

Follow up Letter



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

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings 6 April 2019

Dear Friends

Thank you again for your concentration and commitment at our meeting last Saturday. The minutes are attached/enclosed for you to share with Friends in your area.

In particular, I hope that you will be able to share information about the time we spent in considering inclusion and diversity in our meetings. This is on-going work but as we understand more about the issues, we will be able to see how we may be more welcoming of all. You may like to share the questions we considered in home groups with others – all in our minute 7. As we heard there will be more at yearly meeting.

The Vibrancy Project and its future may also be something you share with your meeting – our minute 13. The film that we saw may be found [here](#) and could easily be shown. And if your meeting was interested in further exploring how things might develop in your own area, then staff involved would love to be invited for a conversation about how something along the lines of the options described might work for you. As usual, contact via: sufferings@quaker.org.uk.

We also heard from the Trustees, and this included an item about statutory compliance at area meeting level. If your area meeting is experimenting in terms of regional grouping, or in the way its business is arranged, do be prepared to let us know at a future meeting (possibly October). We were encouraged to look properly at BYM's annual report and accounts which (since our meeting) have been made available on the [BYM website](#). If you have any queries for the trustees, do contact them via clerkoftrustees@quaker.org.uk

We received two minutes this time - Meeting of Friends in Wales sent a statement about Brexit with which we united and Bournemouth shared their concern about the NHS. Their website has information about the work they have been doing and future plans and could be found [here](#).

Finally you may like to let Friends know that BYM has responded to the appropriate organisers about a proposed service at Westminster Abbey on 3rd May which is billed as “A Service to Recognise Fifty Years Of Continuous At Sea Deterrent’ or control by nuclear submarines. There is more information about the private letter sent by the Recording Clerk [here](#).

The world around us remains in turmoil as we look forward to the Easter weekend and later, our own yearly meeting. May we all find that we can, as James Nayler put it, abide in the Light, which leads to Grace and Truth.

In peace



Anne Ullathorne
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

The following papers are included in this mailing:

- Functions checklist
- Minutes of the Meeting held 6 April 2019

Meeting for Sufferings: Functions Checklist (*Quaker faith & practice* Chapter 7.02)

	Requirement	April 2019 minutes	
A	To set the priorities for the centrally managed work		
B	To issue public statements in the name of BYM		
C	To receive regular interim reports from BYM trustees	6	
D	To receive the BYM trustees' annual report & accounts for information		
E	To make a report on its own activities to YM		
F	To determine the dates of YM		
G	To deliberate on how best to support the spiritual life of the yearly meeting and to further the development of its visionary and prophetic role	7,13	Diversity & inclusion
H	To keep under review and to test as appropriate the existing and new concerns referred to it by AMs and others	7	Diversity & inclusion
I	To foster communication throughout the yearly meeting	8, 9,12	National Health Service Britain's withdrawal from the European Union
J	To receive minutes from area meetings	8, 9	National Health Service Britain's withdrawal from the European Union
K	To make appropriate entries in the prison and court register	5	
L	To appoint representatives to attend other Yearly Meetings	10	
M	To receive information about changes in the composition or status of general meetings and gatherings		
N	To make changes in the composition of area meetings		
O	To give assistance to area meetings in the amicable settlement of disputes		
P	To hear appeals against area meeting decisions		
Q	To give guidance on policy matters referred to it by the BYM trustees	13	Vibrancy in Meetings
R	To authorise action and minute as required under other sections of Quaker Faith and Practice	11	Quaker Recognised Bodies
S	To set up an arrangements group and support and working groups		

Receiving reports from central committees adds to our understanding and decisions regarding both A priorities and G supporting the spiritual life of the YM.

At a Meeting for Sufferings

Held at Friends House, London on Saturday 6 April 2019

MfS/19/04/01 Opening Worship

During opening worship we have heard Quaker faith & practice 23.48 read.

