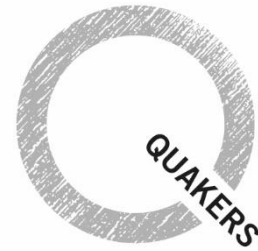


# Calling letter



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

20 September 2024

## **To members of Meeting for Sufferings**

I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the new term of Meeting for Sufferings, and hope that it will be a rewarding experience for you.

In addition to our normal business of recording membership of the Meeting, various appointments, registration of Quaker Recognised Bodies, and the report from Britain Yearly Meeting trustees, we have a number of substantive items following from previous discernment of Meeting for Sufferings.

We are asked to reflect on the reports of Quaker Life Central Committee, which has been looking at changing patterns of membership, and Quaker Peace and Social Witness, which has been looking at how we talk about the situation in Israel and Palestine in such a way as to be both loving and truthful. These opportunities for deep discernment through worship are at the heart of our work.

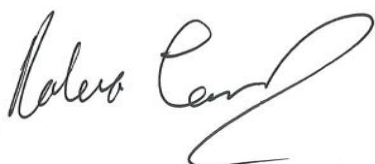
We will also have an update on the work of the Group to Review Central Structures and of the Reparations Working Group, both of which were set up by trustees to further work discerned by Yearly Meeting in session. In the first case, to simplify the centrally managed work, and in the second, to take responsibility for the part the Society played, wittingly or not, in perpetuating unjust structures. These will be an opportunity for us to reflect on our witness to Gospel Order.

It will be a joy to receive the epistle from the World Plenary of Friends held this year in South Africa and via video conference on the theme of “Living the spirit of ubuntu: responding with hope to God's call to cherish creation and one another”. An opportunity for us to celebrate the richness of Quaker diversity around the world, and the openings afforded by online participation.

Finally, following our earlier call to area meetings, we receive minutes from them on suggested changes to the marriage declaration.

I am aware that our last session in June presented us with some challenges in terms of “bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another” (*Quaker faith & practice* 10.01). Let us come together once again in Spirit and in Truth to serve the Seed of Life as best we may.

In Truth,



Robert Card  
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

**Papers enclosed with this mailing**

Agenda

Minutes from MfS Arrangements Group

**MfS 2024 10 06** Quaker recognised bodies

**MfS 2024 10 07** New ways of belonging report

**MfS 2024 10 08** BYM Trustees report and minutes

**MfS 2024 10 09** Group to Review Central Structures update

**MfS 2024 10 12** Reparations Working Group report

**MfS 2024 10 13** Quaker marriage declaration responses (previously published as a separate document)

**A reminder of how you can prepare for the meeting**

- Read the agenda and papers in good time
- Contact the other representative/alternate from your area meeting or body
- Send any comments or questions to the clerks ([sufferings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sufferings@quaker.org.uk)), before the meeting to be received by morning of **2 October**.



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

## Agenda

### Meeting for Sufferings – 5 October 2024

At Friends House and by video conference,  
open for arrivals from 9.30am for 10am start

	Item	Paper
<b>10am</b>	<b>Session 1</b>	
<b>1</b>	<b>Opening worship</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Agenda</b> Adoption and acceptance of the agenda	
<b>4–5</b>	<b>Items to be taken on draft minute:</b> Membership (To follow) <b>(04)</b> Appointments (To follow) <b>(05)</b>	<b>MfS 2024 10 04–05</b> For decision
<b>6</b>	<b>Quaker Recognised Bodies</b> Applications for registration	<b>MfS 2024 10 06</b> For decision
<b>7</b>	<b>New ways of belonging</b> To receive a minute and report from Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC)	<b>MfS 2024 10 07</b> For discernment
	<b>Shuffle break</b>	
<b>8</b>	<b>BYM Trustees</b> Report from Trustees on their recent work	<b>MfS 2024 10 08</b> For information
<b>9</b>	<b>Group to review central structures</b> An update on their work	<b>MfS 2024 10 09</b> For information
<b>12.30pm</b>	<b>End of Session 1</b>	

**12:30pm to 1.45pm Lunch break**

	Item	Paper
1.45pm	<b>Session 2</b>	
10	<b>Epistle from the World Plenary of Friends 2024</b>	For information
11	<b>Israel and Palestine</b> Being faithful in the language we use – a report from Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC)	<b>MfS 2024 10 11</b> For discernment <b>(Paper to follow)</b>
	<b>Shuffle break</b>	
12	<b>Reparations</b> To hear about the work of the Reparations Working Group (RWG)	<b>MfS 2024 10 12</b> For information
13	<b>Quaker marriage declaration</b> Minutes received on possible changes to the declaration	<b>MfS 2024 10 13</b> For discernment
4pm	<b>End of Meeting</b>	



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

At a meeting of

## Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held online 12 June 2024

### Minutes

**Present:** Elizabeth Allen (Clerk), Robert Card, Ivan Hutnik, Charles Phillips, Lex Ryder, Mary Savage, Jean Scott Barr

**Prevented:** Siobhán Haire

**In attendance:** Neil Jarvis

We began our meeting with a short period of worship.

#### 1. Welcome and introductions

We are thankful for the service given by Jean Scott Barr and Ivan Hutnik to this group, as they reach the end of their terms on Meeting for Sufferings. We welcome Charles Phillips as a new member of the Arrangements Group.

#### 2. Meetings attended by the Clerks and others

Robert and Elizabeth attended an online meeting of the Group to Review Central Structures on 15 May.

Elizabeth met with Fred Langridge, clerk of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee (YMAC), and Siobhán Haire on 19 May, to discuss closer collaboration between MfSAG and YMAC. The following useful initial steps were identified, and actions were agreed to take these forward:

1. Get to know and understand what each group is doing – the business on its agenda, how it manages this, and how the group works.
2. Start to consider what needs kept from the current practice and what needs changed or done away with.

Actions agreed were:

- Share MfSAG and YMAC minutes
- Hold an autumn meeting of clerks of YMAC and MfSAG and relevant staff to examine and talk through forward plans.

### **3. Review of Meeting for Sufferings in June**

We have reviewed the minutes from Meeting for Sufferings in June.

We note in minute 7 that following Meeting for Sufferings' discernment on Quaker Recognised Bodies (QRBs) at the meeting, it asks the Arrangements Group to organise three or four Friends to consider the process for registering QRBs so that suggestions for taking this work forwards can be brought to MfS in October.

We ask Lex Ryder to represent Arrangements Group on this small group. We will finalise the full membership by 21 June.

We note minute 9 concerning Palestine and Israel asked Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee to reflect and return to Meeting for Sufferings on the language we might use to describe the situation in Palestine and Israel. We have added this to our Forward Plan.

We thank the Support Group for their report and for the faithful service they have given. We have reviewed the report. We ask staff to consider the point about provision of printed papers and forms for some Friends. Our clerks have noted the comments about Quaker discipline during Meeting for Sufferings.

### **4. Residential meeting in 2025**

We receive a report on a possible venue in north Wales for the next residential meeting of Meeting for Sufferings to be held 3–5 October 2025. We have discussed the merits and drawbacks of the venue.

On balance we agree to book High Leigh in England and we ask our staff to make the reservation.

### **5. Any other matters**

Charles is prevented from attending Arrangements Group meeting scheduled for 16 October. We agree to shift the date to 14 October.

There being no further business to conduct, we part planning to meet again on 4 September to plan Meeting for Sufferings on 5 October 2024. Future dates for MfSAG are (all to be held online and starting at 7pm):

- 4 September
- 14 October
- 6 November
- 18 December

Signed in and on behalf of the meeting,

Elizabeth Allen  
Clerk



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

At a meeting of

## **Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group**

Held online 4 September 2024

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Elizabeth Allen, Robert Card, Charles Philips, Mary Savage

**Prevented:** Lex Ryder

**In attendance:** Siobhán Haire, Neil Jarvis

We began our meeting with a short period of worship.

#### **1. Meetings attended by the Clerks and others**

Robert and Elizabeth attended a blended meeting of the Group to Review Central Structures (GRCS) on 15th August, and an online meeting on 2nd September. The group is planning to share some details of its on-going work with Friends throughout Yearly Meeting, using a short video to explain the work and a consultation document to engage Friends in discernment about possible changes to our central structures. The GRCS has requested to speak to MfS in October, perhaps at the Preparation Meeting, and to show the video at lunchtime, at MfS.

We receive a copy of the paper (MfSAG 2024 09 01) prepared by our Clerks and sent to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, contributing to their discernment for the agenda for Yearly Meeting in 2025. Mary Savage will attend YMAC on 14<sup>th</sup> September and present the MfS paper.

#### **2. Forward plan**

We have reviewed our forward plan, now extended until March 2026, which will be the last meeting of MfS. There are seven meetings of MfS before it is laid down. We will consider how this will affect on-going business and capacity for future business at our Arrangements Group meeting on 14th October.

We have heard that a report from Quaker Housing Trust will not be available until our meeting in December.

At Meeting for Sufferings in June we hoped to return in October to starting a review of the process for registration as a Quaker Recognised Body. We have heard that a group has been convened to consider the next steps but they will not be ready to report to Sufferings in October.

We have discussed the tasks for MfS relating to the transition to a continuing Yearly Meeting from May 2026, which have been added to our forward plan.

The Sustainability Monitoring Group currently has no members and is not in a position to report to MfS in October. We think it would be useful to revisit the purpose of our Sustainability Monitoring Group, and will consult relevant staff and the clerks of QPSW and QL Central Committees on how to move forward with this.

We have discussed how we might take forward the request from Yearly Meeting that MfS consider the theology of blended meetings. We add this to our forward plan and in preparation we will consult Woodbrooke on their work on this.

Further to conversations with relevant Quaker bodies regarding Leeds AM's minute on the Labour Party's decision to abolish the role of shadow minister for peace and nuclear disarmament, we have considered whether it might be timely for MfS to explore our peace testimony. We think there is more work to be done before this comes onto a MfS agenda.

We ask our secretary to update the forward plan to include these amendments.

### **3. Meeting for Sufferings in October**

We have considered potential business for Meeting for Sufferings in October.

We expect to receive the responses from Area Meetings to the consultation on possible changes to the Quaker marriage declaration. We will publish the paper on this next week, to give Friends time to consider it.

We will receive reports from YM Trustees and the Reparations Working Group, plus an update on Quaker Life Central Committee's work on New Ways of Belonging.

We have heard that QPSW Central Committee is ready to offer further discernment on our position on Israel and Palestine. We will hear a report on this.

We will hear the epistle from the World Plenary 2024.

We receive minutes from Ipswich & Diss, Hardshaw & Mann and Staffordshire area meetings and correspondence regarding the laying down of Meeting for Sufferings. Yearly Meeting has subsequently taken a decision on this matter and agreed to lay down the body.



Pendle Hill AM has sent a minute regarding the Loyal Address. This matter is already in our forward plan and we will present this minute to the meeting when we return to this item at a future meeting.

Quaker Life Central Committee has sent a minute to us regarding new ways of belonging, and the co-clerk of QLCC will present it to the October MfS.

