



Yearly Meeting of
the Religious Society
of Friends in Britain

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

18 November 2016

Meeting for Sufferings will be held on Saturday 3 December 2016

Dear Friends

As you will be aware, our December Meeting for Sufferings is being held alongside the next Young Peoples Participation Day. We will be holding our meeting in the Large Meeting House – this will give us enough space for the young people to join us for both the opening and closing worship, and as you will see, we have slightly extended our timings to end at 4.15 pm.

I was hoping to have a nice relaxed final meeting as Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings, but clearly not! We have a full agenda, so preparation beforehand and discipline in the meeting itself will be essential for us to get through it all!

We will start our business in the morning hearing from our trustees. As mentioned last time, if you have specific questions to feel free to contact Ingrid directly – clerkoftrustees@quaker.org.uk

We will then hear from our representative to Quaker Council for European Affairs. This is to update us on changes that are being made to their governance structures. We will also receive the reports from our representatives to other European Yearly Meetings this year.

After the break we have time to consider the minute from Cornwall AM on the decriminalisation of the possession of drugs for personal use. As you will see from the papers a lot of meetings have found time to consider this since April. Given the volume of minutes for this, and for the consideration of the 'Vision for a criminal justice system' later in the day, Arrangements Group felt it was better to send out the summary papers and have all the minutes available to read online (or by paper on request to Graham). Friends around the country have clearly spent a lot of time on this, so if you have time to go online and read through the detailed minutes please do!

During the lunch break we will have time to meet up and have lunch with the young people. If you don't have any young people attending from your Area Meeting do see if there are other groups you could join (one area meeting is sending 4 young people, so their rep might like some support!!).

There will also be opportunities during the lunch break to meet with members of Quaker Life Central Committee, Cornwall Area Meeting and the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group.

After lunch we will start with appointments as usual and will then hear a progress report from our Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group. Following that we will receive minutes from Area Meetings and Committees. This includes some proposed changes to *Quaker faith & practice*. As ever, if you have any comments on the text please let us know in advance of the meeting.

We will then return to the 'Vision for a criminal justice system' from Quaker Peace & Social Witness Crime, community and justice sub-committee. As mentioned above, there has been a lot of consideration of this around the country over the last few months, so do try and make the time to look at the detailed responses available online.

The next item is following on from our decision in December 2015 to move from *Listed Informal Groups* to *Quaker Recognised Bodies*. We have the first groups to recognise! Please do read the paper carefully and if you have any questions or comments do get in touch before the meeting – sufferings@quaker.or.uk Given that we may be short of time, if there are questions or concerns raised about the groups it may be better to defer consideration to our next meeting when sufficient time can be given, so it would help to know this in advance of the meeting.

After the break we will have a report from Quaker Life Central Committee. This is our opportunity to hear a little more about and engage with some of the details of the work of Quaker Life, putting it in the context of *Our Faith in the Future*.

We will end the day being re-joined by the young people for the closing worship. We will hear from them a little of what they have been doing during the day and also share with them a little of what we have been doing.

I think after all of that we will all deserve some tea and cake!

Yours in Friendship



Ethel Livermore,
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

Papers enclosed with this mailing

Agenda

MfS Forward Agenda

MfS Arrangements Group minutes 2016 10 24

MfS 2016 12 04 Court & Prison register

MfS 2016 12 06a Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees report

MfS 2016 12 06b Yearly Meeting Treasurer's Operational Group report 2017

MfS 2016 12 07 Quaker Council for European Affairs report

MfS 2016 12 08 Reports from other European Yearly Meetings

MfS 2016 12 09	Cornwall AM: decriminalisation of drug-users
MfS 2016 12 10	Appointments
MfS 2016 12 11	Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group report
MfS 2016 12 12a	Minutes from Area Meetings not taken elsewhere
MfS 2016 12 12b	Minutes from Central Committee's not taken elsewhere
MfS 2016 12 13	Towards a Vision of a Criminal Justice system
MfS 2016 12 14	Quaker Recognised Bodies
MfS 2016 12 15	Quaker Life Central Committee annual report

Meeting for Sufferings 3 December 2016

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



Agenda

09:00 Arrivals

10:00 Session starts

1. Opening worship

2. Welcome and introductions

3. Agenda

Adoption and acceptance of the agenda.

4. Court & Prison register (MfS 2016 12 04)

5. Membership (MfS 2016 12 05 – tabled paper)

6. Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees report (For information)

Ingrid Greenhow, clerk of BYM Trustees will speak to the minutes of the November 2016 meeting. She and Peter Ullathorne, Yearly Meeting Treasurer, will present the 2017 operational plan and budget. The November 2016 BYM Trustees meeting minutes will be tabled on the day as paper **MfS 2016 06c**.
(MfS 2016 12 06a and b)

7. Quaker Council for European Affairs report (For information)

Elaine Green, BYM representative to Quaker Council for European Affairs, will speak to this report.
(MfS 2016 12 07)

8. Reports from other European Yearly Meetings (For information)

To receive reports from Friends appointed to attend other European Yearly Meetings as Britain Yearly Meeting representatives in 2016.
(MfS 2016 12 08)

Break

9. Cornwall AM minute: decriminalisation of drugs (For deliberation)

Tony Faragher of Cornwall AM will speak to this concern.
(MfS 2016 12 09)

12.30 – 13.30 Lunch in the Restaurant

Members of the Young People's Participation event will join representatives.

Informal lunchtime gatherings in the Waldo Williams Suite:
Meet Quaker Life Central Committee members and Quaker Life staff
Meet Friends from Cornwall AM
Meet BYM Trustees and the Yearly Meeting Treasurer.
Meet the clerk of the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group in Ada Salter 1&2.

**10. Appointments
(MfS 2016 12 10)**

11. Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group report (For information)
Lesley Richards, clerk of the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group will speak to this report.
(MfS 2016 12 11)

12. Minutes sent to MfS from Area Meeting's, Central Committees and other bodies not taken elsewhere.

Area Meeting Minutes (MfS 2016 12 12a)

Leeds AM minute 2016/74 regarding the response to the Leeds Quaker-Jewish Dialogue Report. **(to note)**

Staffordshire AM minute 09/10/16 - 10 regarding Government sponsorship of cadet forces in state schools. **(to note)**

Central Committee Minutes (MfS 2016 12 12b)

Church Government Advisory Group minute CGAG 16/25 Quaker Recognised bodies from the meeting held 8 September 2016 regarding revised text for *Quaker faith & practice*.
(for approval before forwarding to Yearly Meeting)

Church Government Advisory Group minute CGAG 16/27 Changes to Management Meeting and consequent changes required to Quaker faith & practice from the meeting held 8 September 2016 regarding revised text for *Quaker faith & practice*.
(for approval before forwarding to Yearly Meeting)

Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations minute QCCIR/16/72 regarding the Leeds Quaker-Jewish Dialogue Group and proposed World War 1 Memorial Meetings for Reconciliation. **(to note)**

Break

13. Towards a vision of a criminal justice system (for deliberation)
To consider the Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee paper.
(MfS 2016 12 13)

14. Quaker Recognised Bodies

(for approval)

To register four Quaker Recognised Bodies.
(MfS 2016 12 14)

Break

15. Quaker Life Central Committee annual report

(For information)

Jocelyn Bell Burnell, co-clerk of Quaker Life Central Committee will speak to the committee's annual report to Meeting for Sufferings.
(MfS 2016 12 15)

16:15

Closing worship
Tea, coffee, cake and departures.

MfS 2016 12 Additional information

Meeting for Sufferings Forward Agenda (2017)

Arrangements Group hopes members will find it helpful to know that the following items are currently proposed or being considered by Arrangements Group for meetings in 2017. It is possible that these plans will change.

February	Quaker Housing Trust (QHT) report Yearly Meeting 2017 agenda BYM Sustainability Group report BYM Sustainability Group review (set up) MfS Annual Report
April	Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC) annual report Trustees: financial report Letter to Ireland YM
June	Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) annual report
October (Manchester)	Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) annual report
December	Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) annual report

Matters expected to return in due course

- **Gender Equality and the Tabular Statement** – sent to Recording Clerk March 2015
- **Pastoral and spiritual support to people who are not able to regularly attend local meetings** – sent to Quaker Life for advice in February 2015
- **Asylum Seekers: destitution** – sent to QPSWCC in March 2015
- **Use of the phrase ‘Quakers in Britain’** - forwarded to BYMT for advice in April 2016
- **Review of the Appeal process** – in July 2016 Central Nominations Committee was asked to bring names for the review group
- **Review of BYM Sustainability Group**
- **Government sponsorship of Cadet Forces in Scottish State Schools** – forwarded to QPSWCC in October 2016

Other items to be timetabled

- **Quaker Recognised Bodies** – approval of proposals (as ready)

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held on 24th October 2016 at Friends House.

Present: Margaret Bryan, Ursula Fuller, Ethel Livermore, Jane Pearn, Anne Ullathorne (convenor), and Juliet Prager.

Prevented: Sue Goodson,

1. Reflections on MfS held on 1st October 2016

We have reflected on the meeting held in October and considered issues around nominations and appointments, around the role of Meeting for Sufferings and about support for BYM Sustainability Group's suggested actions.

2. MfS Clerks' meeting with YMAC clerks

We have heard from our clerks of the recent meeting with YMAC clerks and we note the importance of a close relationship between the two bodies. Our clerk also attended the meeting of YMAC on 8th October in preparation for YM 2017.

3. Forward agenda

We have considered the forward agenda which helps our planning.

4. Young People's Participation Day

Cat Waithaka, from the Children and Young People's Section, and six adult helpers, have joined us to discuss the arrangements for the Young People who will be with us on 3rd December.

5. Agenda planning for MfS on 3rd December 2016

We have considered the items due to come to MFS in December and planned the agenda.

6. Meeting for Sufferings in Manchester - 7th October 2017

We have been able to have a preliminary discussion about this meeting next year. Next years' clerks with Juliet Prager will be meeting Manchester Friends on 8th December.

We note that a meeting with local friends before and afterwards may be important for MFS representatives. This is the first time MFS has met outside London in recent years (apart from at Woodbrooke) and we are keen to find a way of arranging this to bring the most benefit to local friends and reps alike.

7. BYM Sustainability data

We have received a summary of information gathered from the on-line registration of Meeting for Sufferings meetings.

We forward this information to BYM Sustainability Group.

8. Date of next meeting

11am - Monday 12th December 2016

Anne Ullathorne
Convenor

Court & Prison Register

Introduction

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

In July this year, Meeting for Sufferings recorded that five Friends who participated at the No Faith in Trident day of action at Burghfield on Monday 27th June 2016 were expected to appear in court, and agreed to add their names to the Court and Prison Register, and hold the Friends in the light (MfS/16/07/06).

A trial will be held 14-16 December at Reading Magistrates Court for Gillian Lawrence and Quakers Sam Donaldson, Hannah Brock, Ellis Brooks, John Lynes. They are charged with aggravated trespass for blockading one of the entrances to the nuclear warhead facility of AWE Burghfield during the Faith Day of Action on 27th June. Jo Frew, an attender at Tottenham Meeting, was arrested on the same day. She will be tried alongside four others from a group called 'Put Down the Sword' for obstruction of the highway is to be held in the week of 23 January.

Pickering and Hull AM has sent a minute, copied below, regarding one of these Friends; and the assistant clerk of Hastings local meeting has emailed, with similar news about their member John Lynes.

Meeting for Sufferings may wish to make a further entry in the Register.

At a meeting of Pickering & Hull AM held on 11 September 2016

Minute PHAQM/AM/2016/61 Supporting Sam Donaldson

We have received minute HLQM2016/53 from Hull meeting which reads:

"As part of his commitment to work for peace, an attender at Hull Meeting, Sam Donaldson, took part in non-violent direct action at Burghfield "No Faith in Trident Day" in July 2016 for which he and other Friends were arrested. He stands trial on 14th-16th December 2016. We offer Sam our loving support and agree to offer Sam care and personal support during his trial. We ask our clerk to copy this minute to Sam and to AM."

This meeting unites with our Friend and Hull meeting and offers its prayers and loving support through this period.

We ask our clerks to forward this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Signed in and on behalf of Pickering & Hull Area Quaker Meeting

Phyllis Wicks,
Co-Clerk

BYM Operational Plan 2017 - summary

Whilst much of the work of the yearly meeting takes place in any of its constituent meetings, some work is more appropriately organised centrally...
(*Quaker faith & practice 5th ed., 8.02*)

Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM)'s operational plan describes the centrally managed work. It helps Trustees, committee members, staff and everyone else serving BYM to be well informed about our current work. The plan includes:

- Overviews of financial and staffing information.
- The plans for each departmental area, setting out their areas of work, high level objectives and activities for 2017, along with non-staff costs.
- Details of legacy funded projects running in 2017

This operational plan for the centrally-managed work of Britain Yearly Meeting is organised within six departmental areas, set out on the next page. Following that is a summary, listing the 55 areas of activity.

Legacy-funded projects have been listed separately at the end of this paper.

The full operational plan contains much more detail, but even so can only be an overview of the work undertaken by Britain Yearly Meeting: it cannot include every activity.

This paper can only offer an introduction. For more details about any area of work, please contact any member of Management Meeting:

Paul Parker	Recording Clerk	rc@quaker.org.uk
Juliet Prager	Deputy Recording Clerk	julietp@quaker.org.uk
Helen Drewery	Head of Worship and Witness	helend@quaker.org.uk
Lisa Kiew	Head of Finance and Resources	lisak@quaker.org.uk
Paul Grey	Head of Operations	paulg@quaker.org.uk

Communication and Services	Finance and Resources	Hospitality and Facilities	Quaker Life	Quaker Peace & Social Witness	Recording Clerk's Office
24.2 full time equivalent staff*	12.3 full time equivalent staff	53 full time equivalent staff	19.5 full time equivalent staff	23.5 full time equivalent staff**	12 full time equivalent staff**
Non-staff costs £939,750	Non-staff costs £1,583,432	Non-staff costs £1,862,225	Non-staff costs £514,165	Non-staff costs £611,258	Non-staff costs £255,581
Works to strengthen the engagement and support of meetings and donors with centrally managed work.	Supports work to ensure the effective stewardship and deployment of the assets and resources for Britain Yearly Meeting's central work.	Manages the buildings, grounds and services of Britain Yearly Meeting to enable the Yearly Meeting staff and committees to fulfil their work.	Works to strengthen and sustain the fabric of Quaker life in our yearly meeting, a remit which covers faith and practice: both spiritual nurture and the practical tasks required for the running of our Quaker meetings.	Promotes and undertakes action for peace and social justice in line with our testimonies to equality, justice, peace, simplicity and truth.	Services and supports Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings and BYM Trustees.
Supports and strengthens the ability of discerning groups to achieve their purposes.	Develops and supports the use of IT, records and data management throughout Britain Yearly Meeting.	Extends hospitality, accommodation and retail services to visitors and Friends to provide income for Britain Yearly Meeting's charitable work.			Maintains contact with meetings throughout the yearly meeting; leads staff; acts as 'keeper and interpreter' of church government regulations; represents BYM to, and fosters good relations with, outside bodies.
Works to increase public awareness of Quakerism, and the social and political impact of Quakers in Britain.	Develops and delivers human resources policies, procedures and people strategies that support BYM.				Ensures recording and processing of data held by the yearly meeting conforms with the law.

* staff numbers on 31 October 2016

** RCO work includes some short-term projects

BYM Operational Plan 2017 - Areas of work, with High-level objectives

Communication and Services Department

Communication and services - core

- 1.1 Communication and Services Department review and leadership
- 1.2 Communications strategy
- 1.3 Enable staff to be ambassadors for Quaker work

Committee services and governance

- 1.4 Enable Britain Yearly Meeting's committee structure to function well

Events programme

- 1.5 Deliver a programme of events to meet the needs of Britain Yearly Meeting

Quaker contact and support

- 1.6 Support Quakers and their work through the provision of a database and online tools

Support for Young Friends General Meeting

- 1.7 Joint internship programme with Young Friends General Meeting

Speaking out in the world

- 1.8 Enable Quakers to influence public and political landscapes about Quaker concerns
- 1.9 Engage national media and parliamentarians

Digital communications

- 1.10 Support Quaker communications objectives through provision of digital communications channels

Printed materials

- 1.11 Deliver Britain Yearly Meeting printed materials

Meeting relationships

- 1.12 Engage Quakers with centrally managed work
- 1.13 Support QPSW Grants Group's grant-giving programme

Donor relationships

- 1.14 Promote financial contributions

Finance and Property Department

Finance and property - core

- 1.15 Support good financial governance of Britain Yearly Meeting
- 1.16 Maintain financial controls
- 1.17 Ensure that local and area meetings are supported and informed on financial matters affecting them

Audit & Financial Risk Management

- 1.18 Ensure financial probity in all Britain Yearly Meeting's transactions

Stewardship of property and other assets

- 1.19 Ensure title and security of Britain Yearly Meeting's assets

Grant Making

- 1.20 Control grants relating to Britain Yearly Meeting

Friends Trusts Ltd

- 1.21 Support good financial governance of Friends Trust Ltd

Procurement

- 1.22 Ensure that purchasing achieves value for money and reflects our testimonies

Records and Data

- 1.23 Ensure Britain Yearly Meeting fulfils its responsibilities in relation to responsible records management and data safety

IT

- 1.24 Support staff use of IT
- 1.25 Improve the function of IT systems to ensure they are fit for purpose

Employment and management of staff

- 1.26 Ensure general good practice throughout HR core work
- 1.27 Develop and maintain a highly skilled workforce
- 1.28 Support strategic decision making
- 1.29 Ensure Britain Yearly Meeting enjoys good employee relations
- 1.30 Promote employee well-being

Hospitality and Facilities

Buildings and facilities

- 1.31 Maintain a pleasant working environment for both staff and customers
- 1.32 Provide safe and compliant buildings and grounds for staff and customers
- 1.33 Minimise our environmental impact

Commercial services - retail catering

- 1.34 Grow the commercial business
- 1.35 Expand the market appeal and visibility

Commercial services - hospitality catering

- 1.36 Grow the hospitality catering business
- 1.37 Improve the customer experience

Sales and marketing

- 1.38 Grow the hospitality lettings business
- 1.39 Improve customer service experience
- 1.40 Increase awareness of the brand and retain customers

Front of house services

- 1.41 Improve the customer experience
- 1.42 Control costs to ensure budget are met whilst still being responsible service providers

Staff development and communication

- 1.43 Ensure all staff are trained to meet their full potential
- 1.44 Provide employment experience to those in need and build local links
- 1.45 Improve internal communications

Swarthmoor Hall

- 1.46 Maintain the hall as a spiritual centre of Quakerism
- 1.47 Ensure the continuation of the hall's work by creating a sound financial basis
- 1.48 Improve customer service experience

Bookshop

- 1.49 Deliver Quaker Life Central Committee's bookshop strategy
- 1.50 Ensure that the bookshop can continue by putting on a sound financial basis
- 1.51 Improve the customer experience

Governance

- 1.52 Build strong governance of Hospitality work

Quaker Life (QL)

Quaker Life - Core

1.53 Effective Governance

Library

1.54 Provide access to our collections to as wide an audience as possible

1.55 Support meetings and the centrally-managed work of Britain Yearly Meeting

1.56 Work in partnership with colleagues in Britain Yearly Meeting and at Woodbrooke on Library development and interpretation

1.57 Ensure appropriate collections care across the full range of our collections

1.58 Ensure that we record, maintain and publicise appropriate information about our collections

Ministry and outreach

1.59 Support meetings to be centres of worship and witness

1.60 Support and resource post-holders in meetings and the wider community

1.61 Make information about Quakerism easily available

Children and Young People's work

1.62 Produce quality resources for individuals, meetings and networks

1.63 Strengthen the practice of meetings, young Quakers and those working with children and young people

1.64 Offer a range of national events for children and young people

1.65 Engage with YM colleagues, Quaker organisations and other agencies

Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW)

QPSW - Core

1.66 Support governance

1.67 Ensure that the work and the linkages between work areas are strong

1.68 Contribute to effective communications

QPSW Grant-giving

1.69 Provision of grants/opportunities for people to live fuller lives

Enable peace-building process in East Africa

1.70 Support the development of nonviolent activism for human rights and good governance in Kenya, Rwanda and Burundi

1.71 Support local Quaker peacebuilding initiatives, networks, and relationships in East Africa

Conciliation among armed factions

1.72 Supporting a sensitive indigenous conciliation process among armed factions

Working for a just peace in Palestine and Israel

1.73 Effectively implement Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) programme on behalf of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

1.74 Advocate for and support efforts to end the Israeli occupation and related human rights violations

Peace education

1.75 Promote peace education in British schools

1.76 Create and promote peace education resources

1.77 Nurture the peace education movement

1.78 Challenge the militarisation of children, young people and the wider society

Peace and disarmament

1.79 Nurture the roots and active expression of the peace testimony

1.80 Work for disarmament and against militarism

1.81 Nurture the wider peace movement

Turning the Tide

1.82 Enhance capacity and effectiveness of Quaker and other groups taking action for positive social change

1.83 Improve facilitation skills for social change and movement-building

Sustainability

1.84 Support Quakers to take action to reduce their climate impact and increase their environmental sustainability as a community

1.85 Support Quakers on to take effective action for political and corporate change

Economic Issues

1.86 Support Quakers throughout Britain in living out our testimony to Equality in our everyday lives and through witness in the world.