MfS/19/04/02 Apologies

We receive apologies from Oxford & Swindon AM and North West London AM, which have not been able to send a representative on this occasion.

MfS/19/04/03 Membership of Meeting for Sufferings

Since our last meeting we have received the following nominations for and requests for release from Meeting for Sufferings until the rise of Yearly Meeting 2021:

Nominated:

Rachael Booth – Young Friends General Meeting representative
Brenda Crothers – East Cheshire AM alternate
Sue Horne – North Scotland AM representative
Jane Mace – Gloucestershire AM representative
William Shaw – Swarthmoor (South West Cumbria) AM alternate

Release requests received:

Scotland AM representative
Cindy Metcalfe – Swarthmoor (South West Cumbria) AM alternate

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

We welcome Oliver Robertson who has been appointed as Head of Witness and Worship and we thank Helen Drewery for all her past work.

Visitors invited in the absence of the representative:

Henning Sieverts - Ipswich & Diss AM

Other visitors

Michael Hutchinson, clerk of Woodbrooke Trustees
Sandra Berry, Director of Woodbrooke
Neil Jarvis – BYM staff, Governance Manager
Suzanne Ismail – BYM staff, Head of Networking and Engagement
Edwina Peart – BYM Staff, Inclusion and Diversity co-ordinator
Sherry-Ann Mitchell – BYM staff, Recording Clerk's Office
Anne van Staveren – BYM staff, Media Relations Officer

MfS/19/04/04 Agenda

The Clerk has introduced the draft agenda, and we have agreed to this.

MfS/19/04/05 Court and Prison Register

a) Record of recent witness

Further to our minute MfS 2019/02/05, we are reminded that last December Lyndsay Burtonshaw, an attender at Brighton Meeting, was found guilty along with 14 others known together as the Stansted 15, of intentional disruption of services and endangerment at an aerodrome under the 1990 Aviation and Maritime Security Act.

We note that Lyndsay received a 12-month community order with 100 hours of unpaid work.

We have heard that Marita Over, an attender at Llanidloes Meeting, was arrested in Cardiff as part of an Extinction Rebellion protest. She has been charged with aggravated trespass and will appear in court on 9th April.

Brighouse West Yorkshire AM has also informed us that Jilly Chadwick was arrested during an anti-fracking demonstration in late February. She was held for 5 hours in a police cell in Preston for obstructing the highway, but was later released without charge.

We agree to record this information in the Court and Prison Register. We hold Lyndsay Burtonshaw, Marita Over and Jilly Chadwick in the light.

b) The parameters of the Court and Prison Register

We receive minute 4/2019 of York Area Meeting informing us that Christine Abbot, an attender at Friargate Meeting, lost a contract with the Church Commissioners in 2017, following a year's successful work, without right of appeal, on the grounds that she was attending Quaker worship and refused to give any assurance that she would cease to do so.

We agree to minute this information about Christine Abbott.

York Area Meeting has asked us to re-examine the parameters of the Court and Prison Register. We feel this needs further consideration before making a decision and will return to the matter at a future meeting.

We forward this minute to QCCIR.

MfS/19/04/06 BYM Trustees

Caroline Nursey, clerk of BYM Trustees, has reported on the Trustees meeting held on 15-16 February 2019. Further to our minute MfS 2018/11/13 we receive and note minute BYMT 2019/02/15 regarding the adoption of strategic priorities for centrally-managed work. Caroline has told us more about Trustees' consideration of the relationship between BYM and area meetings and how best to support area meetings in their compliance with statutory requirements. Meeting for Sufferings is involved in the life of area and local meetings and is aware of some of the issues at regional level. We may need to return to this.

We have also heard from Linda Batten, BYM treasurer. The annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 December 2018 were agreed by Trustees yesterday and headline figures are that both income and expenditure are down on the previous year. The loss of £3million for the year includes a stock value loss of £2.3million and the reserves, of which two thirds are held in property, stand at £77 million. Although about £5million was gifted by Friends in 2018, Quaker support was actually down by £0.75million. We continue to be supported more by deceased Friends than by those alive today! The Hospitality Company provided a record-breaking £1.3million of income.