We will ask the GRCS to speak to the October MfS in session about the work of the group.

The online preparation session is on 30th September. We plan to set up breakout rooms, each on a different topic on the MfS agenda, and we will invite Friends to choose to join one or more of the informal discussions in these breakout rooms.

We ask the clerks to finalise the agenda in consultation with staff. We confirm our intention to ask both representatives and alternates to this first meeting of the new session of Meeting for Sufferings to help us build a new community.

#### **4. New triennium**

##### a) Appointment of new groups for Meeting for Sufferings

At our induction session yesterday we asked Friends to consider joining the new Support Group and we hope to receive names soon. We will also review the list of members, and mention it in the MfS registration email. We ask our Clerks to agree to names so that a new group can help to support the holding of the October meeting.

We decide not to appoint a new Standing Nominations Group for the remaining limited life of MfS.

We note the Sustainability Monitoring Group is now without any members. Our minute 2 refers to this.

##### b) Practical matters

We have been informed by our secretary on a few practical matters relating to the new triennium including the circulation of the revised handbook.

#### **5. Any other matters**

There being no further business to conduct, we part planning to meet again on 14 October to review Meeting for Sufferings in October.

Signed in and on behalf of the meeting,

Elizabeth Allen, Clerk

## Record of minutes received by Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

This is a record of all minutes received by Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group since the last Meeting for Sufferings with information about any decisions that have been taken. It also includes minutes received in the past where there are updates. If representatives wish to see a copy of a minute, or wish to contact the Clerks, please email [sufferings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sufferings@quaker.org.uk).

*Minutes received since last Meeting for Sufferings*

Body sending minute	Minute	Initial steps and decisions	Subsequent steps (if any)	Status
Ipswich & Diss AM	Minute 25/24: [Laying down of] Meeting for Sufferings	<b>18/05/24 Minute received</b>  <b>4/09/24 Tabled at MfSAG</b> Since the AM minute, this matter was considered at Yearly Meeting.		Final decision reached by Yearly Meeting 2024
Staffordshire AM	9 [Laying down of] Meeting for Sufferings	<b>21/05/24 Minute received</b>  <b>4/09/24 Tabled at MfSAG</b> Since the AM minute, this matter was considered at Yearly Meeting.		Final decision reached by Yearly Meeting 2024
Pendle Hill AM	24.35 Loyal address	<b>22/05/24 Minute received</b>  <b>4/09/24 Tabled at MfSAG</b> This matter is already in the forward plan for MfS and will come when ready.		To come to MfS when ready
Quaker Life Central Committee	24.38 New Ways of Belonging	<b>28/05/24 Minute received</b>  <b>4/09/24 Tabled at MfSAG</b> To be taken at MfS in October		MfS in October

Body sending minute	Minute	Initial steps and decisions	Subsequent steps (if any)	Status
Hardshaw and Mann AM	39/2024 Yearly Meeting Structures	<b>22/07/24 Minute received</b> <b>4/09/24 Tabled at MfSAG</b> Since the AM minute, this matter was considered at Yearly Meeting.		Final decision reached by Yearly Meeting 2024

## **Quaker recognised bodies**

### **Introduction**

This paper covers:

- **Part A:** one application for registration as a new Quaker recognised body (QRB)
- **Part B:** two reviews of existing QRBs for continuing registration

### **Background**

The guidelines for groups that would like to be a Quaker recognised body are on the BYM website [www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups](http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups). That page also contains a list of current QRBs with their contact details and brief description.

A QRB is an independent group where concerned Friends explore a common interest, seek affirmation, or carry out witness. It wishes to be recognised as a Quaker body because its Quaker roots are an important part of its identity or constitution.

Each QRB is allocated a BYM link staff member.

### **A: New application**

One application for registration as a Quaker Recognised Body is ready to come to Meeting for Sufferings this time:

1. Discovering Quakers

### **Action required**

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to approve this organisation as a Quaker Recognised Body for a period of five years, as it is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

### **Name of Quaker Recognised Body: Discovering Quakers**

**Constitution:** Yes – Charitable Incorporated Organisation, adopted 1 February 2024.

**Governance:** Not known if Quaker business method used. They have a clerk, so it is likely. The group is required to hold an annual general meeting, and has the powers to hold general meetings. A quorum for meetings is 10 members or 10% of membership, whichever is the greater.

**Type of Group:** External – regulated externally (as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation)

**Foundation:** 2022. The group brought together a number of people who had already been active on outreach related matters.

**Aims:** The advancement of the Quaker faith and principles for the public benefit, in particular but not exclusively by raising awareness and access to Quaker, literature, events and meetings through a website, podcasts and other means of digital communication.

**Publications and activities:** Discovering Quakers is a grassroots Quaker outreach initiative that provides a first point of contact for people curious about Quakers. It promotes Quakers nationally through social media and a website, produces an enquirers' email newsletter every two weeks, runs weekly online events for enquirers, and publishes Quaker books.

To help Meetings, it runs monthly outreach forums, introduces enquirers to their Local Meeting, produces printed leaflets and posters, and advertises local and national events.

Discovering Quakers has trialled a paid for service for local and area Quaker meetings providing bespoke advertising and engagement.

See [www.discoveringquakers.org.uk](http://www.discoveringquakers.org.uk) for further details of our work in providing access to Quaker resources and in supporting Local Meetings with outreach activities.

It is in the process of establishing and launching DQ Connect to link Local Quaker Meetings with enquirers and those interested in attending a Quaker meeting. Many Local Meetings have signed up to DQ Connect.

The Discovering Quaker offer provides an additional route for people to find out about Quakers, and to take the first steps to engaging with Quaker worship and community. The experiments in use of social media, online engagement, and the DQ "connect" initiative are helpful in finding out what works well in engaging people and supporting their journey of inquiry and connection.

**Membership:** 10

About 20 enquiries from people are received each week. About half the local meetings are in contact with Discovering Quakers.

**Finance:** Received initial funding from the Adventurous Outreach fund administered by BYM. Expecting to receive £17k funding from external sources in 2024 and to develop a donation process.

**Winding up:** Provision for winding up the organisation is included in its constitution.

**Archives:** No archives currently exist.

**Current contact details:**

**Address:** 22 Maften Court, Sedgfield, TS21 2JB

**Email:** [info@discoveringquakers.org.uk](mailto:info@discoveringquakers.org.uk) **Phone:** 07717 580 095

**Group website** (if applicable): [www.discoveringquakers.org.uk](http://www.discoveringquakers.org.uk)

**Staff link:** Naomi Major (Team Leader, Outreach and collaboration, Quaker Life)  
[naomim@quaker.org.uk](mailto:naomim@quaker.org.uk)

## **B. Review of existing QRB**

When Meeting for Sufferings grants QRB status, it asks for each organisation to be reviewed in due course.

For each of review an update from the staff link about recent activities and key information from the original application to Meeting for Sufferings is included.

There are two reviews submitted this time:

1. Quakers and Business Group (Q&B)
2. The Retreat

### **Action required**

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to renew the registration of these organisations as Quaker recognised bodies to be reviewed during 2029 (that is in five years' time).

### **1) Quakers and Business Group (Q&B)**

**Initial recognition:** 2017, Review due 2022. Externally-regulated. Registered Charity number 1157008

**Staff link:** Originally Paul Grey and now Oliver Waterhouse [oliverw@quaker.org.uk](mailto:oliverw@quaker.org.uk)

**Report from staff link:** This group continues to be active. They are a voice and network for those whose experience is that integrity in business and the workplace matters. Members are active in, or retired from, business of all types including for profit, non-profit and anywhere in-between.

Aims are now to promote Quaker principles particularly in the context of business and the workplace. We are committed to championing better values in business and the workplace based on Quaker principles. We aim to offer a meeting place and run events for those whose experience is that integrity in business and the workplace matters.

**Publications and activities:** Two main events per year, one for members primarily for networking and one for members and non-members to share and learn about how Quaker principles can be put into practice in the wider world. We fund PhD and other research into Quaker business history, ethical business practices and Quaker business methods.

**Website:** <https://www.qandb.org/>

**Contact:** Clerk: John Lovatt [clerk@qandb.org](mailto:clerk@qandb.org)

## **Key information from the original application:**

**Foundation:** CIO registered 12 May 2014. Previous group gathered in late 1990s, which went on to form a registered charity that then moved to CIO.

**Aims:** Our purpose is “to be the custodian, modern interpreter and promoter of Quaker principles in business and the workplace”. We provide a supportive network for those upholding these principles and promote our work through events, programmes, projects, speaking engagements, publications and research.

## **2) The Retreat**

**Initial recognition:** 2017, Review due 2022. Externally-regulated. Registered Charity number 1089826

**Report from staff link:** The Retreat York has undergone major change in the past few years. Inpatient services on the Heslington Road site have closed in the face of large year on year losses. The Charity now offers outpatient and online services in York and Manchester mainly for adults but with some services for children. These services are focused on the diagnosis of autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder together with general psychotherapy.

### **Current contact details:**

**Website:** <https://theretreatclinics.org.uk/>

**Contact:** The Retreat, 28 Green Dykes Ln, York YO10 3HH

**Email:** [info@theretreatclinics.org.uk](mailto:info@theretreatclinics.org.uk)

**Clerk to trustees:** David Robson

## **Key information from the original application**

**Constitution:** The Retreat has a formal constitution and is registered as a charity, number 1089826.

**Governance:** Its governance arrangements are set out in its Articles of Association, and the charity is currently governed by a board of Trustees.

**Foundation:** 1796

**Aims:** To relieve suffering from mental illness. The Retreat is a not-for-profit provider of specialist mental health services, working closely with the NHS to provide services for people with complex and challenging needs in an open, calming environment designed to enable recovery and independence.

Michael S Booth, Church Government Advisor, Quaker Church Affairs  
September 2024

## **Outline of Quaker Life Central Committee's work on new ways of belonging**

Meeting for Sufferings has received a minute (QLCC 24.38) from Quaker Life Central Committee on 'new ways of belonging'. The minute follows this companion paper.

### **A companion paper to minute QLCC 24.38**

Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) has had a concern since at least the early 2010s about whether our membership structures are still appropriate given the changing nature of belonging and community within Britain Yearly Meeting. A working group set up in 2018 did not bring forward any proposals for a way forward. In November 2021 Rachel Matthews, BYM's Head of Supporting Quaker Communities, presented Paper QLCC 2021 11 07 which looked at the issues around membership and belonging afresh, and proposed setting up a new working group to look at ways in which Friends who do not have a fixed geographic base could enter into membership, either through our current structures or by suggesting new ones.

In January 2022 QLCC set up a working group to explore these issues and make proposals. The terms of reference of the working group stated that its purpose was to explore:

- Ways to fully include people who are not able to become members, or be recognised as attenders, in BYM, due to the current geographic-only system of belonging
- Ways to include Quaker worshipping communities which cannot be recognised as such in BYM due to the current geographic-only system of being a Quaker community
- Encouraging models of worship and community which are identifiably Quaker, but do not look like most existing Quaker worshipping communities in 2022

The group was later asked by QLCC to also consider "the potential for an individual's membership of specific groups associated with Friends to be sufficient basis for membership of BYM as a whole..."