1.87 Support Quakers to explore and contribute to the development of 'an economic system in which Quaker testimony can flourish'

1.88 Provide effective infrastructure and support to enable Friends to act and speak out on economic and sustainability concerns

Housing

1.89 Support the work of Quaker Housing Trust: (Britain Yearly Meeting provides staff support)

1.90 Take forward the concern on housing expressed at Yearly Meeting 2015

Crime, community and justice

1.91 Advocate for a compassionate and restorative justice system

1.92 Engage Friends in crime, community and justice issues

Responding to forced migration

1.93 Bring together local and Britain Yearly Meeting level effort to address the current 'refugee crisis'

Recording Clerk's Office (RCO)

Develop high quality, sustained relationships with local, area and regional meetings

1.94 Maintain programme of visits to local and area meetings

1.95 Ensure timely responses to enquiries and queries which are properly the concern of the Recording Clerk's Office

1.96 Develop improved ways of using Tabular Statement data, working with other teams

Plan, fund and implement the Vibrancy pilot programme

1.97 Run Vibrancy pilot programme in four areas

1.98 Conduct evaluation of Vibrancy pilot programme

Britain Yearly Meeting governance support

1.99 Service and support Yearly Meeting (Quaker faith and practice chapter 6)

1.100 Co-ordinate the agenda of governance bodies (Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees)

1.101 Support Yearly Meeting Gathering planning

Service and support Meeting for Sufferings (Quaker faith & practice chapter 7)

1.102 Service and support Meeting for Sufferings, its Arrangements Group and Support Group

1.103 Service and support Britain Yearly Meeting Sustainability Group

1.104 Support review of the Britain Yearly Meeting Sustainability Group

1.105 Implement new Quaker Recognised Bodies processes and structure

1.106 Ensure that centrally-managed work is helping to deliver Our faith in the future

Service and support Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees (Qfp chapter 8.17)

- 1.107 Improve management information provided to trustees to enable strategic work
- 1.108 Improve information and support to central and standing committees, to enable them to work strategically. Review requirements with committee secretaries and Committees
- 1.109 Develop dialogue around strategic planning with and offer support and training to central and standing committees
- 1.110 Develop reporting provision for projects including preparation for risk
- 1.111 Support Trustees' review of process for dealing with legacy income and cash flow

Quaker stewardship

- 1.112 Service and support Quaker Stewardship Committee (*Qfp* chapter 14.27-31)
- 1.113 Service and support Quaker Stewardship Committee and its working groups
- 1.114 Support review of planning process for Annual Conference of Treasurers
- 1.115 Support charity, property and employment law compliance in Quaker meetings

Support for church government

- 1.116 Constitutional oversight
- 1.117 Provide support and guidance around the discipline and statutory compliance
- 1.118 Support and service Church Government Advisory Group
- 1.119 Provide advice to area meetings and registering officers on membership, marriages and funerals

Oversight and management of centrally managed work

- 1.120 Coordinate the management of the work of Britain Yearly Meeting
- 1.121 Together with operational managers, enable team leaders and middle managers to be fully involved in the planning and budgeting process
- 1.122 Continue the work with operational managers to develop strong staff leadership for Quaker centrally-managed work
- 1.123 Implement new management arrangements
- 1.124 Design and implement review process for new strategic management structure
- 1.125 Support project development and management across all departments

Provide accessible and relevant centrally managed operational plans

- 1.126 Support the central planning and reporting process
- 1.127 Develop and implement the use of a tool/database for planning and reporting
- 1.128 Continue moving towards an integrated rolling three year budget and plan
- 1.129 Integrate risk register into the operational plan

External relations

- 1.130 Develop and sustain positive relationships with other churches, ecumenical instruments, Yearly Meetings, faith groups and relevant partners



Legacy-funded time-limited projects

BYM Trustees have set aside some legacy funding for time-limited projects.

Since the start of 2014, **over £2million** has been allocated to **fifteen projects**. Generous donations are paying for additional exciting, vital work both for and on behalf of Quakers in Britain. For more information about the projects, please contact the named member of staff.

Although some of the projects are now completed, most of them are now underway and therefore appear in the 2017 Operational Plan.

Peace Education and Disarmament Programme Assistant £29,736
One-year Programme Assistant to boost capacity of Peace & Disarmament and Peace Education programmes. over 12 months

Izzy Cartwright - 0207 663 1087 - isabelc@quaker.org.uk

Active Nonviolence in Kenya £80,907
Expand active nonviolence in Kenya, equipping ordinary people to stand up against injustice, building momentum for a nonviolent peace movement. over 3 years

Bryn Higgs - 0207 663 1075 - brynh@quaker.org.uk

Advocacy in Scotland £46,746
Increase and develop Quaker advocacy in Scotland. over 3 years

Jane Dawson - 0207 663 1041 - janed@quaker.org.uk

Directory of Services project £40,800
To produce a directory of the materials and support that are available to help people Friends taking roles in local and area Quaker meetings. over 13 months

Blake Humphries - 0207 663 1063 - blakeh@quaker.org.uk

Website Development £167,000
Redevelopment of the Quaker website. over 8 months

Jane Dawson - 0207 663 1041 - janed@quaker.org.uk

Peace Education and Engagement Project £132,618
Peace Education and Engagement Project to better engage Friends in QPSW peace work, and enhance the contribution of Quakers, and others, to growing and developing peace education. over 3 years

Izzy Cartwright - 0207 663 1087 - isabelc@quaker.org.uk

TTT Communications Renewal £37,858
To improve the reach and impact of communications about the Turning the Tide programme. One-year Communications Developer to remodel and update Turning the Tide communications and resources. over 12 months

Steve Whiting - 0207 663 1061 - steveuw@quaker.org.uk

<p>Being Friends Together Development Supporting Quaker Meetings by training and supporting volunteer visitors to deliver Being Friends Together, and helping meetings use the resource – a partnership between QL and Woodbrooke <i>Alistair Fuller - 0207 663 1016 - alistairf@quaker.org.uk</i></p>	<p>£147,297 over 3 years</p>
<p>Vibrancy In Meetings Vibrancy helps BYM and Woodbrooke support local Quakers to be stronger, more connected, confident and sustainable, and to develop a vibrant Britain Yearly Meeting. <i>Rachel Matthews - 0207 663 1039 - rachelm@quaker.org.uk</i></p>	<p>£675,492 over 3½ years</p>
<p>Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Increasing knowledge of Quaker faith and practice. Consulting and setting up a process for collecting materials for any future book. Ensuring BYM is ready to make and act on an informed decision about revision. <i>Michael Booth - 0207 663 1023 – michaelsb@quaker.org.uk</i></p>	<p>£120,760 over 22 months</p>
<p>Responding to forced migration Scope and deliver effective responses by BYM to issues of concern among Quakers around forced migration. <i>Helen Drewery – 0207 663 1069 – helend@quaker.org.uk</i></p>	<p>£49,982 over 12 months</p>
<p>Quaker internship with Housing Justice Tackling housing inequality: extending and strengthening Quaker action on important housing issues by placing an intern with Housing Justice. <i>Helen Drewery – 0207 663 1069 – helend@quaker.org.uk</i></p>	<p>£32,988 over 12 months</p>
<p>Strengthening work with children and young people We will improve how we engage with children and young people by piloting a new intern post within BYM's children and young people's team. <i>Howard Nurden – 0207 663 1012 – howardn@quaker.org.uk</i></p>	<p>£77,654 over 3 years</p>
<p>Property support for meetings - pilot project Britain Yearly Meeting will develop ways to empower local and area meetings to look after their property confidently and effectively. <i>Lesley Hennigan – 0207 663 1029 – lesleyh@quaker.org.uk</i></p>	<p>£187,833 over 2 years</p>
<p>Engaging Young Adult Friends Responding to Forced Migration will scope and deliver effective responses by BYM to issues of concern among Quakers around forced migration. <i>Oliver Waterhouse – 0207 663 1007 – oliverw@quaker.org.uk</i></p>	<p>£181,477 over 3 years</p>

November 2016

Operational Group Budget 2017

Introduction

The 2017 budget has been derived from a detailed financial review of all of BYM's activities (excluding legacy-funded projects), within the context of the Operational Plan.

Operational Budget 2017

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

	£'000
Total Income	11,084
Total Costs	-11,841
Operating Deficit	-757

Strenuous efforts have been made to be both realistic about costs while maintaining a steady state for the charitable activity. BYM is drawing down on its reserves to maintain its current level of activity.

The budget assumes a 10% increase in contributions on 2016 level as there has been a minimal response to date to the Treasurer's call for an additional £1m contributions.

Hospitality gross income is expected to reach £3.9m in line with the current business growth and the target of £5m by 2021 which has been set by the Hospitality Company Board. After covering food and staff costs relating to the Hospitality Company operations, the income will fund £1.2m of support costs relating to the running of Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall before generating £0.7m for charitable activities. Income from Hospitality Company operations covers 16% of total costs but it is noted that growth will eventually be limited by the capacity of the buildings.

The budget figures exclude expenditure relating to legacy-funded projects which are funded from legacy income set aside for this purpose. We have currently have 12 projects running in 2017 with committed legacy funds of £ 0.6m. A number of project proposals are under development for 2017. Trustees also have designated a further £1m for new projects to be committed in 2017, as well as authorising the carry forward of designated funds not committed in 2016.

Appendix A – Operational Budget

Operational Budget			
	2016	2016	2017
	Budget	Forecast	Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Voluntary income			
Contributions	2,011	2,050	2,200
Legacies & gifts	1,800	1,800	1,800
Grants	632	632	720
	4,443	4,482	4,720
Plus			
Income generated by charitable activities (including events & course fees)	308	308	272
Hospitality gross income (Friends House & Swarthmoor Hall)	3,547	3,600	3,965
Yearly Meeting Gathering event fees			593
Investment income	1,413	1,400	1,534
Total income	9,711	9,790	11,084
Less			
Staff costs	-5,971	-5,971	-6,075
Non-staff costs (including trading expenditure)	-4,578	-4,615	-4,925
Yearly Meeting Gathering			-841
Total costs	-10,549	-10,586	-11,841
Operating surplus/(deficit)	-838	-796	-757

At a meeting of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Held Friday 18 November 2016 at Friends House London

Present: David Burnell, Sarah Donaldson, James Eddington, Nick Francis (Assistant Clerk, Ingrid Greenhow (Clerk), Alison Ironside, Roy Love, Lynn Moseley, David Olver, Virginia Pawlyn, Steve Pullan, Alastair Reid, Tim Southall, Graham Taylor, Peter Ullathorne (Treasurer), Chris Willmore

In attendance: Anne Bennett, Clerk Quaker World Relations Committee, (**minutes BYMT-2016-11-09 & 10**); Marigold Bentley, Secretary Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations, (**minutes BYMT-2016-11-9& & 10**); Helen Drewery, Head of Worship & Witness, (**except minute BYMT-2016-11-21**); Nick Eyre, BYM Trustee from 1 January 2017; Paul Grey, Head of Operations, (**except minute BYMT-2016-11-21**); Lisa Kiew, Head of Finance & Resources, (**except minute BYMT-2016-11-21**); Rowena Loverance, Clerk Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations (**minutes BYMT-2016-11-09 & 10**); Paul Parker, Recording Clerk; (**except minute BYMT-2016-11-21**); Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk, (**except minute BYMT-2016-11-21**); Hazel Shellens, BYM Trustee from 1 January 2017

BYMT-2016-11-01 Welcome, agenda check, conflicts of interest check, minutes of last meeting

We welcome Nick Eyre and Hazel Shellens, BYM Trustees from 1 January 2017, to our meeting.

We will be welcoming Anne Bennett, Clerk, Quaker World Relations Committee and Rowena Loverance, Clerk, and Marigold Bentley, Secretary, Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations to our meeting later this morning.

The minutes of the meeting held on 9-10 September 2016 have been signed by the clerk and placed in the minute book.

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We confirm our agenda.

During our opening worship, we have heard *Quaker faith & Practice* 24:50.

BYMT-2016-11-02 Consent agenda I

We note receipt of the following:

- Continued minutes (BYMT-2016-11-02a)
- Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd minutes 15 September (**BYMT-2016-11-02b**)
- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee 16-18 September (**BYMT-2016-11-02c**)
- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee minute QPSWCC 16/81 "QUNO report" (**BYMT-2016-11-02d**)
- Quaker Life Central Committee minutes 16-18 September (**BYMT-2016-11-02e**)

BYMT-2016-11-03 Consent agenda II

(a) Register of interests

We confirm the annual conflict of interest check has been completed.

(b) Other minutes received

(i) Treasurer in 2019

We have received Yearly Meeting Committee on Clerks minute 9 “Treasurer in 2019” asking for advice on what is essential about the treasurer role, and in particular how it relates to the changes in Management Meeting (**BYMT-2016-11-03a**).

We consider the draft role description an adequate reflection of the current Treasurer’s role, as amended in the meeting.

We recognise that each Treasurer brings different gifts and may have constraints on their ability to undertake every aspect of this role. We understand we may need to be flexible to enable the right Friend to serve.

We send this minute to the YM Committee on Clerks.

(ii) Yearly Meeting Accounts

We have received Meeting for Sufferings **MfS/16/10/13** “Yearly Meeting Accounts” concerning Central Yorkshire Area Meeting’s minute raising question about the presentation of the Yearly Meeting accounts, and in particular the difficulty of identifying which expenditure is attributed to Friends House (London) Hospitality Company.

We have heard that the YM Treasurer and the Head of Finance & Resources have been in contact with Central Yorkshire Area Meeting, and that improvements to the presentation of the accounts are planned. We are grateful to Friends in that Area Meeting for their attention.

We send this minute to Central Yorkshire Area Meeting.

BYMT-2016-11-04 Finance

(a) Minutes of Meeting of Quaker Finance & Property Committee

We receive the minutes of the meeting of Quaker Finance & Property Committee held 27 October (**BYMT-2016-11-04a**)

(b) Finance reports

We receive the finance reports for periods 8 and 9 (**BYMT-2016-11-04bi,ii**).

BYMT-2016-11-05 Report of Trustees’ work

(a) Trustees’ news

We receive paper **BYMT-2016-11-051** giving news of the activities of trustees including reports of training and similar events.

(b) Link Trustee guidance

We receive paper **BYMT-2016-11-05b** on Link Trustees from Nick Francis, updating paper **T/13/12-14**.

We note that from time to time trustees with specific skills or interests may be invited to attend central and standing committee meetings.

The Recording Clerk will circulate an updated list of Link Trustees and departments.

BYMT-2016-11-06 Recording Clerk's report

We receive the Recording Clerk's report (BYMT-2016-1106) covering:

- Recording Clerk & Deputy Recording Clerk: effective management, risk, visits to meetings, external relations (Quaker and related organisations), external relations (faith sector), external relations (third sector), communications
- Operations: building works, High Speed 2, garden
- Finance & resources: staff changes, fundraising strategy, training strategy, being a Quaker workplace
- Worship & witness: strategic planning with the central committees, peace, Vibrancy in Meetings, Joint Libraries Development Project, Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine/Israel, East Africa Programme

The confidential staffing update is an appendix to this report.

We have received minutes of Management Meeting for 13 September, 11 October, 25 October (includes minutes of Extended Management Meeting) and 8 November.

BYMT-2016-11-07 Health & Safety report

We receive and welcome the annual health & safety report from Adrian Brough (BYMT-2016-11-07).

BYMT-2016-11-08 Management Meeting Terms of Reference

We receive paper **MtM-2016-11-08** giving the report of the Management Meeting Terms of Reference Group including the proposed new terms of reference.

The paper proposes that a clear description be prepared of the role and delegated authority of the Recording Clerk. We ask Sarah Donaldson, David Olver and Ingrid Greenhow to continue the work on terminologies and the review of the work of the Recording Clerk.

We approve the terms of reference for Management Meeting. We note that the Extended Management Meeting has decided to rename itself the Operational Managers Team. As this group reports to Management Meeting, we no longer expect to receive its minutes.

BYMT-2016-11-09 Quaker World Relations Committee

Anne Bennett (Clerk) is with us for this item. We receive the annual report of Quaker World Relations Committee (BYMT-2016-11-09)

The Clerk has reported on QWRC's work in 2016, including the establishment of the QWRC Network and Forum, the latter attended by a good number of representatives from BYM committees. A programme of intervisitation is planned to raise interest among Local Meetings about Quakers worldwide.

The Committee continues to promote the four key messages from the World Plenary in Pisac in January 2016.

We note the proposed application with FWCC for legacy funding for a project to explore closer working relationships and promoting understanding of world Quakerism within BYM

We are pleased to hear that the new 'user-friendly' Overseas Visitors tea at Yearly Meeting has been much appreciated.

We are encouraged to hear of the positive spirit within the committee and its flexible ways of working; and to hear of ways of involving younger Friends in the events of BYM.

We thank QWRC for this report and uphold the committee in its work.

We send this minute to Quaker World Relations Committee.

BYMT-2016-11-10 Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations

Rowena Loverance (Clerk) and Marigold Bentley (Secretary) are with us for this item We receive the annual report of Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (**BYMT-2016-11-10**).

The Clerk has reported that QCCIR has spent time in 2016 in a process of reflection, looking at the committee itself, at BYM and at changes in wider society. The committee's strategy has crystallised around three concepts: visibility, engagement and communication. We note the proposed project on "The Changing Face of Faith in Britain", which would review issues in the changing religious landscape in Britain, thus enabling the committee's work to be relevant and effective.

We encourage the committee to continue to respond to changes in society and the role of faith within it.

We are pleased to hear of the success of the Committee's publication "A Spirit-led-Led Church" and hope more Friends will read and share this. We are encouraged to hear that the Committee intends to find further opportunities to disseminate its work at local, area, regional and national level.

We thank QCCIR for this report and uphold the committee in its work.

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

BYMT-2016-11-11 HS2 agreement between BYM and the Secretary of State for transport

Britain Yearly Meeting has been in consultation with the Secretary of State for Transport over the High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Bill. Britain Yearly Meeting sought assurances that the Euston Works would not have adverse effects on our Church, Charity and Company at Friends House and Drayton House.

BYM has reached an individual agreement with the Secretary of State that acknowledges the Quaker way of silent worship requires a quiet ambience. Both Friends House and Drayton House are considered places of worship. The agreement gives a route wide assurance that it will consider reimbursing places of worship adversely affected by the authorised works if they suffer a significant loss of revenue if unable to undertake core activities.

Having reached this agreement, BYM has withdrawn its petition to the House of Lords Select Committee and will refrain from further opposition against the Bill.

BYMT-2016-11-12 Budget and Operational Plan 2017

We receive the Budget and Operational Plan for 2017 (**BYMT-2016-11-12a,b**), also BYMT Finance & Property Committee minutes **FP16/63 “Budget 2017”** and **FP16/64 “Designated funds for legacy-funded projects for 2017” (BYMT-2016-11-12c)**.

We approve the budget and operational plan for 2017. We agree the recommendation of our Finance & Property Committee that we allocate £1m from legacies to be spent on short-term projects agreed in 2017, in addition to funds already allocated in previous years.

The budget includes a commitment to provide funding towards the cost of Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017. We do not regard this as a subsidy, but as part of Britain Yearly Meeting’s core activity.

We ask that the 2018 and 2019 budgets look ahead at how to address the current levels of deficit in the budget and request Finance & Property Committee and Management Meeting come to us with proposals ahead of the next budget at our September 2017 meeting.

BYMT-2016-11-13 Communications strategy

We receive the Communications Strategy and supporting Management Meeting minute (**BYMT-2016-11-13 and 13b**).

We are grateful to the Deputy Recording Clerk and staff colleagues for the preparation of this strategy document, and we approve the direction the team is working towards. We look forward to receiving further reports.

BYMT-2016-11-14 Vision, purpose and strategy

Staff have presented us with a draft paper setting out the vision, purpose and strategy for the centrally-managed work (**BYMT-2016-11-13c**). We find this helpful and approve it.

BYMT-2016-11-15 Ageing and declining membership

We receive Quaker Life Central Committee minute **QLCC 16.74 “Changing membership and attendance; the changing face of faith in Britain”**.

We are glad to receive QLCC’s minute and look forward to hearing more about their work on this and associated issues.

BYMT-2016-11-16 Nominations

(a) Property Strategy Group

We note the appointment of David Olver as a member representing the Hospitality Board on the Property Strategy Group by a between-meetings decision in order that the Group could start its work.

(b) Nominations for appointments commencing 1 January 2017

BYMT Nominations Group puts forward the following nominations for appointment:

BYMT Audit Committee 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2019

Ian Cook - Hardshaw & Mann AM

Paul Whitehouse - Bristol AM

Finance & Property Committee 1 January 2017-31 December 2019

Peter Green - North East Thames

Trustee elders

David Burnell and Virginia Pawlyn

Gold Papers 2017

James Eddington and one other

Trustees Annual Report and Financial Statements (TARA) 2017 & 2018 TARA

Steve Pullen

The names being acceptable, we appoint these Friends accordingly.

BYMT-2016-11-17 End-of-year review

We have spent time reviewing our work this year.

We thank our outgoing trustees, Alison Ironside and Graham Taylor, for their service.

