

# Calling letter



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

18 September 2020

## To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Dear Friends,

The October meeting would, in a normal year, have been our residential meeting at Woodbrooke. Sadly, circumstances mean that we are meeting for a second time online, and we have planned shorter sessions punctuated by longer breaks in the hope of lessening the strain of concentration over extended periods.

As before, staff will be running two technical sessions preceding MfS so that friends new to Zoom can learn how we run our business virtually. Details of this induction will be sent to representatives and alternates separately and all are welcome to take part. If another Friend in your area will be attending Meeting for Sufferings on your behalf please share information of the induction sessions with them too.

You will see from the attached agenda that Arrangements Group has planned a mix of plenary and breakout sessions.

- The Friday evening is given over chiefly to Sustainability and a strategic update from QPSW Central Committee.
- On Saturday we start with a report from Trustees, followed by consideration in smaller groups with the title *Responding to racism* looking at issues raised by minutes received both from Area Meetings and Trustees
- After a 30-minute break we will spend an hour on a variety of reports.
- On Sunday morning Rosie Carnall and Catherine Brewer, co-clerks of the Book of Discipline Review Group, will share with us news of the work the group has been doing since its inception in early 2019. We will also hear about plans for YMG in 2021
- The meeting will close with an extended period of worship

The Arrangements Group's minutes are included in your papers and I would like to draw your attention to minute 5 (August meeting). MfSAG was asked to look again at their proposal (considered in June) for reducing the number of Sufferings' meetings in the next triennium, and to report back this time. You will see that Arrangements Group wishes to experiment before bringing you any revised proposal.

I'm delighted to say that the first experiment concerns QCCIR. The committee will be bringing a short report on its work to MfS but they welcomed the opportunity to offer an additional evening session on 28 September as an introduction to the themes and

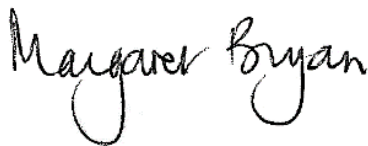
issues they are considering in their work at the present time. Details of this online session will be emailed to MfS members separately.

At our residential meeting last year, we received two minutes from area meetings on assisted dying. At that time we encouraged all area meetings to explore this issue, and we hope to return to it at a future meeting. The Arrangements Group had hoped to do this at our meeting in December this year but, as yet, we have only received a handful of minutes. It may be helpful if you could speak with your area meeting clerk, to discuss whether your area meeting will be able to consider the matter.

As always the Meeting for Sufferings Support Group will provide eldership for the meeting, and staff will be on hand for technical support throughout.

I am looking forward to seeing your faces once again.

In peace and friendship,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Bryan". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Margaret Bryan  
Clerk

**Papers enclosed with this mailing**

Agenda

MfS Arrangements Group June and August 2020 meeting minutes  
MfS 2020 10 Record of minutes received  
MfS 2020 10 05 Appointments  
MfS 2020 10 06a Sustainability Monitoring Group report  
MfS 2020 10 06b Climate Crisis: spiritual nurture and learning project  
MfS 2020 10 06c Preparations for COP26  
MfS 2020 10 07 Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee strategy  
MfS 2020 10 08 BYM Trustees  
MfS 2020 10 09 Responding to racism  
MfS 2020 10 11 Quaker Recognised Bodies  
MfS 2020 10 12 Report from Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations  
MfS 2020 10 13 Update on minutes received by Meeting for Sufferings  
MfS 2020 10 14 Report from the Book of Discipline Revision Committee  
MfS 2020 10 15 Yearly Meeting 2020

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

- Register
- Register for the informal session to meet QCCIR committee members
- Register for a session for technical questions on attending online meetings
- Read the agenda and papers in good time
- Contact the other representative/alternate from your area meeting or body
- Send any comments or questions to the clerks, before the meeting



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## Agenda

### Meeting for Sufferings – 2–4 October 2020

By video conference

#### Friday 2 October

Time / item #	Item	Paper Number
6:30pm	Arrivals	
7pm	<b>Session 1</b>	
1	<b>Opening worship</b>	
2	<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	
3	<b>Membership</b>	<b>MfS 2020 10 03</b> (To note)
4	<b>Agenda</b> Adoption and acceptance of the agenda	
5	<b>Appointments</b>	<b>MfS 2020 10 05</b> (For approval)
6	<b>Sustainability and the climate crisis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Report from the Sustainability Monitoring Group <b>(6a)</b></li><li>• Update on the project: 'Climate crisis: spiritual nurture and learning' <b>(6b)</b></li><li>• Preparations for COP26 <b>(6c)</b></li></ul>	<b>MfS 2020 10 06</b> (For information)
7	<b>Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee strategy</b> Update on progress	<b>MfS 2020 10 07</b> (For information)
8.30pm	<b>End of Session 1</b>	

*continued...*

## Saturday 3 October

9:00am	Arrivals	
9.30am	<b>Session 2</b>	
8	<b>BYM Trustees</b> To hear from the Clerk of BYM Trustees including a report on Trustee meetings in June, August and September	<b>MfS 2020 10 08</b> (For reflection)
9	<b>Responding to racism</b> In small groups reflecting on questions for discussion. Returning to worship sharing	<b>MfS 2020 10 09</b> (For reflection)
11.30am	<b>End of Session 2</b>	

12.00pm	<b>Session 3</b>	
10	<b>Review of Quaker Stewardship Committee</b> To receive a report and consider recommendations from the group appointed to review Quaker Stewardship Committee and the terms of reference for BYM Trustees	<b>MfS 2020 10 10</b> (For approval)
11	<b>Quaker Recognised Bodies</b> To approve and register further Quaker Recognised Bodies	<b>MfS 2020 10 11</b> (For approval)
12	<b>Annual report from Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations</b> Introduced by Stephanie Grant, QCCIR rep for MfS	<b>MfS 2020 10 12</b> (For information)
13	<b>Update on minutes received by Meeting for Sufferings</b> To receive an update on minutes received by Meeting for Sufferings on poverty of public services, tax for warfare, conflict in meetings and unattached Friends	<b>MfS 2020 10 13</b> (For information)
1pm	<b>End of Session 3</b>	

*continued...*

## Sunday 4 October

9:00am	Arrivals	
9.30am	Session 4	
14	<b>Report from the Book of Discipline Revision Committee</b> Introduced by Rosie Carnall and Catherine Brewer, Co-clerks	<b>MfS 2020 10 14</b> (For information)
15	<b>Yearly Meeting 2020</b>	<b>MfS 2020 10 15</b> (For information)
	<b>Closing worship</b>	
11am	End of Meeting	



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At a meeting of

## **Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group**

Held online from 19:00 – 20:30 on 29 June 2020

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Margaret Bryan, Robert Card, Gill Greenfield, Karen Draycott, Mark Lilley

**In attendance:** Sherry-Ann Mitchell, Juliet Prager, Neil Jarvis, Paul Parker

#### **1. Review of Meeting for Sufferings held online 06 June 2020**

We have reviewed the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2020 via Zoom.

We have heard that the meeting went well and we thank all involved for making it a success. We are grateful for all the feedback we have received. We have noted comments about needing to allow more time for items, about how best to draft and offer minutes, and about allowing for the building of community and social interaction.

We will hold these comments in mind when we come to plan the next meeting.

#### **2. Pattern of meetings**

Meeting for Sufferings minute MfS20/06/09 agrees to hold four meetings a year for the next triennium beginning in 2021. Some unease about reducing the number of meetings was expressed and the minute instructs Arrangements Group to review the pattern of meetings and report back in October.

We have been reminded that we have still to arrange the meetings for the rest of this triennium. We are minded to try a variety of additional online meetings to enable threshing in advance of main sessions of Meeting for Sufferings. On the basis of these experiments we may be better able to present options in 2021.

We will return to this issue at our August meeting.

#### **3. Forward agenda**

We have reviewed our forward agenda, which informs our planning.

We have agreed that we would prefer to hold our October meeting via Zoom rather than having a residential meeting at Woodbrooke. We imagine holding a number of sessions over the course of the weekend.

We would like to ask QCCIR to be the focus of an extra meeting when it feels ready. We might make similar arrangements for QWRC.

We would like to hear from the Book of Discipline Review Group and the Sustainability report.

We expect to plan the agenda for our October meeting at our meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> August.

#### **4. Correspondence received**

We ask our Clerks, in collaboration with staff, to provide a brief response to the Friends who have sent correspondence.

Robert Card  
Clerk

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At a meeting of

### **Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group**

Held online from 11:00 – 13:20 on 20 August 2020

#### **Minutes**

**Present:** Margaret Bryan, Robert Card, Karen Draycott, Gill Greenfield

**In attendance:** Neil Jarvis, Sherry-Ann Mitchell, Paul Parker (agenda items 3-6), Juliet Prager

**Prevented:** Mark Lilley

#### **1. Gold minutes**

We agree to record the following as Gold minutes and papers:

<b>Gold minute number</b>	<b>Minute title</b>	<b>Associated gold paper</b>
MfSAG-2019-12-07	Gold minutes	MfSAG-2019-12-06
MfSAG-2020-02-06	Record of minutes received and actions taken	MfSAG-2020-02-05d

#### **2. Meetings attended by clerks and others**

We have heard an update from members of the group on meetings we have attended since we last met.

The Clerk has attended the following:

Meeting with Clerks of Meeting of Friends in Wales and General Meeting for Scotland.

Clerks' Away Day. This looked at progress towards simplifying structures, which is likely to come to Meeting for Sufferings early next year.

Joint meeting of Ireland Yearly Meeting and Britain Yearly Meeting.

### **3. Forward agenda – present triennium:**

#### **a. Forward agenda**

We have reviewed our forward agenda, which informs our planning.

#### **b. Young People's Participation Day, December 2020**

We have discussed options for Young People's involvement in our December meeting.

We plan to include young people in our December meeting and think that we may be looking at issues arising from the Black Lives Matter movement.

### **4. Planning for October**

We have started to plan the agenda for our October meeting. We ask that this be finalised by the clerks in consultation with staff.

### **5. Forward agenda – next triennium:**

#### **Future meetings of Meeting for Sufferings**

We have returned to our consideration of dates for future Meeting for Sufferings. At our meeting in June we noted there was some unease about reducing the number of meetings to four meetings a year for the next triennium although some Friends supported this move and were enthusiastic about the opportunities it presents.