In the meantime, Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) began considering questions around membership (and specifically around membership and central service) in October 2022. The Deputy Recording Clerk contacted QLCC to get a better understanding of how our exploration might connect with the work MfS were doing around this.

Throughout its work, the working group, while conscious of many other issues that were peripheral to its considerations, endeavoured to stick closely to its remit and



not stray into other areas. That said, the working group was bold and creative in the ideas it considered and did not shy away from looking at radical possibilities.

The working group discerned the essence of its task was to think about how people feel a sense of belonging to Friends (“being a Quaker”) more generally, and how that sense of belonging could best be affirmed for those for whom BYM’s traditional membership structures did not work, for whatever reason. Thus, “new ways of belonging” became the phrase used to describe what the group was working towards.

In June 2023, the working group reported to QLCC:

*Whilst there is still further consultation and exploration that needs to be done, a number of possible recommendations have begun to emerge. These include:*

- *The appointment of a designated development worker for non-geographic and emerging Quaker communities. The purpose of this role would be to support, encourage and engage with non-geographic, non-traditional Quaker communities and the individuals who are part of them. These might include young adult groups, some Quaker Recognised Bodies, worship groups in prisons, universities and other settings, and online worshipping communities. They might also link closely with Quaker chaplains in prisons, universities, etc.*
- *The development of a structure that serves as an ‘umbrella’ for a range of Quaker groups and organisations, that would allow non-geographic membership to the individuals who are part of them*
- *The development of a model for an equivalent to membership, that recognizes connection and belonging and creates possibilities for greater engagement with the wider Quaker community*
- *That Central Committee invites BYM, FWCC and others to explore the much larger question of recognizing membership that is truly non-geographic and that potentially crosses existing geographic boundaries of belonging and might sit outside BYM*

Some of these issues remain unresolved and need further work. We need a greater understanding of why Friends are choosing not to come into formal membership in order to understand what further work needs to be done, given the changing nature of membership and belonging, not just within BYM.

The working group consulted widely with organisations, groups and individuals. We heard a wide range of views, and there was a general acceptance that there was a need for change, although there was less certainty about what that change should look like.

During our consultations, abolishing formal membership altogether was raised with us as a possible solution. However, it quickly became clear that for a substantial number of Friends, a formal membership structure is important and central to their

identity and sense of belonging as Quakers, even though for others it is irrelevant or even a barrier. This led the working group to conclude that there would be no unity should that option be put to a yearly meeting in session.

The working group considered partnering with an organisation like Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), which already runs its own non-geographic membership programme. The feedback we received indicated that it would not be appropriate to cede responsibility for membership within BYM to an organisation that, while it might be based in Britain, was not part of BYM structures, although different avenues for cooperation could be explored.

Consideration was given to asking Woodbrooke whether it would consider holding a new category of membership not based on geography, centred on its online worship provision. However, as Woodbrooke is currently reviewing its offering, this possibility became less clear.

This left various options that could sit within amended BYM structures, either managed centrally or devolved. The working group considered the responses of the Recording Clerk's Office and others. It became apparent that there was an issue with capacity within BYM staff, making it unlikely that they would be able to manage a new programme centrally without substantial new resources.

The working group therefore narrowed its focus to the second possible recommendation in the bulleted list above, which it refers to as the "BYM devolved" option. This option was endorsed by QLCC. Under this model, recognised groups within BYM would be authorised to grant formal membership to those whose connection to Friends is through their belonging to those groups. These could be existing groups, like Young Friends General Meeting or other Quaker Recognised Bodies, as well as a new non-geographic "area" meeting that could be set up for those whose lifestyle is peripatetic or who feel a different kind of connection with Friends, e.g. through an online meeting for worship.

Further work is needed on the procedure for giving groups the authority to grant membership and what requirements they would need to meet in terms of accountability and topics, like safeguarding. We would also need to look at how such possible membership-granting communities, both existing and new can be best supported and nurtured. There is also the question of whether simply being recognised by a group as a member of that group would be sufficient for someone to be recognised as a member of BYM. A new working group could be set up to do this work should MfS endorse QLCC's discernment.

This working group recognises that our proposals do not address the issue of those for whom formal membership plays no part in their sense of belonging, and other more general issues around membership and identifying as a Quaker, and making our existing procedures for applying for membership less cumbersome. There are also conversations to be had about building and nurturing new Quaker communities

as they emerge, but these issues were not within the remit of this working group. The proposals made are a first step towards becoming more inclusive, and affirming the sense of belonging of those who call themselves Friends, no matter what their attachment to Quakers may be, while clarifying how formal membership of the Society of Friends can be accomplished within our structures.

The New Ways of Belonging working group  
On behalf of Quaker Life Central Committee

## **Appendix: Minute from Quaker Life Central Committee to Meeting for Sufferings**

### **Quaker Life Central Committee, 24-26 May 2024**

#### **QLCC 24.38 New Ways of Belonging**

We receive paper QLCC 2024 05 09 from the working group, presented by Harry Albright, which follows the previous consultation paper on new ways of belonging, incorporating the responses of interested bodies.

This has not been an easy discernment process. Every conversation about belonging becomes entangled with our current membership practices and vice versa. We are clear that there is more work to be done to differentiate the two conversations. We are also clear that the paper we are receiving this weekend is from a small group with agreed terms of reference.

Those terms of reference are:

The Belonging in Quakers working group is a working group of Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC). Its purpose is to consider:

- Ways to fully include people who are not able to become members, or be recognised as attenders, in BYM, due to the current geographic-only system of belonging
- Ways to include Quaker worshipping communities which cannot be recognised as such in BYM due to the current geographic-only system of being a Quaker community

We note that these terms of reference were expanded by Minute QLCC 24.06 in which we asked this group to consider 'the potential for an individual's membership of specific groups associated with Friends to be sufficient basis for membership of BYM as a whole...'

We have been presented with options within BYM structures and a Third Party Option. We recognise that Woodbrooke is currently undergoing review of their online

worship provision and as a result is not ready to be included with any clarity in the Third Party Option recommendations. This makes this option less clear to envisage.

We support the BYM devolved iteration option from the paper. In this option, BYM would recognise a group or groups which could act as effective area meetings (AMs) in respect of membership. Examples might include YFGM, or the formation of a specific meeting for Friends who are seeking a different way of affirming their belonging. These groups would be given similar autonomy to geographic area meetings in regards to membership.

We would like to inform Meeting for Sufferings that we don't think the work that has already been done is enough and the conversations must continue. We want Friends to be radical in approach to this work and move to a place where everyone in the Yearly Meeting who feels a sense of belonging to Friends feels valued and affirmed.

We suggest that our Clerks and Secretary provide clarity to Meeting for Sufferings Clerks on the specifics of our recommendation and the process undertaken and engage with them on useful ways forward for these considerations.

We ask the small group to summarise their process in a paper. We thank Harry, Zélie Gross and Max Kirk for their report and their work. We acknowledge that we need this group to undertake some work in the finalising of this recommendation and we will release them from service at a future meeting.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Harry Albright, Co-clerk  
Rachael Swancott, Co-clerk

## **Report from BYM Trustees**

Trustees have met four times since we last reported to Meeting for Sufferings. However, our June meeting followed shortly after Meeting for Sufferings last met and I was able to tell you about upcoming business and to receive your guidance in advance of that meeting. The minutes are now included in this report. Trustees also held two short meetings in July – one to approve the annual accounts ahead of Yearly Meeting and one to approve the sale of a property given to the Society. I will answer any questions you have on these matters on 5 October.

My report to you here concentrates on our most recent meeting held on 6 and 7 September. This was a blended meeting run from Friends House, where the clerking team gathered.

I would like to draw your attention to some items which may be of particular interest to you. First, you may want to look at minute **24/09/14** on interesting developments at Woodbrooke. In addition to the current online and at locations provision, Mandy Cooper, Chief Executive, and Ingrid Greenhow, Clerk of Trustees, set out plans to create a digital library of content that people will be able to access, and on-demand, self-guided modular resources which will enable people to learn when it is convenient to them. To make it possible for people to also meet tutors and interact with other learners an on-line Café ([Café–Woodbrooke](#)) is being set up. Long term programmes like Equipping for Ministry will be re-introduced. Woodbrooke needs to reach beyond its established and loyal following and build up wider participation if it is going to survive long term and continue to provide the Quaker learning that we have come to depend on.

We also met with Rachel Swancott, Co-clerk of Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC), and Jonathan Lingham, Clerk of Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC), to talk about the role of the committees in overseeing the work managed by Quakers in Britain, which was presented more fully at Yearly Meeting in the Our Faith, Our Work report. You will find this at minute **24/09/15**. The committees provide advice, mentoring, interpretation on priorities to the operational staff in the role of “critical friend”. Whilst trustees allocate funding for the work, it is the committees that give direction and oversight. But, as can be seen from a minute sent to trustees by QLCC on the current uneven provision of Youth Development Workers across the Yearly Meeting, each committee does not have the flexibility or authority to move resources around to meet discerned priorities for investment and work.

In this context, it is good to receive the most recent draft proposals developed by the Group to Review Central Structures (GRCS) at minute **24/09/10**. Margaret Bryant, Convenor, Sarah Donaldson, Quaker Church Affairs and Suzy Lidbury, Head of Governance, presented the proposals for a single central committee, a structure that

may remedy the inflexibility and slow response of the current arrangements, and may be given greater authority in the allocation of resources.

These draft proposals have since been widely consulted upon across the Yearly Meeting. Many thanks to all the Meetings and individuals who have responded with their comments and questions – there are just eight days left for this consultation before firmer proposals are taken to our meeting of trustees next month, and I urge you to encourage any responses in development to be returned without delay.

Friends and Meetings will have the opportunity to explore what is being proposed in greater depth next Spring during the preparation for Yearly Meeting.

While GRCS continues its work, trustees have considered the tasks that Yearly Meeting has asked of them in the implementation of the decision to move to a Continuing Yearly Meeting, and the wheels have been put in motion – see minute **24/09/09**.

On Friday evening we were very pleased to meet Friends from General Meeting Scotland (GMS) and Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales (CC–QW), accompanied by Lesley Richards, who has been conducting a travelling ministry in helping Friends develop new governance structures. We were interested to learn more about the experience of Friends in GMS and CC–QW in making changes, and also a bit about the Quaker work they are able to do in their countries.

We were glad to spend time with all members of the Senior Management Team and receive reports on their areas of responsibility. We were glad to find them in good heart, having taken some well-deserved time off work after the intense time of Yearly Meeting.

We are planning to meet again on 8th November and will report to you at your next meeting in December.

As ever, questions and comments are welcome.