BYMT-2016-11-18 Training day

We agree to the suggestion of a joint training day with Woodbrooke Trustees on 31st March 2017, and ask our Recording Clerk to take this further.

BYMT-2016-11-19 Meeting for Sufferings: preparation

We have discussed our input into Meeting for Sufferings on 3 December.

BYMT-2016-11-20 Reviewing the meeting

We have reviewed the meeting.

BYMT-2016-11-21 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

We record our thanks to our Management Team for all their work.

We part, hoping to meet again from 17-18 February 2017, if nothing occur to prevent.

Ingrid Greenhow
Clerk

Quaker Council for European Affairs

Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA), based in Brussels, aims to bring a Quaker vision of just relationships to European institutions - www.qcea.org

In this paper Elaine Green, BYM's representative to QCEA, reports on recent changes to QCEA's governance structure, and asks for minor changes to the appointment of representatives and reporting arrangements.

Her report is followed by information from the Recording Clerk about the relationship between Britain Yearly Meeting and QCEA.

Report on QCEA Constitutional and Programme Revisions

Introduction

Friends may have seen the recent article penned by Oliver Robertson, Clerk of QCEA, in *The Friend*. Both Oliver, as Clerk and member of BYM, and I as your representative on QCEA, wish to address any doubts amongst Friends in Britain about the value of continuing to belong to a European Quaker body. I am hopeful that the substance of this report and the proposals for representation presented serve well to reassure and affirm our continued work with our Friends and neighbours in Europe.

The review of how QCEA is structured and operates was started before Brexit, but the decision by the UK electorate to leave the EU added an edge to the review, which the Council brought to a conclusion in early October this year. This report brings to you a summary of the constitutional changes which emerged, as well as the discernment of the programme of work for QCEA from now on. I seek from you a guide as to how your Representatives should account for the work done on your behalf as Britain Yearly Meeting and how British Friends can stay abreast of our work in Europe.

In conclusion, I am proposing some minor changes in the nomination of Representatives and in our reporting arrangements, and that this report be forwarded to those bodies which can take your decisions forward.

2016 Governance Changes

We have agreed, and submitted to the Belgian legal authorities in our revised statutes, to reduce the number of QCEA governing bodies to two: General Assembly and Council (also known now as the "Executive Committee" and comparable to the body formerly referred to as "Bureau"). The duties of the two new bodies looks like this:

General Assembly (Assemblée Générale)

- Appointments to this body will consist of nominees representing Quaker bodies in Europe, plus the members of Council (Executive Committee), following the current practice for Council nominations;
- All members will be appointed for three years, renewable once;
- Founder members will continue to serve as they do now.

Council (Conseil d'Administration), also known as "Executive Committee"

- The “Governor/Trustee” role is delegated to the Council (“Executive Committee”), consisting of the officers of the organization and at least five other members (of which I am one from October 2016 to October 2019;
- Council (“Executive Committee”) members (including officers) are nominated by QCEA Nominations Committee and appointed by the General Assembly;
- Nominees to the new Council (“Executive Committee”) should be members of Quaker Meetings in Europe (YMs, worship groups, or in international membership living in Europe). No one such body should have a majority in the new Council/Executive Committee;
- All members will be appointed for three years, renewable once;
- Council (“Executive Committee”) is responsible for line management of the senior staff member;
- Council (“Executive Committee”) may appoint subordinate committees, including a Finance Committee.

Programme changes

Over two weekend meetings during 2016, the outgoing Council (now replaced by the “General Assembly”) the representatives from across Europe discerned not only changes to the governance structure, but reshaped the programme of work for the next few years to focus on just two complementary portfolios: peace and human rights.

There was extensive discussion about plans to spend European development aid money on military equipment, diverting common European research funds to supporting the arms trade, and so investing in the wrong kind of capacity in countries affected by insecurity. We were led by new QCEA Peace Programme Lead, Olivia Caeymaex, through a workshop on peace in Europe, discerning the shape of our peace work programme, balancing concerns about military responses to forced migration, recent proposals for an EU ‘defence union’ and how we approach violent extremism.

In identifying the second programme area as human rights in Europe, we recognised that the work needed is varied and complex and that detailed planning, led by head of QCEA, Andrew Lane, will need to be undertaken to focus the programme. Examples of where we have expertise amongst our supporters and network of European Quakers, and where there is also a great need for change in European policy are

- Detention conditions for refugees and asylum seekers, and
- Restorative Justice

We were aware of a range of interconnected risks in Europe, including recent developments in Hungary, Poland, Russia the UK. QCEA’s minute reads,

“There is a negative momentum away from human rights, in part because of right-wing thinking and the return of greater nationalism in Europe... We can engage positively on this issue, working to protect human rights and the institutions and standards, such as the Convention on Human Rights, which uphold them ... In an environment that wants to deny the rights and humanity of some, we will need to be irritating and persistent. We have seen from other issues that continued, dedicated action can change thinking and activity.”

Quaker House

BYM Trustees have agreed to renew their support of QCEA for the next three years by maintaining the ownership and upkeep of Quaker House in Brussels and have been kept abreast of staffing tenant changes which affects how the house is used. Belgium and Luxemburg Yearly Meeting (and thereby Brussels Local Meeting) use the house for their regular meetings for worship and their relationship with Andrew Lane and colleagues in Quaker House is a very happy one. Andrew Lane lives in the apartment at the top of the house, whilst US Friends Dan Flynn and Kate McNally rent a second apartment and are fully engaged in the life of the house, almost acting as wardens from time to time when they are there. From December this year, one office is temporarily rented out to the Nonviolent PeaceForce, whilst other local worshipping groups also hire rooms for their regular meetings. The house does not lend itself to holiday lets under Belgian law, and so income from such activities is limited and has to be carefully managed.

Representation of BYM, reporting and accountability

It is my spiritual leading, as well as that of Friends from other countries in the QCEA General Assembly, that Britain Yearly Meeting should remain engaged with the work for peace and human dignity required in Europe. Not only do we as a country sit within the Council of Europe, but we are close neighbours, and along the troubled road to Samaria, we do not choose to walk away on the other side. Post-Brexit, we are uncertain how our engagement may change, but I wish to position us to fulfil our commission, whatever that may prove to be.

It is in this light that I bring to you proposals for strengthening our representation and engagement in matters QCEA. Whilst the General Assembly has independently appointed another member of Britain Yearly Meeting as member of the Executive Committee from April 2017, with regard to my appointment, Friends in the General Assembly discussed whether it was right that I be asked to wear 'two hats', i.e. as Executive Committee member as well as BYM Representative. I was assured that I could (!), but it was not favoured, and I prefer to ask Sufferings if they might consider nominating a second Representative to the General Assembly who is not me. At the moment, BYM has nominated a Representative and an Alternate, but I propose that we might consider:

- **The nomination of a second Representative** to attend the meetings of the General Assembly, (no more than twice in each year of service)
- **No nomination of an Alternate Representative** as long as there is a BYM named member of the Executive Committee also in attendance at the General Assembly meetings
- **For the extraordinary occasion when the Representative and the BYM members of the Executive Committee are all prevented** from attending a single meeting of the General Assembly, an ad hoc name is proposed to QCEA to attend on behalf of BYM.

My next proposition relates to communications and accountability. As a member of Council/Executive Committee, my personal governance responsibility is for the right trustee management of the organisation, and I can report back to BYM and MfS within that constraint.

The BYM Representative as member of the General Assembly is better placed to report back and engage British Friends on the QCEA work programmes. I suggest therefore that we re-configure the reporting back as follows:

- **The Representatives and appointed Executive Committee members jointly compile the triennial report** to Meeting for Sufferings on the life of QCEA
- **The Representatives and appointed Executive Committee members are all from time to time available to talk to groups or meetings of British Quakers** about QCEA and to support fund-raising
- **The Representatives report to QPSW CC on an annual basis**, timing to be agreed, to update the Committee on the work progress of QCEA within the portfolios of peace and human rights
- **Matters related to funding and property** are not handled by either the Representatives or the appointed members of Council/Executive Committee but are managed between the Executive Committee, Friends House and BYM Trustees.

Finally, I ask Meeting for Sufferings to refer this report as relevant to:

- **Nominations Committee:** regarding the deletion of the role of Alternate and the nomination of a substantive Representative to serve for the remainder of the current triennium to December 2018
- **QPSWCC**
- **BYM Trustees**

Elaine Green,
BYM Representative to QCEA

The relationship between BYM and QCEA

Background

The formal relationship between Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) and the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) is complex: BYM is one of the family of European yearly meetings which are sponsors of QCEA, but is also a partner agency, a significant funder and landlord of Quaker House Brussels.

This paper sets out how these relationships work. Alongside this paper you have a report from Elaine Green, BYM's representative to QCEA, describing recent changes at QCEA which affect how BYM engages with that organisation and its work.

Understanding how the relationship works

BYM as sponsoring Yearly Meeting

QCEA was set up in 1979 to work on behalf of the yearly meetings in Europe & the Middle East at the European level. It engages with the institutions of the European Union (currently 28 nations) and the Council of Europe (currently 49 nations).

As one of the sponsoring yearly meetings, BYM is entitled to be represented on the General Assembly of QCEA, which appoints the executive committee and supports it in discerning the programme of work for QCEA and its staff.

BYM can nominate one or more representatives and/or alternates to the General Assembly; appointment is by QCEA General Assembly in session. Both representatives and alternates may attend its meetings. BYM's representative(s) report back to Meeting for Sufferings at least triennially, and to other bodies of BYM more often as required. In addition, Friends from BYM can be appointed by QCEA to serve on the executive committee of QCEA.

This relationship is managed by the BYM representatives to the General Assembly.

Partner agency

Both QPSW and QCEA have programmes of work which relate to peace and human rights. It is very important that the work of both organisations continues to be complementary, and that staff of both are in close contact with each other. There are occasions when QCEA and BYM or QPSW are joint signatories to public statements or submissions to government bodies; in these cases the BYM Speaking Out policy is applied.

This relationship is managed by staff of QPSW and QCEA, consulting with the BYM representative as appropriate.

Grant-maker/grantee

BYM Trustees make a grant to QCEA each year as British Friends' contribution to the core costs of QCEA. Currently the level of the grant is around £22k annually. It is kept under review by Finance & Property Committee, who report to BYM Trustees.

Landlord/tenant

BYM owns Quaker House Brussels, the building QCEA uses for its work and some staff accommodation. The tenancy is managed by the Finance & Property team at Friends House, under the oversight of BYM Trustees' Finance & Property Committee.

Paul Parker
Recording Clerk
November 2016

Reports from the Britain Yearly Meeting representatives attending European Yearly Meetings in 2016

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting – Huw Still

France Yearly Meeting – Liz Scurfield

German Yearly Meeting – Tim Brown

Ireland Yearly Meeting – Ann Floyd & Marilyn Higgins

Netherlands Yearly Meeting – Anne Bennett & Laura McQuillan, YFGM representative

Norway Yearly Meeting – Patricia Cockrell

Sweden Yearly Meeting – Gisela Creed

Switzerland Yearly Meeting – Jane Mace

Our representatives to other European Yearly Meetings have sent written reports, which are followed, below, by the epistle from each Yearly Meeting.

Belgium & Luxembourg Yearly Meeting

10-12 June 2016, Maldegem

'Who am I as a Quaker in this rapidly changing world'

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

- The bulk of the meeting followed an 'Open Space' format – while Friends were encouraged to reflect on the theme and arrive with hearts and minds prepared the gathering was unprogrammed in advance. Each day we met as a gathering and all participants were invited to offer sessions as we constructed our own programme - in some ways similar to an unprogrammed Meeting for Worship
- Sessions were not planned before the gathering, we met each day to discuss what activities Friends could offer, and construct the timetable together.
- As a small Yearly Meeting largely based around Brussels Local Meeting most Friends attending knew each other well. The weekend felt more focussed on forming & deepening relationships than on conducting business – more like my experiences of AM events than YM ones.
- In a smaller gathering, the reps from other Yearly Meetings (Britain, France, Netherlands) and EMES were a larger proportion of attendees. Links to other Quaker communities felt more important to the Yearly Meeting as a whole than they feel in BYM.

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

- The focus on the European refugee crisis was notable – This seemed a more present issue and a more widely-held concern for friends in BLYM than BYM, with deep concern for the refugees but also awareness of the impact on local residents (in Brussels and Calais), lorry-drivers, and others affected by the issue.
- The open space format lent itself to children being more fully integrated into the gathering than I have been used to. They offered activities, and participated in others offerings. Two Young Adult Friends were funded to attend in order to help with child-care, which allowed parents to participate more fully as well.

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

- I've exchanged emails with the gathering organisers following Britain's EU referendum, and have joined the BLYM facebook group (which all visitors were invited to do).
-

d) Your overall experience as a BYM representative

- I felt welcomed. International visitors were offered a lift to & from the Eurostar in Brussels, and while at the gathering Friends were keen to make sure we felt included.
- Friends seemed to appreciate their connections with other Yearly Meetings both at organisational and personal levels. The business meeting included a report on BYM from their rep (Daniel Flynn) which was positive and included the recommendation that all Friends in BLYM try to attend at least once.

Huw Still, York Area Meeting

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting 10 to 12 June 2016

To Friends everywhere: Greetings!

The theme of the 2016 residential meeting of Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting was “Who am I as a Quaker in this rapidly changing world.” In our opening session, each of us dropped a stone in a bowl of water. We were able to see how even the smallest action can have a rich, rippling effect.

Thirty Friends and attenders gathered together in the Jeugdherberg (Youth Hostel) ‘Die Loyale’ in Maldegem in East-Flanders, Belgium. We were very happy to welcome visitors from Britain Yearly Meeting, France Yearly Meeting, the Netherlands Yearly Meeting, as well as the Clerk of the EMES of the FWCC. Friends who are no longer with us were also very much in our thoughts. We are thankful for the hospitality and the warm welcome extended to us by all of the ‘Die Loyale’ Youth Hostel staff.

We chose to explore the theme through the Open Space method. This was a new departure for many of us, and we were thankful to our team of facilitators from Meeting who talked us through the process step by step.

As a result, through spontaneous contributions from all participants, we built our own agenda for the three-day gathering. The children and young people present were also responsible for the agenda and brought their ideas and energy to the gathering. All activities were open to all age groups. The children and young people led an exploration of our surroundings as well as games and craft activities. Meditation was happening alongside football. In building our agenda, we felt a great commitment to the success of our gathering. This was a gathering that was as much about being as doing, and found space for deepening, lightness and fun.

There was freedom to offer an activity, freedom to take part in activities, and freedom to move about between activities. We felt that the Open Space reflected the importance that we attach to freedom and to responsibility, both individual and corporate.

Our program included a wide range of themes, taking in the spiritual, the personal, as well as how we can make a difference in facing the challenges around us, such as the refugee crisis. A number of us were attending the protest against the arms trade at Eurosatory in Paris and our gathering was an opportunity to reflect on our peace testimony.

Our gathering testified to the energy and to the curiosity of our exploration of what it means to each of us to be a Quaker in a rapidly changing world. The richness of the stories that we shared, the ministry that we heard, and the fellowship that we enjoyed, gave us renewed hope and confidence that our voices – and our silences – may be heard in these troubled times.

France Yearly Meeting 2016

Once again France Yearly Meeting took place at the Centre des Naudières (an ecumenical centre) in Nantes from 28 to 31 July 2016. Around 30 Friends from all over France gathered here one more time before the Centre was to be taken over by the University of the South West as the site for its computer department. Being aware that we were the very last guests to use the Centre in its current form made our leave-taking on Sunday afternoon all the more poignant.

The theme of this year's Yearly Meeting was a continuation of the previous year's theme 'To be a Quaker in France today'. This year's subheading was 'Witnesses to Action' (des Témoignages à l'Action). For me, an unusual and interesting aspect of the Yearly Meeting was a survey that had been put together by the planning team entitled: '44 Questions for Quakers' (Quarante Quatre Questions pour les Quakers). 'Who are the Quakers in France today? What are our practices and our faith?' (Qui sommes-nous, les Quakers en France aujourd'hui? Quelles sont nos pratiques, et notre foi?)

The survey had six sections; each one was on a separate page. The titles of the sections loosely translated as: About you; Quaker Meeting and me; My Beliefs; My Individual or personal practices; My Political practices and finally How I use money and resources. Some of the questions were very searching.

We answered the survey on Friday morning in session. We did it anonymously and it was made clear that it was for Yearly Meeting consumption alone. All the surveys were then separated into their six sections and we were divided into six groups. Each group was given the task of jointly analysing and summarizing one section for the plenary. The whole process threw up really interesting results and deepened the feeling of community in both the small group and in the Yearly Meeting as a whole.

Although the survey was for Yearly Meeting consumption alone, I am reasonably confident that I can reveal that of the 29 Friends who answered the survey, only 6 were native French speakers, 20 were native English speakers and 3 Friends had a mother tongue that was neither French nor English. This makes it all the more remarkable that the Annual Meeting was conducted entirely in French. It was clear that although many of the Friends present whose mother tongue was not French spoke extremely good French, others had to make real efforts to communicate in French. It was also clear to me that everyone present was very supportive of their efforts to do so. Mealtimes were more relaxed in this regard. If you found yourself on a table where everyone present was a native speaker of English you generally spoke English.

On the Friday afternoon most Friends visited the Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery where one Friend gave a moving speech (which included references to Quaker involvement), flowers were laid, and several interfaith groups also attended, two members of whom later attended part of the Yearly Meeting – outreach in action indeed.

In the late afternoon, instead of hearing **verbal** reports from the various Quaker local groups and isolated members, each group had prepared a vivid pictorial representation of their activities. (France Yearly Meeting is made up of a smallish number of members and a larger number of attenders (sympathisants) scattered throughout the country. At one point I heard the number 150 mentioned.)

The groups represented were: Centre Quaker Paris, Groupe Languedocien, Toulouse Quakers with a small group also in Bordeaux, the group in Nantes who meet in one member's home which is now getting too small for the purpose (again as a result of some excellent outreach), an isolated couple in Draguinan, and Centre Quaker de Congénies near Nîmes. Members from the group stood next to their particular poster(s) to answer any questions we might have. There was also a poster featuring the work of QCEA, as the France Yearly Meeting representative to QCEA thought this would be a more interesting way of presenting information than a written report.

Another highlight for me was the second panel on Saturday afternoon entitled 'The actions of individuals – witnesses and examples'. There were six panel members, four Friends from France YM and two from outside the Yearly Meeting. Their brief was to answer four questions: What brought you to Quakers? How do you live your beliefs in the world? What are the challenges you face? and 'Where do you see yourself in the future?' These testimonies were tremendously moving and inspiring.

I was impressed by the frank way in which French Friends assessed their strong and their weak points – among other things they felt that their pastoral care lacked oversight and that inter-visitation among the various groups and isolated individuals did not work any more. There were no recriminations, just an appeal to everyone present to think of creative ways of dealing with these difficulties.

It was felt that everybody should do something – there should be a dynamic culture not a hierarchical one. A major project of France Yearly Meeting – to produce a 100% French Quaker Faith & Practice - is almost complete. Friends completing this work were told that they should work on the principle of 'good enough'! I was interested to learn that French Quakers are major protagonists in the 'Stopfuelling War' campaign.

To conclude, France Yearly Meeting (Assemblée Annuelle) 2016 was both an inspiring and enjoyable event. The Yearly Meeting planning team had put an enormous amount of thought, energy and creativity into the programme and it was wonderful to see this 'paying off'.

There was much reflection and discernment on the way forward for French Friends and above all there was a feeling of real and deep fellowship. It was a privilege to have been part of such a gathering.

Liz Scurfield
Golders Green LM, NW London AM

France Yearly Meeting Epistle

Letter to all Friends around the world

During our Annual Meeting, held from 28 to 31 July 2016 at the Centre Naudières near Nantes, our goal was to build a better understanding of where we are on our Quaker path and discern the direction we want to take.

We understood our position on the path through a sociological survey of 44 questions: social, spiritual and ethical and material. We drew strength and inspiration from the European and global Quaker institutions (QUNO, EMEYF, EMES, QCEA) when their

representatives presented their aims and actions. We also discovered vitality amongst our own assembly with friends illustrating their Quaker practices in everyday life. We worked on how to apply the Quaker testimonies in the practice of our faith in a programmed worship. At a workshop we discussed the strengths and weaknesses of our Assembly in order to address them. Thanks to a real discipline, created by excellent pre-planning, we have enriched our lives with a lot of questions and sought answers together.

We commemorated, at the Nantes memorial to slavery, the slavery of the past and that which continues today. We were joined by representatives of the associations Tibhirine, ACAT, and the mosque of Nantes. By this commemoration we emphasized the unbroken link between the Quakers who came before us and ourselves, both hungry for social justice. This commemoration has helped guide our Assembly ever outward. One example of this outreach was a person whom we did not previously know, joined us throughout the next day to get to know us. He was warmly welcomed and he has expressed his desire to return.

This bodes well for the future outreach.

Sylvette Thompson
Clerk FYM

German Yearly Meeting,

Held in Venusberg, Bonn, 13 to 16 October 2016

German YM began on Thursday 13 October evening after dinner, with the presentation of delegates. There were then greetings from YMs and individuals, followed by excerpts from YM epistles, from the whole world and from FWCC, and including the epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting. This was followed by singing from the choir.