In June, we also received feedback from representatives about the first online Meeting for Sufferings and we noted that, while there were some matters we can improve on, overall meeting online went well. Many Friends suggested this different way of gathering might give us new opportunities when deciding on the pattern of future meetings.

We now affirm our decision in June to experiment and we will do this over the coming months so we can present options to Meeting for Sufferings. In October, we will offer an online gathering of members of Sufferings to meet QCCIR committee members. We hope to experiment with further meetings in this triennium.

We expect to return to Meeting for Sufferings in 2021 with options based on our learning from our online gatherings and meetings. We note that in the current circumstances it is difficult to guarantee face-to-face meetings and we will have to be open to experiment.



We note moving Yearly Meeting from May to August in 2021 has resulted in a long gap between Meeting for Sufferings in April (the last meeting planned in this triennium) and October (the first meeting of the new triennium). This gap presents us with an opportunity for additional online meetings.

## **6. YMAC invitation to help discern the agenda and programme for YM2021**

The Clerks have been invited to contribute to YMAC's discernment of the agenda and programme for Yearly Meeting next year. We agree to include details of minutes that have been sent to MfS from area meetings and an indication of matters we are expecting to return to in our forward agenda.

We close, planning to meet again on Monday 20 October 2020.

Robert Card  
Clerk

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

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

Body sending minute	Minute	Initial steps and decisions	Subsequent steps (if any)	Status
Central Yorkshire AM	Minute of online discernment regarding support for US Quakers (and case of George Floyd)	<b>17/6/20 Minute received</b>  <b>29/6/20 and 15/8/20 Tabled at MfSAG</b> MfSAG agreed to bring to MfS in October	Letter of solidarity 'Standing together against racism' sent to Friends in USA signed by clerk to Quaker World Relations Committee and the Recording Clerk	To MfS in October.
Manchester & Warrington AM	MWAM2020.06.03. Minute18. National Quaker response to the unrest caused by the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis USA	<b>4/6/20 Minute received</b>  <b>29/6/20 and 15/8/20 Tabled at MfSAG</b> MfSAG agreed to bring to MfS in October	Letter of solidarity 'Standing together against racism' sent to Friends in USA signed by clerk to Quaker World Relations Committee and the Recording Clerk	To MfS in October.
South East London AM	20/38 (iii) Help for hardship  (subject: greener, fairer, simpler government)	<b>20/5/20 Minute received</b>  <b>29/6/20 and 15/8/20 Tabled at MfSAG</b> Area meeting asked for further information. MfSAG agreed to request paper from QPSW staff on work on		Issue to MfS in October.

Body sending minute	Minute	Initial steps and decisions	Subsequent steps (if any)	Status
	policies post covid pandemic)	COP26 and Build Back Better in relation to this minute for October meeting.		
Southern Marches AM	AM20/34 Israeli Annexation in Occupied West Bank	<b>18/6/20 Minute received</b>  <b>29/6/20 and 15/8/20 Tabled at MfSAG</b> MfSAG asked QPSW staff for information and responded to AM asking queries.		Reply has been sent to AM.
Book of Discipline Revision Committee	BDRC 2020-04-6 Request for new members of this committee	<b>11/6/20 Minute received</b>  <b>29/6/20 and 15/8/20 Tabled at MfSAG</b> MfSAG noted the minute is also with CNC and CNC is searching for new members.		No action required from MfS at present.
Brighthouse West Yorkshire AM	20/03/13 Swords into Ploughshares concern	<b>28/6/20 Minute received</b>  <b>15/8/20 Tabled at MfSAG</b> MfSAG agreed to share this minute for information.		To be shared for information.



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## Appointments

### Central Nominations Committee

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

#### Group to Review Yearly Meeting and Yearly Meeting Gatherings

To serve from appointment until the work is complete

For appointment:

Alexandra Boliver-Brown	Young Friends General Meeting	1st term
Sarah Donaldson	Manchester & Warrington AM	1st term
Joseph Fuller	Gloucestershire AM	1st term
Ann Kerr	West Scotland AM	1st term
Lesley Richards	Worcestershire & Shropshire AM	1st term
Carolyn Sansom	South Wales AM	1st term
Chris Skidmore	Craven & Keighley AM	1st term
Keith Walton	Kingston & Wandsworth AM	1st term

For appointment to serve as convenor for the group until the work is complete:

Sarah Donaldson	Manchester & Warrington AM	1st term
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#### Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations

To serve from 1 May 2021 to 30 April 2023

For appointment:

Debbie Cates	Cambridgeshire AM	1st term
Madeleine Pennington	South London AM	1st term

For reappointment:

Catherine Brewer	Northumbria AM	2nd term
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#### Quaker Housing Trust

For reappointment to serve for a one-year extension of their service from April 2021 to April 2022:

Malcolm Bowker	York AM
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### **Quaker Life Central Committee**

To serve from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2023

For appointment:

Rachael Swancott	Worcestershire & Shropshire AM	1st term
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For reappointment:

Max Kirk	York AM	2nd term
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### **Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee**

To serve from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2023

For reappointment:

Mike Coote	Sussex West AM	2nd term
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Annie Dickson	Bournemouth Coastal AM	2nd term
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### **Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee**

To serve from 3 October 2020 to Yearly Meeting 2020

For appointment in the interim, on behalf of Yearly Meeting:

Andrew Rendle	London West AM	1st term
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Martin Ward	South East Scotland AM	1st term
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### **For information**

The following appointments were made in the interim by a between meetings decision of the Meeting for Sufferings clerks.

### **Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees**

Appointed to serve from 30 July 2020 to 31 December 2020:

Kit Fotheringham	Bristol AM	1st term
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### **Quaker Life Central Committee**

Appointed to serve from 16 June 2020 to 31 December 2021:

Susannah Tombs	Banbury & Evesham AM	1st term
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## Sustainability – living up to our commitment

### Sustainability Monitoring Group report to Meeting for Sufferings October 2020

#### 1 About this report

The Sustainability Monitoring Group (SMG) exists to help Meeting for Sufferings review whether Quakers in Britain, including our centrally managed work, are meeting our commitment to becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community.

This report covers what we have learned about the commitment and our actions. There is also a section about SMG.

Covid-19 has impacted on SMG itself, on local and area meetings, central committees and staff capacity. So it hasn't been possible to produce a report that covers everything. That said, we have tried to keep this report short, and make it helpful as possible to Meeting for Sufferings.

#### 2 Our commitment

Meeting for Sufferings adopted [A Quaker Response to the crisis of climate change](#) in 2009. Two years later, in 2011, Yearly Meeting made a [commitment to sustainability](#) and asked Meeting for Sufferings to *work with area meetings and our staff to make better known our current witness and to give thought to appropriate aims for our corporate commitment and the framework which will allow our successes to be shared.*

To help take this forward, MfS adopted the **Recommendations for Action** in 2014, and then agreed a revised version in 2017 – the full document is included below in Appendix A. It covers five broad areas:

- Eldership
- Oversight
- Living Faithfully
- Right Ordering
- Witness

The rest of this section gives examples of what we know has happened and is happening, in relation to each heading.

## 2.1 Eldership

This section is about understanding, articulating and deepening the spiritual underpinning of the commitment.

- BYM has commissioned Woodbrooke to work with Quakers in Britain, helping us all to deepen and articulate the spiritual basis of our commitment. The project is called *Nurturing our Sustainable Ministry*.
- The theme for Yearly Meeting 2019 was privilege, on climate justice. The planned theme for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2020 was '*Listening, prophecy and reconciliation: Allyship in a Climate Emergency*', but unfortunately the event had to be postponed.
- The Swarthmore Lecture 2019 'On Earth as it is in Heaven: the Kingdom of God and the yearning of Creation' considered Quaker eco-theology; Woodbrooke has made the [video of the lecture](#) available, and the [book](#) (published by BYM) is also available.
- We anticipate that the Book of Discipline Revision Committee will include more about the spiritual basis of our commitment to sustainability in the new book.

## 2.2 Oversight

This section focuses on how Friends can connect, learn from and inspire each other.

- The *Nurturing our Sustainable Ministry* project now being delivered by Woodbrooke includes organising Sustainability Gatherings, to enable Friends from different parts of Britain to strengthen our shared commitment through regular meetings and dialogue with BYM staff and with Quaker other organisations.
- BYM continues to fund the [Friends World Committee for Consultation](#) (FWCC) to enable Quakers in Britain to connect with and learn from Friends around the world.
- General Meeting for Scotland, Meeting of Friends in Wales, and some regional gatherings of Quakers have considered sustainability together. In some parts of Britain this has been supported by the Local Development Workers employed by BYM. *It would be good to hear more about this sort of event – please send information to SMG by emailing [sufferings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sufferings@quaker.org.uk)*

## 2.3 Living Faithfully

This section is about how we, as individual Quakers, live out the commitment in our day-to-day life.

- Some Quaker communities have found ways to support this, and here are three examples we've heard of:
  - [Young Friends General Meeting](#) (YFGM) is all vegetarian and mostly vegan.
  - Loughborough Friends have produced a '[sustainability handbook](#)' documenting lifestyle changes individuals have made.
  - Laurie Michaelis of Living Witness runs the discussion group [Zero Carbon Quakers](#), for Friends to share experiences of the journey to zero-carbon living.

## 2.4 Right Ordering

This section is about how Quaker communities organise ourselves.