The accounts will be available in full for Yearly Meeting in May and we are encouraged to read them.

We thank all Trustees for their work.

MfS/19/04/07 Diversity and Inclusion

“As Friends we commit ourselves to a way of worship which allows God to teach and transform us. We have found corporately that the Spirit, if rightly followed, will lead us into truth, unity and love: all our testimonies grow from this leading.” QF&P 1.01

We have been reminded that Yearly Meeting has asked us to consider diversity in our committee and organisational structures and to think of ways in which Quakers can remove barriers and seek wider participation in the full life of our meetings.

Edwina Peart, Inclusion and Diversity Co-ordinator, has presented a second report to MfS, describing information gathered from the diversity and inclusion survey and from the national gathering on diversity and inclusion held at Woodbrooke. Around 1600 people have responded to the survey and were a self-selecting sample. Edwina has more work to do on analysing the results, but today she has shared with us some further reflections about ethnicity, gender and class in particular. She has found Quakers are, at their core, a community of people committed to a loving, simple and rich-in-the-spirit way of life.

We have spent time in seven separate groups considering the following questions:

1. Does anyone have a claim on the universal?
2. Do Quakers think that everyone should aspire to become middle class by middle age?
3. What makes for a welcoming welcome?

A report will be compiled from feedback received from the groups.

In the concluding plenary session we reflected that some things are visible and others invisible – those in a dominant group are not always aware of their dominance. We need to know ourselves and the ‘baggage’ we hold to enable us to be truly welcoming of others. ‘Jesus asks us to love each person, whoever they are; not necessarily to agree or approve, but to love at a deep level. There should be no ‘other’ – we are all family.’

We are reminded of the importance of listening to each other at a deep level. We heard that diversity, inclusion and privilege will be considered at Yearly Meeting in May and we will return to the matter again.

MfS/19/04/08 National Health Service

We receive minute 19.02 of Bournemouth Coastal Area Meeting, which has adopted a concern to uphold a universal, publicly provided Health Service. This has grown from and builds on local circumstances, including proposed changes to health services in Dorset.

We forward Bournemouth Coastal AM's minute to Area Meetings, encouraging them if appropriate to learn more about the concern and to consider taking action. AM clerks are welcome to read documents available on the Bournemouth and Coastal AM website, and to contact the AM's clerk for further information.

MfS/19/04/09 Britain's withdrawal from the European Union

We receive part of minute 2019.08 of Meeting of Friends in Wales held at Aberystwyth on Saturday 23 February 2019 which contains a statement that Meeting of Friends in Wales have agreed. It draws attention to the importance of peace within Europe and in

the UK and shares distress about the degree of inequality that is evident in our society today. We unite with this statement.

We are aware of the great turmoil that currently exists in the political spectrum and are reminded that whatever the political outcome, we will continue to live lives that focus on love, both of our fellow beings and of the planet, and to seek to follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit that may be found within each of us.

MfS/19/04/10 Appointments

a) Central Nominations Committee

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

BYM Representatives to other European Yearly Meetings

To serve as representative to the following Yearly Meetings in 2019, should BYM receive invitation:

Ireland Yearly Meeting (25-28 April 2019)

Tina Cunningham - West Scotland AM (1st term)

Appointed as a between-meetings decision by the clerks of Meeting for Sufferings:

Finland (22-24 March 2019)

Mary Woodward - South East Scotland AM (1st term)

Switzerland (7 June-10 June 2019)

Harry Albright - Leicester AM (1st term)

Pendle Hill Friends in Residence

To serve between September and December 2019:

Maureen O’Ryan – Brighouse & West Yorkshire AM (1st term)

Group to review Quaker Stewardship Committee

Appointed as a between-meetings decision by the clerks of Meeting for Sufferings to serve from as soon as possible until the work is complete:

David Robson - Leeds AM (1st term)

Steven Burkeman - York AM (1st term)

Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee

To serve from 6 April 2019 to 31 December 2021:

Robert Thompson - East Scotland AM (1st term)

Request for release from QPSW Central Committee:

Dick Stockford - Worcestershire & Shropshire AM

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

b) Yearly Meeting Nominating Group

Central Nominations Committee

Further to Minute MfS/19/02/11b Yearly Meeting Nominating Group bring forward an amended term of service for Fran Hicks – West Somerset AM, to serve from 1 January 2019 – the end of YM 2022.