Friday began with singing, for everyone, in the main meeting room and then a meeting for worship. That was followed by the Richard Carey lecture (the equivalent of the Swarthmore Lecture in BYM) given in German by Janet Kreysa (English by origin) called "Open to new light" and it covered Quaker scientists and what they have contributed to Quaker ideas.

We then met in discussion groups and I went to one called "Connecting climate change and spirituality" led by a friend from QUNO. There was 1 degree of climate warming in 1,000 years, and recently 1 degree in the last 100 years. It is a Peace and Justice concern.

At the first business session in the afternoon new members were presented and welcomed. There were 194 Friends present, plus 52 young people and children. Appointees were discussed, those who had gone, and new ones. The budget result for 2015 was presented and explained, followed by a budget proposal for 2007 that was also presented and explained.

After supper there was "Sandmann" - a story told to the children. Then there was a presentation of Quliker Hilfe (the equivalent of QPSW in Britain YM) and the Quliker Hilfe Stiftung (Foundation). They support AVP in South Africa and the Quaker Peace Center there. A VP in Ukraine was presented by a young girl from Ukraine. The Foundation receives money from wills (3 million Euros) and is helped by gifts from the USA.

Saturday morning after breakfast began with communal singing followed by a meeting for worship. The second business session was concerned with reducing staff costs. The grant to QCEA was discussed; it receives more money from AMs than from the YM. It was suggested that the YM should pay both contributions. The question of what to do with the buildings and cemetery that belong to the YM was then raised. It was agreed that the Finance Committee should deal with this and bring proposals to YM. Then there was the question of insurances. Non-members can be appointed to positions - there is a difference between positions and duties.

In the afternoon there were discussion groups again, and I went to one on "Consensus". There are three elements in reaching agreement: Inner Light; I and my ego; the group.

Later in the afternoon there was another business session, with reports from groups, including children and young Friends. There were reports from Bad Pyrmont; Berlin, and the family gathering in Hirschloch. Other gatherings included EMEYF.

In the evening there was a "Bunter Abend" (coloured evening) which began with the choir (which I sang in) followed by performances by young people, readings of poetry etc.

Sunday morning began with communal singing. In the business session there were reports from Friends House Moscow, Church and Peace, and QCEA. Delegates were then appointed to attend BYM, North YM and Netherlands YM. That was followed by a discussion of the budget for 2017. The business finished with the second reading of the Epistle.

The YM closed with a meeting for worship, followed by lunch.

Tim Brown

Ireland Yearly Meeting

Theme: Who is My Neighbour?

It was underpinned by a quotation from C. Winifred Lamb written circa 1954: "How can we, such a small insignificant group of people as the Society of Friends help to stem the tide of evil and hate, and greed and fear that is so widespread in the world today?" (Quaker Life & Practice: A Book of the Christian Experience of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, paragraph 4.13).

BYM representatives:

Ann Floyd, Jordans LM and Chilterns AM

Marilyn Higgins, Central Edinburgh LM and South East Scotland AM

(a) Our overall experience as BYM representatives

It was an uplifting experience to spend four days with Irish Friends, who welcomed us warmly and inspired us with their examples of putting faith into action. This is a Yearly Meeting soundly grounded in the Spirit, which was evident throughout. Given the theme, the story of the Good Samaritan appeared frequently.

We heard of many examples whereby this 'small insignificant group' (as the quotation describes Friends) were making a real and valuable difference in Ireland.

We were reminded how important these international interchanges are amongst Friends, bringing us closer together and shrinking the world. The attendance of other Friends from throughout Europe and North America enriched our experience. Ireland Yearly Meeting is facing challenges that are very familiar to us in Britain and we were reminded of the value of sharing experience and ideas for action.

One of us came to IYM for the first time, and was delighted to see Friends from both the North and South gathered together within one Yearly Meeting. Both of us could see from some of the reports that it can add a complication by having to work within two sets of legislation and regulations, when one can seem onerous enough, but IYM seems to take this in its stride. In this connection, it was an interesting week to be in Dublin – the city centre was full of reminders of the centenary commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising, which had been held several days previously. The Yearly Meeting felt a peaceful haven.

Both of us have strong links with Woodbrooke in different ways and we were pleased to hear that their courses (both on-site and on-the-road), study opportunities and support have been deeply valued by Irish Friends. Irish friends were interested to hear from us about Woodbrooke's developing e-learning strategy, and will consider what this might offer them.

We have found great value in BYM's practice of sending two representatives, each for two consecutive years, with one of us in their second year and the other new. We hope BYM will continue with this practice.

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

A difference in the programme from BYM was the inclusion of a session on Ministry and Oversight, which helped make the work of Elders and Overseers better integrated with the Yearly Meeting as a whole.

Similar issues as within BYM seemed to be important: outreach, encouraging attenders into membership, addressing the needs of children and young people and preparing Friends for Quaker roles.

Ireland Yearly Meeting's programme was broadly similar to BYM. Smaller numbers (varying from 60 to 120, with 185 attending the public lecture) allowed for sessions together in a more intimate atmosphere. Bible study with worship sharing took place every morning and each evening ended with an epilogue.

Many reports were circulated beforehand and taken as read, allowing the sessions to focus on particular issues and be more interactive; this was welcomed. It was particularly inspiring to hear about the impressive actions Irish Friends are taking to address current issues.

What aspects of the programme stood out for you?

As part of the Ministry and Oversight session, Marisa Johnson, Secretary of FWCC-EMES, inspired us with her talk 'The Gift of Conflict.' She urged us to view conflict not as a problem but as a creative opportunity for spiritual growth and transformation seasoned with passion, energy and truth.

We heard an inspirational reflection from the recently retired Head of Friends' School Lisburn, about how our Quaker values can play out in education.

We heard very moving accounts of problems to do with homelessness, social exclusion and refugees and what Irish Friends are doing to address these pressing issues. Homelessness is an acute problem in Ireland; so far this year over 200 families have become homeless in Dublin alone. Irish Friends decided to write to the governments of both the North and South to call for urgent action.

Andrew Lane of QCEA spoke about 'who is my neighbour in Europe?' and deepened our understanding of what Quakers are doing to try to put this into practice in Brussels. They had seen a memorable example of effective nonviolent activism after the Brussels bombing, when peace activists of varying persuasions had responded quickly and set the tone for the remarkably peaceful reactions we all saw. The atmosphere already established had overwhelmed the far right groups who came in later, and QCEA and other groups can learn from this.

We were inspired by the public lecture given by William Haire, a Friend from Northern Ireland, entitled 'Who is my Neighbour? What is our Testimony on Inclusion?' He encouraged us to take small steps both individually and collectively with 'unreasonable optimism' to address the large and long-term societal issues of poverty and exclusion, which do not have to be inevitable.

Last year considerable time was spent on the issues of Irish neutrality and the Shannon Watch vigil. It was moving to hear how this vigil is being sustained, with three

or four Friends bearing witness to their concern, every week, as to what might be happening within the airport that would violate Quaker principles and the principle of Irish neutrality.

IYM devoted considerable time to following up the FWCC World Plenary in Peru, in different but connected ways. One was hearing a lively presentation by the three Irish representatives, about their experiences. Another was a workshop session, organised by Eco-Quakers Ireland, focussed on the request from Peru that all Yearly Meetings commit to at least two concrete actions addressing sustainability, to be implemented by January 2017. The workshop group developed some ideas for how IYM might respond. The outcomes of the workshop were reported back to IYM, and there was further discernment, resulting in the following IYM minute:

We agree to the following two actions:

1. To commit to making all the Meetings within Ireland Yearly Meeting as sustainable as possible, considering such factors as accessibility by public transport, energy efficiency, use of Fairtrade tea and coffee and use of organic and locally sourced food when possible. We ask Meetings to develop a sustainability plan, no matter how simple, before January 2017. We ask Ireland Yearly Meeting to take its sustainability plan into consideration when planning for its next Yearly Meeting.
2. To follow in the steps of FWCC by developing an investment strategy, by January 2017, to ethically invest all the funds within the Yearly Meeting in sustainable and peaceful companies, and divest from destructive industries, including fossil fuels.

We also ask all Meetings to consider how truth prospers with regard to sustainability, taking care to relate this to all of our testimonies – peace, simplicity, truth and equality.

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

We are grateful to Irish Friends for their warmth and inspiration and hope to keep up the personal contacts we made. We are glad to see the many links between us as near neighbours and hope to build on this in the future. During IYM we were able to draw attention to some of the analogous work and concerns in BYM: specific examples were the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network and the focus on housing at BYM last year. These may lead to further links.

Ann Floyd and Marilyn Higgins: April 2016

Ireland Yearly Meeting Epistle 2016

To Friends Everywhere

We send warm greetings from Ireland Yearly Meeting, held from 31st March – 3rd April 2016 at King’s Hospital School on the western outskirts of Dublin. The theme of our Yearly Meeting was “Who is my Neighbour?”, underpinned by a quotation from C. Winifred Lamb written circa 1954: “How can we, such a small insignificant group of people as the Society of Friends help to stem the tide of evil and hate, and greed and fear that is so widespread in the world today?” (Quaker Life & Practice: A Book of the Christian Experience of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, paragraph 4.13).

We welcomed Friends from a number of other Yearly Meetings and worship groups and enjoyed sharing with them in our many sessions, in worship sharing, bible study and in special interest groups. Ten Irish Friends had the opportunity to participate in the World Plenary Gathering of FWCC in Peru in January. This was a wonderful occasion to connect with Friends from all over the world and to explore our shared heritage and beliefs. Ireland Yearly Meeting has answered the call from FWCC to initiate two concrete actions on sustainability by January 2017.

In our Ministry & Oversight session, the topic was “The Gift of Conflict”. We were encouraged to welcome conflict rather than avoid it, as it offers the potential for compassion, creativity and innovation. Our Public Lecture, given by William D.A. Haire, was entitled “Who is my Neighbour? What is our Testimony on Inclusion?”. Drawing on the actions and testimonies of Fox, Bellers and Woolman, Will noted that our faith and tradition is only of value if we also live it now. Poverty and social exclusion are not inevitable and can be changed. Reflecting on his career working in Government in Northern Ireland, Will found that “unreasonable optimism” was a very necessary requirement in life. A positive faith is essential in the face of tough challenges. This is also essentially the message of Quakerism.

We considered the question of “Who is my neighbour in a European context?” and heard about the work of QCEA and how a few Friends can have a not insignificant impact on EU policy. We heard from a group of Dublin Friends who are concerned with welcoming refugees. A Friend from German Yearly Meeting spoke movingly of the German approach to creating a “welcome culture” for refugees. Our Peace Committee reminded us that, while we help refugees, we also need to consider how to address the causes of the conflicts which lead to such misery.

We also considered the serious and increasing incidence of homelessness in our country, and decided to express our concern publicly in a statement addressed to the authorities in both jurisdictions of Ireland, urging them to take urgent action to tackle the underlying causes of homelessness.

Reflecting on our theme, we are mindful of the story of the Good Samaritan, and Jesus’s challenge to us to “go and do likewise”. We encourage Friends everywhere to work for social justice and to take action, both individually and collectively, to assist those on the margins of our society and address the causes of inequality in our communities.

Signed on behalf of Ireland Yearly Meeting
Daniel H. Sinton, Clerk, Ireland Yearly Meeting

Netherlands Yearly Meeting

Held over the weekend of 3 - 5 June 2016, at "Natuurvriendenhuis De Bosbeek" in Bennekom.

Theme: Living the Transformation

Report on attendance at Netherlands Yearly Meeting as the BYM Representative Anne Bennett of Brant Broughton Local Meeting in Lincolnshire Area Meeting.

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

- It is a small Yearly Meeting and about 100 people were at Bennekom. There was a sense that everyone knew each other well and as there were a number of three generation families present, small children were welcomed by all and small babies shared. It felt like a family gathering which created a warm and welcoming environment into which visitors were made to feel a full part. The sense of community was very real.
- This was my second visit to Netherlands Yearly Meeting and once again I was very impressed with the thought that had been put into making visiting Friends from other Yearly Meetings feel very welcome. Nearly all the papers had been translated into English which it made it really easy for us to be absorbed into the activities. This was assisted by membership of a Base Group which consisted of English speaking Friends from a number of Yearly Meetings although the majority were from BYM. This provided an opportunity to reflect on the theme and ways in which it had impacted on our own lives.
- The sophisticated but unobtrusive system of simultaneous translation assisted the non-Dutch speaking visitors to engage with the processes in the main sessions.
- The Yearly Meeting was once again held at Bennekom, which is a beautiful woodland setting. The weather was glorious so we were able to sit outside for our base group meetings which aided the sense of being in a very special place. Walks in the woods alone, or with others, provided the opportunity to talk or reflect in a very peaceful setting.
- As Clerk of Trustees of my own Area Meeting it was extremely interesting, once again, to sit in on sessions at the Yearly Meeting when issues of property, old buildings and their use were discussed. I found that although it was a different setting, the issues raised sounded very familiar!

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

- The theme of the Yearly Meeting was Living the Transformation (which had been the theme of the FWCC Plenary in Peru) and aspects permeated many of the sessions and small groups. Although a number of people from NYM had been to Peru the emphasis was not on re-telling their experiences but to explore together times when we had been transformed and its impact on our lives.
- In support of the theme, much time was given to considering the concerns of the Yearly Meeting which included the situation in Israel/Palestine, the Pisac call for sustainability, armaments, and the care and treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.
- There were two sessions that reflected the last mentioned concern which were powerful in their content. The first was a talk given by a representative of the Dutch Council of Churches on the legal status, government policy and local care of refugees in the Netherlands. The second was a presentation by a young Dutch Friend of his experiences of working as a volunteer at the centre in Calais referred

to as 'the jungle'. Personal experiences and the stories of individuals and families made the issues and the consequences so much more powerful.

- The Yearly Meeting followed through its theme not only in the main sessions but also in the wide range of interest groups.
- There was an unhurried air about the Yearly Meeting which provided much opportunity to talk and share but also to reflect.
- Last year Erik Dries, a skilled illustrator and member of Netherlands Yearly Meeting had provided a number of cartoons reflecting the theme. This year various examples of his work appeared in the programme, wall charts and a mind-map. In addition, his recently produced book was on sale. The comic book format was used to provide an introduction to Quakers called Simply Quakers and was available in Dutch and in English.

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

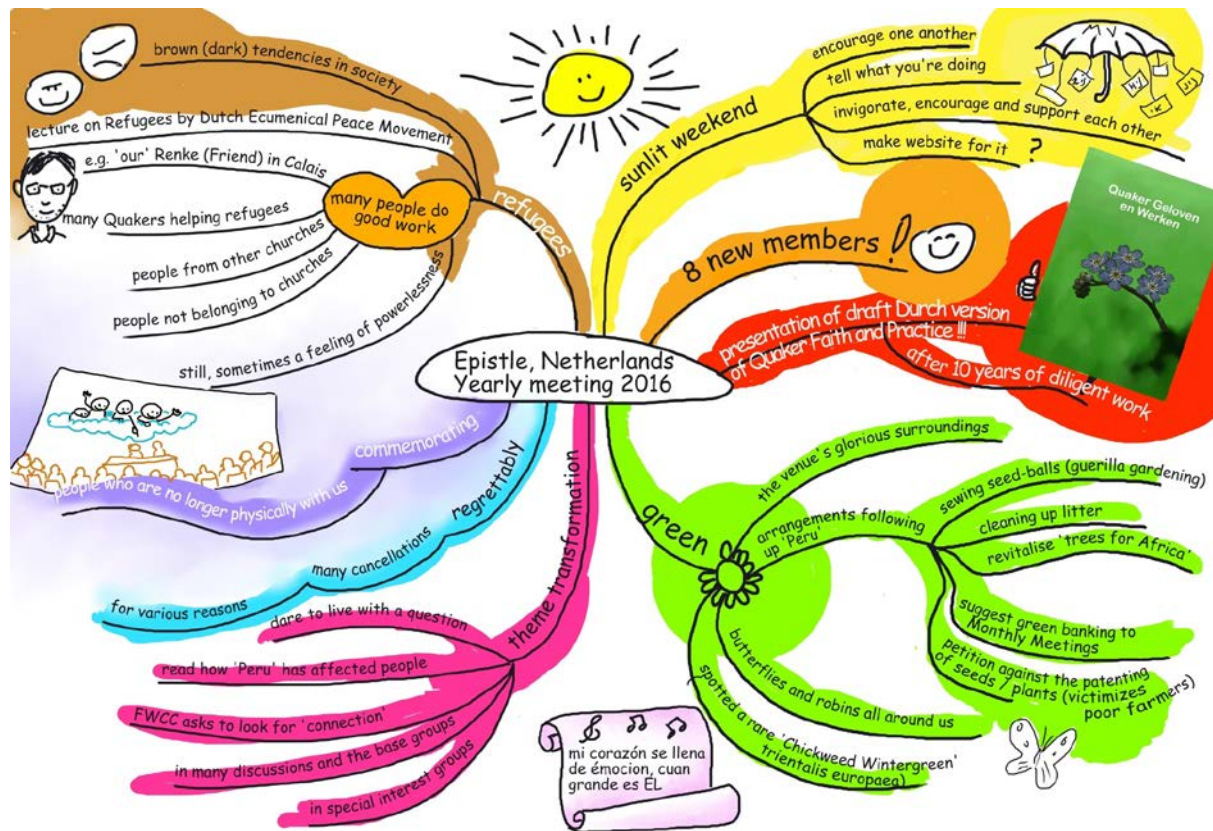
- Since my return I have been in contact with the Quaker Secretariat of Netherlands Yearly Meeting and also the clerk. I am hoping that it will be possible to meet up with whoever represents NYM at Britain Yearly Meeting next year.

4. Your overall experience as a BM representative

- It was a very positive experience to attend NYM on behalf of BYM. It is a small Yearly Meeting where everyone wears many different 'hats' and willingly engages with anything and everything that needs attention. I was welcomed into what felt like a large family and made to feel very much at home.
- They also invite – unlike other Yearly Meetings – two representatives from BYM, one of whom should be a young Friend. This imaginative policy creates the opportunity for a British Young Friend to be a part of another yearly meeting but also provides another dimension to the gathering of Dutch Friends. This is a policy that BYM might consider in the future.
- It has reinforced my feeling that BYM is a large and often quite impersonal gathering, especially for visitors. It is really important to recognise their needs and provide them with the information and hand of friendship – whether this is additional information or help with language/translation provision. The Overseas Visitors Tea is one way of addressing this, as a first step to make them feel as welcome as I was made to feel at Netherlands Yearly Meeting but more care might also be given to those representatives from other yearly meetings whose English might not be fluent.

Anne Bennett

Epistle from Netherlands Yearly Meeting



Dear Friends

In this letter we send you the epistle of our Netherlands Yearly Meeting held on the first weekend in June in the nice Wildlife Friends House in Bennekom in the centre of The Netherlands. This time our epistle is made up as a mind map and I would like to add some explanation so that the reading of the mind map is understandable for people who did not attend our Yearly Meeting.

The pink branch is about the theme of the weekend: Transformation, which is connected to theme of the World plenary in January in Peru: Living the transformation. We explored the theme in our support or base groups, in the interest groups, in the Meeting for Worship and in the topics the Meeting for Worship for Business. The purple branch stands for the Friends who died since the last Yearly meeting and whom we commemorated.

The brown branch tells about the lecture we had from a member of the Council of Churches who spoke about the work the council does to improve the situation for Asylum Seekers. After the presentation we asked Friends in what ways they are involved in work for refugees. We were very moved by the actual work Friends are doing with refugees: teaching the Dutch language, supporting families, supporting gay, lesbian and transsexual refugees. Working as a volunteer in Calais in France. Telling about this work stimulated other Friends to come and support in this work.

The yellow branch illustrates the sunny weekend. We had a weekend in October 2015 where we inspired each other, rather than doing concerns together, which is not so easy for a group spread over the country, we agreed to support each other,

encouraging and motivating in what we are doing. This requires that we talk about the concerns we have in our own hometowns, like working on Peace, working with refugees and sustainability. We felt the inspiration of this special weekend last year during the Yearly Meeting.

The light brown branch refers to 8 new members we welcomed in our midst. It was a great joy to welcome so many new Friends.

The red branch represents the presentation of two new books in the Dutch language: Kees Nieuwerth presented a new version of our Dutch Quaker Faith and Practice: Quaker Geloven en Werken. A committee worked ten years to write this book. It is still a preliminary version to work with, which will be finalised in two years' time. During the meeting we all read some parts of the book right there and then. After that we shared some quotes, which made that we felt very much the value of the book. The flowers on the cover refer to the 5 chapters in the book. We are very happy that we have this new version of our own Quaker Faith and Practice. The previous one was published in 1952.

The green branch refers to the topic of sustainability which was an important topic in Peru. We made seed balls which we could take home to put in places where nothing is growing. The activity was done by Friends of all ages. We renewed our commitment to clean up litter in our own environment and to make sure we have bank accounts with green banks, like TRIODOS in The Netherlands. We ask Friends to sign a petition against patenting of seeds by Monsanto which is very negative for farmers in Developing countries. We want to renew our support for 'Trees for Africa' to compensate for the CO2 emission when travelling by plane.

We enjoyed very much the wonderful environment of our venue, we could sit outside enjoying the terrace, the flowers and the butterflies.