- Many Quaker activities have had to adapt unexpectedly this year. At the time of writing this report, we don't have data about how this has impacted on our carbon footprint. However, we note that local meetings, regional events and national gatherings have been impossible since late March; fewer face-to-face meetings will assist in the reduction of emissions by personal transport. The closure of Meeting Houses and use of Zoom will have reduced carbon emissions at least temporarily.
- BYM publishes sustainability information on the [Friends House website](#). The building is one of a few London venues to be awarded a Green Tourism gold award.
- BYM monitors the carbon footprint of its activities. The data we have seen covers staff, visitors, committee and volunteer activities. In 2019:
  - **Overall** BYM (running Friends House, Swarthmoor Hall and all Quaker centrally managed work) emitted **345 tonnes** of carbon dioxide (tCO<sub>2</sub>e). This was 22% less than in 2018.
  - **Electricity** accounted for 56% of total emissions – **209 tonnes** for 'location-based' carbon. (BYM purchases electricity from Good Energy which supplies from renewable sources, so the 'market-based' carbon footprint is zero.)
  - **Air travel** – BYM used **61 tonnes**. This was 51% less than in 2018 thanks to a reduction in long-haul flights. Flights are used by staff, volunteers and committee members to meet with with partners in South Asia and Africa; for the EAPPI programme; and for visits to and from Quakers based elsewhere in the world.
  - **Car and rail travel** combined used **53 tonnes**. Most journeys are for Friends to attend committee meetings.
  - **Paper** – used mostly for committee meetings, events, and clerks' mailings, cost **2.5 tonnes**.
- We understand BYM is working towards a more detailed breakdown of travel data, which would help manage and cut carbon use. For example, we don't have detailed information about MfS' carbon footprint, although we know it currently requires about 1,000 journeys a year the length and breadth of Britain.
- To minimise our carbon footprint we need to find ways for committees to meet less often and differently. During lockdown we've learned that it's possible to meet online, at least sometimes. In June Meeting for Sufferings was reluctant to hold fewer meetings each year, although there was also some enthusiasm and acknowledgement of the potential benefits.

## 2.5 Witness

This section is about Quaker faith in action.

- Yearly Meeting has delegated the work of translating our faith into action to Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC). Its [Economics and Sustainability programme](#) is guided by the ESP sub-committee. The work includes speaking out and supporting local Quaker communities in their witness:
  - Working with partners to promote '[Build Back Better](#)'
  - This year there have been several inquiries and consultations looking at the post-Covid future, from the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy



Committee's inquiry into 'Post Pandemic Economic Growth' to the Reset inquiry. QPSW has responded and developed [six principles for a green and just recovery](#)

- Preparing for the [United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP26](#), which is now due to take place in Glasgow in November 2021. This is done alongside the [Quaker United Nations Office](#) (QUNO) Geneva which receives grant funding from BYM.
- QPSW has published a [Resource Directory for Quakers](#) to help us learn and take action on climate justice issues
- It's helpful to note that BYM maintained some capacity for sustainability witness throughout lockdown, and brought staff back from furlough to work with partners and Friends

### **3 Committees for centrally managed work**

#### **3.1 What are the committees doing?**

Since January 2019, all our central committees have considered sustainability at least once since January 2019. Appendix A shows the committees' activities, and related work undertaken by BYM staff.

When the four central and standing committees (QPSWCC, QWRC, QCCIR) reported to MfS in December 2019, all their reports included reference to sustainability.

QPSWCC's witness work is well-developed, and connected with partners, including faith organisations and international Quaker bodies. There may be opportunities for other committees to connect more and draw on this work – possibly in particular QCCIR which reported to MfS last year that they haven't discerned any particular work on sustainability for the committee (although they aim to articulate and embed the commitment in their work).

#### **3.2 Collaboration**

In 2018, Meeting for Sufferings agreed that there should be a meeting of representatives from key committees: *...to ensure collaboration, resourcing, effective communication, and co-ordinated responsibility for all required tasks...* (minute MfS 2018 04 06).

The first gathering took place in 2018, and later that year Meeting for Sufferings reflected:

*Experiments in holding meetings of representatives of BYM committees, like the one held in July, seem a good way forward and there are often unexpected benefits in gathering together for liaison and mutual encouragement. ... we ask for these to be held regularly.* (minute MfS 2018 07 20)

There have now been three of these gatherings, and one of our members joined the meeting held in July this year. It was a helpful meeting, and good to hear how much is being done.

## **4 Local and Regional Quaker Communities**

All Area Meetings have been asked to include information in their annual reports about their actions on sustainability (minute MfS 18/07/17, Sustainability: Reporting on Actions' refers). Quaker Stewardship Committee collects the annual reports, and will be able to review them when they're received later in the year.

Some stories of how local meetings are living out the commitment are shared on BYM's website – for inspiration and mutual encouragement. Examples include stories about [Extinction Rebellion](#), [Young Quaker Climate Strikers](#), and a [summer project involving local children](#).

## **5 Reviewing the Recommendations for Action**

We're considering whether it would be helpful to update some sections of the Recommendations for Action. If so we'll bring proposals to Meeting for Sufferings next year.

## **6 About the Sustainability Monitoring Group**

The Sustainability Monitoring Group (SMG) is responsible for monitoring the Yearly Meeting's commitment to Sustainability. The group supports Meeting for Sufferings in overseeing the Yearly Meeting's commitment to sustainability. SMG monitors receipt of reports from Trustees, committees and area meetings that are sent to MfS; that agreed activities are undertaken; and that MfS pays attention to our sustainability commitment in its meetings.

### **6.1 Activities**

Two of the current members of SMG were appointed by MfS in July 2019, and the third in October 2019. Since then we have spent time learning about and understanding the role. We've started to become acquainted with the Recommendations for Action and with the complex central committee structure and roles.

It's fair to say that we were just getting started at the beginning of this year, and the lockdown has had an impact on what we have been able to do.

### **6.2 Membership**

The Group has three members. One, Maureen Jackson, has asked to be released for personal reason, so we hope the Standing Nominations Group can bring a name for MfS approval. The other two members are Peter Aviss (Sussex East AM) and Caroline Howden (East Kent AM).

Prepared by:

Peter Aviss (SMG)

Caroline Howden (SMG)

Juliet Prager (Deputy Recording Clerk)

September 2020

## **7 Appendix A – Recommendations for Action agreed by MfS**

### **Recommendations for Action (Meeting for Sufferings, February 2017)**

Becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community: Revised Recommendations for Action

#### **Introduction**

Our overall aim is to encourage and support Friends and meetings in implementing the Canterbury Commitment. This paper offers recommendations in five key areas:

1. Eldership: rooting the Commitment in our Quaker faith
2. Oversight: strengthening our community
3. Living faithfully: changing our lifestyles
4. Right ordering: Quaker core activities and property; and
5. Witness: working for systemic and policy change.

Friends and meetings vary in their situations and hence in their priorities, suitable approaches and needs for support. Their needs change over time. We must therefore be responsive, with a wide and evolving range of resources in each of the five areas, and regular communication to bring those resources to Friends' and meetings' attention in a variety of ways. We also need strong networking among Friends and meetings so they can share ideas and good practice and learn from each other's experience.

The following sections identify aims and make broad recommendations in each of the five implementation areas. We have not specified which organisation should take the work forward except in a few cases where this has already been discerned.

#### **Eldership: rooting the commitment in our Quaker faith**

##### **The aim**

While Friends mostly feel ownership of our corporate sustainability commitment, many understand it in secular or practical terms and find it hard to say what is Quaker about it; others have a clear idea of its spiritual basis for themselves, but may not recognise the relevance of others' spiritual paths and experiences. Our spirituality may relate to sustainability in many ways. It may enable us, for example, to engage with loss and suffering, to celebrate beauty, to connect with others in the work for transformation, and to discern our way forward.

We need to make the commitment real and relevant to Quakers as an expression of our faith. That means:

1. Recognising and being able to articulate how our own spiritual experience and practice relates to sustainability

2. Recognising and being able to acknowledge other Friends' spiritual experiences and practices – both similar to and different from our own – and their relationship with sustainability
3. Recognising all of these as part of our corporate faith and practice
4. Being able to bring Quaker insights, values and practices to bear on sustainability issues in our lives and communities and the wider world.

### **Eldership – Recommendations**

This section of the Recommendations for Action is essentially about eldership – supporting Friends in their spiritual practice, worship, ministry, learning and discernment as these relate to our sustainability commitment. These need attention at all levels, from individual Friends and local meetings to the Yearly Meeting and other national and international Quaker bodies. In particular:

1. Local and area meetings should provide opportunities for worship-based explorations where Friends can share how sustainability is part of their faith, and how that shapes their lives, relationships and actions.
2. Quaker bodies including central committees, Quaker Recognised Bodies and other organisations, should make opportunities (including for their staff, members and networks) to explore how their work connects sustainability with Quaker faith.
3. Central departments and other Quaker bodies should work together to provide Friends and meetings with resources and support for learning and discernment related to sustainability and its basis in Quaker faith.
4. There is a particular need to support ministry in all its forms, from spoken contributions in meetings for worship to publications, art, drama and spirit-led action.

### **Oversight: strengthening our community**

#### **The aim**

Community is fundamental to the Canterbury Commitment and underpins the whole of our recommended approach. In local meetings and in our Yearly Meeting we aim to strengthen our communities, grounded in love and worship. Such communities can be the settings where Friends and meetings engage more fully with the Commitment:

1. Listening to one another, relating constructively, working through pain and loss linked to living in a violent and unsustainable civilisation, as well as the tensions and conflict that arise out of our different responses, and supporting each other in opportunities for insight and growth
2. Strengthening our shared identity and developing a shared understanding of how Quaker faith and practice relates to becoming a low carbon, sustainable community

3. Discerning the way forward in our Commitment, rooted in the Light and following the leadings of the Spirit
4. Supporting one another in implementing the Commitment, sharing learning, insight and celebration
5. Becoming more resilient, able to cope with change and adversity.

### **Oversight – Recommendations**

The Canterbury Commitment should be owned and implemented by BYM as a whole including individual Friends, local meetings, central committees, Woodbrooke, listed informal groups and other Quaker organisations. We all have a responsibility for embedding the Commitment in every group and every decision we participate in. Our witness should also be connected to the work of international Quaker organisations, other yearly meetings and non-Quaker organisations.

1. Regular and ongoing dialogue involving Friends House, local meetings and other Quaker organisations is needed to build community and share resources.
2. Face-to-face gatherings are also vital for maintaining and developing our community and our focus on becoming low-carbon and sustainable. We see a need for such events to take place regularly, ideally every year, but at least every two years.
3. Regional and national networks can be ways for Friends and meetings to build community and share resources without relying on paid staff at Friends House. Further networks will be needed.

### **Living faithfully: changing our lifestyles**

#### **The aim**

We aim to support Friends in developing low-carbon, sustainable and spiritually enhancing ways of living.

#### **Living faithfully – Recommendations**

Lifestyle change is about more than carbon reduction, it is about all of our priorities and choices including patterns of family and social life, consumption and work. We recommend ongoing and increased encouragement and support for local meetings to be adventurous in helping Friends to live sustainably – adopting, in doing this, approaches that are sensitive and loving, while also radically transformative. This means sharing the joys we find in a simple lifestyle freely chosen, while offering compassion and support to those who find change difficult.