We appoint our Friend accordingly.

c) Committee on Clerks

Brings forward the following names for service as indicated:

Clerks of Meeting for Sufferings 2020

To serve from 1 January 2020 - 31 December 2020

Clerk

Margaret Bryan - York Area Meeting (1st term)

Assistant Clerk

Robert Card - Northumbria Area Meeting (1st term)

We appoint the Friends named accordingly.

MfS/19/04/11 Quaker Recognised Bodies

Further to minute MfS/15/12/1, we receive paper MfS 2017/10/14 recommending groups for registration as Quaker Recognised Bodies.

We agree to register the following groups for five years, with registration to be reviewed by April 2024:

External

The Mount School, York
Green Olive Trust

Free-standing

Quaker Music Network

MfS/19/04/12 Letter of greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting

We receive from Quaker World Relations Committee a draft for our letter of greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting to be held at The High School, Rathgar, Dublin on 25–28 April 2019 (paper MfS 2019/04/12). We agree to an additional paragraph suggested by QCCIR.

We ask the clerk to sign the letter, as amended, on our behalf.

MfS/19/04/13 Vibrancy in Meetings

Our minute 2018/10/09 refers.

We have received a copy of the executive summary of the Vibrancy in Meetings programme evaluation by the NCVO charities evaluation service together with a report on options being considered by Woodbrooke and BYM trustees (paper MfS 2019/04/13). Caroline Nursey (BYM trustees) and Michael Hutchinson (Woodbrooke trustees), Martin Ford (Vibrancy steering group) and Suzanne Ismail (Head of Networking and Engagement) have been with us today and we have heard that trustees will be considering this matter again at their meeting in June.

Caroline began by explaining that the median number of members in local meetings has fallen from 24 to 18 in the last ten years, but there are now more children's meetings than ten years ago and 16 'Young Adult Friends' groups around the country.

Michael explained Woodbrooke's desire to work more with Friends on the ground to build Friends' confidence and foster their ministry.

We are united in our desire to make Quakerism more accessible to others and to build our local meetings in to more vital and resonant communities.

Martin has told us about the work of the steering group and explained this is the third evaluation report that they have received. The outcomes for Friends involved in the project are that they have felt much better supported, and feel happier, more confident role holders.

Meetings have felt transformed particularly in the areas of community, Quaker discipline and collaboration. (Half of the meetings currently served reported deeper quality of ministry at their meetings).

We have read that simply replicating the pilot on a larger scale may not be the best way forward. Suzanne explained that it could be adapted, either by a phased roll-out which would take a transition period of about five years, or by pursuing further decentralisation opportunities so that some functions/ services are delivered from locations other than London and Birmingham: although these models may overlap more than we think.

Meeting for Sufferings has been asked how either of these options might support Quakerism to thrive in your area.

There is considerable enthusiasm today for the Vibrancy programme and a wish that it should continue. Friends have spoken of their experience in being supported by local development workers, enabling them to feel engaged with Quakers in Britain.

Both the parliamentary work in Scotland and the youth work in Yorkshire have shown how a more decentralised approach can work well.

We have also heard that some changes will be needed. We hope that our consideration today has been useful.

We send this minute to BYM Trustees, to Woodbrooke Trustees and to Quaker Life Central Committee.

MfS/19/04/14 Closing minute

We closed our time together with worship.

Anne Ullathorne

Clerk