We felt very blessed with so much happiness and inspiration of our Friendship, deepened by our Meeting for Worship and our connectedness to God and to each other on Sunday.

We send our loving greetings to all Friends around the world
In deep connection

On behalf of The Netherlands Yearly Meeting
Marlies Tjallingii, Clerk

A report by Laura McQuillan, YFGM representative

A warm welcome was received from the Netherlands Yearly Meeting in May 2016, in a beautiful setting within a woodland, an inspiring group of people discussed the global challenges and the transformations needed to tackle these issues. The theme explored was Living the Transformation, a follow on from the World Conference in Peru with many talks including ministry from Friends who were present at the Peru gathering and discussions which looked deeper into the theme including; what is transformation and what does this mean for your daily life?

The weekend came at a good moment in my personal life, as I had just finished a three year undergraduate degree in Human Geography that explored many of the

world challenges. I find myself looking for what my next chapter in life will be, with the hope of finding a job or volunteer position that will make a difference to some of the challenges we face. Over the weekend there were many discussions about the crises and uncertainty facing society today such as climate change and the refugee crisis in Europe; I found myself wondering what can I do when there are so many complex challenges. How can I help contribute to transforming society? Listening to stories from Friends about their experiences gave me much hope that change is possible, with the accumulation of all the positive individual efforts. This for me was a transformation in my thinking, not to be overwhelmed by all the world's challenges and want to be able to solve them all, but to realise that by focussing ones energy into one specific area has the greatest impact. So at gatherings such as this, you too can add to all the wonderful stories being shared.

Base groups created a safe space to explore the theme of living the transformation in more depth, looking at transformation from both a spiritual and physical view point. One of the questions which stood out for me was the challenge of talking to people in society who see refugees as a drain on the system, how to change the view-points of people who are so against migrants. What tools could be used to illustrate to people the real world and help them deal with their own fears?

The final base group discussion was closed with hands round which gave a real sense of being part of something much bigger and a supportive base. After a full day of ideas growing everyone enjoyed a glowing fire with campfire songs in the moonlight which created a warm atmosphere amongst a group of lovely thoughtful people.

I left the weekend feeling excited and inspired with a real sense of energy from the group. This gathering specifically made all the huge challenges faced across the globe seem possible with the idea of transformation being central, with the support and love from one another. I would like to thank everyone from Netherlands Yearly meeting for making me feel so welcome and to the translators who kindly translated all the sessions which made it possible to feel part of the whole meeting. A great weekend that will stay with me.

Norway Yearly Meeting

23 – 26 June 2016 held at Kragero, Norway

Peacebuilding in the local environment: learning and practising AVP (this is Marit's version; Stephen's translation is a bit different).

Plenary sessions included the annual report, membership matters, greetings from other groups and yearly meetings, accounts, property, budgets, the constitution and nominations. The YM is still in deficit following the sale of the premises at Skoveien in an upmarket part of Oslo and the purchase of the fourth floor of a building in a socially mixed area. This caused some anxiety, but Friends were assured that things are moving in the right direction, it feels right to be based in this part of Oslo, and the availability of space at a reasonable rent is appreciated by local groups.

The Friends who are working on the **Norwegian Quaker faith & practice** reported that this will be published in time for the 200th anniversary in 2018. There was also a presentation from the three Friends who had been present at the **FWCC triennium in Pisac** which called on yearly meetings to adopt actions for just sustainable development.

Interest groups were held on Friday on 1) **the gift of conflict** 2) **compassionate communication** and 3) **mindfulness**; and on Saturday on **refugees and asylum seekers**, on **Norwegian work in Gaza** and on **sustainability**. It was easy for me to choose which groups to go to because I have done trainings with Marshall Rosenberg in compassionate communication so would have a good chance, after learning the key words, of understanding the session in Norwegian. And at breakfast on Saturday I was asked to contribute to the session on Gaza in view of my EA experience and of our recent project (successful in the end after the intervention of the former consul-general in Jerusalem, whom I know because he was head of counter-terrorism when I was involved in Chechnya) to bring young musicians from the Edward Said Music School in Gaza to play at the Brighton Fringe Festival and to make music with children at schools in Lewes and Lancing. It was inspiring to see what the Norwegians have been able to achieve with their kindergarten project in Gaza, and there are good prospects that funding for this work will continue. They have not yet been successful in getting Palestinians out of Gaza. We'll keep in touch.

Another possibility for cross-fertilisation is Kristin Eskeland's project on Palestinian children in Israeli prisons: in Brighton we too are working on Palestinians in prison including COs, and so is the Lewes Amnesty Group. Perhaps we could use her research to focus on children too.

Much of the time at YM was given to AVP – **Alternatives to Violence Project** – which was also easy for me as I was trained in AVP at Woodbrooke in 1993, and took the project to Russia where we translated the materials and ran the first workshops in 1994. It was good to see the usual mixture of fun and serious exploration of the themes in Norway, and there were suggestions as to how AVP could be helpful in work with refugees and asylum seekers.

All 77 of us, including the baby who was happily passed around, took our picnic lunch on a wonderful boat trip to one of the islands, where we picked a few wild strawberries in the woods and swam in the bay avoiding the jellyfish.

Next year's budget of **Quaker Service Norway** was approved at their AGM in the early evening. Their work is still centred on Gaza and on the Great Lakes Region, and after the AGM we were shown a film on restorative justice and reconciliation work in Burundi. I was given a copy of the film in English. Roger Cassidy, who is now clerk of QSN, let it be known that he has been accepted to join the Christian Peacemaker Team in Afghanistan in October, and that he has to raise funds for the programme.

On Sunday morning the **draft epistle** was challenged once or twice and agreement reached, even on the mention of Brexit, which some Friends found to be too political; we received the epistle from the ten children aged 8 – 13, and next year's Nordic YM was mentioned.

Meeting for worship later on Sunday morning was dedicated to Isaak and Sofia, the two young people who had been preparing for their 'confirmation'. Intrigued by the ministry the previous day which questioned the use of this word, I spoke to some of the young and to their parents (almost everyone speaks English, and, through German, I was able to guess a bit of Norwegian): it seems that all those who have not written a letter to opt out of the system are confirmed at 15, having attended preparation classes for two years. What kind of classes? Ethics, values, relationships, responsibilities, sexual matters; also banking and civic duties. It was a strange but moving MfW as Isaak and Sofia, supported by the three 16 year-olds, were welcomed into membership by their parents and the whole worshipping group. They were presented with a BYM *Qf&p*, a Norwegian A&Q and a rose.

I expressed my appreciation for the welcome and grateful thanks to Kristin Skarsholt and Penny Heymans and the other volunteers for their patience and fortitude in quietly interpreting the sessions. I said I hoped to meet Friends again in Scandinavia or England, and everyone clapped as I said thank you and good-bye in Norwegian. Per Eivind had offered to drive me back to Oslo. Now, which is his car? The one with the boat on top. Ah!

PS I am very glad to have had the opportunity to attend Norway YM to make new friends and to meet up with people I have known for many years: Roger Cassidy, whose partner was clerk of Friends House Moscow 20 years ago, Kristin Eskeland also of FHM, Penny Heymans, with whom I coincided on the QCEA Council, and 15 year-old Adrian Cleven, who was a week old when I last saw him (his mother, who was not at YM, contacted me a couple of days ago): I had been invited by the Norwegian Red Cross to bring the director of the Yaroslavl hospice to look at hospice services in Norway. We joined up with Erik Cleven, director of the Peace Centre in Lillehammer, who had asked me, some two years earlier, to bring a delegation of Russian educators for peace, with whom I worked in Moscow, to a conference in Lillehammer.

Opportunities for learning: it was of course a great pity that Bronwyn Harwood was unable to go. If a replacement representative has to be found in an emergency, then we have to our best in a hurry, but if a decision needs to be made which is not strictly an emergency, could we ask for a minimum period of three weeks? In this case the extra weekend would have made things easier.

I believe the Zeitnot put quite a lot of stress on the organising group because – I discovered later – Marit Kromberg was doing about four jobs. She did send me a welcome note with some information about the programme and the other participants;

she even told me the name of the venue but not how to get there, or how far it is from Oslo.

Emails went unanswered so I googled the venue and asked them for help. They sent me links to Norwegian bus timetables from which I understood that I would need three buses and then a walk, and the journey from Oslo airport would take about 6 hours. When Bronwyn asked about my plans, I told her I was still trying to work out how to get to the Sportotell from Oslo, and she thought she could dig out the email she had received from Marit some weeks earlier about lifts from Oslo. I wrote to a few Norwegian Friends asking for their advice, and this time Marit did respond with the name of a person who could pick me up from the central bus station. This meant that I could go ahead and book my flight from Gatwick, 25 minutes from Lewes, and wouldn't need to try to get to Stansted (£91 fare, if the trains are running) in order to arrive at Torp airport which is nearer to Kragero.

I am not sure about the time or place, or even if it would be helpful to share these, but Norwegian Friends were very generous with their opinions about various things, and I do have some suggestions to make about the **role description** I was sent. I think this could be more useful, though it did alert me to the fact that I needed to ask for the **MfS Letter of Greeting**, which I gave to the clerk of Norway YM, having read it out. I also gave him the new economic justice booklets and the BYM trustees' report.

From the role description I see that QWRC believes that it is important that Friends nominated serve twice if possible.... I would be very happy to serve twice if nominated, especially as I have projects in common with Norwegian Friends. It would be great to have more time to prepare, and I would be glad to have a reason to learn some Swedish.

Next year the Nordic Meeting will be held at the Folk High School, Kungälv, Gothenburg, 29 June – 2 July.

Patricia Cockrell, Sussex East AM

Norway YM 2016 Epistle

To Friends everywhere

Norwegian Friends were gathered for their 2016 yearly assembly from 23rd – 26th June in the town of Kragerø by the sea. We were 77 participants in all, of whom 22 below the age of 20. Our theme this year was Making peace locally with the help of the Alternatives to Violence Project.

During our first business session we remembered Friends who have died during the last year and heard greetings from home and abroad. Our epilogue that first evening was to learn Dag Hovda Sture's new song The Wave, which he has written especially for this year's assembly. We sang the song on several occasions during our gathering. We shall remember this line: We need no interpreter between us and God; he who sings within our minds. See his spark in others.

Friday morning we woke up to Brexit after the referendum in Great Britain, and we were gripped by the many challenges this decision may bring. During business that

day we approved the accounts and a budget for 2017, and discussed how peace work can be shown in the budget. We also made provisions for continuing the work on our Norwegian Faith and Practice as part of our process towards our 200 year anniversary in 2018.

After lunch we worked in three interest groups. Stephen Collett led a group on Conflict as a gift, Penny Heymans on Compassion and communication and Lars Verket on Mindfulness. The rest of Friday was dedicated to the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP). We enjoyed practical and entertaining exercises for all ages (from 6 months to 89 years). The basis for AVP consists in positive confirmation that we are all good enough and important, focusing on communication, listening, community building and how to deal with conflicts.

The Saturday morning sky was brilliantly blue and we all looked forward to our visit to Jomfruland. Before we left we worked in three interest groups, one on Contact with refugees and asylum seekers in our local communities, one on Quaker engagement in Palestine/Israel in general and Gaza in particular, and one on Sustainability in our everyday life and communities – challenges from Peru.

We travelled to Jomfruland in two comfortable boats winding their way between islands and skerries. We enjoyed our packed lunches and many of us seized the opportunity of a refreshing wade or swim. Some also took a walk to Jomfruland Lighthouse, or past the pebble beach to see the oldest ash tree in the Nordic countries.

On our return we joined in the annual meeting of Quaker Service Norway and saw the documentary Reconciliation in Burundi by Øystein Rakkenes. During the social evening after dinner we saw a documentary from Palestine / Gaza, and we sang and played some more AVP games.

During a short business session on Sunday morning we started preparations for the Nordic Yearly Meetings' gathering in 2017. During Sunday Meeting for worship, two of our young people chose to confirm their membership in the Norwegian Quaker community.

Every morning offered early meeting for worship or some mindful exercises. Our days together were characterised by cheerfulness, delightful reunions, play and conversations across all ages. We leave our YM assembly with a desire and a commitment to make a difference in everyday life, in our own lives as well as in others'. Even if we are few we have many testimonies to share.

In Friendship

Stephen W Collett, YM Clerk

Sweden Yearly Meeting

Held in Svartbaecken May 5th to May 8th 2016

The 82nd Yearly Meeting was held in Swedish Friends' beloved retreat centre, Svartbaecken, which lies in lovely country side about 40 miles north of Stockholm. I found a wonderfully welcoming and joyous atmosphere enhanced by the beautiful surroundings of fields and forest covered in wood anemones and 4 days of lovely warm early summer sunshine. About 50 people gathered including 5 visitors from abroad and 5 children. We shared good conversation, serious reflection, fun and play with the children, and were sustained by lovely food, miraculously prepared by one of the young parent members and his small son, not forgetting lots of coffee, cake and delicious Knaeckebrot.

Swedish Friends were conscious that about half of the participants were attenders and took great care to make the Quaker business process understandable and straight forward for everyone. This meant using very little Quaker "jargon". I admired the timely and sensitive explanations of the business process given by the clerk, thereby increasing active participation and depth of reflection by all those present. Translation for the visitors was generously on offer by tireless Friends using wonderful equipment and the new hearing loop was also greatly appreciated.

For me, being from a big Local Meeting in Scotland, it was amazing to witness, how such a small Yearly Meeting (100 members in total) copes with its business and reaches out to the world so well and with such a light touch. We heard exciting reports from Quaker Service Sweden, of work in Bangladesh, Burundi, Georgia and Palestine, but we also considered the serious financial constraints for this work in the future. Swedish Friends strongly consider themselves part of the European and World family of Friends and reported enthusiastically about their attendance at the world Plenary Meeting in Peru and their involvement with FWCC and the European and Middle East Section.

The business sessions covered everything from committee reports, membership matters (admission of their 100th member!), finance, property, employment, European and international cooperation. Can you imagine LM, AM, GM and Yearly Meeting rolled into one?? That's how it felt like at times, beautifully and sensitive led by the 2 clerks, who split their work in a manner new to me: one presiding, the other recording. It worked brilliantly, with the presiding clerk being able to present the business and pay full attention to the sense of the meeting without the burden of preparing the minute and the writing clerk concentrating on composing and then presenting the minute. I had never experienced Quaker business meetings conducted quite in this way and hope to discuss this more widely in our own area.

We also worked in small groups and had a threshing session to consider the dwindling financial contributions by members in an atmosphere of trust and openness and I hope that based on this work Swedish Friends will go forward to resolve their difficulties. This year's theme was: "Non-Violence: possibilities and limitations". Jalka from Vienna, who had been invited to lead these workshop sessions, turned the title into a positive: "Be courageous and cool" With her help we explored "Bridge building" in conflict situations. This starts with learning to communicate in tense situations with courage and wit, and being authentic, emancipated and creative in our dealings with the "other".

We learned that tension is energy which actually is neither good nor bad. Quakers must learn again to use this precious energy and transform it into understanding the different views of others, instead of trying to avoid conflict because they equate it with violence. Avoiding confrontation can also be a form of violence.

We need to understand that when dealing in conflict situations we must feel protected, acknowledge the state of our body and emotions and attempt to think clearly so that we can analyse the situation. It's important to be aware of our inner monologue and not let it become ugly. It's not about changing "the other", but it's understanding each other.

Ahmet, one of our participants, was able to reflect movingly the emotions and feelings created by some of our work together with his superb improvisations on the cello, underlining the effectiveness of transforming emotions into other creative outlets.

I feel privileged and most grateful to have been given this opportunity to attend as BYM representative, it has strengthened my feeling of belonging to the world family of Friends, and I feel encouraged that together we can work for positive change in the world.

Gisela Creed

Sweden YM 2016 Epistle

To Friends everywhere

For our 82nd Yearly Meeting, some forty participants from Sweden, Finland, Gambia, Norway, Great Britain and Austria met at Svartbäcken amongst the wood anemones and trees bursting into leaf. In different discussion fora, as well as musical dissonance games and role-play, we have worked with our theme: "Non-violence: Possibilities and Limitations".

Rather than non-violence, our invited guest, Jalka, from Austria, talked about learning to quarrel, so that we meet in the conflict and become more human – "This is just as important as learning to brush your teeth". She said that Quakers often equate conflict with violence, but that avoiding confrontation is also a form of violence. Instead we can be more real for each other by saying how things are, listening to ourselves and understanding "the other".

The annual report of our activities has given us insights into the work that Swedish Quakers are engaged in nationally and internationally. Quaker Service Sweden facilitates the planting of trees to protect crops and the building of bridges between people. The Swedish Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Israel and Palestine, where Swedish Quakers are included in the steering group, is active in these two areas and supports both sides in the work for peace. Europe & Middle East Section is oriented towards "finding hidden Quakers" in Central Europe, so that they in turn find the Religious Society of Friends.

For every year that passes we get better at making the content more accessible and the meeting more inclusive. This year we had a hearing loop for the first time. At the same time as we reminded each other about breaks in the circuit and distance from

the microphone, we “quarrelled” about our own and others’ needs, so that they would not be overlooked. Children and adults took part together, in mixed groups, in the work with the theme. The children also had their own programme, which reflected their own wishes, and included everything from grilled marshmallows to improvised song lyrics.

It was unusual to have as many Attenders as Friends with us. It signalled a vitalisation and led to even more shared experiences. We could not lapse into Quaker jargon, but introduced our methods in a spirit of mutually care between clerks and participants. The meetings for worship for business were disciplined, engaged and at times filled with laughter.

We were glad to hear about the World Plenary Meeting in Peru, where participants from different Quaker traditions found a kinship beyond outward forms. A word that recurred during our yearly meeting was transformation. Making the most of change, renewal, and young Friends. The generations working together.

The threshing session on members’ financial contributions to the Society gave us an opportunity to discuss the subject openly in groups in an atmosphere of trust. In safety, we could share feelings, ideas and experiences – and even quarrel a bit.

We are grateful for the energies that have created both the meeting we have just taken part in and other forms of meetings the world over. At the same time, we see how ambitious activities sometimes collide with materialistic economic circumstances, where one of the questions is how we, with our Quaker ideas as the starting point, should manage our finances in the world of which we are a part.

At the same time as we have met in the spring sunshine and warmth, a humanitarian crisis is taking place, where people in flight are deprived of their human rights. We realise, with pain, how difficult it is to make a real difference in such a situation. We unite with what is expressed in the letter of greetings from Britain Yearly Meeting. The importance of joining together and welcoming refugees, not just in words, but also in practice.

8th May 2016

Torbjörn Söderqvist
Recording Clerk

Catharina Gustafsson
Presiding Clerk

Switzerland Yearly Meeting

2016, 17-16 May 2016 at the Herzberg Centre, near Aarau.

Report from Jane Mace, the BYM representative.

The theme for this event was: “Out of sight and out of mind? refugees and us in Switzerland today”

Originating in regular meetings in the 1920s, and the first national meeting in 1947, SYM is today a body of some 150 Friends (which includes those categorized as ‘friends of Friends’) gathered across the country in four local Meetings and a number of what in BYM might be called house groups (e.g. in Lausanne) where three or four Friends meet to worship as regularly as is practical (once every two or three weeks seems average). Across SYM there is just one designated meeting house (in Geneva).

The weekend programme this year (my first as BYM rep) contained one plenary, three meetings for worship, two workshop sessions and three meetings for worship for business, with the opening evening on Friday being a song with slides, followed by worship sharing and the closing evening on Sunday comprising poetry, songs and music from participants.

This is now the 4th year Swiss Friends have held their YM in the Herzberg Centre, providing a residential gathering for those who can make it: this year, as in previous years, approx 50 attended in total (with a reduction by Sunday evening event to 25). So in terms of numbers, the event had more a feel of an enjoyable Area Meeting than that of a gathering on the scale of BYM.

Two other groups were present in the Herzberg Centre Centre (whose purpose is to provide ‘Bildung and Begegnung’ -education and meeting) for this weekend, yet both the building itself and the dining room felt spacious and airy, with easy room for all to mingle and sprad out. The four children present provided an interesting activity halfway through the weekend, in the fom of a survey they conducted of all those present, through !! interviews on a group of 4 questions: where were you born? where did you grow up? where do you live now? have you ever felt like a migrant? They played back the filmed results on Sunday evening, giving pause for more reflection on the questions.

Ministry from the first evening stayed with us as we listened on Saturday morning to Patrick Taran, President of Global Migration Policy Associates, based in Geneva. He opened with a wakeup call: saying that the refugee crisis as experienced in Europe is one of perception and values, much more than of reality. Migration, he said, has long been a feature of Europe, which needs migrants for all sorts of reasons, maintaining the viability of many sectors (even including Swiss watchmaking). Using a range of statistics, he told us that this is the time for Quaker witness and solidarity.

A second key theme, linked to this one, came from the minute on sustainability that emerged from the FWCC world meeting of Quakers in Peru earlier year. There was also a third, namely a concern for the financial stability of Quaker United Nations Office. .

I found it exciting to be in a multilingual gathering and felt very humbled by amount of swift and skilful that went on.

English was the primary language of the event. For the plenary, Patrick Tara paused at regular intervals to allow for the Friend offering a version in German to be heard. The minority of French Friends present were evidently able to manage with one or other of the two other languages.