A wide variety of resources are required to address Friends' different and changing needs. For some, personal climate impact calculators are a vital part of understanding and reducing their carbon emissions; for others it is more important to have opportunities to talk about feelings. Some want simple, practical guides to action; others like to do their own research.

1. Regular revisions are needed in resources for sustainable living such as those included in the QPSW/Living Witness Sustainability Toolkit (footprint guides, guides for practical action, study group session plans). New versions should be brought to Friends' attention in a variety of formats.
2. We hope that Living Witness, QPSW and Quaker Life will continue to work together to support Friends in deepening dialogue and making lifestyle changes, in particular through group activities. A variety of approaches are available.
3. We need to provide opportunities for Friends to connect with each other through talks, workshops, etc. Friends' experience of the practical, social and spiritual aspects of lifestyle change should continue to be shared regularly in a variety of ways, from face-to-face contact and networks to blogs, newsletters, talks and workshops.

## **Right ordering: Quaker core activity and property**

### **The aim**

Our aim is to support Quakers in Britain (including BYM departments and committees, area and local meetings, and other Quaker organisations) in making the Canterbury Commitment a core part of fulfilling their religious and other purposes, in making all of their activities and assets low-carbon and sustainable, and in being patterns and examples for the wider community.

### **Right ordering – Recommendations**

Quaker meetings, organisations and committees may struggle with the complexity of addressing their core purposes in low-carbon, sustainable ways. They may need support to get beyond seeing these as conflicting goals, and they may need technical help with addressing buildings, land, travel, food, waste and use of money. Friends particularly face dilemmas about travelling to meetings and maintaining historic meeting houses, which are seen as vital for maintaining and developing community.

Local meetings, central committees and other Quaker organisations should be encouraged to organise themselves in low-carbon, sustainable ways. This includes looking at how they meet, where and how often.

1. Resources should be developed to support Quaker bodies in discernment that takes account of the Canterbury Commitment, including weighing up the effects of their decisions on a wide variety of issues, and considering creative alternatives.
2. A way needs to be agreed to monitor and review progress by local meetings in developing low carbon, sustainable core practices and premises. This might include collection of data such as annual energy use, and a regular questionnaire or survey of local meeting activities. Central committee and staff support would be required. The results should form part of the BYM Trustees' Annual Report.

3. Encouragement and support should be given to all parts of the Quaker community to follow the example of BYM Trustees in ensuring that our investments are consistent with being low-carbon and sustainable, and in particular to disinvest from fossil fuels.

## **Witness: taking political action and promoting systemic change**

### **The Aim**

To create structures and policies – locally, nationally and globally – which enable people to live low-carbon, sustainable lives; and a transformed economy and society which is low-carbon and just.

### **Witness – Recommendations**

We have heard that Friends want to take more political action and to be supported to call for and create systemic change in economics and society. In particular:

1. Friends and local meetings need ongoing support:
  - to use their experience of the joys and challenges of changing their lives and meetings as a foundation for engaging others in their local community, national businesses and politicians
  - to take radical action for change from the current system to be part of building the alternative
  - to speak out for systemic change and for climate justice.
2. This support comes from the centrally managed work (where the lead committee is the QPSW Economics, Sustainability and Peace subgroup) along with other Quaker organisations including Living Witness and Woodbrooke.
3. Many parts of the centrally managed work are engaged, including Turning the Tide, Parliamentary Engagement, Peace Education, and the Peacemaker scheme. A continuing effort is needed to strengthen and connect up the Canterbury Commitment aspects of their activities.
4. British Friends should continue to be supported to connect better with work on climate change and sustainability beyond BYM. There are opportunities to share our experience and contribute to work for change, in particular with international Quaker bodies, other churches and faith organisations, campaigning organisations and movements.

We recommend that Quaker bodies of all kinds continue to speak out publicly on systemic change and climate justice, making the links to traditional Quaker concerns for peace and justice. Advice and other resources are needed to help them to do this. Public statements can help to strengthen our Quaker community and identity, and affirm our shared values.

## 8 Appendix B – Central committee activities

The table below shows committee work on sustainability between January 2019 and July 2020. It only shows *substantive* agenda items.

Committee	Relevant committee activities	Related staff or volunteer activities
Yearly Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Looking through the lens of privilege at climate justice</b> and inclusion. <i>'We are impatient: we identified both sustainability, and diversity and inclusion as urgent concerns two years ago, and we want to see change and growth.'</i></li> </ul>	n/a
Meeting for Sufferings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Oversight of our shared commitment</b></li> <li>• Significant time on this at October 2019 residential meeting</li> <li>• Consideration of <b>minutes from AMs</b>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extinction Rebellion</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Record witness in <b>Prison and Court Register</b> (Extinction Rebellion)</li> <li>• <b>Reports</b> from BYM Trustees, central/standing committees (see below)</li> </ul>	n/a
BYM Trustees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of <b>strategic priorities</b>, including working for a sustainable and peaceful world</li> <li>• Approval of major grants and funding for <b>short-term projects</b> including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- QUNO Geneva</li> <li>- QCEA</li> <li>- Woodbrooke</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Oversight of <b>BYM property and facilities</b> management</li> <li>• Oversight of how <b>committees and events</b> operate (financial and carbon cost)</li> <li>• <b>Finances</b> – investment policy</li> <li>• Grants to improve <b>Meeting House</b> maintenance &amp; improvements</li> </ul>	<p>(Also see below)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Speaking out</b> (advocacy)</li> <li>• Facilities (buildings, committees, events) – procurement; monitoring and improving <b>carbon footprint</b></li> </ul>
QLCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strategic planning</b> – including sustainability in the priorities</li> <li>• Sustainability sub-Group considered the <b>spiritual underpinning</b> of the concern.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Local Development Workers</b> supporting Friends organising regional gatherings</li> <li>• <b>Children and Young People's</b> team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introducing children to the commitment through events and resources for Meetings</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Committee	Relevant committee activities	Related staff or volunteer activities
		- Supporting young Quakers' witness
QPSWCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strategic planning</b> – developing a clearer focus on sustainability</li> <li>• Liaison with <b>QUNO</b>, which has a climate change programme and collaborates with QPSW in preparing for COP</li> <li>• Attend <b>Sustainability Gathering</b></li> <li>• <b>Statements</b> (usually approved by clerks and made by staff between meetings): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- climate-related loss and damage</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Grants</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Speak out</b> on a just transition to a zero-carbon economy</li> <li>• <b>Information for Quakers</b> (e.g. New Economy booklets)</li> <li>• Support <b>local Quaker witness</b></li> <li>• Help to deliver <b>Sustainability Gathering</b></li> <li>• Develop a <b>pilot community climate project</b> (not implemented due to lack of funding)</li> </ul>
QWRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaison with <b>FWCC</b> and its work on sustainability with Friends globally</li> <li>• Encouragement of and practical support for <b>FWCC's sustainability project</b> (BYM-funded)</li> <li>• 2020 <b>Forum</b> focused on climate justice, diversity and privilege</li> <li>• <b>Links with other YMs</b>, and visits to YMs in Europe</li> <li>• Hosting <b>visitors to our Yearly Meeting</b> from other YMs – in 2019 focusing on sustainability</li> <li>• Consideration of the committee's <b>carbon footprint</b></li> </ul>	
QCCIR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considered QCCIR role in relation to sustainability – no specific work identified, but the committee can articulate and embed the commitment.</li> <li>• Reflection on sustainability discernment – YM and MfS, QLCC, QWRC and FWCC</li> </ul>	
QSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collects <b>AMs' Annual Reports</b> and reviews information about sustainability activities</li> </ul>	
Quiet Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three pillars: 'People, Planet, Profit'.</li> <li>• Sets targets and monitors BYM activities carbon footprint of BYM activities</li> <li>• Implements measures to cut carbon footprint</li> </ul>	<p>The commitment underpins operations including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement of goods and services</li> <li>• Waste management</li> <li>• Use of electricity, gas, water</li> <li>• Travel arrangements</li> </ul>



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## **Climate Crisis: Spiritual Nurture and Learning Project**

### **Aim**

BYM has recently funded Woodbrooke to undertake a 5 year project, the aim of which is project is to strengthen the spiritual underpinning of our Quaker response to the climate crisis. The work of the project will nurture our individual and collective grounding and encourage practical witness to transform our lives.

### **Why is it needed?**

Work on sustainability and our response to environmental destruction is not new to us as Friends. A commitment to the 'unity of creation' has always been part of our Quaker faith and witness: In 2011 Britain Yearly Meeting made a corporate commitment to become a low-carbon, sustainable community and agreed to take steps towards this (Britain Yearly Meeting 2011 Minute 36). This commitment was reaffirmed by Yearly Meeting in 2017. Individual Friends, meetings and the Yearly Meeting have wrestled with how to put this commitment into action.

In 2018 Meeting for Sufferings brought together representatives from Quaker groups involved in this work in order to map the breadth of activity being undertaken within the Yearly Meeting and to identify gaps (Minutes MfS/18/10/20 and MfS/18/11/18). This process identified that two significant gaps were firstly the need to strengthen and deepen our understanding of why and how we as Friends are led to live up to our corporate commitment to sustainability and secondly to provide greater support for Friends looking for practical solutions to lower carbon use. In order to help Friends develop our ministry in relation to this learning, sharing and preparation, followed by action is needed.

### **Why is this project being led by Woodbrooke?**

Woodbrooke has significant expertise in in providing learning opportunities for Friends and meetings and is well placed to undertake the work that is needed. Work on climate justice and sustainability has been a core part of our learning programme for more than a decade.

## What will the project actually do?

This project has three main aims:

1. *Supporting Friends to explore, understand and become more confident in articulating the spiritual underpinning of Quaker commitment to caring for the earth and creation.*

What will this look like for Friends?

- A study pack written by Stuart Masters exploring the spiritual roots of Quaker Eco-Theology. This will be available for small groups of Friends and Quaker communities. Many Friends assume our concern for environmental sustainability is relatively new and therefore can be resistant to calls for action. We feel this learning will embed our commitment to become a low carbon community in our hearts.
  - Working with Quaker Arts Network on the *Loving Earth Project*, a textile based response to what we love, what we fear we may lose and what actions we can take. We are currently running an online course for Friends and can also offer one day workshops or meetings and other groups. The LEP exhibition can also be requested to display during events and act as a way to begin conversations about lifestyle changes.
  - Courses, workshops and retreats focused on enabling Friends to explore the spiritual underpinning of the Quaker commitment to care for the earth. We have run a *Courageous Living Amid a Climate Crisis* retreat both residentially and online.
2. *Providing advice, guidance support and encouragement to enable Friends to make practical changes to individual lifestyles and to take community-level action, particularly around the use and management of property.*

What will this look like for Friends?