Marisa Johnson (she/her)  
Clerk of BYM Trustees

## Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Friday 6 September to Saturday 7 September, by video conference

### Minutes

**Present:** Georgina Bailey, Catherine Brown, Kit Fotheringham, Ursula Fuller, Ellie Harding (minutes BYMT/24/09/08 to 15), Carolyn Hayman, Jo Hills (minutes BYMT/24/09/15 to 20), Marisa Johnson (Clerk), Kit King, Silas Price, Danielle Walker Palmour (Assistant Clerk), Liz Redfern, Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer)

**In attendance:** Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk; Vipin Narang, Finance Director; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk; Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness & Worship; Lisa San Martín, CEO Quiet Company

**Visitors:** Margaret Bryan, Convener Group to Review Central Structures (minutes BYMT/24/09/09–10); Mandy Cooper, Chief Executive Woodbrooke (minute BYMT/24/09/14); Sarah Donaldson, Quaker Church Affairs (minutes BYMT/24/09/09–10); Ingrid Greenhow, Clerk of Trustees, Woodbrooke (minutes BYMT/24/09/14–15); Jane Harries, Co-clerk Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales (CC–QW) (minute BYMT/24/09/13); Michael Hutchinson, Clerk of General Meeting for Scotland (GMS) (minute BYMT/24/09/13); Suzy Lidbury, Head of Governance (minutes BYMT/24/09/06, 09–10); Jonathan Lingham, Clerk of QPSWCC (minutes BYMT/24/09/14–15); Susan Mitchell, Assistant Clerk of GMS (minute BYMT/24/09/13); Carina Mundle-Garratt, Co-ordinator CC–QW (minute BYMT/24/09/13); Lesley Richards (minute BYMT/24/09/13); Carolyn Sansom, Co-clerk CC–QW (minute BYMT/24/09/13); Rachel Swancott, Co-clerk of QLCC (minutes BYMT/24/09/14–15); Frances Voelcker, Assistant Clerk CC–QW (minute BYMT/24/09/13)

### **BYMT/24/09/01 Welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest check**

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We considered our agenda. We added a Nominations item to consider the name Clerks bring forward to serve on Nominations.

During our opening worship, we heard an extract from *Quaker Faith & Practice* 29.02: *When we look at our past, we can see the length of time needed for transformation. We are a small church with the pretensions to change the world. But first we have to let God change us – to empower us to be better Friends, and more active in our own work. We must look to ourselves, to speak of our lives and to let our lives speak. Above all we must look to the Truth. We have an Inward Teacher who teaches, guides and commands us. When we know what we have to do, how to do it will come.*

### **BYMT/24/09/02 Continuing business**

We receive a list of continuing minutes including the extracts from the following minutes of our meeting in June:

- BYMT/24/06/10 Information Governance Report, where we asked for information internal processes for raising concerns; and, BYMT/24/06/11 Review of Central Structures, which we will return to at this meeting.

- BYMT/24/06/13 Risk Management; BYMT/24/09/14 Board Effectiveness; BYMT/24/06/15 BYMT's committee structure; and, BYMT/24/06/16 Reparations, which we will return to at a future meeting.

### **BYMT/24/09/03 Minutes received**

We receive the following minutes:

- Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) 24-26 May 2024. We note minute QLCC 24.34 asking us to consider the inequality of provision between LDWs across the Yearly Meeting and YDWs only where local funding is available. We will come back to this tomorrow under item 12.
- Quaker Life Central Committee 8 July 2024
- Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) 4 June 2024
- Reparations Working Group 20 June 2024
- Reparations Working Group 18 July 2024
- Management Meeting minute MtM-2024-08a-05. At our meeting in June we received the annual Safeguarding Annual Report and heard BYM's safeguarding policy was under review (BYMT/24/06/04 Safeguarding annual report). We note this review has concluded, that Management Meeting has approved a new policy, and details of the changes have been communicated to the trustee safeguarding champion.

### **BYMT/24/09/04 Gold minutes**

We agree to add the following minutes from our meetings September 2023 to July 2024 to our list of Gold minutes:

- BYMT/23/09/08 Appointments to QUNO Geneva
- BYMT/23/11/15 Fundraising strategy 2024–2026
- BYMT/24/02/06b Pollard & Dickson Trust
- BYMT/24/02/14 Social Media Policy
- BYMT/24/02/15 Friends House Lettings Policy
- BYMT/24/06/12 Communications strategy to 2027
- BYMT/24/06/15 BYMT's committee structure
- BYMT/24/06/18 Memorandum of understanding between constituent charities of the Religious Society of Friends
- BYMT/24/07/03 Drayton House
- BYMT/24/07/04 Lesser Slatters

### **BYMT/24/09/05 BYM Trustee meeting dates for 2025 and 2026**

Proposed dates for our meetings are set out in paper BYMT 2024 09 03b. In particular, we give some thought to a) the timing and pattern of our meetings in relation to normal working hours and the possibility they cause barriers to service and b) the proximity of our June 2025 residential meeting in relation to Yearly Meeting the previous weekend.

We have reflected on how our pattern of meetings could create a barrier to service for some Friends. It is difficult to find a balance that will suit everyone where Friends have a variety of commitments: paid employment, voluntary work, caring responsibilities, etc. We expect to return to this at a future meeting.

In the meantime we agree:



- To experiment in 2026 with holding some meetings as a couple of evening sessions and a half day over the weekend, over a week or two.
- To change the date of our residential meeting in 2025 as the current date falls the weekend following Yearly Meeting. We favour holding a residential meeting in late June; the final date will be confirmed after this meeting.

We will revise the proposed dates for 2026 and bring them back in November, although we note the dates for September and November of that year may need to change after the dates for the continuing Yearly Meeting for 2026 have been set.

### **BYMT/24/09/06 Governance strategy update**

We are joined by Suzy Lidbury, BYM's Head of Governance. We receive an update on the delivery of the Governance Strategy (paper BYMT 2024 09 05). We note progress against the four strands of the strategy.

We welcome the report as a useful update. We hear that the range of stakeholders to be consulted is being considered and further thoughts from trustees would be welcome.

We agree to the proposal to extend the strategy for a further year – until the end of 2025 – before it is reviewed.

### **BYMT/24/09/07 Recording Clerk's report**

We receive a report covering June to September 2024 from the Recording Clerk and Management Meeting informing us of new and positive developments as well as areas of concern. We also receive the reporting dashboard dated August 2024 with indicators of key information on compliance, communications and organisational health. Members of Management Meeting provided us with further clarification of items covered in the report. We thank the team for this helpful overview.

### **BYMT/24/09/08 Finance and property report**

We receive the management accounts for period 6 (June 2024). An updated paper containing some amendments and corrections will be circulated with these minutes.

Net deficit shows a variance of £650K for this period, due principally to a shortfall in income, particularly legacies, offset in part by reductions in expenditure.

The Quiet Company's contribution is 30% behind budget. There was over-ambition in the projections for this year. Legacies are unpredictable and analysis of what has been received over the last 10 years shows that £3m per year is a more accurate estimate to base budgets on.

### **BYMT/24/09/09 Continuing Yearly Meeting – actions given to Trustees**

We welcome Margaret Bryan, Convener Group to Review Central Structures; Sarah Donaldson, Quaker Church Affairs; and Suzy Lidbury, BYM's Head of Governance.

Papers BYMT 2024 09 08a/b provide extracts of Yearly Meeting minutes and an outline of the work given by Yearly Meeting to Trustees.

We reflected on our experience and perspectives on Yearly Meeting.

To meet the tasks Yearly Meeting has asked of us by minute 37 and summarised in the circulated minute extracts, we ask staff to:

- ensure that the costs of the planning and holding of continuing yearly meeting sessions has been factored in in the budget planning process so that resources are available to hold a continuing Yearly Meeting.
- prepare proposals to review and simplify the bursary scheme for individuals to attend Yearly Meeting and bring them to FIPC and our anti-oppression champion for consideration and agreement.
- propose principles for a system to support area meetings and other bodies with the financial costs of representatives' attendance at Yearly Meeting sessions and bring them to FIPC for first consideration, expecting FIPC to bring recommendations to the full trustee board in February 2025 so that proposals can be taken to Meeting for Sufferings at its meeting in March 2025.

We reflect on possible principles relating to the funding of future engagement with a continuing Yearly Meeting including equity of access to financial support, geographical representation, the involvement of children and young people, and creative approaches such as regional hubs to build stronger worshiping communities and avoid isolation.

We note the move to a continuing Yearly Meeting also has impacts on other matters: the calendar of central committee meetings and other events; our governing document; trustee reporting to Yearly Meeting; communications among Friends; teaching and learning about how Friends conduct business.

We expect that these matters will be brought back to us as necessary over the course of the next 18 months.

### **BYMT/24/09/10 Review of central structures**

Margaret Bryan, Convener Group to Review Central Structures; Sarah Donaldson, Quaker Church Affairs; and Suzy Lidbury, BYM's Head of Governance join us for this item.

We receive a paper (BYMT 2024 09 09) from the Group to Review Central Structures setting out recent work and its plans for next steps. We also receive minutes from their meetings held on 19 June and 15 August.

In introducing the paper, Margaret Bryan reviewed the progress since 2021 thus far, moving towards final proposals to Yearly Meeting 2025. We note the circulation of the consultation document setting out clearly and succinctly the "why", the "what" and asking for views on the "how". We hear that it is also hoped that there will be other opportunities to engage with Friends in different ways as the year progresses.

We welcome this exciting next chapter of reflecting and implementing the will expressed by Yearly Meeting.

### **BYMT/24/09/11 Raising concerns**

At our meeting in June we asked staff to provide us with a summary of how staff can raise concerns (BYMT/24/06/10). We now receive paper BYMT 2024 09 14. Siobhán Haire provides us with clarification on the process proposed.

We reflect on the role of trustees in maintaining an overview of the governance of raising concerns, as well as the specific role of trustees in the process itself. We are conscious that some of us have specific responsibilities in relation to staff wellbeing,

for instance the anti-oppression champion role. On the one hand we may not be very visible to staff or to Friends, on the other we have our own networks of Friends and can be approached by someone with a concern, and need to know how to respond appropriately.

We are content with the process that has been outlined in the paper.

We agree to share with senior managers any ideas that may occur to us to improve and strengthen routes for raising concerns.

### **BYMT/24/09/12 BYMT Nominations Group**

Following the release by Yearly Meeting of Kate Gulliver from service as a trustee, the Clerk of BYM Trustees brings the name of Danielle Walker Palmour to serve on our Nominations Group from 7 September 2024 until 31 December 2025. We approve this nomination.

### **BYMT/24/09/13 Evening Session – Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales (CC–QW) and General Meeting for Scotland (GMS)**

We met informally with Michael Hutchinson, Clerk of GMS; Susan Mitchell, Assistant Clerk of GMS; Jane Harries and Carolyn Sansom, Co-clerks CC–QW; Frances Voelcker, Assistant Clerk CC–QW; Carina Mundle-Garratt, Co-ordinator CC–QW; and Lesley Richards. We were grateful for the opportunity of learning a bit more about the experience of Friends in Scotland and Wales, particularly in relation to transitioning to new governance models.

### **BYMT/24/09/14 Woodbrooke**

We are joined by Mandy Cooper, Chief Executive Woodbrooke; Ingrid Greenhow, Clerk of Trustees, Woodbrooke; Jonathan Lingham, Clerk of QPSWCC; and, Rachel Swancott, Co-clerk of QLCC.