After the keynote talk, we worked in three groups to consider what could be (or already is) the Quaker witness and testimony (Zeugnis und Dienung) that flows for Friends' concern to provide a proper response to the refugee phenomenon as it affected Switzerland itself, as well as Europe as a whole.

In one working group discussion it emerged that Swiss Quakers see themselves as fairly quiet in the public sphere (the suggestion of a press release from this conference being a new idea to some) – while at the same time, the theme and the keynote take on it plainly came from a spirit of passion on the subject among Friends. It was good to feel the common link to the Peru gathering

Overall, I felt very privileged to be able to engage with Quaker life in Switzerland and also made to feel very welcome. For next year, I have an invitation to spend a day or two in Zurich before the gathering, which I plan to follow up.

Jane Mace
Gloucs AM, 22 May 2016

Switzerland YM 2016 Epistle

Held at Herzberg, Asp ob Aarau, Aargau on 13-16 May 2016

Dear Friends,

On May 13 we opened the 2016 Switzerland Yearly Meeting, themed “Out of Sight and Out of Mind? Refugees and us in Switzerland today”, with song and worship sharing. The refrain of the song, Nowhere to Stay, helped open our thinking on the topic:

*Everyone's a refugee
We're all afraid here, can't you see?
What's happened to our empathy?
Is this the end? Or can we reinvent this failed humanity?*
(Kathleen Koch, 2016)

We were gifted that Patrick Taran, member of Geneva Monthly Meeting, shared his expertise having worked on migrant issues for the past four decades, leading an interactive keynote address on the present situation in Europe and Switzerland. During his presentation we discovered that about 75% or more of us in attendance would be considered “migrants,” or are the sons or daughters of migrants, under the United Nations criteria. Patrick pointed out that the refugee “crisis” is much more one of perception – and of values – than of reality, and challenged us to reflect on Quaker testimony and witness. We discussed this theme throughout the weekend culminating in an epistle with a position and set of proposed actions, which will be considered by the SYM.

While we were considering the topic, the children went on a trip to visit an art museum in Aarau, where they enjoyed a special video exhibit called *The Sleeping Eskimo* by Portuguese artists João Maria Gusmão & Pedro Paiva, and then ate delicious cupcakes of all colors and flavors. Later on, they interviewed 21 of the attendees about their experiences as #Migrants and shared a selection of their results during the social evening. It was fascinating.

A notable characteristic of the SYM meeting is the number of languages spoken, reflecting the broader Swiss society. Several volunteers took turns translating between German, English, and French throughout the weekend. While at times our patience was challenged, we appreciated the variety and depth of expression enabled by this practice.

Herzberg offered a “green” location for our meeting – there was a new “smart flower” solar panel out front that moved throughout the day to catch the most possible sun.

Even though it rained continuously through Saturday, at least we knew where the sun should have been. Nearby trails were perfect for silent walks, where the backdrop of Aarau and the rolling countryside were finally revealed on Sunday.

Also of note: Small groups considered additional concerns focused on sustainability and CO₂ emissions, and funding challenges faced by the Quaker United Nations Office. We came together for a lively social evening, where a huge variety of musical talent was shared: cello, viola, harmonica, saxophone, recorders, piano, and voices. We even had storytelling, hand massage, and Taizé chants.

We were 49 Friends and attenders in total, including five children and two delegates from Britain Yearly Meeting and German Yearly Meeting.

In closing we offer text from a Friends' Hymn:

*As we leave this friendly place
Love give light to every face
May the kindness which we learn
Guide our hearts 'till we return*
(Vincent Brown Silliman, 1932)

Greetings to Friends everywhere.

Decriminalisation of the possession, for personal use, of all drugs

Introduction

For several years, Cornwall AM has been testing and developing its concern that the possession, for personal use, of drugs should be decriminalised. Meeting for Sufferings considered a first minute from the AM on this subject in June 2011, which led to further discussions and consideration. In April, Meeting for Sufferings received a second minute, and asked Area Meetings to consider this matter, with the intention of returning to it later in the year.

The minute from Cornwall AM is copied at the end of this paper. The briefing paper, mentioned towards the end of Cornwall AM's minute, can be found on the Devon & Cornwall Quakers site at <http://swquakers.org.uk/content/decriminalisation-possession-personal-use-all-drugs>

(Please note that the first request to Meeting for Sufferings, regarding action relating to a UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS), has been addressed: a statement was agreed, to be used on behalf of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) by Quakers attending the Session.)

Which AMs responded?

At the time of preparing this paper, 30 (of 70) Area Meetings had sent minutes, and one other hopes to do so by the time of Meeting for Sufferings.

All of these minutes and accompanying papers are collated in a 47-page document, which can be read online here <http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/papers-and-minutes>

Paper copies can be sent on request, or collected during Meeting for Sufferings.

The AMs which responded are:

Bristol AM	North Somerset AM
Cambridgeshire AM	North West London AM
Chilterns AM	Lincolnshire AM
East Cheshire AM	Norfolk & Waveney AM
Pendle Hill AM	Northumbria AM
East Kent AM	Notts & Derbys AM
East Scotland AM	Sheffield & Balby AM
Hertford & Hitchin AM	South East Scotland AM
Kingston & Wandsworth AM	South East London AM
Leicester AM	Southern East Anglia AM
Wirral & Chester AM	Hampshire & Islands AM
Mid-Essex AM	Sussex West AM
Mid-Somerset AM	West Wilts & East Somerset AM
Northamptonshire AM	West Somerset AM
North London AM	York AM

The clerk of Cumberland AM let us know they will consider this on 26th November and he hopes the representative will be able to bring a minute to Sufferings.

One of the clerks of Pickering and Hull AM wrote:

Pickering & Hull AM has not been able to consider these matters directly although they were originally circulated to LMs for initial discussion. We have not had any minutes back with substantive responses.

Responses from AMs – overview

Of the 30 AMs which sent minutes, half are supportive, although most of those have not adopted the concern themselves. The other half are uncertain, unclear, or not supportive:

3	Unite with the concern
12	Are broadly supportive, including recognising that this is a religious concern; but not committed to sharing the concern (any work would be for others to do)
4	Would need further consideration
5	Cannot support the concern
6	Gave no clear response at this stage (one of these gave a mixed message; one was not able to reach unity)

Although this paper seeks to represent the essence of the responses, many of the minutes contain much more detailed reflections and explanations.

Three AMs unite with the concern:

Pendle Hill

Some of us are still discerning where we are on this issue but we are clear that as a Meeting, we feel called to speak truth to power on this issue and feel united with the Cornwall Area Meeting concern.

North-West London

We unite with Cornwall AM's concern to decriminalise possession of drugs for personal use.

Notts & Derbys

We wholeheartedly support and share Cornwall Area Meeting's concern to promote the decriminalisation of all drugs for personal use. ... We agree that there is a need for us to work together in order for us to effect change on this issue.

Eleven AMs are broadly supportive in some way – although their minutes largely suggest they expect others to take action, rather than the AM:

Five AMs expressed *support for Cornwall AM* (without making any commitment):

Lincolnshire AM

We ... recognise the concern. We do not feel, however that we, as a Meeting, are able to do more, at this time, than offer our prayerful support for the endeavours of Cornwall AM.

East Scotland AM

While recognising the impossibility of doing justice to all the dimensions of this matter, we support Cornwall Area Meeting's concern.

Bristol AM

We are in sympathy with Cornwall Area Meeting's concern ...

Sussex West AM

We recognise this is a valid concern and support Cornwall AM ... but do not feel able to adopt this as an AM concern.

West Wiltshire & East Somerset AM

We do not feel we can adopt this as a concern at this stage, but wish to support the work of Friends in Cornwall and thank them for all their work on this issue.

Three of the AMs anticipate that *MfS* would take action:

South East Scotland AM

We ask Meeting for Sufferings to work towards preparing a public statement reflecting the need for change.

North Somerset AM

We ask Meeting for Sufferings to approach our government...

York AM

We find the arguments persuasive and clear. We recommend that Meeting for Sufferings adds a Quaker voice to this campaign.

Two AMs are not explicit about whose role this might be:

Northumbria AM

We are encouraged to know that Friends are actively engaged in taking these matters forward. We support the work being done and look forward to hearing how it progresses.

Norfolk and Waveney AM

We feel limited support for the concern...

Two AMs recognised that this is a religious concern (but also made no commitment to taking work forward):

Leicester AM

We recognize this issue as a religiously valid concern but do not feel able to adopt it...

Chilterns AM

We have considered this and have come to the view that it is a valid spiritual concern for the Religious Society of Friends.

Three AMs feel there would need to be more consideration before this is clear:

Cambridgeshire AM

We feel that there is still much work to do. We think this paper is a good start, but the concern needs to be widened. ... At the same time we are clear that this is a religiously valid concern ... We consider that this is a subject upon which there should be a clear Quaker voice, but we do not feel that that point has yet been reached. We hope that work will continue and that the concern will come back to Meeting for Sufferings in due course

East Cheshire

Although we feel that as a matter that is important in our interrelationships as human beings, Decriminalisation of the possession of all drugs for personal use is a religious matter, we recognise that we don't know enough of the background to the concern of Cornwall AM raised at this time. ... This is not an issue we feel we can usefully take any further as an AM at this point.

Southern East Anglia

We cannot form a view on the basis of what Cornwall Friends have said ... unless we know what an informed and experienced response would be to the case that has been made... We seek clarification ... We need to know, whatever the decision of BYM might be, what happens next?

South East London

We are essentially with Cornwall Area Meeting's concern as expressed in their paper, although some of us are still 'threshing' this issue.

Five AMs do not support the concern:

Wirral & Chester AM

We sympathise with Cornwall's concern that vulnerable people should not be criminalised for drug use, but we do not think that Cornwall's proposal is the right solution at this time.

Kingston & Wandsworth AM

We support present UK policies for gradual depenalisation but are not in unity with Cornwall AM's call for decriminalisation at this point. Northamptonshire AM

Northamptonshire AM

We are unable to support the Cornwall minute

East Kent AM

We believe that there are other concerns more pressing for Quakers.

Sheffield & Balby AM

Should the decriminalisation of drugs for personal use be adopted by Meeting for Sufferings / Britain Yearly Meeting as a concern we would support this, but do not feel it is a concern which we ... feel is our priority at present.

Six AMs sent minutes, but did not indicate a clear response:

Two of these AMs spent time on this but could not reach clarity or unity:

Mid Essex

We fear that we may be unable to provide Meeting for Sufferings with useful comments in the time available. ... we think that it would be better to defer our consideration as a Meeting for, say, a year or two ... We ... ask the clerk to report our inability to comment at this stage."

Mid Somerset

We are not in unity as to the course of decriminalisation proposed by Cornwall Area Meeting and so are unable to offer Meeting for Sufferings any guidance other than to consider what they are likely to be aware of already...

The other four of these AMs sent minutes which did not indicate a clear response. Some sent local meeting minutes, or additional notes.

North London AM

Hampshire & Islands AM

West Somerset AM

Hertford & Hitchin AM

Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs (QAAD)

7 of the minutes refer to QAAD:

- Sussex West AM – one local meeting wanted to hear from QAAD
- Cambridgeshire AM - *We would like to see QAAD involved*

- Leicestershire AM - *We will uphold those from other local and area meetings and organizations like QAAD (Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs) who feel able to take this matter forward.*
- Wirral & Chester AM - *We feel that the response of QAAD is the more balanced approach*
- Kingston & Wandsworth AM - *We welcome QAAD's research, note its influence in the field and hope that Britain Yearly Meeting will consider financial support for QAAD.*
- West Somerset AM – one LM would like to see a current response to this paper from our established committee QAAD.

Other reflections

The minutes and papers sent by AMs show that Quakers around Britain have taken a great deal of time and trouble to learn about the issues, to reflect together, to share experiences, and to consider possible corporate ways forward.

At the same time, some AMs have let us know that the process of considering this issue has been daunting, or has felt inappropriate. Some clarified, or questioned, what was involved in considering and testing a concern. Many AMs struggle to manage business items within the available time, and relatively small numbers attend.

Thirty-nine AMs have not sent any response.

While many Friends have spent time engaging with this in discussion and prayer, the level of energy and enthusiasm for taking this forward is not yet clear.

Testing this concern

There is guidance about the Quaker understanding of 'concern', and the discernment process, in Quaker faith and practice (Qfp) chapter 13.

Section 13.12 explains that a meeting needs to be clear whether it recognises a concern as religiously valid, or not. If the meeting *supports* the concern, it should also accept responsibility for its furtherance, including financial support where necessary. If the meeting *adopts* the concern as one it shares, the concern becomes the concern of the whole meeting.

Section 13.13 helps us with the next step. If the meeting recognises a concern, practical details of its implementation and consequences need to be addressed; in which case, it may be appropriate to take more time, to consider what should be done.

The minutes sent by AMs indicate a broad range of views: positive, negative and uncertain. More than half of AMs have not responded. The minutes will inform discernment, but Meeting for Sufferings will not seek a 'majority view'.

Meeting for Sufferings will need to reach its own view about whether to adopt this concern on behalf of all Quakers in Britain; to recognise a concern held by Cornwall and other AMs, and encourage them in their work; or to ask Quakers around Britain to continue to test and explore these matters.

What might happen next?

Although three or four AMs suggest MfS should 'speak out' on this, at least one specifically says MfS shouldn't do that. The Speaking Out policy¹, adopted by Meeting for Sufferings in 2014, clarifies the difference between a *Yearly Meeting statement* (which defines a new position on an area of concern) and *public statements or comments* (addressed primarily to the wider world). MfS would need to reach unity on the issue, before making (or asking for) a public statement.

If the Meeting is led to adopt the concern, it might wish subsequently to make a statement. It is rarely easy for a large meeting to draft text, so the clerks, or staff, could be asked to do this.

If the Meeting reaches the sense that the Yearly Meeting should take additional action, this would need to be referred to both BYM Trustees and QPSW Central Committee, to identify a strategy, specific actions, and how any work might be resourced (which might include seeking additional income, or laying down other work).

One possible way forward is that the three AMs which wholly unite with Cornwall AM – Pendle Hill, North London and Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire - could join with Cornwall AM and individuals from other AMs to form a Quaker Recognised Body.

¹ <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources/directory-of-services/speaking-out>

Minute from Cornwall AM, held 12th September 2015

Decriminalisation of the possession, for personal use, of all drugs

The concern of Cornwall Area Meeting regards the decriminalisation of the possession, for personal use, of all controlled drugs. We advocate the decriminalisation of all drugs. We ask for the support of MfS to test this concern in the hope that BYM will adopt this concern.

Our Quaker concern relates solely to the decriminalisation of the possession, for personal use of all drugs. It does not relate to the issues of supplying and selling drugs, producing drugs or trafficking drugs. The concern, also, does not relate to drug-related crime i.e. inquisitional crime committed in order to purchase drugs.

Background information / history of our concern

For more than five years Cornwall Area Meeting has been examining and discussing current drugs policy.

The concern was initially raised in the autumn of 2009 when a Member from Marazion Local Meeting brought the issue to our attention. He said that it was wrong that there was a war on drugs which was treating people who are drug dependent as criminals who must be punished, rather than human beings who need help. He had himself been dependent on heroin for many years and now runs an organisation to support people who are recovering from dependency. On 30 January 2010 Cornwall Area Meeting received a minute from Marazion Local Meeting and materials were circulated to local Meetings with a request that consideration be undertaken and written minutes be sent to the next Area Meeting. After discussion at Area Meeting on 13 March 2010 the Crime, Community and Justice Group was asked to assist in setting up a day conference which was held on 4 December 2010. This conference was attended by senior officers from the criminal justice systems and social care systems who all agreed with our premise that decriminalisation was the most rational and humane response to this issue. At Area Meeting on 8 January 2011 the minute from the conference was heard and three Friends were appointed to draft a minute for Meeting for Sufferings. On 7 May 2011 the minute was read and approved and the concern was adopted by Cornwall Area Meeting (see below). The minute was received in June 2011 by Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) and was forwarded to Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) on 9 July 2011. QPSW forwarded the minute to the Crime, Community and Justice Sub-Committee for their advice. The sub-committee asked for contact with Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs (QAAD) and requested that QAAD provide a briefing paper by September 2011 so that the sub-committee could provide MfS with information to help their testing of this concern.

Cornwall Area Meeting subsequently organised a workshop and agreed a working party to take this issue forward. The working party discussed an alternative approach to the criminalisation of drug use. A workshop took place on 26 January 2013 with representatives from QPSW and QAAD. Several recommendations were made at this workshop and the working party undertook work accordingly and drafted a further paper entitled, 'Reform of illegal drugs policy' together with a discussion paper entitled "how current law affects drug users and where changes are needed in the criminal justice system to shift the focus" and a two page summary of this paper which was published in The Friend on 14 November 2013. The original minute was

amended as suggested and agreed at Cornwall Area Meeting on 9 March 2013 (see below). On May 2013 the amended minute was sent to the Clerk of MfS. A response was received from the Deputy Recording Clerk which required consideration and discussion.

A response was returned to the Deputy Recording Clerk in June 2013 which detailed the history of our concern, the practical steps being taken by the Area Meeting and what specific action was being asked of MfS, what makes this a Quaker concern and detailed points about procedure. The response explained that QPSW had already looked at our concern as had QAAD (which had held a discussion on decriminalisation but had not been led to take a position). The response to the Deputy Recording Clerk explained that the matter had already been to MfS but had been the last item on the agenda when members were already leaving to catch trains.

On 22 July 2013 the Clerk of Cornwall Area Meeting circulated the amended minute to Area Meeting Clerks' Network. We received a number of supportive emails in return. However, the email used the phrase, "we have been asked by QPSW and QAAD to gather support" which we were told was not in the right ordering and should instead have been more on the lines of "sharing and testing our concern". We accepted that a misunderstanding had taken place regarding the outcomes of the workshop with QPSW and QAAD in January. The Deputy Recording Clerk circulated the QAAD briefing paper to Area Meeting Clerks.

In September 2013 Cornwall Area Meeting agreed a minute to the Convenor of the Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) for the BYM Agenda Committee which detailed the history of our concern, actions taken and information regarding the concern itself. We asked the Agenda Committee to consider the topic for the 2014 BYM agenda. On 2 January 2014 another article about decriminalisation by a member of our working party (Nicholas McGeorge from Bournemouth Meeting) was published by The Friend. The Friend recently published a further article about decriminalisation in Portugal by members of the working party.

After a period of respite the Cornwall Area Meeting working party resumed its work several months ago and has prepared a briefing paper to accompany this minute.

Planned work to test our concern further

It is time to test again this concern among Friends. It is now Cornwall Area Meeting's wish to email our concern again to the Area Meeting Clerks' Network and also to set up a national network of Friends concerned about this and to use this network to take this issue forward and advocate change.

The concern

In the UK many people use illicit drugs: some use drugs for pleasure or for other reasons and suffer few consequences while others become dependent on drugs and suffer serious consequences.

In the 18th century in England, Quakers established the first modern hospital for the treatment of mental disorders – the Retreat at York. Previously, the method was to

imprison the mentally ill, often chained to walls and living in appalling conditions. Today, people are still punished and imprisoned for using illegal drugs.

It is time for Quakers speak out for change, believing in a healing rather than a punitive approach to dependent drug use and believing in a rational response to recreational drug use. We believe that all drug policy should be evaluated on how effectively it reduces harm to individuals, families and communities.

We are deeply aware of the devastating impact of the current UK drugs policy in that it criminalises all sectors of the community for personal drug use. In 2011/12 there were 229,103 drug offences¹ of which 86% related to drug possession. 1,247 people were imprisoned for having possession of a controlled drug, 655 were given a suspended sentence and 21,862 were fined.

Having a criminal record prevents people from fulfilling their personal potential. In addition, are the significant related issues of social and economic exclusion and inequality, particularly in relation to young people from Black and Ethnic Minority communities, poor people, vulnerable people and people from Black and Ethnic Minority communities. There is a huge racial disparity in rates of stop and search, arrest, prosecution and sentencing outcomes.

It is accepted that prevalence is influenced in the main by social, economic and cultural factors. Decriminalisation with concurrent investment in treatment and harm reduction services can lead to a number of very positive outcomes. Evidence from Portugal which decriminalised the personal use of all drugs in 2001 shows the following gains: personal drug use no longer attracts a criminal record and so drug users are no longer damaged by this; voluntary access to and uptake of treatment and prevention services has improved; HIV infection rates are down and drug related deaths have markedly decreased; the criminal justice system is able to concentrate on drug trafficking. Importantly, there has been no substantial increase in the prevalence of drug use. Portugal shows small variations in trends and numbers in common with its European neighbours.

¹ A Fresh Approach to Drugs. The final report of the UK Drug Policy Commission. (2012)

What we ask of MfS

1. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2010 published a report, 'From Coercion to Cohesion: Treating drug dependence through health care, not punishment'. It uses research evidence to show that a health-based approach results in both less restriction of liberty and better prospects for the future of the individual and society. We support UNODC in urging a more humane policy to drug users and their problems. We ask Britain Yearly Meeting to encourage the UK Government to back this policy at the UN General Assembly Special Session "World Drug Problem" in April 2016.
2. We ask that MfS test our concern and conduct a process of discernment regarding the decriminalisation of the possession, for personal use, of all drugs. We ask that MfS representatives raise the concern with their Area Meetings. We

hope that a process of testing and discernment will lead to BYM agreeing to support decriminalisation and issuing a statement to that effect.