- Resources on lifestyle changes that will be available online. This work has been delayed due to Covid and staff on furlough but is a priority.
- Courses and workshops – for example over the summer we ran *Finding Our Way Forward: positive living in the climate crisis*; a series of live sessions on zoom with speakers on a range of topics related to the climate crisis which enabled Friends to think about what next in terms of both Covid and the Climate Crisis, we will be providing similar opportunities in the future.
- Workshops and guidance for Friends to consider their property, this is currently under review as it was prepared prior to Covid and lockdown. We shall be developing resources for Friends and meetings going forward.
- A facilitated session for meetings to enable them to work through potential changes to their property as this can be a cause of conflict for Meetings.

3. *Building community to support and strengthen our individual and corporate response.*

What will this look like for Friends?

- National Gatherings to enable Friends to be together, in community. We imagine this to be a gathering full of inspiration and sharing open to all Friends, including children and young people. We have provisional dates for May 2021 although this is dependent on Covid and localised measures. An online alternative will be considered.
- Work with Young Adult Friends, plans to run gatherings for Young Adult Friends to be together and share in community are being developed. We are running an online climate based retreat/workshop in Autumn 2020 for Friends aged 18
- -35 years. We hope to offer residential gatherings in 2021.

**How does this work relate to QPSW work on sustainability and climate justice?**

Currently BYM's sustainability work is focussed on political and systemic change. BYM frequently receives requests to support individuals and meetings to explore the spiritual basis of our sustainability commitment or to engage in collective practical action as communities. However at present the organisation is not well placed or resourced to do this.

There is overlap between BYM's work on political and systems change and this project on spiritual and practical action (for example where collective action relates to campaigning for political change). The collaborative nature of this project between BYM and Woodbrooke as partner organisations serving the same community is therefore essential to ensure that work is integrated, avoids duplication and minimises the risk of gaps in support and provision. This will mean that both BYM and Woodbrooke will be able to identify Friends needs as they develop and to ensure that work on systems change, spirituality and lifestyles are mutually reinforcing.

Simon Best, Head of Learning

Maud Grainger, Faith in Action Programme Coordinator

Woodbrooke



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## **QPSW Economics & Sustainability programme update: COP26**

### **Introduction**

The Economics & Sustainability (ES) subcommittee, with approval from QPSW Central Committee, took the decision in mid-2019 that all the programme's work should be seen through the lens of 'transforming the economy for climate justice' – a move away from a more 'portfolio' approach.

Once it was announced that the COP26 UN climate talks would be held in the UK in November 2020, it was obvious that this would be a major focus for the UK climate movement and an opportunity to further develop Quaker witness on climate. The postponement of COP26 until November 2021 has provided the climate movement with an unusually long lead-in time in which to build an effective response, though efforts have inevitably been slowed by the pandemic.

ES work between now and the end of 2021 will consist of two main strands: work associated with COP26 and global climate justice (which will form the majority of our work), and the Build Back Better campaign for a green and just recovery from the pandemic. We see these areas of work as distinct but complementary. This paper focuses on the COP26 work, looking at four (overlapping) areas: the event itself, support for Friends, central advocacy work, and collaboration with other organisations.

### **Aims of the work**

We have identified an overarching aim for the work, as well as four desired outcomes.

**Aim:** To use the opportunity of the UK's COP26 Presidency to establish a clear and effective Quaker voice for climate justice, in a way that strengthens the wider climate justice movement and lays the foundations for Quaker work beyond COP26.

**Outcomes:**

- Quaker efforts are supporting the presence at COP26 of marginalised communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis and amplifying their voices, with a focus on the Global South.

- Increasing numbers of Friends have the knowledge, skills and confidence to lead or support local action for climate justice leading up to, at and beyond COP26.
- Quaker calls for strong UK action on climate justice in the context of COP26 are being heard by decision-makers.
- Quakers are contributing to the wider movement for climate justice through appropriate use of our strengths and resources.

## **Areas of work**

- **COP26, 1-12 November 2021**

We applied to the UNFCCC for official observer status last August, but have still not received notice of its decision. QUNO has been an observer organisation for some time, and we hope to be able to join them inside the official event. If we do gain accreditation, we may co-host a stall or 'side event' with QUNO, budget permitting.

We will also have a presence in civil society spaces outside the official event, including through use of Glasgow Meeting House, which will also be made available to other groups. A group of Friends from West Scotland Area Meeting has formed a group to oversee the local side of the work, including meeting house logistics. They also hope to be able to support some people from the Global South to attend through sponsorship and/or hosting, though there is much uncertainty around this because of Covid-19.

- **Support for Friends**

Oonagh Ryder (Activism Support Coordinator) and Rebecca Woo (Campaigns and Advocacy Coordinator) are overseeing this part of the work. Plans include a 'penpals' project linking British Friends with Friends in the Global South to discuss experiences of the climate crisis; a series of resources including blog posts, written guides and a video to help Friends learn, connect with others and take action; and a 'relay' action taking messages about COP26 and the climate crisis from Glasgow to London on foot or by bike, probably in spring 2021. This is in the early stages of planning, but we hope it will be possible to make it an interfaith event, to increase its impact and help foster local interfaith networks.

It is important to us that this work build beyond COP26 as well as towards it. As the event approaches, we will be developing a plan to support Friends' activism post COP26 and build on the experience gained.

- **BYM advocacy work**

The ES subcommittee has identified some key priorities for our advocacy work around COP26: ending public finance for fossil fuels, and establishing new sources of finance to pay for 'loss and damage'. This is damage from climate-related disasters which goes beyond what it is possible to adapt to. It is recognised in the Paris Agreement but funding is a major sticking point.

The COP26 faiths task group, of which we are a member, has also adopted these two priorities, as well as a third area of focus around local resilience. We see this as an important area closely aligned with our Build Back Better work.

Our contact with government so far has been through meetings with civil servants from the Cabinet Office and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. We coordinated an interfaith letter to Alok Sharma on his appointment as COP26 President just before the lockdown. We received a response to this, but have not made much further progress.

Where possible, we are undertaking advocacy work on an interfaith basis, as we feel this is likely to have more impact.

- **Working with others**

We are on the COP26 faiths task group, where Livvy has been coordinating the advocacy work. Work is beginning on the other two strands of work identified by the group: transformation (which we don't expect to have much involvement in, though we will share information with Woodbrooke where relevant), and hospitality.

As part of our involvement with this group, Rebecca is working with Faith for the Climate and Christian Aid to run a series of interfaith workshops in November. These were originally envisaged as local or regional events, and we have retained this focus despite the necessity of holding them online. The areas involved are Leicester, Leeds and Manchester.

We have also joined the COP26 Coalition, a civil society coalition focused on climate justice. Its statement in response to Covid-19 can be found online and gives a flavour of the coalition's analysis and priorities:

<https://cop26coalition.org/2020/05/08/covid19statement/>

The other main civil society coalition working on COP26 is The Climate Coalition (TCC), of which we are currently a largely dormant member. The COP26 Coalition's focus on climate justice is more aligned with our priorities, and we also see it as important to bring a faith voice, of which there are several others in TCC. Quakers in Scotland are also represented on the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland coalition, which is coordinating Scottish work on COP and engagement with the Scottish government.

In 'normal' times, one of the ways we can support social movements is through providing space at Friends House. While this is impossible at present, we have provisionally booked The Light for Saturday 30 October and hope to host an event for climate activists, probably working with partners in the coalition.

## **Communicating our work**

We will continue to use the 'climate justice' subsection of the Quaker Faith in Action mailing list as the main channel for keeping Friends updated on this work and inviting involvement. Where appropriate, we will also use other BYM channels including

social media, *Quake!*, and the clerks' monthly mailing. Events such as the Quaker Activist Gathering and Yearly Meeting Gathering will also provide opportunities for updates and dialogue. We would welcome suggestions on how best to communicate this work in ways that will reach and inspire as many Friends as possible.

Livvy Hanks  
Economics & Sustainability Programme Manager





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## **QPSWCC report to Meeting for Sufferings: QPSW strategy**

### **Introduction**

Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) has been working on a new strategy for our work putting Quaker faith into action. The strategy (current draft appended to this report) has been conceived to work towards both the vision set by Meeting for Sufferings in *Our faith in the future* and the strategic priorities set by BYM Trustees and endorsed by Sufferings. QPSWCC has created the strategy within these parameters, and brings this to Meeting for Sufferings to share our current thinking.

The strategy will cover the activities of QPSW until 2025, guiding the work done and the way it is governed and overseen. QPSWCC has discerned the framework and principles for the new strategy and is now looking at implications for the work and governance. This should be completed by the QPSWCC meeting in November 2020. Ahead of that, we would be interested to hear from Meeting for Sufferings before our final discernment later in the year.

### **What has already been decided?**

- QPSW will work on fewer distinct areas but put more capacity into the issues we work on, in order to be more effective. We expect there will be multiple pieces of work under each of two major headings:
  - 1) Peace & peacebuilding
  - 2) Sustainability and climate justice
- We will develop a new area of work looking at 'Peacebuilding in Britain', to engage with the increasing divisions and polarisation in society.
- We will do more to support Quakers across Britain taking action themselves, supporting and accompanying local Quaker witness. We will find ways for the wider body of Friends to engage with and input to QPSW work.
- We will continue with a mixture of British and international work, and have them connect with and learn more from each other.
- We will continue to build alliances with others and work collaboratively in our political advocacy, trying to forge relationships of mutual respect.

- QPSW's governance should be focused on setting the strategic direction rather than detailed oversight of work programmes, be able to respond quickly to new and emerging areas of work, and be slimmer and less costly in governance costs and staff time.
- In line with the priorities for all of BYM's work, QPSW's activities should be distinctively Quaker, integrated and well-governed.

### **What still needs to be decided?**

QPSWCC needs to set out the change it wants to see QPSW make between now and 2025, the realistic five-year goals for the work.