Mandy Cooper and Ingrid Greenhow have outlined the future strategy for Woodbrooke.

Following a period of worship, Mandy Cooper expresses gratitude for the support of BYM to Woodbrooke while a new strategic way forward for the organisation is envisioned, at this time of change, following the closure of the building.

Current areas of development include creating a digital library of content and on-demand, self-guided modular resources in two areas: history, service and roles.

An online drop in “café” is being introduced, with tutors being available for information and guidance, and opportunities to meet other learners.

Courses that are being delivered live are being reviewed and there are plans to relaunch long-term study programmes such as ‘Equipping for Ministry’ and ‘Becoming Friends’. A sustainable financial model, which is realistic, and enlarges participation is being looked for. Developing partnerships will happen through the appointment of a Partnership Manager for an initial period of one year. We suggest the exploration of a possible partnership with the Quiet Company.

By the end of 2026 it is anticipated that breakeven will have been achieved, or be achievable within a short time.

We look forward to working with Woodbrooke to explore future partnerships and financial relationships as their new strategy develops.

### **BYMT/24/09/15 Work of Quaker Life and Quaker Peace & Social Witness central committees**

For this item, we are joined by Ingrid Greenhow, Clerk of Trustees, Woodbrooke; Jonathan Lingham, Clerk of QPSWCC; and Rachel Swancott, Co-clerk of QLCC.

We note minute QLCC 24.34 raising the distribution and funding of Youth Development Workers and Local Development Workers across different parts of the country. We reminded ourselves of the different funding models for the two, LDWs being funded centrally, and covering every area of the Yearly Meeting, and YDW being funded through hypothecated funding received from the Meetings in the areas in which they work. We understand the importance the role of supporting work with children, young people and families has for outreach and express our support for the work of these roles in Quaker communities. We have witnessed the contribution they can make but must balance this against the need to find a sustainable financial model in partnership with Area Meetings. We will continue to explore this as we set future priorities.

We thank Rachael Swancott for attending our meeting and responding to our questions.

We thank Jonathan Lingham who introduced the work of QPSWCC. He drew our attention to the stronger theological expertise in the committee through new members. The current strategic plan runs to the end of 2025, but it may need to be extended as it began at the time of the pandemic. The committee provides advice, mentoring, interpretation on priorities to the operational staff in the role of “critical friend”. Whilst trustees allocate funding for the work, it is QPSWCC that does the direction and oversight.

The work that the committee oversees has peace programmes in Britain and abroad, and a focus on climate justice. There are also many opportunities for advocacy and lobbying of government through our own statements, and many others initiated by partners that we support.

We agree that clear measures of effectiveness for the work that BYM does are needed and should become included routinely in any work that we engage in.

The new structure for planning the work proposed by the Group to Review Central Structures would mitigate some of the challenges that have been identified by our visitors today, giving the opportunity to take a holistic view of all the work that we run currently at an unsustainable deficit.

### **BYMT/24/09/16 Operational plan 2024**

We receive a report from the operational manager team updating us on the delivery of the operational plan for this year.

We welcome the clear format of the report and note the achievements so far helping us to deliver our strategic priorities. We thank staff for their efforts to keep the work of the organisation on track.

### **BYMT/24/09/17 Preparing for Meeting for Sufferings**

We have prepared for Meeting for Sufferings on 5 October 2024.

### **BYMT/24/09/18 Communicating our work and reviewing the meeting**

We hear that a new area is being created on the website on governance issues which may be a useful channel for including trustee blogs, brief reports on our work, thoughts and reflections. We welcome this development and suggest we may want to have photographs of the trustees alongside their names on the relevant webpage.

We have reviewed the meeting.

### **BYMT/24/09/19 Time with Recording Clerk**

We spent time with the Recording Clerk.

### **BYMT/24/09/20 Time without staff**

We have spent time without staff.

Marisa Johnson  
Clerk

## **Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees**

Sunday 28 July, Friends House and by video conference

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Catherine Brown, Kit Fotheringham, Ursula Fuller, Carolyn Hayman, Jo Hills, Marisa Johnson (Clerk), Kit King, Silas Price, Elizabeth Redfern, Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer)

**Prevented:** Georgina Bailey, Ellie Harding and Danielle Walker Palmour

**In attendance:** Vipin Narang, Finance Director; John Dash, Property Development Manager

### **BYMT/24/07/04 Lesser Slatters**

BYMT/24/02/29 agreed the sale of this property to Mr Robert Clerk for £332,000. Unfortunately, this sale fell through.

The sale was re-advertised and a number of new offers received, ranging from £240,000 to £325,000, most offers were nearer the £240,000. The £325,000 offer was pursued but also fell through at a later stage. We have since received an offer of £270,000 which will be a cash purchase.

Trustees are of the view that this property does not fit their strategic objectives.

Trustees are asked to consider and, if thought appropriate, approve the sale of Lesser Slatters, Belstone Corner, Sampford Courtenay, Okehampton, Devon EX20 2SL ("the Property") to Neil Bragg ("the Purchaser") for £270,000.

Caroline Lawrence MRICS FAAV of Carter Jonas, being a properly qualified designated adviser for the purposes of section 119 of the Charities Act 2011 ("the

Act”), had been instructed to produce a report in accordance with The Charities (Dispositions of Land: Designated Advisers and Reports) Regulations 2023 (“the Report”). A copy of the Report was circulated to trustees prior to consideration of the first offer. The Report at the time confirmed that in the designated adviser’s opinion a disposition of the Property for not less than £325,000 would be on the best terms that could reasonably be obtained by the Charity.

Given the changing state of the market and the experience of two rounds of advertising and processing the range of offers by our agents the current proposal is recommended for acceptance as being the best terms that could reasonably be obtained by the Charity.

Having considered the original Report and the further advice of the designated adviser, together with the testing of the market through previous efforts to sell:

- Trustees are satisfied that the proposed disposition of the Property to the Purchaser is on the best terms that could reasonably be obtained by the Charity;
- Trustees are satisfied that they had complied with their obligations under sections 117–121 of the Act; and
- the Charity’s solicitors be instructed to negotiate with the Purchaser’s solicitors to exchange contracts for the sale of the Property as soon as possible and that any two of the Trustees be authorised pursuant to section 333 and section 260 (3) of the Charities Act 2011 to execute the transfer and to give the certificate required by section 122 (3) Charities Act 2011.

Marisa Johnson  
Clerk

## **Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees**

Thursday 18 July, by video conference

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Georgina Bailey, Catherine Brown, Kit Fotheringham, Ursula Fuller, Kate Gulliver, Carolyn Hayman, Jo Hills, Marisa Johnson (Clerk), Silas Price, Elizabeth Redfern, Danielle Walker Palmour (Assistant Clerk), Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer)

**Prevented:** Ellie Harding, Kit King

**In attendance:** Anthony Collingwood, interim Finance Manager; Vipin Narang, Finance Director; Adetola Oyebadejo, Financial Controller; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk

**Visitors:** Farrah Kitabi and Judith Miller, Sayer Vincent (BYMT/24/07/02)

## **BYMT/24/07/01 Welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest**

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We confirm our agenda.

During our opening worship, we heard read 22.01 of *Quaker Faith & Practice: Love is the hardest lesson in Christianity; but, for that reason, it should be most our care to learn it.* (William Penn, 1693)

## **BYMT/24/07/02 Annual accounts 2023**

We are joined by Judith Miller, Partner, and Farrah Kitabi, Audit Director, from Sayer Vincent, our external auditors.

We receive the draft Trustees' annual report and financial statements for 2023 (BYMT 2024 07 01a), the external auditor's management letter (BYMT 2024 07 01b) and the Letter of Representation (BYMT 2024 07 04c). We also receive Finance, Property and IT Committee minutes from 8 July 2024 (BYMT 2024 07 01d) and note the recommendations to us in minute FIPC 24/30.

Our Treasurer has introduced this item. We have also heard from the Finance Director, past and present clerk of FIPC and our auditors. We are very pleased to note the significant improvement in the way the accounts for 2023 were prepared, We congratulate the Finance Team for achieving this progress.

It is a trustee responsibility to consider each year whether or not the charity is a going concern for the year ahead. We have taken account of the strength of our balance sheet and expected cashflows to the end of 2025 and confirm that we consider the charity to be a going concern.

We approve the annual report and financial statements and authorise our Clerk and Treasurer to sign them on our behalf.

The annual accounts and financial statements will be provided to Friends at Yearly Meeting, filed with the Charity Commission and also made available on our website.

We authorise the Treasurer to sign the Letter of Representation to the auditors.

We ask the Treasurer to draw to Yearly Meeting's attention that the longer audit timetables now required to meet new auditing standards, and the need to allow our finance team adequate time to prepare the accounts to the required standards, will mean it is not possible to provide future annual accounts in time for Yearly Meeting when held in May, and to recommend that the receipt of the accounts be delegated to Meeting for Sufferings in 2025.

We thank staff and others for their work in producing these documents.

## **BYMT/24/07/03 Drayton House**

At our meeting on 19 February 2024 we agreed the terms to renew leases of Drayton House to UCL and at that time we received advice that the terms met the requirements of the Charity Act 2011 (minute BYMT/24/02/28).

We note that UCL has recently agreed to the 3-year lease extension for Drayton House on these terms and the documents have now been signed.

Marisa Johnson  
Clerk

## **Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees**

Friday 7 June to Sunday 9 June, Swarthmoor Hall and by video conference

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Georgina Bailey, Catherine Brown, Kit Fotheringham, Ursula Fuller, Kate Gulliver, Ellie Harding (minutes BYMT/24/06/01–10, 17–24), Carolyn Hayman, Jo Hills, Marisa Johnson (Clerk), Kit King, Silas Price, Danielle Walker Palmour (Assistant Clerk), Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer)

**Prevented:** Elizabeth Redfern

**In attendance:** Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk; Vipan Narang, Finance Director; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk

**Visitors:** Libby Adams, Head of Library and Archives (minutes BYMT/24/06/09–10), Margaret Bryan, Convener Group to Review Central Structures (minute BYMT/24/06/11), Sarah Donaldson, Quaker Church Affairs (minute BYMT/24/06/11), Suzy Lidbury, Head of Governance (minute BYMT/24/06/04), David Loxton, Head of Communications and Fundraising (minute BYMT/24/06/12), Ann Morgan (minute BYMT/24/06/16), Mark Mitchell, BYM Safeguarding Officer (minute BYMT/24/06/04), Jane-Eve Straughton, Governance Manager (Team Lead) (minute BYMT/24/06/13)

### **BYMT/24/06/01 Welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest**

The clerk welcomed trustees and staff in the room to the meeting, and Ellie Harding, Suzy Lidbury and Mark Mitchell online. This should have been Liz Redfern's first meeting, but unfortunately she is prevented.

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We confirm our agenda and welcome the annual reports we are receiving for different areas of our Yearly Meeting's work.



