice*, 6.19)

The review group, appointed by Meeting for Sufferings in response to Yearly Meeting's request, reported to Meeting for Sufferings in 2018. It made eight recommendations. Meeting for Sufferings accepted the recommendations relating to the nominations for BYM Trustees, namely:

- BYM Trustees to bring forward nominations for Clerk of BYM Trustees and Yearly Meeting Treasurer to Yearly Meeting
- Friends should be appointed to serve for three years in these roles
- BYM Trustees to appoint its own Assistant Clerk from amongst its number.

In 2018 Yearly Meeting asked for BYM Trustees terms of reference to be reviewed. This process has been concluded and the review group's report and recommendations will be before Yearly Meeting in 2021. If Yearly Meeting accepts the recommendations from the review of Committee on Clerks, the changes relating to BYM Trustees will be incorporated into the revised BYM Trustees' terms of reference.

Review of Central Nominations Committee (see *Quaker faith & practice*, 6.21)

Meeting for Sufferings asked for a review of Central Nominations Committee in 2018. As a result of this review, Meeting for Sufferings accepted:

- Central Nominations Committee to take on the work of both Central Nominations Committee and the residual work of Committee on Clerks.
- Revised terms of reference for Central Nominations Committee.

Meeting for Sufferings forwards these recommendations, and resulting changes, to Yearly Meeting for its approval.

Relevant minutes and revised terms of reference for Central Nominations Committee

MfS/18/11/17 Committee on Clerks

Further to minute 23 of Yearly Meeting 2017, last year Meeting for Sufferings set up a group to review Committee on Clerks (our minutes MfS/17/10/21 refers). Today we have received the report of the Review Group (paper MfS/18/11/17) and one of its members, Rhiannon Grant, has spoken to it.

Rhiannon Grant has reported that the Group consulted carefully with Friends who have experience of Committee on Clerks and beyond. It found that lots of good work is done within the current system, but also identified a number of issues around transparency, simplicity, communication, and the unequal distribution of power.

We note that the review found that specific strengths of the current system were in the care and attention given by Committee on Clerks and the benefits of giving time and space to specific nominations work.

However we are reminded that Quakers today are wanting to simplify procedures, to break down barriers to participation and to make space for the workings of the Spirit by improving understanding and communication.

The report has made eight recommendations:

1. The nominations for the different roles currently handled by Committee on Clerks should no longer be handled by a single body.
2. YM Trustees should nominate their own clerk and the BYM treasurer, for appointment by Yearly Meeting.
3. Friends should be appointed to serve for three years in each of these roles.
4. BYM Trustees are empowered to appoint an assistant clerk directly if they so wish.
5. The names of clerks for Yearly Meeting should be found by Central Nominations Committee and appointed by Yearly Meeting.
6. The names of clerks for Meeting for Sufferings should be found by Central Nominations Committee and appointed by Meeting for Sufferings.
7. Central Nominations Committee should be strengthened by increasing its membership.
8. Committee on Clerks should be laid down.

We accept the first four recommendations, noting that BYM Trustees would be able to nominate their clerk and treasurer not necessarily from within the body of Trustees.

We share concerns about the right-holding of nominations work and the importance of the work of the Spirit. We need to be more radical and to consider how we care for the nominations process.

We are not ready to change the system until we are sure that Central Nominations Committee (CNC) has the capacity to carry out the work and there are no unintended consequences. It has been said that 'nominations is the holiest thing we do'. The problems are how to make discreet work more transparent, and there is an issue in how we nurture Friends before and during service.

We look forward to a review of CNC's terms of reference due in 2019 to make specific recommendations that ensure CNC has sufficient resources to carry out its work. We therefore ask CNC to do this review on its terms of reference (and consider its ways of working) as soon as is practical, in the anticipation of some of the changes recommended in this review group's report.

We expect to return to this matter in 2019, including the implementation of recommendations 1-4.

We lay down the Review Group, thanking them for their work.

We send this minute to Committee on Clerks and CNC.

MfS 19/12/15 Central Nominations Committee review

In November 2018, Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) asked Central Nominations Committee (CNC) to review its terms of reference and bring back any recommendations for change (minute MfS/18/11/17 refers). At the same meeting, MfS considered a review of the YM Committee on Clerks (CoC), agreeing a number of recommendations, and deferring consideration of others.

In 2018 we accepted four recommendations which were regarding the nomination and appointment of BYMT clerks and treasurers. We receive and note BYM Trustees' minute 2019/11/04 which confirms that, if Yearly Meeting adopts these recommendations concerning the appointment of BYM Trustees' clerks and the Yearly Meeting Treasurer, Trustees can make them work successfully.

During 2019 CNC and CoC have been considering ways forward. We now receive and note minute 2019/09/30 of Central Nominations Committee and 2019/09/02b of Committee on Clerks which are supportive of the new proposals.

We receive paper MfS 2019/12/10 which makes new recommendations, following the work that CNC and CoC have undertaken, together.