We attach a briefing paper from Cornwall Area Meeting which provides information we consider relevant to exploring this concern.

Linking concerns to faith

The concern stems from the negative and discriminatory effects of criminalisation on individuals in terms of inequality, poverty and social exclusion.

Referring to the Quaker testimonies, Chris Lawson wrote: "Finding ways of expressing the testimonies that are relevant to present times is a continuing challenge. Such expressions will not necessarily seem practical, tactful, sensible, and expedient or in line with some current vogue of thinking, for they are based on what seems right in an absolute sense of inner conviction." (QF&P 20.17) Cornish Quakers wish to share their sense of inner conviction with the Society of Friends as a whole and to speak truth to power.

Cornwall Area Meeting 12th September 2015 held at Bude Local Meeting
Clerk – Marion Coleman

MfS 2016 12 09b and appendix b

Decriminalisation of the possession, for personal use, of all drugs

Additional minutes

Unfortunately, a relevant minute from Bournemouth Coastal AM, sent to Meeting for Sufferings at the end of 2015, was inadvertently not included in the papers. It is copied below, along with two minutes received since the papers were sent, from Worcestershire and Shropshire and South Wales AMs, also copied below.

Also copied here is a relevant minute from Thaxted AM which was received by MfS in 2013; and a minute of Staffordshire AM, which was not sent to Meeting for Sufferings – Friends from Cornwall AM have asked for it to be circulated.

This means we have minutes from 35 (of 70) AMs.

Uniting with the concern

Thaxted

We unite with this concern and hope it can be taken forward as a concern of the Society as a whole.

Broadly supportive

Bournemouth Coastal

We endorse this Concern ... We commend this to Local Meetings and encourage concerned Friends to write to their MPs.

Staffordshire

We ask our Clerk to convey our support to the Clerk of Cornwall AM.

Further consideration

Worcestershire and Shropshire

We are not ready to reach a unified response.

South Wales

We do not feel led to unite with Cornwall's concern at present but recognise that we have much to learn regarding the complexities of this topic.

Appendix – minutes from Area Meetings

Bournemouth Coastal AM held on Saturday, 21st November.

Minute 15.11.3 - Decriminalisation of possession of drugs for personal use

We have heard from Nick McGeorge of Cornwall Area Meeting's appeal for further support for this Concern.

We have examined this before (Minute 14.1.6, which concluded, "We endorse this Concern, and ask our Clerk to notify the Recording Clerk accordingly.").

They write:

"Marion Coleman, then Clerk for Cornwall Area Meeting, shared concern with you in July 2013. We had sent a Minute regarding our concern to Meeting for Sufferings. We received a number of emails supporting our concern and attempted to take the concern to Britain Yearly Meeting but were not successful on that occasion. We are moved again to raise this concern and to send again a Minute to Meeting for Sufferings and to test this concern among Friends and advocate change. We have established the Quaker Decriminalisation Network in order to bring together those who support our concern."

We are asked whether drug addiction - and a whole host of associated issues - should be seen as a health, rather than a justice matter. Support from Quakers has been requested from the Head of the UN Drugs Office.

Difficulty has been encountered in the wide polarization of opinions once the topic of drug use is mentioned.

We commend this to Local Meetings and encourage concerned Friends to write to their MPs. We ask our Clerk write to Meeting for Sufferings expressing our support for this Concern and to notify Cornwall AM accordingly.

The supporting papers will be sent to Local Meeting Clerks, and can be made available to individual Friends on request.

Nick McGeorge is willing to visit Local Meetings or neighbouring Area Meetings if they feel it would be helpful to draw on his expertise.

Tom Sanders
Clerk

Worcestershire and Shropshire AM held on Saturday 19th November 2016

72/16 Decriminalisation of the possession, for personal use, of all drugs

Helena Chambers, director of Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs (QAAD), led a session to consider Cornwall Area Meeting's concern regarding the decriminalisation of the possession, for personal use, of all drugs. The following minute arises from our thoughts today.

We have considered many aspects of this matter and realised that we have many unanswered questions. We are not ready to reach a unified response.

We understand that QAAD supports the idea of a Royal Commission and we support this too.

We thank Helena Chambers for guiding us through these issues.

Angie Dunhill and Jackie Fowler, Co-clerks

Thaxted Area Meeting held on Sunday, December 8 2013

13/12/09 Quaker Concern Regarding Drug Policy.

Cornwall AM has been working on their concern that the current policy on drugs increases the harm caused by drugs rather than decreasing it. They are not asking for the decriminalisation of the sale/marketing of illegal drugs but are questioning whether it is right to criminalise a person with a health related need and are asking Friends to examine the need to take action on this issue in order to abide by the principles of truth, equality and compassion. We unite with this concern and hope it can be taken forward as a concern of the Society as a whole.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings for information.

John Capper
Clerk, Thaxted Area Meeting

Staffordshire Area Meeting 14 February 2016

Minute 5a) Cornwall AM concern on the decriminalisation of drugs

We have received reports from 4 Local Meetings expressing support for Cornwall AM's concern on the decriminalisation of drugs: in addition several Friends have sent individual responses directly to the Clerk of Cornwall AM. We ask our Clerk to convey our support to the Clerk of Cornwall AM.

Bryan Cleary, Clerk
Anne Orme, Correspondence Clerk

South Wales Area Meeting held on 16:09:05

Meeting for Sufferings minute mfs 16/04/14 re: Cornwall AM Concern

Further to our minute 16:05:07, we have given consideration to MFS's minute 16/04/14 which outlines Cornwall AM's concern regarding the decriminalisation of the possession, for personal use, of all drugs. We are asked to discern whether we unite with Cornwall AM's concern. We note that our Clerks circulated all the relevant documentation to Local Meetings following our AM in May as requested, and we have heard the two responses received which are appended to these minutes.

We do not feel led to unite with Cornwall's concern at present but recognise that we have much to learn regarding the complexities of this topic.

We are clear that more resources need to be given for the health and social care of individuals with drug problems whilst it is appropriate for the criminal justice system to address the activities of those that profit from dealing in drugs.

We urge Meeting for Sufferings to consider pressing for a Royal Commission type body to address the complexities of this issue. We recognise, for instance, that whilst the legalisation of cannabis could help some people with Multiple Sclerosis, it can also induce mental health problems in others.

We ask our Clerks to send this minute, along with Caerleon LM's minute and minute 16:06:04 to MFS as requested.

We encourage Friends in Local Meetings to continue to engage with this issue.

Carolyn Sansom and Frances Rutter
Co-Clerks SWAM

Appointments

a) Meeting for Sufferings Search Group

Brings forward the following names for service:

Meeting for Sufferings Support Group

To serve from December 2016 until Yearly Meeting 2018 to fill a vacancy

Nominate:

Chris Bullard – Kendal & Sedbergh AM

b) Central Nominations Committee

Brings forwards the following names for service or release

Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group

Release with immediate effect:

Andrew Williams – South East Scotland AM

Friends Trusts Ltd

Nigel Barnes – Northumbria AM

Groups to Review the Appeals Procedure (Qf&p 4.25 and 4.26)

To serve from 1 December until 31 December 2017;

Nominate:

Val Ferguson – Oxford and Swindon AM

Michael Hutchinson – West Scotland AM

Beryl Milner – Leeds AM

Michael Phipps – Chilterns AM

Pendle Hill

1 or 2 friends to serve from September to December 2017

Maggie and Melvyn Freake – North East Thames AM

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations

To serve from 1 May 2017 to 30 April 2020,

Renominated for a third term;

Nicola Hoskin-Stone – Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire AM (only served 7 months of first term)

Quaker Housing Trust

To serve from ARM 2017 until the end of ARM 2020

Nominate:

Mary Hammond – Cornwall AM

Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee

Released;

Camilla Oelman – Thaxted AM

The Retreat (York) General Meeting: Members

Release with immediate effect:

Stephen Kirby – Northumbria AM

Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group

The Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group (RPG) was established by Meeting for Sufferings in September 2014 (MfS/2014/09/13). Its purpose is to engage Quakers in Britain in learning, mutual exploration and growth; to provide and encourage a threshing process leading into readiness to participate in any revision of our Book of Discipline.

RPG's first report to Meeting for Sufferings came in December 2015; this is the group's second report.

RPG Report to Meeting for Sufferings Dec 2016

One of our major pieces of work has been considering the church government aspect of the Book of Discipline. You may be aware of a questionnaire currently circulating about its use. We have worked closely with the Church Government Advisory Group and the Yearly meeting Publications Group. They describe the current book as 'barely adequate'. This is not altogether surprising as the last revision committee were asked not to make significant changes to the basic content of Church Government. Although there have, of necessity, been piecemeal changes since, there has been no holistic revision since 1967. Our committee has come to the considered view that the Church Government text in the current book is no longer fit for purpose. We minuted (RPG 16/09/16):

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

We have concluded that the church government part of the text should be comprehensively revised, rather than simply updated. We see this as an integral part of a wider revision of the Book of Discipline; a revision which *might start with church government – while not being constrained to confine itself to this area – and sequence the work on the anthology sections later...*(RPG 16/09/16)

We recommend that a future book of discipline should focus on describing and explaining the enduring principles of our church government, together with anthology examples of our practice. We minuted (RPG 16/09/16):

Friends today – many of whom are new to Quakers – have greater need than previous generations to articulate why we do things as we do and the theological base for them. This will be challenging, but we see it as exciting and necessary.

The new chapter on marriage (Chapter 16) of our current book, published as a supplement, has an introductory section that gives this kind of explanation. We

envisage such explanations of principle serving for the life of the book, so new editions would not be required.

Detailed material such as current legal requirements would be in what we are currently referring to as handbooks, which could be updated as required. *The process of producing handbooks needs to be planned and resourced in parallel with producing a revised book of discipline.* (RPG 16/09/16) We are continuing to work on the issues surrounding the handbook idea such as their authority, maintenance and presentation so they have visibility and credibility with Friends.

The text that will be needed for this new structure will not necessarily exist. *The terms of reference should enable the revision group to draft, or commission, new material as well as collating what already exists.* (RPG 16/09/16) There are some areas, perhaps membership and our relationship with Churches Together, that are not yet settled enough for this approach. We need as a society to work further on these.

As I have explained, we don't see it as possible just to revise the church government sections. We have other on going work. We have been working with a group we convened by invitation which we refer to as the Theology Think Tank. We plan to produce a booklet, along the lines of 'Twelve Quakers and...' to share some of the conversations within the group. Our committee's terms of reference ask us to work on the 'theism / nontheism' issues. We have come to see that 'theism' is an unhelpful word as it is almost never used by a Friend to describe themselves; it is imposed by others to describe Friends who are not nontheists. We would rather refer more generally to theological differences. In practice we think these differences feel less threatening than perhaps they were a couple of years ago. Theological conversations need to be ongoing amongst Friends rather than swept under the carpet because they might be difficult.

There has been a gratifyingly large take up of the 'Reading Quaker Faith and Practice' project. One of our aims in this was to get Friends talking and listening to each other about all aspects of our life together. The calendar we produced for this finishes in the spring and we will soon start seeking feed back from Friends. We have decided to ask the open, general question, 'What have you learnt?' to enable Friends to comment about any aspect of their experience. We are hoping this will give us a rich source of data when we come to write our report.

Originally our committee was appointed for three years. In order to accomplish the detailed work on church government and to allow time for the Reading Quaker Faith and Practice project to come to an end and be evaluated, we will not be able to stick to this timetable. We are planning to use the opportunities provided by YMG 2017 for two way feedback, between ourselves and Friends. Our final report to Meeting for Sufferings would be in a year's time, which just leaves enough time for the matter to be brought to Yearly Meeting 2018.

Lesley Richards
Clerk, RPG

Meeting for Sufferings 2016 12 03 – AM minutes received

Leeds AM minute 2016/74 from the AM held on 1 September 2016 regarding the Leeds Quaker-Jewish Dialogue Report.

Staffordshire AM minute 09/10/16 - 10 from the AM held on 9 October 2016 regarding Government sponsorship of cadet forces in state schools in Scotland.

At a meeting of Leeds AM held on 1 September 2016

Minute 2016/74 Response to the Leeds Quaker-Jewish Dialogue Report

We are aware that a lack of communication is at the heart of the problem. Jews, Israelis and Palestinians are very afraid; we pray for them all and seek to understand. Our small dialogue group is valuable and we would like to see dialogue on a much wider scale, with different faith groups and communities.

Our historical relationship with the Jewish Community in Leeds has been good. We would like to return to a good and engaged relationship, including an active Dialogue Group that helps build bridges between our two worshipping communities; we would like our friends in the Jewish community to better understand the work of EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompanier Programme for Palestine and Israel).

We have received a report from the Leeds Quaker Jewish Dialogue Group, produced after much listening, discernment and compromise. We agree to the following two recommendations:

- We encourage all parties to refrain from using inflammatory language that divides rather than builds bridges of understanding.
- We welcome steps to draw attention to the work of Peace Groups and individuals in Palestine and Israel.

We agree to send this Minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Robert Keeble
Clerk

Additional information

Meeting for Sufferings received a previous minute about this from Leeds Area Meeting, in July this year, and forwarded it to Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) (minute MfS/16/07/08).

A minute from QCCIR, in paper MfS2016/12/12b, asks whether it might see a copy of Leeds AM's report. Rather than waiting for that request to be communicated via Meeting for Sufferings, staff have already arranged this. Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group hopes that QCCIR will keep in touch with Leeds Area Meeting, as it takes this work forward.

Arrangements Group suggests that this minute could be forwarded, for information, to QCCIR and to QPSW, which oversees the Ecumenical Accompanier Programme for Palestine and Israel.

At a meeting of Staffordshire AM held on 9 October 2016

Minute 09/10/16 - 10 Government sponsorship of cadet forces in state schools

We agree with Minute **MfS/16/10/14** concerning the Government sponsorship of cadet forces in state schools. We hope that as a Society we would have some comment to make on the training of 12 and 13 year olds in the handling of weapons and live ammunition and the admission of 16 year olds into the army.

We hope that the emphasis on cadet forces in schools will be replaced by an increasing emphasis on peace education.

We agree to send this Minute to Meeting for Sufferings and Quaker Peace & Social Witness.

In Friendship

Bryan Cleary
Clerk

Additional information

The Meeting for Sufferings minute which Staffordshire AM has responded to was written in October:

MfS/16/10/14 Cadet Forces in Scottish State Schools

We receive minute 10 of General Meeting for Scotland held on 11 June 2016, regarding the proposed introduction of cadet forces to Scottish state schools to be financed from fines levied on banks. General Meeting for Scotland's Parliamentary Liaison Function Group is working on this, supported by the Parliamentary Engagement Officer. However, as the funding is allocated by the UK Government via the Ministry of Defence, the Scottish Government has no influence over how the funding is used.

We forward this minute to QPWSCC, asking it to consider what work might be done alongside General Meeting for Scotland, and to report back in due course.

Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) has not yet been able to consider this minute; MfS can expect to receive a response next year.

Arrangements Group suggests that this minute is also forwarded to QPSWCC.

Meeting for Sufferings 2016 12 03 – CC minutes received

Church Government Advisory Group minute CGAG 16/25 Quaker Recognised bodies from the meeting held 8 September 2016 regarding revised text for *Quaker faith & practice*.

Church Government Advisory Group minute CGAG 16/27 Changes to Management Meeting and consequent changes required to Quaker faith & practice from the meeting held 8 September 2016 regarding revised text for *Quaker faith & practice*.

Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations minute QCCIR/16/72
Report to Meeting for Sufferings 2016 from the meeting held over the weekend of 14-16 October 2016 regarding the upcoming Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations report to Meeting for Sufferings, noting the continuing work of the Leeds Quaker-Jewish Dialogue Group and have revisited Meeting for Sufferings Minute **MfS 2015/07/13** regarding the proposed World War 1 Memorial Meetings for Reconciliation.

Church Government Advisory Group

Held 8 September 2016 at Friends House, London

CGAG 16/25 Quaker Recognised Bodies

We have received a revised text for this section: and agree the following:

Quaker recognised bodies

13.19 Quakers in Britain, both individually and as a yearly meeting, have long benefitted from the many formal and informal groups which allow and encourage Friends and others to develop concerns and interests arising from, and strengthening, their experience of Quaker faith. At different times in the past, some of these have been known as Special Interest Groups, or Listed Informal Groups. These, together with many free-standing Quaker trusts and charities, are now known as Quaker Recognised Bodies.

A Quaker Recognised Body is an independent group through which concerned Friends may share a common interest, seek affirmation or carry out witness. The bodies are seen as arising from Quaker faith, and provide a way in which conviction and witness can be explored and developed outside our formal structures. Being independent, Quaker Recognised Bodies generally have no right of communication by minute with structures such as Meeting for Sufferings, Central Committees or Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee.

Details of the following may be obtained from the Recording Clerk: the criteria for and process of recognition, the benefits and responsibilities, and periodic review.

All groups or bodies using the name 'Quaker' or 'Friends' in their title are reminded of the responsibility to uphold our testimonies, and that care is needed in case the work or witness of the group is understood to be part of the yearly meeting's corporate activity when it is not.

We send this to Meeting for Sufferings for endorsement and forwarding the draft to Yearly Meeting for adoption.

We suggest in 11.05 and 11.11 that the phrase 'Listed informal group' is replaced by Quaker recognised body.

Catherine James
Convener

Church Government Advisory Group

Held 8 September 2016 at Friends House, London

CGAG 16/27 Changes to Management Meeting and consequent changes required to Quaker faith & practice

We have received MfS minute 16/07/07 and a copy of **BYMT minute 2016/06/11** Strategic Management, which outlines changes to the structure at Friends House and therefore to Management Meeting. Section 8.21 does not appear to need to be changed, but there are minor amendments to 14.40 and 8.20 required as set out in Paper **CGAG 16 09 08c**.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings subject to there being no further changes required following the Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees' meeting in November.

Catherine James
Convener

Recommended Changes to *Quaker faith & practice*.

- 1 Quaker Recognised Bodies
- 2 Changes to Management Meeting

1 Quaker Recognised Bodies

In December 2015, Meeting for Sufferings considered the introduction of Quaker Recognised Bodies, to replace Listed Informal Groups. You minuted:

At a Meeting for Sufferings held at Woodbrooke over the weekend of 4-6 December 2015

MfS/15/12/17 Review of BYM's relationship with Listed Informal Groups

Further to minutes **MfS/2014/06/12** and **MfS 2014/09/15**, Joycelin Dawes has spoken to the report of the Review Group on BYM's Relationship with Listed Informal Groups (**paper MfS/2015/12/15**).

We agree to the group's proposal for a new Quaker Recognised Bodies system.

We ask staff to take forward the implementation of this new system. We recognise that this may happen over a number of years and look forward to receiving the applications for registration of both existing Listed Informal Groups and other Quaker bodies.

We thank the review group for its work on our behalf, and lay the group down.

We forward the paper to Church Government Advisory Group and ask it to advise on amendments to *Quaker faith & practice*, and prepare text as appropriate.

Ethel Livermore
Clerk

The Church Government Advisory Group has considered how to change *Quaker faith & practice*, and minuted the following, which suggests text to replace the text in section 13.19 in its entirety:

CGAG 16/25 Quaker Recognised Bodies

We have received a revised text for this section: and agree the following:

Quaker recognised bodies

13.19 Quakers in Britain, both individually and as a yearly meeting, have long benefitted from the many formal and informal groups which allow and encourage Friends to develop concerns and interests arising from, and strengthening, their experience of Quaker faith. At different times in the past, some of these have been known as Special Interest Groups, or Listed Informal Groups. These, together with many free-standing Quaker trusts and charities, are now known as Quaker Recognised Bodies.

A Quaker Recognised Body is an independent group through which concerned Friends may share a common interest, seek affirmation or carry out witness. The bodies are seen as arising from Quaker faith, and provide a way in which conviction and witness can be explored and developed outside our formal structures. Being independent, Quaker Recognised Bodies generally have no right of communication by minute with structures such as Meeting for Sufferings, Central Committees or Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee.

All groups or bodies using the name 'Quaker' or 'Friends' in their title are reminded of the responsibility to uphold our testimonies, and that care is needed in case the work or witness of the group is understood to be part of the yearly meeting's corporate activity when it is not.

Details of the following may be obtained from the Recording Clerk: the criteria for and process of recognition, the benefits and responsibilities, and periodic review.

We send this to Meeting for Sufferings for endorsement and forwarding the draft to Yearly Meeting for adoption.

We suggest in 11.05 and 11.11 that the phrase 'Listed informal group' is replaced by Quaker recognised body.

2 Changes to Management Meeting

Changes required as a result of changes to Management Meeting structure
The minutes of Meeting for Sufferings (MfS/16/07/07) and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees (BYMT-2016-06-11) ask Church Government Advisory Committee to suggest any necessary changes to Quaker faith & practice as a result of the changes to the structure of Management Meeting and the discontinuance of the term General Secretary.

The only place that the term General Secretary requires changing is in 14.40 in the description of the Quaker Stewardship Committee. The phrase "General Secretary of Quaker Finance & Property" could be replaced by "appropriate member(s) of Management Meeting".