Staff will then need to work out how to deliver this change: what we work on, how we do the work, what the staffing structure is.

QPSWCC, in consultation with its sub-committees and groups, needs to work out the details of the governance arrangements that will oversee the work and ensure it is accountable to Quakers.

### **Who's been involved?**

QPSWCC, the sub-committees and groups overseeing different areas of QPSW work, and QPSW staff have all been involved since the strategy process began in mid-2019.

### **Why a new strategy?**

The world is changing fast and is at risk on many fronts – violence, division, climate change and ecological breakdown. We owe it to the communities we want to support, and the Quakers who pay for our work, to be as effective as possible. We don't have the luxury of being ineffective. We need to adapt as the world changes, in order to best help create the world we want to see.

# Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee

## QPSW strategy 2020-2025 – principles

### Vision

Guided by the spirit, our vision is of a peaceful and sustainable future built on just relationships between people and with the earth.

### Mission

To work towards a future where Quaker values are actively transforming the world.

“Our Lives speak peace, equality, respect for the earth and all its inhabitants. We offer friendship to all and solidarity to the marginalised. We speak truth to power with love. We hold those in power in the Light. We find creative and nonviolent ways to get our message across. We are in this for the long haul; we’re not afraid to take risks. We are called to live in the place where our ‘deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.’” (from *Our faith in the future*)

QPSWCC works to build the daily experiences and spiritual leadings of Friends in their meetings into our corporate work. With this foundation the committee seeks to support Friends individually in their lives, jointly in their meetings and in Britain Yearly meeting to witness on behalf of Quakers throughout the world. (from *Quaker faith & practice* 8.11)

Our work combines an adherence to the testimonies of peace, equality, simplicity, sustainability, truth and integrity with the flexibility to respond to the immediate reality of present-day concerns.

### Principles

The work of QPSW is based on three key principles:

#### *Nonviolence*

We recognise the physical and psychological damage perpetrated by violence of all kinds.

We are convinced that violence generates violence and that nonviolent action is the only way to make changes that are just.

Therefore we pursue change in an exclusively nonviolent way.

#### *Collaboration*

We wish to encourage co-operation with other groups and individuals where their interests align with our own. To this end we seek to raise awareness and change attitudes to expand the scope of potential collaboration.

We wish to support and empower Quaker communities including local meetings to put their faith into action

We also seek to empower those who are marginalised to act for change.

### *Justice and equity*

We see the potential for war in structural injustice so we are committed to radical but peaceful change of such structures.

We recognise that colonial legacies, including racism, run deep within our society and seek to transform the longstanding structural injustices that harm so many today.

We are committed to raise awareness in BYM that our own organisation may contain aspects of structural injustice.

## **The Quaker faith**

The entire QPSW framework is underpinned by our faith which guides our lives and work, infusing what we do and how we do it. This is what we call spirit-led:

We make major decisions about our work through a process of reflection and discernment

We may undertake commitments to projects which are not conventionally popular

We start from a place of principle, seeking to build relationships of reciprocal respect

We aim to see through prejudice and partiality to find our capacity for compassion towards everyone

We recognise there is also a need to speak truth to power with love and to stand firmly on the side of those who are oppressed and whose voices are not heard by those in power.

## **Work themes**

The two interlinked themes which we choose to prioritise are peace and sustainability.

### *Peace and Peacebuilding*

The use of military force and potential destruction by nuclear weaponry are ever-present threats. We see peace and cooperation becoming devalued and militarism and isolationist views becoming more dominant. These encourage a culture of aggression and divisiveness that leads to some people and communities being delegitimised and denied respect for their humanity.

To address this deep concern, we support the peaceful resolution to all injustice, aiming to forge alliances to build new, peaceful structures and cultures that are inclusive of everyone. This is what we have done for many years in situations of conflict, gaining the trust and respect of those in opposition to one another.

### *Sustainability and climate justice*

In the face of overwhelming evidence of rapidly increasing destruction of the Earth, we are called to work for a world that prioritises ecological repair and well-being. Our dominant economic system is founded on extraction and exploitation, both of people and of the natural world, in pursuit of growing the wealth of a few individuals and corporations.

The solution we seek is national and worldwide economies operating within ecological limits and upholding the wellbeing, dignity and equality of all. Therefore, we want to respond to the symptoms and root causes of climate change, in order to bring about a just transition to zero carbon.

### **Approaches**

The means by which we work towards our goals are as important as the goals themselves. Our spirit-led and non-hierarchical approach comprises a variety of methods including accompaniment and providing a protective presence, quiet diplomacy, education and training, conciliation and community peacebuilding. We also engage in advocacy and policy development. In addition, we support Quakers to become active in their own areas of concern and in their own communities by strengthening networks and movement building.

We believe, from a wealth of past experience, that our nonviolent and inclusive approach has been effective in many situations around the world.

We are also aware of the realistic challenges of the limits of our resources and of our obligation to learn from formal evaluation of our programmes to ensure that our work is effective.

### **Overview – collaboration, integrity, flexibility and international work**

We want to expand our peacebuilding and climate justice work.

We will work towards:

- Building alliances with others and working collaboratively in our political advocacy
- Identifying individuals and groups in Quaker communities who have specific expertise, experience or interest, to expand our range of activities and to support Local Meetings in their witness.
- Strengthening the interdependence and reciprocal learning of our British and international work
- Maintaining the Quaker spiritual practice of discernment in supporting reflective analysis and strategic decision-making
- Remaining agile and adaptive to circumstances

We will continue to work both in Britain and internationally. International work will interconnect with Britain-based work, and the two will learn from one another. We recognise, as stated in *Reframing our International Work* that international work may require more time and effort to understand cultures and make greater use of partnerships and others doing the work. We acknowledge that this activity will involve situations of armed conflict, have higher financial and carbon costs than Britain-based work. These considerations will feed into decisions about the work we do.



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

## **Update from the Clerk of BYM Trustees**

Dear Friends,

Trustees have met three times since the last MfS. The minutes from those meetings follow this introduction and you will see that we are still working on many matters already discussed with MfS. I look forward to continuing that consideration with you.

One of those areas is simplification on which we had some very helpful discussion at the Clerks' consultation held on line in July. Two trustees are working with a group from all central committees (and including the MfS clerk) and we should have more to explore with you by your next meeting. Meanwhile, we have looked at ourselves and have agreed to hold one weekend meeting face-to-face in future years alongside three on-line meetings. We have found that our meetings take place in a spirit of worship on line and that the Quaker business method adapts well to Zoom!

In August, the Black Lives Matter marches were spotlighting racism. We are acutely conscious that Quakers have done little work on anti-racism for several decades and we see a real need to work on this across the Society. While trustees have a responsibility as employers, we felt that MfS is best positioned to discern a position across the Society of Friends. We sent a minute to MfS that links to the session on your agenda.

At our September meeting, we heard from both QUNO and QCEA and saw again the importance of BYM being part of Quaker work worldwide.

A lot of our time was spent on Covid issues. As most of you will be aware, Friends House reopened at the beginning of September, which feels symbolically important although all that is possible at the moment is a few small events, opening the bookshop/café, and the Local Meeting has returned for Sunday worship. Swarthmoor Hall is open for self-catering only.

Staff have worked incredibly hard to make the reopening possible with social distancing and all necessary health and safety arrangements in place. Many staff remain on furlough and most will continue to do so until the scheme ends on 31 October. Furlough has made it possible to retain all our staff over recent months. We

have been consulting them about ways to reduce staff costs while protecting jobs and we hope to avoid compulsory redundancies this year.

Trustees have been working with QLCC and QPSWCC to make sure their work continues and is aligned with the strategic priorities. Some furloughed staff have returned and staff continue to work flexibly across teams to ensure that essentials are delivered.

In normal years, the Quiet Company (that runs Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall) contributes significantly to BYM's income (£1.3m in 2019), but with almost no lettings or hospitality the results will be very different this year. Trustees agreed financing to help the trading company remain solvent until things get easier. Even before Covid-19 arrived, we were spending more each year than we had coming in and planned to address that over five years. Without trading profit from the Quiet Company this year to help fund the charity and with meetings across the country facing similar challenges so unlikely to be able to contribute as much to BYM, we are having to draw down significantly on reserves.

Caroline Nursey  
Clerk of Trustees



At a meeting of

## **Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees**

Friday 12 to Sunday 14 June 2020, by video conference

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Georgina Bailey, Linda Batten (Treasurer), Alison Breadon, Jenny Brierley, Sarah Donaldson, Nick Eyre, Kate Gulliver, Ellie Harding, Carolyn Hayman, Caroline Nursey (Clerk), Graham Torr (Assistant Clerk), Danielle Walker Palmour, Chris Willmore.

**In attendance:** Paul Grey, Head of Operations; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk; Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk; Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship.

**Prevented:** Frances Voelcker.

**Visitors:** Libby Adams, Head of Library and Archives (minute BYMT-2020-06-04) Robert Almond, Co-clerk, Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (minute BYMT-2020-06-02 Part 2); Martin Atkinson, Finance Support (minutes BYMT-2020-06-01 to 04); Matt Baker, Board of Quiet Company (minute BYMT-2020-06-03); Jeff Beatty, Co-clerk, Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (minute BYMT-2020-06-02 Part 2); Val Brittin, Clerk, Board of Quiet Company (minute BYMT-2020-06-03); Steven Burkeman (minute BYMT-2020-06-06); Emma Roberts, Clerk, Quaker Life Central Committee (minutes BYMT-2020-06-02 Part 2 to 06); Deborah Rowlands (minute BYMT-2020-06-06).

### **BYMT-2020-06-01 Decision to hold a virtual meeting, welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest check**

We record our decision to hold this meeting by video conference. We follow Charity Commission guidance on running charities during the Covid-19 outbreak published on 19 March 2020 that allows video conferencing where there is no such clause in a charity's governing document. The Charity Commission asks us to record this decision.

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We confirm our agenda.

During our opening worship, we have heard read a piece by Scott Woods, on 'Black Lives Matter' published on his own website on 3 January 2014.

### **BYMT-2020-06-02 Coronavirus impact and risks and the future of BYM's work**

**Part 1** We have received: Paper BYMT-2020-06-03a Looking to the future; Paper BYMT-2020-06-03b Financial planning, that sets out the approach to financial planning for the next 12 months, and until the end of 2023; and Paper BYMT-2020-06-03c Strategic-level risks, that gives an update on the management of the six strategic-level risks.