We gather together with glad hearts in this very special place, in the 400th anniversary year of the birth of George Fox. We find hospitality and nourishment in this place still, just as George Fox did from the generous welcome of Margaret Fell. We continue to draw inspiration from them, and all our founding Friends and those who have shaped our community since.

During our opening worship, we heard quoted *Quaker Faith & Practice* 29.01. As our founding Friends gathered together within these walls to shelter from the religious and political storms of their time, we, like them, put our trust in the guidance of the Spirit, whose presence is in the darkness as well as the light.

### **BYMT/24/06/02 Continuing business**

We receive a list of continuing minutes including the extracts from the following minutes of our meetings in February: three matters we are returning to at this meeting: BYMT/24/02/08 Preparation of 2022 annual accounts; BYMT/24/02/12 Reparations Working Group; BYMT/24/02/17 Board effectiveness; and one matter we expect to return to at a meeting later in the year: BYMT/24/02/16 Young Adult Quaker Grant Group.

### **BYMT/24/06/03 Minutes received**

We receive the following minutes:

- Quaker Life Central Committee meetings held 31 January 2024 and 9 March 2024
- Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee meeting held 23-25 February 2024
- Minute '2024-3-11 Salter Lecture' from Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee. We note the conclusion of their discernment.

We note some important risks that may impact performance, and we expect this to be addressed when operational plans are drawn up.

### **BYMT/24/06/04 Safeguarding annual report**

We are joined by Mark Mitchell, BYM's Safeguarding Officer, and Suzy Lidbury, Head of Governance. Mark has introduced paper BYMT 2024 06 03 which we receive.

Mark highlighted the work being done to strengthen the safeguarding arrangements for Yearly Meeting and Junior Yearly Meeting, the adoption of new objectives for the improvement plan, the introduction of network meetings for safeguarding coordinators and the development of a safeguarding culture within the staff.

We are pleased to note most actions in the safeguarding improvement plan were either complete or in progress and a new two-year plan has been produced. We acknowledge that safeguarding is an area where it is important to work continually

on our approaches to ensure we meet best practice and keep those who are young and vulnerable safe.

The report outlines the staffs' current activities; their work to support Quaker meetings; training and development; safer recruitment; recording keeping; governance; and communications.

We also hear about how to instil and develop a safeguarding culture in BYM. We are pleased to hear that further work is underway this year to measure how this develops.

We are responsible for oversight of BYM's own safeguarding policy which we note is under review – along with the underlying procedures – in consultation with a professional safeguarding agency. We note further that the revised policy will be submitted to us at a future meeting for our approval.

Following a discussion relating to a programme run by the Quiet Company which posed a potential safeguarding risk, we ask that any future programmes developed which carry a safeguarding risk have clear governance in place for the management of that risk.

Safeguarding at BYM and in our Quaker meetings is a priority. We are updated on the outcome of a safeguarding investigation that consumed considerable staff time. Although the incident related to an Area Meeting, it helped both affirm the soundness of our policies and areas of good practice as well as being an opportunity to clarify and improve some of our own approach. We are grateful to those leading this work and ensuring we all remember that this is a responsibility shared by us all.

### **BYMT/24/06/05 Audit annual report**

We note paper BYMT 2024 06 04 reporting to us on: the work of the Audit Committee in 2023, its current priorities and the plan of its work for 2024. We note the Committee's remarks on its changing role and we plan to return to this when we discuss our committee structure later in this meeting.

### **BYMT/24/06/06 Recording Clerk's report**

We receive a report from the Recording Clerk and Management Meeting informing us of new and positive developments as well as areas of concern. We also receive the reporting dashboard dated May 2024 with indicators of key information on compliance, communications and organisational health.

We welcomed the new format of the report, and ask that we continue to receive it in this form.

### **BYMT/24/06/07 Finance report**

We have heard an update from the Finance Director along with receiving paper BYMT 2024 06 06.

We have considered:

- the progress of preparing the 2023 accounts and the associated external audit. We are pleased that the audit process is currently on track to meet the expected timelines. We plan to meet virtually on 18 July at 8.30 am to approve the accounts in time for Yearly Meeting
- the levels of expenditure and designated funds
- the management accounts for quarter 1 of 2024
- an update on property matters including the lease of Drayton House and the current status of the sale of Lesser Slatters.

We are asked to confirm our support for Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd in an annual letter of support. We ask our Treasurer and our Clerk to sign on our behalf.

### **BYMT/24/06/08 Quiet Company annual report**

We hear from Paul Whitehouse and Carolyn Hayman, Quiet Company Board members who introduce the report and give us highlights from the 2023 report and key issues for 2024.

We record our gratitude to the Board and the staff of Quiet Company who have contributed to the strong recovery of the company following the pandemic and who have made 2023 an outstanding year for performance so that conferencing, hospitality, the café and the bookshop have all exceeded expectations.

The Quiet Company puts faith back into business, one event at a time, and is indeed a beacon in the hospitality industry while raising income for Britain Yearly Meeting that we are able to use towards our work.

The report also looks ahead to 2024 and the Company's development plan.

We note that Matt Baker's term as clerk will end at the end of the year and that existing board member Carol Rowntree Jones will take on the role for 2025. The search is underway for a clerk to begin a full term of service in 2026.

We also note that the company's performance in quarter 1 of 2024 is down on expectations and budget. This may be due in part to overconfident budget in light of the excellent performance in 2023. There are issues to be addressed, for instance the relatively high level of staff sickness, the company's costs structures and improvement needed in the bookshop. The café is exceeding its budget targets.

We have had an opportunity to see for ourselves the programme of refurbishments at Swarthmoor Hall, a property that we hold in trust on behalf of the entire Quaker world. The work is being funded by restricted funds we hold for the benefit of maintaining the estate. The appointment of a new manager, John Moffat, offers the opportunity of investing in marketing the facilities available, and generating more

income for the benefit of maintaining the site, and contributing to the outreach efforts of BYM as a whole.

### **BYMT/24/06/09 Collections development and management annual report**

We receive an annual report (paper BYMT 2024 06 08) from Libby Adams, Head of Library and Archives, on collections development and management, and Libby joins us for this item.

We note updates on new acquisitions and collecting activity in 2023 (including the impact of the closure of Woodbrooke Centre), development work including the refurbishment of the reading room at Friends House and the work at Swarthmoor Hall, and plans for 2024–2026 aided by additional resource to ensure this is delivered.

We are reminded of the potential impact of current decisions on the shape and content of our collection in the future. We hear of efforts to focus staff resources to reflect priority areas including engaging broader audiences in Quaker heritage and witness. We welcome the efforts to work across the organisation including the Quiet Company and Communications to increase the accessibility of our Quaker story. We look forward to hearing in future reports of the fruits of this important work.

### **BYMT/24/06/10 Information Governance annual report**

We receive paper BYMT 2024 06 09 with a report on information governance and we are joined by Libby Adams, Head of Library and Archives, who holds operational management of this area of work.

We did not have any major data breaches in 2023. We note an incident regarding the introduction of a new finance system that led to some data being visible to more staff than necessary. We are reassured the risk is low, does not need to be reported to regulators and that Management Meeting is dealing with this matter appropriately.

We note staff undertook a revised scoring exercise of our compliance using the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) accountability framework. We note some areas have improved, while some areas need attention; the report outlines the plans to address these matters.

As well as BYM's data governance, staff also provide support to meetings on their own information governance. The report includes a summary of this support in 2023.

We raise the following points in discussion:

- how risks that may arise in operational areas are escalated in the organisation in hybrid work environments and actions taken thus far
- the functioning of the information governance group
- the dynamics of raising of operational concerns within the organisation.

We ask that Management Meeting brings a paper on the internal processes of raising concerns to us following their further considerations of the issue.

### **BYMT/24/06/11 Review of Central Structures**

We welcome Margaret Bryan, clerk of Group to Review Central Structures (GRCS), and Sarah Donaldson, consultant in Quaker Church Affairs to our meeting.

We receive paper BYMT 2024 06 10 updating us on recent work of GRCS, along with the outline of the emerging proposal. We note the group is working through the details of how this proposal may work in practice. We also receive minutes from the Group's meetings in February, April and May 2024.

The paper sets out a timeline for future stages of work and asks trustees for input.

We asked the team for clarification of some of the structures underpinning the on-going discernment relating to simplification and their relationship to wider Yearly Meeting engagement.

We review the detail of the functions outlined in the structure diagram including changes to language to reflect the will of the Society and the relationships between various functions of testing, threshing, planning and stewardship.

We affirm and uphold the work of the Group as they continue to develop the proposals to include:

- Reflecting the central work supported by trustees alongside the work of Quaker Recognised Bodies and natural networks of shared interests that operate outside that framework
- Designing a nominations process that is more inclusive and involves more people willing to give service for a shorter period of time
- Demonstrating the dynamic relationships between the different parts of structures

### **BYMT/24/06/12 Communications strategy: more proactive and focussed communications**

We are joined by Head of Communications and Fundraising, David Loxton, who has introduced his paper (BYMT 2024 06 11).

The proposed strategy – More proactive and focussed communications – supersedes the current strategy and covers the period to 2027.

The document sets out how to build on the achievements of the past three years so that our communications help deliver our strategic priorities and address the mitigation of two of our strategic-level risks: a reduction in membership and unsustainable reduction in income.

In considering the paper, we discussed:

- The importance and framing of communications support of outreach and how local meetings respond to the results of outreach
- Staffing capacity to support the strategy
- Measures of success that are under consideration including reach and engagement

We approve this strategy as a mechanism for managing communications activities for the next 3 years and ask Management Meeting to implement it in the context of other pressures on existing resources.

### **BYMT/24/06/13 A fresh look at our strategic risks**

We welcome Jane-Eve Straughton, Governance Manager in Quaker Church Affairs, to our meeting.

Paper BYMT 2024 06 12 includes an update on how the seven strategic-level risks are being managed.

We have discussed the two top risks, SLR1 (Major changes to Quaker community) and SLR2 (Operating model becomes unsustainable or unstable). We agreed that they are both too broad, and need to be better focused.

There may be merit in separating the risks concerning “people” (SLR1) and income (SLR2). We considered the instability of income streams and the cumulative effect of unpredictability which make it more difficult to plan.

We ask Management Meeting to reflect on the detailed points made and noted, in particular differentiating between risks and issues, and return to us with a revised draft of how these risks can be articulated.

Next year we will be considering the next iteration of the strategic priorities for the next five years, and will be discussing these with the Yearly Meeting. The work that is being done on risk management needs to inform that process and be aligned with it.

### **BYMT/24/06/14 Board effectiveness**

We have received an update on four areas of effectiveness we previously agreed to prioritise: diversity of the trustee body, induction, accessibility of documentation and support for our meetings.

Areas of possible development suggested in our discussion of our effectiveness are, firstly some experiments we can undertake such as:

- Using Teams to raise questions and comment on the papers as part of our preparation for our time together
- Having a rolling programme of training in key areas for trustees such as anti-racism/anti-oppression, safeguarding, trusteeship

- Considering the role of the exchange of information about our Quaker lives summarised in Trustee news to include any training undertaken
- Reflecting on the processes relating to trustee meetings

We ask staff to come back to us at a future meeting with an overview of Friends' thinking and existing information within the charity sector on how we might address the economic barriers to charitable service facing Friends.