The only place that the term general secretaries appears is in 8.20. The clause of the appropriate sentence could be changed from

“... being line manager of the general secretaries and certain senior staff, ...”
to
“... being line manager of the other members of Management Meeting and certain senior staff, ...”

No other changes to *Quaker faith & practice* are required at present. However, BYM Trustees are considering the terms of reference of Management Meeting; if those changes require other amendments to Quaker faith & practice, then we suggest that the changes listed in this part of the paper are deferred.

Catherine James
Convener
Church Government Advisory Group

Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations

Minutes of a meeting held at Friends House 14 – 16 October 2016

QCCIR/16/72 Report to Meeting for Sufferings 2016

Mark Lilley presented our report to Meeting for Sufferings on 2 July and we have received Meeting for Sufferings minute **MfS 16/07/21 (QCCIR 2016 10 12a)**. Mark Lilley has given us a verbal report on the meeting. We note that the next report is due to be presented to Meeting for Sufferings in February 2017, and ask Stephanie Grant to prepare this.

Stephanie Grant, the QCCIR representative to Meeting for Sufferings, gave a verbal report on the October meeting.

We have received Meeting for Sufferings minute **MfS 16/07/08 Interfaith Relations (QCCIR 2016 10 12b)**, informing us of the continuing work of the Leeds Quaker-Jewish Dialogue Group. The group has produced a report which is being considered by the Area Meeting. We affirm the importance of the work of the Leeds Quaker-Jewish Dialogue group, and ask Meeting for Sufferings to ask Leeds AM if willing, to provide a copy of the report under consideration to the Secretary of QCCIR. QCCIR encourages all Friends to engage with Quaker-Jewish dialogue, acknowledging the difficulties and sensitivities in these relationships.

We have revisited Meeting for Sufferings Minute **MfS 2015/07/13 World War 1 Memorial Meetings for Reconciliation [QCCIR 2016 10 12c]** relating to a minute from Luton and Leighton AM. We discussed this minute at our October 2015 meeting (minute **QCCIR 2015/62** refers) and agreed to return to this matter at our next meeting. We thank Meeting for Sufferings for this minute. We encourage all Area Meetings to be active in their local Churches Together and Interfaith networks, as well as relevant national organisations such as the Royal British Legion, to influence commemoration services towards reconciliation. We point Friends to possible resources for this, such as the Mayoral Service 2016 in St. Mary's Church, Dorchester, which has been circulated on the QCCIR cluster. We encourage Friends to use the cluster for discussion.

We forward this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Rowena Loverance, clerk

Mark Lilley and Eoin Stephenson, assistant clerks

Additional information:

The third paragraph of this minute responds to information sent to QCCIR in October, about Leeds Area Meeting's Quaker-Jewish Dialogue Group. Please see paper MfS2016/12/12a. Leeds AM's report has now been sent to QCCIR's Secretary.

This minute also responds to Meeting for Sufferings which, in July 2015, asked QCCIR for advice, concerning a matter sent by Luton and Leighton AM. The AM had expressed the hope that meetings to commemorate World War 1 are multi-national, focusing on reconciliation and committing participants to peace-building. MfS asked representatives to alert Friends locally to this, for them to explore practical possibilities.

Vision for a criminal justice system

Introduction

Earlier this year, Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) commended a paper, titled 'Vision for a Criminal Justice System', to Meeting for Sufferings. The paper sets out the discerned position of QPSWCC's Crime, Community and Justice sub-committee. QPSWCC felt it would be helpful to know whether the paper represented the views of Quakers throughout Britain.

Arrangements Group suggested, and the Meeting agreed, to ask AMs to consider the paper before Meeting for Sufferings responded (MfS/16/04/17).

Which AMs responded?

At the time of preparing this paper, 23 (of 70) Area Meetings had responded by sending minutes. Another explained it is still considering the matter. A local meeting in one other AM has also sent some notes.

All of these minutes and accompanying papers are available to read online <http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/papers-and-minutes> or paper copies can be collected during Meeting for Sufferings. The document is 52 pages long.

The AMs which sent minutes are:

Bournemouth Coastal AM	Lincolnshire AM	Pendle Hill AM
Bristol AM	Luton & Leighton AM	Sheffield & Balby AM
East Kent AM	Luton & Leighton AM	Sussex East AM
East Scotland AM	Mid-Somerset AM	Sussex West AM
Gloucestershire AM	Norfolk & Waveney AM	West Somerset AM
Hertford & Hitchin AM	North London AM	Wirral & Chester AM
Kingston & Wandsworth AM	Northumbria AM	York AM
Leicester AM	Notts & Derbys AM	

Also: notes from a meeting held at Forest Hill LM (South East London AM).

The clerk of North Somerset Area Meeting emailed to explain they have started to consider this and invited speakers to a series of meetings; this will take a long time, but they are keen to understand the issues.

How have AMs responded?

Almost all of the AMs which sent minutes have responded positively.

5 AMs are very positive - one described relevant work, locally, and another suggested funding should be moved from other areas of work, to support this:

- Pendle Hill AM - *we feel the document is comprehensive and we fully share and support the vision outlined there. We are committed to doing what we can to help the vision become a reality.*

- Wirral & Chester AM - *North Wales and Wirral and Chester Area Meetings have established a working group to support the establishment of the new prison at Wrexham and we feel that this is an appropriate and ongoing response to this concern.*
- Norfolk & Waveney AM - *we feel that this is an appropriate and ongoing response to this concern.*
- Leicester AM - *We support their vision of the criminal justice system but would like to see better distribution of resources in order to facilitate this work. We look forward to hearing about future developments, focused action and the next steps.*
- Lincolnshire AM - *We support the vision set out in the paper Vision for a criminal justice system and we are content to rely upon QPSW to take it forward in our name and with our support.*

Four AMs are also supportive, but with less enthusiasm:

- Mid Somerset AM - *their vision ... has much in common with the experiences of our Meeting, some of whom work or volunteer within the Criminal Justice System. In general we accept the paper's views on what we stand for and reject within the system.*
- Herts & Hitchin AM express 'some support' for the ideas, recognising there are no simple answers and upholding and encouraging those working on the issues.
- Notts & Derby AM forwarded comments from local meetings, which broadly welcomed the document but encouraged some changes of emphasis in both the paper and in ways of working
- Kingston & Wandsworth AM welcome the paper, but found the format difficult to engage with
- North London AM – heard an 'enthusiastic with reservations' response from one local meeting, and encouraged other meetings to read the document.

Eight AMs are broadly positive, and offered editing suggestions (in some cases these are quite detailed):

- Bournemouth Coastal AM
- Luton & Leighton AM
- East Scotland AM
- Sussex West AM
- Gloucestershire AM
- Northumbria AM
- Bristol AM
- York AM

Several Meetings made this an opportunity to learn about the issues, including:

- Sussex East AM

Three AMs feel it didn't go far enough

- Sheffield & Balby AM - *We feel that the document, while containing many laudable statements ... could have been more challenging. The document contains nothing we cannot support but does not fully reflect the problems within the prison service today.*

- West Somerset AM - *There was general agreement with the overall principles and policies in the paper, and particularly with the quotation from CCJS. We found the paper helpful and clear, and felt it did express our Quaker values. It describes a direction in which we should try to travel, and a shift in attitude which would be much more compassionate, less destructive, and a far better foundation for our criminal justice system. However, it does not take proper account of Humanity's capacity for cruelty and harm. We fear, that as a whole, it may fall into the Friendly trap of failing to fully acknowledge the shadow behind the light.*
- North London AM - *we agree with the thrust of every statement and endorse these principles strongly. Our reservation is that there is a need for development of the practical implications for us and the wider society in terms of necessary actions and priorities for those actions.*

Other reflections

It is clear that Quakers across Britain are interested in, educated about, taking action and bearing witness in relation to criminal justice issues. The minutes contain a great deal of rich material. Quakers do not shy away from words, or sharing long documents!

The way that Quakers around Britain have responded to this request has been similar to the response to Cornwall AM's concern. Many AMs gave considerable time and attention to this matter; but over half (46 of 70) have not. We all know there are many claims on AM agenda time, and most Quakers don't attend AM. Some felt the 'ask' was not clear.

What is asked of Meeting for Sufferings?

All of the material sent can be forwarded to QPSWCC and its Crime, Community and Justice Sub-committee (CCJS).

However, QPSWCC's intention, when it commended the paper to MfS earlier this year, was not simply to ask for feedback. It hoped MfS would ask AMs and their representatives to help test whether the paper represents where Friends stand.

As the introductory paragraphs in its paper say, CCJS encapsulated its own view of a criminal justice system – the paper is an expression of Quaker concern and vision from this specific group of Friends.

It would not be helpful or appropriate for Meeting for Sufferings to consider detailed changes or edits. However, Sufferings can consider whether the paper, broadly, expresses our yearly meeting's current experience and view.

Juliet Prager
Deputy Recording Clerk
16/11/2016

Quaker Recognised Bodies

Introduction

This paper is put before Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) for your consideration of the four groups selected to partake in the pilot of the Quaker Recognised Bodies (QRB) registration process. These groups are the first to seek recognition from MfS under this new scheme, which aims to clarify the relationship between Britain Yearly Meeting and external groups with strong Quaker links.

In June 2014, MfS agreed to review the Listed Informal Groups (LIG) arrangement, which led to MfS proposing the new system of QRB in December 2015.

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 organisation because its Quaker roots are an important part of its identity. The aim is that this new relationship will clarify the benefits and responsibilities for each QRB and Britain Yearly Meeting.

Since the QRB system was approved by Sufferings last year, members of staff in the Recording Clerk's Office have been working on the pilot phase of this switch-over. Four groups have been selected to partake in the pilot: Living Witness, Quaker Disability Equality Group, Quaker Values in Education, and Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs.

All of these groups were selected based on the criteria of being established Listed Informal Groups, and additionally, already have a linked member of staff at Friends House who can support them throughout the process. By testing this process with a few established groups, we hope to make sure it works well before involving others. So far, all of the groups involved have been informed of the switch-over process, agreed to partake in the pilot, and have been sent registration forms. By December 2016, we hope this first registration process will be completed, and these groups can then be considered for approval by Sufferings.

Information about all of the groups in the pilot can be found in the following pages.

The Quaker Disability Equality Group

Name: Quaker Disability Equality Group: QDEG

Constitution: This group has a formal constitution, but it is not a body that is formally registered as a charity.

Type of Group: “free-standing”

Foundation: The group was set up in 2008, having grown out of a concern by various Friends and Meetings, including West Scotland over the preceding years.

Aims: We want to belong to a Society that reaches out to ALL people, celebrates and embraces differences and encourages use of skills and diversity from wherever and whomever they come.” Eccles Local Quaker Meeting 2006.

The Quaker Testimony to Equality witnesses to the inclusion of all. The purpose of the Quaker Disability Equality Listed Informal Group comes from this experience and exists to promote Disability Equality within the Quaker context.

Governance: QDEG appoints clerks. It has a committee that meets approximately monthly often by skype or teleconference. It uses the Quaker business method to reach decisions. It holds an annual general meeting during the time of Britain Yearly Meeting.

Membership: Membership of the Group shall be open to all members and attenders of the Society. Membership shall begin when a record is made in the minutes of the Group or of its Committee.

A constituent Meeting of Britain Yearly Meeting may become a Supporting Meeting of the Group.

Finance: QDEG appoints a treasurer and it has a bank account, its accounts are published on its website.

A donation form, including the details of the bank account and treasurer is available on the website.

Publications and activities: It has created a set of Advices and Queries to help all Friends and Meetings consider attitudes to people with disabilities. It operates an e-mail list for Friends who wish to share thoughts and news about disability issues.

Current contact details:

Co-Clerks: Liz Anderton (West Scotland AM) Jackie Fowler (Worcester & Shropshire AM)

Contact: generally by e-mail, Liz’s telephone number is given on the website for those who prefer not to use e-mail.

quaker.org e-mail disabilityequalitygroup@quaker.org.uk

website quakerdisabilitygroup.org.uk/

Winding up: in the event that the group is laid down, any money at that time in the hands of the Treasurer or held in a bank or other account for the Group shall pass to any organisation with similar interests, as determined by the AGM which decides to lay it down, or by the Committee, in default of this. If no such organisation is nominated, any funds shall pass to Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

Staff link: Within the Quaker Life Ministry and Outreach Team.

Links with Quaker work: This includes the YM accessibility officer (when in post), a member of the Ministry & Outreach team attends the committee when they are able (time commitment works out to about 2 hours per month) QDEG members encourage Woodbrooke to provide inclusive and accessible accommodation and courses, QDEG are part of the Mental Health Group (which meets annually and includes the Retreat, Quaker Life Mental Health Cluster, Woodbrooke and YFGM).

Minutes of the AGM and the committee meetings are shared with the staff link.

Archives: held by one of the co-clerks.

Living Witness

Name: Living Witness

Constitution: the group is a registered charity (charity registration no. 1119938)

Type of Group: “external”

Foundation: The group was established in 2002, with a grant from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. It was registered as a charitable trust in July 2007. In 2008 it merged with Quaker Green Action, the group of British Friends concerned with our sustainability witness since 1986.

Aims: Living Witness aims to support the development of Quaker corporate witness to sustainable living for the public benefit, and explore ways of taking it to the wider community in Britain and elsewhere.

Governance: Living Witness is a charitable trust. In 2015 the trustees met twice in person and twice by teleconference, using Quaker Business Method.

Membership: The group is open to anyone to join.

Membership of the group shall be open to all members and attenders of the Society. Membership shall begin when a record is made in the minutes of the Group or of its Committee.

Finance: The annual budget of the group is approximately £10,000.

Publications and activities: Living Witness produced four issues of earthQuaker in 2015, including a special issue leading up to the General Election in May. From May 2014 to May 2015, Laurie wrote a monthly column for The Friend entitled Gleanings, exploring the links between sustainability and Gospel Order. The Friend has plans to publish the articles as a small book.

Current contact details:

Laurie Michaelis, group coordinator
5 Hutchcomb Road, Oxford, OX2 9HN
Email: laurie@livingwitness.org.uk
Group website: www.livingwitness.org.uk

Staff link: Chris Walker, Sustainability & Peace Programme Manager

Links with Quaker work: Living Witness work closely with Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre to provide advice, analysis, study guides and resources for spiritually-grounded action concerning sustainability in person, in print and on the internet.

Living Witness' main area of activity in 2015 was supporting the work of BYM Sustainability Group.

Living Witness also support a number of international Quaker projects concerned with peace and the environment, including supporting the work of the Quaker UN Office.

Archives: not known.

Quaker Values in Education

Name: Quaker Values in Education (QVINE)

Constitution: This group is not a body that is formally registered as a charity.

Type of Group: 'Free-standing'

Foundation: A threshing conference on Values in Education was held at Woodbrooke from 29 – 31 August, 2014. The conference focused on education in maintained schools in England and other related concerns, including alternative education. The 40 Friends who attended agreed a statement to reflect their concerns. Friends agreed to form the group 'Quaker Values in Education', and to invite others to join them, as a way of offering mutual support, to provide a forum for discussion and to promote action on shared issues of concern.

Aims: The aim of the group is to provide a forum for discussion of mutual concerns regarding education. Friends on the group are able to start new conversations, but initial themes are: Pedagogy, governorship, pastoral support for teachers and schools, project support for teachers and schools, RE teaching, other Quaker actions.

Governance: QVINE has a steering group that meets annually.

Membership: QVINE has no official membership process, but has over 100 supporters on its mailing list, and any member or attender of a Quaker Yearly Meeting can join.

Finance: The approximate annual budget is £500 (QVINE has annual funding from Cumberland AQM of £500). QVINE aims to produce an annual report to accompany its annual accounts in the autumn.

Publications and activities: Recent publications include: 2016 - Quaker Voices on Education – booklet, and 2016 – Tips for New Teachers, with a further two scheduled, Quaker Insights in Education (winter 2016), and Quaker Pedagogy (2017).

Current contact details:

David Day (Treasurer)
c/o 22 Seven Acres, Parton, Whitehaven, CA28 6RG
Email: dfhday@gmail.com tel: 07917 666 254
Website: www.qvine.org.uk

Winding up: winding up provision unknown

Staff link: Clare Wood

Links with Quaker work: On the 30th April 2016, QVINE held a conference at Friends House - "Values in Education"

Archives: QVINE do not have archives

Additional Information: QVINE would welcome BYM staff support to help with-

- Mailings to meetings
- Booking rooms
- Liaison with other FH staff [e.g. worship & witness/ peace ed. / campaigning and networking subcommittee]
- Publications

Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs

Name: Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs (QAAD)

Constitution: a registered charity (number 1059310), and a company limited by guarantee (number 3265669)

Type of Group: External

Foundation: 1996, but grew out of the Friends Temperance and Moral Welfare Union, which was set up as the Friends Temperance Union in 1870.

Aims: QAAD aims to meet the needs for support and information within the Religious Society of Friends in relation to alcohol, other drugs, and gambling. We do this by producing materials, offering advice to individual Friends when requested, and by attending and organising gatherings. We seek to facilitate links between Friends who share our concern or who are personally affected by substance issues themselves or in their families. QAAD also contributes to public discussions on matters within its concern when trustees feel led to do so.

Governance: It is managed by a Committee of Trustees who are appointed and conduct their business in accordance with Quaker Practice as observed by the Religious Society of Friends – Quakers.

Membership: Any member or attender can be involved by joining 'QAADNET' or by attending our gatherings.

Finance: QAAD appoints a treasurer and has its accounts independently examined. These are submitted to the charity commission and Companies House.

Publications and activities: These are detailed on its website. It includes Qaadrant, a quarterly magazine distributed with The Friend, biennial conferences at Woodbrooke, also QAADNET which is an informal network of Friends who have an interest or a concern with substances and gambling.

Current contact details:

Helena Chambers, QAAD Director.
21 Church Street,
Tewkesbury GL20 5PD
Telephone: 01684 299247
helenaqaad@hotmail.com

Winding up:

Staff link: Jane Dawson

Links with Quaker work: Through JPIT on gambling, QPSW and young people.

Quaker Life Central Committee Report to Meeting for Sufferings 2016

A lot has happened this year - and more will happen between the writing of this report in October and its presentation in December; a verbal update will be given in Meeting for Sufferings. Quaker Life staff and Quaker Life Central Committee continue to foster the life of Local and Area Meetings and support those holding roles in their meetings.

The Children and Young Peoples' section continue to run greatly appreciated events, the Library experimented by having an exhibition at the time of Yearly Meeting, and the Ministry and Outreach section support the very successful Quaker Life Network, and increasingly has helped make a Quaker presence at big Festivals. Major pieces of work for Central Committee are on: Changing Membership and Attendance; Pastoral Care of Unattached Friends; End of Life Issues; Engaging Young Adult Friends; each has its own working group. We expect that in future there will be more short-term working groups as legacy Funding is used more for short term projects.

Looking forward – we are seeking ways to collaborate with other Quaker bodies such as Vibrancy, Sustainability, Stewardship, Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations, Quaker Peace & Social Witness, Woodbrooke, and Hospitality (who are taking over the day-to-day running of the Bookshop) and we would like to have a stronger link with Quaker World Relations Committee. At our February meeting we will meet at Woodbrooke alongside Quaker Peace & Social Witness, and with Vibrancy and Sustainability also represented. In addition we interact regularly with Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, Meeting for Sufferings, and Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee. Two of our four meetings next year will be out of London, but we have still to explore how different the format could be, while getting the necessary work done.

Last spring Quaker Life Representative Council was on Death and Dying, led by our End of Life Issues Group; the most recent was on Sustainability. Both are heavy topics, but Representatives have risen well to the challenges. I see Quaker Life Representative Council as underpinning a lot of the life of Britain Yearly Meeting. It is a body of about 90 people from all over the country; feedback from the Representatives about what issues they feel are of concern in local meetings guides the choice of topics for future Representative Council meetings. The topic of Death and Dying also has been taken up by the Prison Chaplains Committee, and we understand that Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations, will be holding a one-day conference on the topic in March next year.

This has been a year of major transition for both the Quaker Life Staff and the Committee. There are new arrangements for management of staff and for the Secretaryship to Quaker Life Central Committee, following Richard Summers' departure early in the year. The Committee is working to understand its role and what 'being strategic' means, and laying out our strategic plan. (At the time of writing this plan is far from complete, but after our November meeting there may be significant developments to bring to Meeting for Sufferings).

A further glitch was our then Clerk having open heart surgery at the end of last year and the appointment of others to clerk. I'm glad to report that he looks better every time we see him.

The committee is currently operating with co-clerks. A further consequence of Richard Summers' departure along with new internal management arrangements is that Committee members and Quaker Life staff need to explore the best, appropriate, working relationship – we have just set up a working group to reflect on this.

The Committee is feeling stretched. Sometimes this stimulates us, but sometimes we are too stretched for comfort, so we are looking hard at what work we have to do and what could be done by others. Much of our effort this year has gone on strategic and management issues, but while we have management responsibilities we are not just a 'management machine'. We also have to discern and ask about the religious life of the Yearly Meeting - is Britain Yearly Meeting being faithful; are we as members of Britain Yearly Meeting being faithful?

I am reminded of the John Lennon quote – 'Life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans!'

Jocelyn Burnell
Co-Clerk Quaker Life Central Committee
October 2016