We have considered the implications for financial planning of “best reasonable”, “cautious” and “worst case” scenarios for the resumption of trading and charitable activities over the next 12 months, and over the period to the end of 2023 when it will be necessary to be delivering a balanced budget each year. We ask Finance and Property Committee to consider this at their next meeting and advise us on how far it would be wise to draw down on reserves so that we can agree the parameters for our planning.

We have also reviewed the strategic level risks on our risk register, several of which have become more severe because of the Covid-19 crisis. We must build our resilience to manage all these.

We recognise that much is uncertain so we must plan for flexibility as we do God's work in the world as it is. This probably means having some core activity to which we can add and subtract further work in response to circumstances, all within the strategic priorities agreed with Meeting for Sufferings in February 2019:

- Thriving Quaker communities,
- Simple structures and practices,
- A sustainable and peaceful world.

with all work distinctively Quaker, integrated and well governed.

As we think ahead to the next phase of the pandemic and how we work in the future, four elements are being explored with staff:

- First and foremost, what is the safe way forward for BYM staff and the people we work with?
- What is the healthy way forward for all staff, including those who might work from home more than they have before and the different ways we may need to work in our buildings?
- What is the effective way forward that still delivers the work BYM needs to do as a church, charity and company in a changed society – and makes the difference we need it to make?
- What is the sustainable way forward, from both environmental and financial perspectives?

We know that Management Meeting is managing the first two of these effectively. We have started to consider the third and fourth points and will continue our discernment in partnership with Quaker Peace & Social Witness and Quaker Life Central Committees tomorrow and at their forthcoming meetings. And we look forward to testing emerging thinking with Meeting for Sufferings at their October meeting.

In doing this, we will face some challenging questions including whether or not the national charity is too big for a faith group the size of Quakers in Britain and what the balance should be between national and local activity.

We must also determine the best structure for delivering Quaker Life's and Quaker Peace & Social Witness's strategic aims including how best to organise staff and how we can keep competing priorities in right balance. Staff have begun organically to work in different ways – spurred by the challenges of operating in the time of Covid-19 – and this may make changes easier.

We have much work to do in discovering how governance can be as simple, effective and responsive as possible. And we must communicate with Friends across the Yearly Meeting about what they need and want from BYM and the steps that we are taking to deliver those needs in a way that we can afford.

**Part 2** We have been joined by Robert Almond and Jeff Beatty, Co-clerks, Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) and Emma Roberts, Clerk, Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC).

With them, we have begun consideration of the questions highlighted in the first part of this minute. Our Clerk will attend part of the next QLCC meeting and Carolyn Hayman will attend QPSWCC to hear from those Friends who have the most understanding of our work in worship and witness. Over the next few months, together, we must discern what work to do and how to do it in ways that are effective and sustainable.

We have heard from both committees about their current thinking.

QPSWCC has been working intensively on a new strategy for many months in close conversation with its subcommittees, groups and staff. The overall strategy – vision, mission, principles and strands – should be agreed by July and the implications arising from that by November. The stage between July and November will be the most challenging as choices must be made together with, and on behalf of, Friends about which are the ‘fewer things that we want to do better’.

We welcome QPSW’s thinking and, in particular, the aspiration to work more closely with area meetings and the activists there as well as with partners in other organisations. Change has to happen in the hearts of Friends and not just through what is done by BYM nationally. We agree that this must include more collaboration within the staff body of BYM as communication – for example – is critical to delivering QPSW’s work. We welcome thinking on new ways of bringing in expertise from Friends and on governance changes – though these may be hard.

We have heard from the Clerk of QLCC about the calls they are having with each area meeting. From these we are hearing of signs of new life, as well as difficulties. It is clear that the new ways of working (that have become possible now that Local Development Workers are in place) are making BYM more responsive to the needs of Friends – and are there just in time to support the Yearly Meeting during this time of Covid-19. Close working between the Local Development Workers, other BYM staff and Woodbrooke staff is proving effective. Identifying what work makes the most difference, and strengthening our focus on that, is critical – even where it will mean laying down some much loved activities.

We hear that the Central Committees need to understand the wider financial picture of BYM so that they can prioritise clearly, and we know that trustees need the knowledge that Central Committees have. It is complex in our governance system to be clear where responsibility lies. Trustees ultimately must decide where to put resources – particularly in balancing between overall areas – but we do this discernment in partnership with Central Committees and tested with Meeting for Sufferings. Central Committees and trustees must work particularly closely in coming months to ensure that BYM can afford the work that it plans, and that what BYM

does is right in these difficult times for the Yearly Meeting and the world in the years ahead.

We are grateful for the work of both our Central Committees and all those who serve on them. The reports have shared the difficulties of the committee work as well as the joys and we stand ready to support as needed. We know that Covid-19 is placing additional pressures on many individuals that affect the service it is possible for them to give. We uphold them all.

We forward this minute to QLCC and to QPSWCC.

### **BYMT-2020-06-03 The Quiet Company annual report 2019**

We have been joined by Val Brittin, Clerk, Board of Quiet Company and Matt Baker, Board Member of Quiet Company.

We receive the 2019 annual report from Quiet Company's Board of Directors (BYMT-2020-06-05) covering financial performance and key achievements at Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall. We receive also the minutes of the Quiet Company board meeting held 9 June 2020 (paper BYMT-2020-06-3d), and note particularly minutes H20/25 (Covid-19) and H20/26 (Operations – Swarthmoor Hall: models).

The report includes an overview of plans being made in response to the impact of Covid-19, the risks currently being managed by the Company and hopes for the future. We are very grateful for all that was achieved last year both in providing very important income for BYM and for the quality of provision at Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall.

We are impressed by the speed with which Quiet Company has responded to the Covid-19 crisis, and are pleased to hear of plans for the volatile period ahead – including provision for hybrid meetings that helps towards our sustainability goals as well as generating income. We have heard that Brexit poses significant additional challenges in recruiting the staff that are needed. The Covid-19 crisis is highlighting areas where we will need honest conversations between BYM the charity and Quiet Company. We look forward to receiving updated plans for Swarthmoor Hall at our September meeting.

We forward this minute to the Board of Quiet Company.

### **BYMT-2020-06-04 Library collections policy and principles**

We are joined by Libby Adams, Head of Library and Archives. We receive paper BYMT-2020-06-06.

We note the process to create a collections mission statement which will then inform the development of policies, procedures and plans for the Society's collections.

We endorse the approach that the mission statement should link clearly to Our Faith in the Future and to the strategic priorities of BYM. We are pleased that it provides a clear statement of why we are developing collections, what we hope to achieve by collecting and who we hope to engage with the collections, and why. This will mean that we say 'no' to some offers and do not seek to store everything.

We agree the mission statement subject to some minor rewording.

Specifically, we agree that:

- The collections should be distinctly Quaker with focus on the material that is the distinct responsibility of BYM and that can have most impact in relation to organizational priorities. It will not aim to be a complete collection of Quaker materials, but will be informed by collaborative working with others. We see the collection as primarily helping us now to be nearer to God.
- There are costs ahead in sorting, reducing and putting the collection in order that will not have immediate obvious benefit to Friends, but has to be done before we can get the collection working properly.
- We continue to operate a public-facing service rather than merely an internal-facing archive and records management service operating only for Quakers, and that we find a balance that is affordable at any time.

We look forward to hearing more as the work on the collection proceeds and will agree the pace of work in the context of budgets available each year.

### **BYMT-2020-06-05 Safeguarding**

We have received paper BYMT-2020-06-07 comprising an update on:

- The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)
- BYMT training
- Case workload
- Past cases
- The role of QLCC
- Safety for online meetings for worship
- New model documents for area meetings
- Progress of improvements.

QLCC has reported to us on its consideration of Safeguarding over the last year and their Clerk, Emma Roberts, has joined us for this item.

Our current Safeguarding Policy continues in place though we are aware that significant changes are being made and that it will come to us when ready. We note that an updated incident report will be sent to the Charity Commission shortly. In 2019 we appointed a lead trustee for safeguarding to monitor progress of the improvements we have endorsed, to ask questions of Management Meeting, be available to staff and ensure safeguarding remains on our agenda. We agreed to review this role in 12 months. We agree this role should continue and ask BYMT Nominations Group to bring a name to serve from January 2021 once Sarah Donaldson ceases to be a trustee.

### **BYMT-2020-06-06 Reviews of Quaker Stewardship Committee and the terms of reference for BYM Trustees**

Yearly Meeting in 2018 initiated a review of Quaker Stewardship Committee (QSC), reporting to Meeting for Sufferings, and a review of BYM Trustees' terms of reference reporting to QSC. We are joined by Deborah Rowlands and Steven Burkeman – two of the three Friends appointed to complete these reviews. Emma Roberts, Clerk, QLCC, also joins us for this item.

We have received a draft final report (BYMT-2020-06-08) inviting our feedback on its recommendations. We do agree with them and are grateful that they are so clear and well written.

We are pleased to hear from Emma Roberts that QLCC can naturally take over many of QSC's responsibilities as outlined in the report. We note, however, that we need to keep under review the totality of the responsibilities that lie with QLCC.

We are grateful that the report discusses where the main responsibility for strategic planning lies and that it has sought to clarify in our proposed terms of reference that "the task of agreeing the vision for Quakers in Britain – the church – rests with MfS; whereas to achieve this vision by setting the direction and consequent planning for the charity rests with BYM Trustees ... using the duality between church and charity to show how the different parts of our governance complement one another, recognising that the two parts, although in some respects distinct, are also inextricably intertwined". We concur with the hope of the review group that this can be explained clearly in the revised book of discipline.

### **BYMT-2020-06-07 Communicating trustees' work**

We have discussed communicating our work in awareness that we ourselves and staff have limited capacity. However, we do want to experiment!

We are conscious that we want to hear from Friends as well as communicating to them and that we need multiple channels – though the responsibility for formal consultation with area meetings rests with Meeting for Sufferings. And we want to be proactive as well as reactive in letting Friends know our thinking.

We remind ourselves of the link trustee function with specific areas of work.

We agree that the Recording Clerk should tweet our reading, that a blog is drafted to link with *Quake!*, and that we all communicate by whatever means possible.

We ask Georgina Bailey and Ellie Harding to capture their thoughts on paper and share them with the Recording Clerk.