### **BYMT/24/06/15 BYMT's committee structure**

Our trustee body is currently served by three standing committees: Finance, IT and Property Committee (FIPC – previously called Finance and Property Committee), Audit Committee (AC) and Employment Committee (EC). Paper BYMT 2024 06 14 encourages us to consider if this arrangement is working – particularly the roles of FIPC and AC along with the relationship between FIPC and Friends Trusts Ltd (FTL).

The paper also includes a draft memorandum of understanding with FTL for our consideration.

We agree the following points:

- Maintaining separate FIPC and Internal Audit & Risk Committees and the clarification of their respective terms of reference to ensure it is clear that the function of Audit Committee is internal audit issues
- We will agree a clear work programme for Audit Committee and that it is resourced appropriately to carry out its work

We agree that our clerk should sign the memorandum of understanding with Friends Trusts Ltd. We understand that this will in future mean that we will appoint some Directors of Friends Trusts Ltd to serve as members of our Finance, IT & Property Committee.

We ask staff to prepare revised terms of reference reflecting these changes for approval at a later meeting.

### **BYMT/24/06/16 Reparations**

Ann Morgan, the convener of the Reparations Working Group and a member of Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations, joined us for a discussion on how we are called to respond to the Yearly Meeting's minute on reparations.

We are impressed by the commitment of Friends who are leading this work on our behalf in meticulously researching and documenting the whole story of the Quaker involvement in the transatlantic chattel slave trade at both institutional and individual/family level. The first step in reparation work is to acknowledge and understand our history – the whole of it, the prophetic vision and the defiance, the faithfulness and disregard for discipline and failing to recognise that of God in other human beings. We see much the same in our own days, when the Spirit, clearly

heard in our Yearly Meeting calling us to new witness, is often hindered from rapid progress by resistance in our own midst.

Time will come when apologies will need to be offered, and more tangible reparations. We cannot do this work alone, and must engage with the communities who have inherited the disadvantage of this sad history, so that we may be properly guided in doing what is just in mitigating, to the best of our ability, the great harm that has been done, and from which many of us have inherited unearned privilege.

We note receipt of minutes from the Reparations Working Group meetings on 21 March and 18 May.

## **BYMT/24/06/17 Appointments**

### **Group to Review Central Structures**

The terms of reference for the Group to Review Central Structures need to be revised to allow the appointment of additional trustees and of a non-trustee as convener. The following changes are agreed (new wording marked in bold type):

2.1 The Group shall consist of:

- Up to ~~three~~ **four** Friends serving as BYM Trustees at the time of appointment on the nomination of BYM Trustees' Nominations Group
- 1 member of the Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gatherings and Meeting for Sufferings on the nomination of this group
- 1 or both co-clerks (or their designate) from Central Nominations Committee (CNC) on the nomination of CNC
- 1 or both co-clerks (or their designate) from Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC)
- 1 or both co-clerks (Quaker Life Central Committee)
- **Up to two additional Friends (if required) on the nomination of BYM Trustees' Nominations Group**

2.3 Trustees will appoint a convener from among the ~~Trustee~~ members of the Group.

The following appointments were made by the Clerks as between-meeting decisions and are noted here for recording:

- **Kit Fotheringham**, BYM trustee to serve with immediate effect for the lifetime of the review
- **Margaret Bryan** (York Area Meeting) to serve as convener with immediate effect for the lifetime of the review

### **Employment committee**

The following appointments were made by the Clerks as between-meeting decisions and are noted here for recording:



- **Ursula Fuller** to serve for 3 years (from now until end December 2026)
- **Ellie Harding** to be released from service with immediate effect

### **Audit Committee**

The following appointments were made by the Clerks as between-meeting decisions and are noted here for recording:

- **Liz Redfern** to serve for 3 years (from now until end December 2026)
- **Kit Fotheringham** to be released from service with immediate effect

### **Finance IT & Property Committee**

The following appointments were made by the Clerks as between-meeting decisions and are noted here for recording:

- **Jo Hills** to serve for 3 years (from 16 April until end December 2026)
- **Danielle Walker Palmour** to be released from service from 15 April 2024

### **Nominations Group**

BYMT Clerks bring forward the following proposed changes to the BYMT Nominations Group:

- **Ursula Fuller** to serve for 3 years (from now until end December 2026)

The end dates for the two current serving members of the Nominations Group will be revised to achieve better rotation and continuity:

- **Kate Gulliver** will now serve until the end of December 2024
- **Silas Price** will now serve until the end of December 2025

We agree these appointments.

## **BYMT/24/06/18 Memorandum of understanding between constituent charities of the Religious Society of Friends**

We receive paper BYMT 2024 06 17 from the Deputy Recording Clerk on the current position of the memorandum of understanding between trustee bodies of area/general meetings and BYM. The final version of the document is included in our papers.

Area and general meetings are now signing this document and returning it to BYM.

We agree to enter into this memorandum of understanding between the organisations forming the Religious Society of Friends in Britain, on this date and authorise our clerk to sign the document on our behalf between each area and general meeting. We will retain a copy of each document for reference alongside our other key governance documents.

## **BYMT/24/06/19 Whistleblowing annual report**

We receive the Recording Clerk's annual report on BYM's whistleblowing policy and note there have been no whistleblowing cases in 2023.

### **BYMT/24/06/20 Trustees' news**

We received a report of recent activities of the clerk and treasurer (BYMT 2024 06 18). In our meeting we have heard updates from Kit King, Kate Gulliver and Catherine Brown on developments in their Quaker service.

### **BYMT/24/06/21 Preparing for Yearly Meeting**

We have reviewed the most recent Meeting for Sufferings and prepared for Yearly Meeting in July.

### **BYMT/24/06/22 Reviewing the meeting**

We have reviewed the meeting.

### **BYMT/24/06/23 Time with Recording Clerk**

### **BYMT/24/06/24 Time without staff**

We have spent time without staff.

As we close our meeting we look forward to joining local Friends in Swarthmoor Local Meeting, still held in the building, once a barn and cottage, bought by George Fox and gifted to Friends for the purpose of holding worship. We remember the many journeys Friends made from this beautiful and isolated place, reaching so many faraway countries. Later this year the whole family of Friends will gather in a plenary meeting in Durban, South Africa. Some of us will be joining in person or virtually. All of us will uphold Friends as they bear witness to the faith and hope that have sustained our community in such diverse places and times, and will go on leading us closer to the Kingdom of love and justice we long for.

Marisa Johnson  
Clerk

## **Group to Review Central Structures**

The idea of simplifying our structures is not new, and Meeting for Sufferings has been thinking about it since at least 2020. Some of you may have been involved in one of the many workshops and discussions held during 2021 and 2022.

In May 2023 Yearly Meeting held a session looking at our committee structure. Part of YM 2023 minute 21 reads: “We recognise that the time has come to look anew at our structures, including our Central Committees. We ask our trustees to consider what form a new committee structure should take. We ask them to form a group who will consult widely with affected committees, with Meeting for Sufferings, informal groupings of Friends and Friends more widely. We ask them to bring proposals to a future Yearly Meeting for our discernment.”

BYM trustees responded by setting up the Group to Review Central Structures (GRCS). GRCS is a group of representatives of BYM trustees, Central Nominations Committee, Meeting for Sufferings, Quaker Life Central Committee and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee.

GRCS is now ready to share its thinking with Friends and to seek their feedback, prior to forming final proposals. The next page in this pack is the consultation document that it is asking Friends to consider. You can also find the document online here: <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/grcs-consultation-doc---to-share>

Please read the consultation document and email in your responses. Please also encourage Friends in your meetings to do the same.

GRCS does not expect that area meetings will be able to spend time now looking at the consultation document that has been circulated. YM 2023 did not ask for consultation specifically with local or area meetings. There are many individual Friends with interest and expertise and GRCS hopes to hear from them, as well as from any informal grouping or meeting that is able to spend time considering the proposal.

The current consultation process aims to gather feedback on a draft proposal. It will use the feedback it receives between now and 13 October to help it prepare its final report to BYM trustees.

Changes to the existence and basic functions of Quaker Life Central Committee and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee can only be made by Yearly Meeting (see *Quaker faith & practice* paragraph 8.18). Therefore if the final proposal includes any such changes then it will need to go to Yearly Meeting 2025 for discernment and decision. In that case further material will be provided to help Friends and meetings prepare to take part in that discernment.

**At this stage Meeting for Sufferings representatives are being asked to participate in and publicise the consultation outside of the meeting, not to decide on the merits of the proposal.**

## **Feedback needed:**

### **Contribute to discernment about the future of our central committee structure**

In 2023 Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) started thinking about how we might change our committee structure to make it simpler, more sustainable and more inclusive. Minute 21 of Yearly Meeting 2023 asked BYM trustees to continue this work. In August 2023 BYM trustees set up the Group to Review Central Structures (GRCS), bringing together Friends with wide experience of our current committee structure. GRCS now needs feedback from Friends.

In summary, GRCS is proposing the creation of a single central committee. We hope you can answer the following questions:

- What are your hopes for how a single central committee might turn discernment into action?
- What are your concerns about how a single central committee might operate in the proposed structure?

Please read this document and consider the questions. Responses are welcome from individual Friends, informal groups, and Quaker communities. GRCS will consider all responses and report to BYM trustees in November 2024.

### **Background**

BYM has committees to plan, carry out, and evaluate centrally managed Quaker work. Two of these are known as central committees:

- Quaker Life Central Committee
- Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) Central Committee

GRCS is **only** looking at the work of these two central committees. It has not considered changes to any other part of the BYM committee structure.

### **Disadvantages to current committee structure**

Over the last year, GRCS has been looking at the centrally managed work to see what oversight and governance it needs. We have come to see that there are disadvantages in having two separate central committees:

- There is no single point for planning centrally managed Quaker work.
- The Quaker Life/QPSW divide can make it hard to move resources between these areas of work – the two committees cannot share or swap resources between themselves.
- It can be hard to take a joined-up approach to issues that don't fit neatly into either worship or witness.
- This can make it hard to turn Yearly Meeting discernment into action (especially where we need co-ordination or work across different areas).