We now accept the two recommendations made in the paper:

- Central Nominations Committee should take on the work of both CNC and CoC.
- This committee will establish subgroups and standing search groups, with additional Friends brought in to serve on them as needed. This will enable expertise and capacity to nurture Friends before and during service.

We have considered draft terms of reference for the new Central Nominations Committee, and agree that they reflect the accepted recommendations, subject to amendments at 1.1 and 3.3.

We forward this matter to Yearly Meeting for approval.

Revised Terms of reference for Central Nominations Committee

Central Nominations Committee

“It is the responsibility of a Christian community to enable its members to discover what their gifts are and to develop and exercise them to the glory of God.” *Quaker faith & practice* 3.22

Terms of Reference

1. Summary of Purpose

1.1. Central Nominations Committee uses a corporate discernment process to recognise people’s gifts and enable them to use these in the service of the Society of Friends. By its work, Central Nominations Committee aims to help create a community that is spiritually resourced, empowered and joyful.

1.2. Central Nominations Committee is responsible for finding names for most of the appointments made by Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings and for overseeing and developing nominations procedures within its purview. (See also *Quaker faith & practice* 6.21).

2. Authority, Delegation and Relationships

2.1. Central Nominations Committee (the Committee) is appointed by Yearly Meeting on the nominations of Yearly Meeting Nominating Group.

2.2. The Committee should report annually to Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings on the progress of its work and on any other nominations matter.

2.3. The Committee may communicate by minute with Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Nominating Group, Meeting for Sufferings, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, and other Central and Standing Committees of Britain Yearly Meeting.

2.4. The Committee may establish subgroups and search groups as required, provided there is at least one serving member of the Committee on such groups.

3. Duties

3.1. The Committee shall bring forward to Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings, names of Friends to serve in central roles and on central committees as directed by Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings. A schedule of nominations required is maintained by the Recording Clerk. Where no suitable name can be found this should be reported to the appointing body in a timely manner.

3.2. The Committee shall bring forward the names of clerks for Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings, having due regard to the need for long term planning for these nominations.

3.3. The Committee shall maintain an ongoing relationship with the officers of the Committees and other bodies for which it is seeking names, to ensure that the needs of that body are understood.

3.4. The Committee shall seek names for nomination with due regard for equality, diversity and inclusion, balancing the predetermined criteria for each appointment with the gifts of Friends who could serve. Wherever possible the Committee shall seek to remove barriers to participation by underrepresented groups.

3.5. The Committee shall advise Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings (as appropriate) if it feels that an adjustment or review of the purpose or operating terms

for any appointment are necessary to allow service from the widest possible range of Friends. If the Committee becomes aware that the working practices of any committee or body to which the Committee nominates is restricting the diversity of that committee or body, this should be brought to the notice of the clerks of that committee or body.

3.6. The Committee should endeavour to take a long term view of nominations, especially for key appointments, to allow nominees to be well prepared and nurtured for the role.

3.7. The committee shall nominate only members of the Society for appointments to standing committees of Meeting for Sufferings or Britain Yearly Meeting, or as representatives to other Quaker bodies or to the outside world. Exceptions to this general rule shall be clearly indicated and supported by reasons for nomination.

3.8. The Committee shall keep its communications under review and raise awareness of opportunities for service.

3.9. The Committee is responsible for its own effectiveness. It shall keep its processes under review and ensure that its members receive appropriate training as required.

4. Membership and attendance

4.1. The Committee comprises 18 members, appointed for three years, and 2 clerks. Re-nomination for a second term of service is possible.

4.2. The Committee appoints two clerks from within its membership to serve for one or more years depending on their circumstances and the Committee's needs. Clerks can serve as such for an extra year on top of their ordinary term of service. The clerks serve ex-officio on Meeting for Sufferings. The clerks of the Committee should maintain effective communications with clerks of other nominating groups.

4.3. The Recording Clerk may attend ex-officio. The clerks of Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings may attend exceptionally with the agreement of the Committee or on the direction of Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings.

4.4. A member of staff, designated by the Recording Clerk, shall normally attend committee meetings to act as secretary to the committee. The secretary will help coordinate and pass information between nominations committees. Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, via the Recording Clerk, are responsible for ensuring there are sufficient staff resources to support the work of the Committee. Meeting without the secretary should only be with that person's or the Recording Clerk's agreement.

5. Frequency of Meeting

5.1. The Committee shall meet as frequently as needed to fulfil the duties placed upon it. Meetings should fit within the calendar agreed with the Recording Clerk.

5.2. The Committee shall ensure that an adequate number of its members shall be present during Britain Yearly Meeting in session, to make any ad-hoc nominations required.

6. Agreement of the Terms of Reference

6.1. The Committee shall work within these terms of reference under the authority of minute XX Britain Yearly Meeting held 15 November 2020.

6.2. The terms of reference shall be reviewed by the Committee at least triennially. The Committee may propose changes to Britain Yearly Meeting in session or to Meeting for Sufferings.

6.3. We are a spirit led community. We do not know and cannot predict where the wind of the spirit will blow us. If faithfully following our leadings would take the Committee outside its terms of reference, then it shall bring the matter before Meeting for Sufferings.