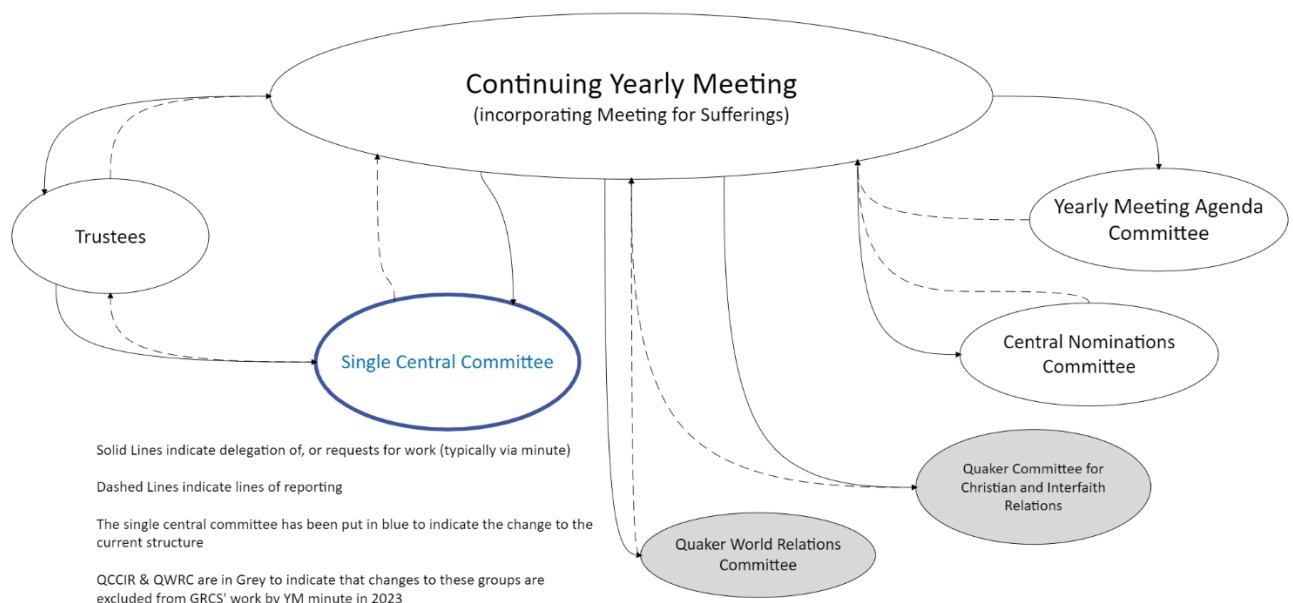
- BYM trustees are the only committee with an overview of all centrally managed work. A committee focused solely on the work would be closer to it and would be able to scrutinise it better.
- If BYM trustees can see there is a single point for planning they can delegate responsibility with confidence, recognising that things will not get lost or duplicated between different committees.

## Proposed changes

GRCS is therefore proposing a change to **one single central committee**, in place of the current Quaker Life and QPSW central committees. We believe that this change would place spirit-led discernment at the heart of an effective prioritisation process which looks at Quaker work as a whole. (The work of other national committees will not be significantly affected by this change.)

This single central committee would be the main body responsible for planning centrally managed work. It would express what love requires of us in action, moving us from the discerned leadings of Yearly Meeting to specific work.

The single central committee would ensure that centrally managed work is grounded in Quaker faith, allowing Yearly Meeting to be assured of the spiritual basis for all work. The committee would have oversight of all the work and allocate resources across it. This would include evaluation, monitoring and measurement of impact from the start and throughout.



Yearly Meeting would continue to discern what love requires of us as a faith community. BYM trustees would continue to act on that discernment by preparing the highest-level strategic priorities for centrally managed work. Currently these priorities are: thriving Quaker communities; a sustainable and peaceful world; simple structures and practices. BYM trustees would also continue to set the overall budget

for BYM. The single central committee would then take the high-level priorities and decide on work priorities, allocating the budget accordingly. The single central committee would be able to communicate directly with Yearly Meeting and Yearly Meeting would be able to ask the committee to do work on its behalf. The committee would be accountable to BYM trustees and through them to the Yearly Meeting.

Some tasks currently undertaken by our two central committees do not fit well with a focus on planning and would not transfer to the single central committee. They would need to sit elsewhere in the structure. Examples include directly working to help clarify the Quaker position on issues or acting as a 'think tank'. We know we cannot give one committee all the work of our two current committees and believe there are other ways to undertake some short-term or more occasional pieces of work.

### **Other significant issues**

Having a single central committee will not, on its own, address all the significant issues we currently face. Things to think further about include:

- Whether we can enable Friends to give Quaker service in ways that are right for them, e.g. not just by committing to a 3-year (minimum) period of service with lots of reading and meetings. Currently we are heavily reliant on a small pool of people, which is not sustainable.
- Whether we can offer Friends other ways to participate in our structures e.g. a form of participation that does Quaker work, rather than governing it.
- Whether we can better connect our formal governance structure with the many vibrant Quaker networks that exist in other parts of BYM (including Quaker Recognised Bodies).
- As above, how we might do some of the work currently given to the two central committees differently, so that a single central committee is not overburdened.

We think that these issues are linked. For example, if we can suggest new ways of doing some of the non-planning work of the current central committees this may uncover different ways for Friends to participate. If Friends discern that we should move to a single central committee then further work will be needed to address these points.

The proposal to move to a single central committee would only involve laying down Quaker Life and Quaker Peace & Social Witness central committees. It would not result in changes to other standing committees.

### **What are we asking you to do now?**

Friends are invited to participate in the discernment on this proposal by answering the questions:

- What are your hopes for how a single central committee might turn discernment into action?

- What are your concerns about how a single central committee might operate in the proposed structure?
- Are there any other comments you wish to share with GRCS to contribute to their discernment on this change?

Please share this widely and send all contributions to [governance@quaker.org.uk](mailto:governance@quaker.org.uk) by no later than 13.10.2024.

## **BYM Trustee's Reparations Working Group (RWG)** **a report on our first year's work**

The group held their first meeting on 23 October 2023 much of which was spent getting to know each other in the things that are eternal, confirming our understanding of our Terms of Reference and feeling our way forward. We established that for each reading provided during our opening worship we would develop a blog outlining why it had spoken to the reader. These blogs would become part of our communications with Friends about our work. (BYM's blog is here: <https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog>. It is possible to filter by topic; select 'reparations'.)

We began by educating ourselves about reparations. We examined moral agency and role of victims in reparations programmes, defined reparations and explored what success criteria might look like for our work. We have recognised that reparation is first and foremost about healing relationships and that we have to ensure that those experiencing the legacy of enslavement, colonialism and/or economic exploitation by British Quakers have to be involved at the heart of our work.

Our initial planning looked forward to a full day together in January 2024, identified a meeting schedule for the year and requested the involvement of a member of Woodbrooke's staff in our meetings.

We were agreed that our first step had to be telling the truth about British Quaker involvement in Transatlantic chattel slavery; colonialism and economic exploitation. This would be addressed by establishing two workstreams, one to undertake historical research which would allow us to acknowledge the levels of involvement of individual Quakers and Quaker families, the other to use the result of the research into Transatlantic chattel slavery to identify the financial harms and impact that involvement created.

To do this we recognised the need to listen to Friends both in BYM and around the world in particular those experiencing the legacies of enslavement; colonialism and economic exploitation. In this we are collaborating with Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) and their Peace and Justice Co-ordinator has been co-opted onto the RWG. In addition, we agreed to listen to other faith groups who are on the same journey, to Quaker affiliated organisations such as Quaker Trusts and charities. Our Networking and Listening workstream will address this.

The development of our fourth workstream is a collaboration between ourselves; the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) Theology Commissioning Group and Woodbrooke. We will commission a post-doctoral piece of research into the way Quakers used theology to justify enslavement and/or to support abolition.



We recognised the need for good communication with Friends and set about ensuring our presence both at Yearly Meeting and the World Plenary. Our statement of intent was published on the [reparations page](#) of the BYM website and signposted in *Quake!*. In this we invited Friends to express interest in joining our work through a dedicated email address ([equity@quaker.org.uk](mailto:equity@quaker.org.uk)). We made a video in which we explained our personal reasons for being part of the Reparations Working Group and posted that on the [BYM website](#).

We are pleased that much of what we planned has been carried out or is underway.

The Historical Research workstream is open to any Friend researching history relevant to our work. It includes Friends from the following area meetings: Bristol; Lancashire Central & North; Hertford & Hitchin; Oxford & Swindon; Central England; London; Sheffield & Balby and Leicester and interest is expressed by Manchester & Warrington Area Meeting. We are delighted that a representative of the BYM Archivists'/Librarians' team has joined the workstream.

The researchers meet quarterly to share findings which we hope will be placed on a searchable data base in due course. They led the Special Interest Group at Yearly Meeting providing Friends with early information about their findings. This material will enable Friends in time to acknowledge the part played by individuals and Quaker families in enslaving and owning people, in colonising areas to build plantations and establish states in America and in exerting influence in parts of Africa where British Quakers sent missions.

Lancashire Central & North and Bristol are well ahead of the others in terms of research. Friends in Lancaster working with others in the community have embedded their research locally, all that remains is to publish the findings. Bristol has developed two projects to enable this and will need to seek funding to bring them to fruition from beyond the Area Meeting.

Once there is sufficient information about the involvement of British Quakers in the Transatlantic Chattel Slave trade then the members of the Financial workstream will be able to start to quantify the harms and impact that involvement created. We recognise that this will provide a financial figure which will be impossible to meet but it will demonstrate our willingness to acknowledge how much harm those Quakers involved did and the legacy their actions have left by their failing to recognise that of God in everyone.

The Listening and Networking workstream has not only led exploratory sessions at Yearly Meeting but has also provided a video about our work for the FWCC World Plenary Theme on Healing and Repairing Relationships in the light of Historical and Continuing Injustice. Two members of the Group attended in Vanderbijlpark near Johannesburg, South Africa and others online facilitated breakout rooms. In addition, FWCC Sections are being asked to address the same four questions about their

experiences of the legacy of enslavement; colonialism and economic exploitation and these meetings will continue into our second year.

As we ask these questions, we find that we are raising expectations we will be addressing the legacies of British government colonialism and American Friends Missions rather than legacies of the activity of British Quakers. We recognise that we will need to work through these tensions in our second year.

We have maintained contact with the Churches Reparation Action Forum of Jamaica who visited Friends House in June 2023 and whose 7 Point Action Plan has now been adopted by churches throughout the Caribbean.

We recognise the need, during our second year to make contact with faith groups in Britain following the reparations journey.

We are visiting area meetings to encourage participation, to explain our work and to present the historical information we have uncovered. We plan to increase this activity in 2024/25. With Woodbrooke, we are developing a series of courses which will be offered in the autumn of 2024 and spring of 2025 to support our work and engage Friends.

For the Theological workstream a draft briefing document has been developed with the QCCIR Theological Commissioning Group to enable the RWG to commission research on Quaker Theologies of Enslavement and discussions are in progress with Woodbrooke College who we anticipate will manage the process of appointing a researcher and providing any supervision required.

Friends on the RWG have attended many conferences and events to aid their own learning and to provide reports to each other and our sponsoring committees. These include the Parliamentary Cross-Party Conference in January on Reparatory Justice held at Friends House, World Council of Churches webinars on racism and whiteness and the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Conference on Reparations.

We have worked with BYM staff to develop the policy which will gift rooms at Friends House to groups whose activity is concerned with reparation. This is a form of reparation which Britain Yearly Meeting can make now.

We have had a challenging and busy first year and look forward to being assisted by the appointment of a Reparations Co-ordinator as we embark on our second year.

Ann Morgan  
Marghuerita Remi-Judah  
September 2024