### **BYMT-2020-06-08 Reviewing the meeting**

We have reviewed the meeting.

### **BYMT-2020-06-09 Date of next meeting**

We agree to hold an additional meeting before our scheduled date in September.

### **BYMT-2020-06-10 Time with Recording Clerk**

We have spent time with the Recording Clerk.

### **BYMT-2020-06-11 Time without staff**

We have spent time without staff.

Caroline Nursey  
Clerk

At a meeting of

## **Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees**

Saturday 15 August 2020, by video conference

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Georgina Bailey, Linda Batten (Treasurer), Alison Breadon, Jenny Brierley (from BYMT-2020-08-06), Sarah Donaldson, Nick Eyre, Kit Fotheringham, Kate Gulliver, Ellie Harding, Carolyn Hayman, Caroline Nursey (Clerk), Graham Torr (Assistant Clerk), Frances Voelcker, Danielle Walker Palmour, Chris Willmore (from BYMT-2020-08-05).

**In attendance:** Paul Grey, Head of Operations; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk; Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk.

**Prevented:** Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness & Worship.

**Visitors:** Martin Atkinson, Finance Support (minutes BYMT-2020-08-01 to 2020-08-06).

### **BYMT-2020-08-01 Decision to hold a virtual meeting, welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest check**

We record our decision to hold this meeting by video conference. We follow Charity Commission guidance on running charities during the Covid-19 outbreak published on 19 March 2020 that allows video conferencing where there is no such clause in a charity's governing document. The Charity Commission asks us to record this decision.

We welcome Kit Fotheringham (Bristol Area Meeting) as a Trustee. Kit was appointed by Meeting for Sufferings Clerks on 29 July 2020 to serve until 31 December 2020.

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We confirm our agenda.

During our opening worship, we have heard paragraph 26.18 from Quaker faith & practice (Qf&p).

### **BYMT-2020-08-02 Minutes received**

We have received the following minutes:

- Quaker World Relations Committee 23v2020 (BYMT-2020-08-02a)
- Quaker Life Central Committee 19–20vi2020 (BYMT-2020-08-02b)
- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee 4vii2020 (BYMT-2020-08-02c)
- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee minute 20/26 'Setting the Scene' (BYMT-2020-08-02d)
- Quiet Company Board 16vii2020 (BYMT-2020-08-02e)

- Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations 12–14vi2020 (BYMT-2020-08-02f)

### **BYMT-2020-08-03 Nominations and appointments**

Our Nominations Group brings forward the following nominations (paper BYMT-2020-08-10):

#### **Finance and Property Committee**

- Randal Barker (North West London Area Meeting) to serve as a non-trustee member for a second term on Finance and Property Committee from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2022.

#### **Property Development Steering Group**

- Randal Barker (North West London Area Meeting) to serve as the Finance and Property Committee representative with immediate effect for the lifetime of the group.

#### **Trustee to advise on the BYMT Annual Review and Report and Accounts**

- Jenny Brierley to advise on reports for 2020 and 2021.

We agree to these appointments.

### **BYMT-2020-08-04 Clerks' awayday**

We have heard a report from our Clerks on the clerks' awayday held on 11 July. This meeting brought together clerks from Trustees, Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, Meeting for Sufferings, the four central and standing committees, Quaker Stewardship Committee and Quiet Company.

This meeting is an annual opportunity to review progress across the Yearly Meeting towards our Canterbury commitment on sustainability. A representative from the Meeting for Sufferings' Sustainability Monitoring Group was present for this discussion and will prepare a report to Meeting for Sufferings.

Clerks shared experiences of their areas of work since the start of "lockdown". Quaker Life Central Committee and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee noted the flexibility and innovation exhibited by staff, Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations the greatly increased contact with the 'Churches Together' organisations (e.g. the Churches Together in England coronavirus round table) and Interfaith Network for the UK, and Quaker World Relations Committee the expansion of their connections online. Ellie Harding and Carolyn Hayman, trustees appointed to work with Management Meeting on simplifying structures and practices, were present for a discussion on our committee structure and whether it is fit for purpose (see also minute BYMT-2020-08-08). It was a very positive, warm and energetic meeting that demonstrated a real commitment to work together across BYM.

### **BYMT-2020-08-05 Preparing for a post-Covid future**

We receive paper BYMT-2020-08-04 from the Recording Clerk updating us on work in response to the coronavirus pandemic and emerging thinking on the future shape



of BYM along with a timeline for decision making and the introduction of changes. We note that this report does not provide further reporting on the financial position; we expect to discuss the budget at our meeting in September.

### Covid-19 update

Juliet Pager has introduced the paper and we have asked a number of questions. We recognise how challenging this period has been for all our staff – whether furloughed or working – and thank them.

We are grateful to Management Meeting for how well they have handled the last five months with great concern for the well-being of staff alongside managing finance and ensuring that as much programme work as possible is delivered. We are impressed by the way that the rest of the team stepped in when Paul Parker broke his ankle.

We are satisfied that the key issues are being addressed in BYM's operations at the present time in relation to staff (furloughing, other employment measures to reduce costs and minimise compulsory redundancies, and staff communication and wellbeing), premises (including the reopening of Friends House for some services from 1 September), Health and Safety, and programme activity.

### Towards a Vision for 2023

We are grateful that the paper draws together the aspirations that we expressed at our May and June meetings (since tested at the clerks' awayday and with Central Committees) and provides a high-level framework for how BYM should operate to deliver work programmes and set budgets from 2021 onwards. The programme strategies being developed by Central Committees will sit within this framework as will the work of the Quiet Company, and operational details will be shaped by staff.

We have made some minor points that will be reflected in the final version of the paper.

We agree with the direction of travel, pace of change and key milestones between now and the end of 2022 to put BYM in a position – by the beginning of 2023 – to deliver the strategic priorities of becoming a simple church supported by a simple charity within which thriving Quaker communities work together towards a sustainable and peaceful world as agreed with Meeting for Sufferings in 2018.

We need to: communicate well with all Friends; enable discernment and decision making within the various bodies that hold responsibility for what BYM does and its staffing, structure and governance; and make timely plans. It is challenging to achieve the change that is needed in the time that is available while involving all parts of BYM appropriately, but Friends are living adventurously and it will be possible.

As trustees we are 'responsible for the work, assets and property of the yearly meeting' (Qf&p 8.18) and we hear the call to provide the leadership that God is asking of us as service to Friends at this time.

### **BYMT-2020-08-06 Finance**

We have received Finance and Property Committee minutes 20vii2020 (BYMT-2020-08-05) and have been updated on the position of the Quiet Company which we will consider fully at our September meeting.

### **BYMT-2020-08-07 Trustees' news**

We receive a report of the recent activities of Trustees (BYMT-2020-08-06).

### **BYMT-2020-08-08 Simplifying structures and practices**

We receive a paper from Ellie Harding and Carolyn Hayman (BYMT-2020-08-07) taking forward the work that they are leading on our behalf and summarising current challenges, opportunities and the recent discussion at the clerks' awayday.

We are grateful for the paper and have suggested some minor changes. We endorse the proposal for a set of four exploratory meetings with Friends from key bodies identified at the clerks' awayday – including the Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings – to take advantage of the current momentum and to ensure conversations continue.

We note Quaker faith & practice 8.18 'Yearly Meeting also entrusts to Trustees the organisation and periodic revision of the structure of the standing committees' and remind ourselves that, should discernment lead to consideration of changes to either Quaker Peace & Social Witness or Quaker Life Central Committees, Yearly Meeting 'reserves to itself decisions affecting the existence and basic functions of ... Quaker Life Central Committee and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee'. We recognise that we cannot undertake this alone, and welcome this opportunity to work with others from across BYM's structures to take this much-needed simplification forward.

This matter will be on our agenda regularly over the coming year.

### **BYMT-2020-08-09 Communicating well**

In June, we asked Georgina Bailey and Ellie Harding to consider how we might improve our communication with Friends (minute BYMT-2020-06-07). We are grateful to receive paper BYMT-2020-08-08.

We are excited by the ideas in the paper and have discussed how we might adopt some of them.

We recognise that we need to be careful about the line between management and governance and to coordinate with the communications staff of BYM, and we are reminded of 'the complexity of communication within Quakers' (minute BYMT 2020-02-10).

We are grateful to Georgina and Ellie for continuing to scope this work alongside staff and look forward to returning to it at a future meeting.

## **BYMT-2020-08-10 Racism and the naming of the William Penn room at Friends House**

We receive paper BYMT-2020-08-09, and minute MtM-2020-07 from Management Meeting, on the naming of rooms in Friends House and, in particular, the naming of one room in recognition of William Penn who was a slave owner.

We are grateful for Management Meeting's consideration of this matter.

As an immediate step, we ask that the communication board outside the William Penn room is amended to acknowledge that he owned slaves – alongside all the good things that he did – so that we recognise our failings and can avoid repeating them.

Tackling racism is a spiritual imperative of our time and this affects our understanding and communication of Quaker history – and how Quakers in Britain live now – far beyond the question of the name of one room at Friends House. We are aware that Meeting for Sufferings is already exploring the barriers to inclusion and diversity in our structures and hope that this paper can contribute to a loving conversation across the Church led by Meeting for Sufferings and supported by Quaker Life Central Committee.

We will return to the question of racism at our November meeting to explore what more we as trustees should do.

We ask Management Meeting to update their paper and to forward it with this minute to Meeting for Sufferings and to Quaker Life Central Committee.

Caroline Nursey  
Clerk

At a meeting of

## **Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees**

Friday 11 September to Saturday 12 September 2020, by video conference

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Georgina Bailey (until 09.08), Linda Batten (Treasurer) (until 09-08 except for minute 09-08b), Alison Breadon, Sarah Donaldson, Nick Eyre (except for minute 09-08b), Kit Fotheringham (except for minute 09-09), Kate Gulliver, Ellie Harding (except for minutes 09-05, 06 and 08b), Carolyn Hayman, Caroline Nurse (Clerk), Graham Torr (Assistant Clerk), Frances Voelcker, Danielle Walker Palmour (except for minutes 09-07 and 09-08), Chris Willmore (from 09-04).

**Prevented:** Jenny Brierley

**In attendance:** Paul Henderson-Grey (except for minutes 09-08, 16 and 17), Head of Operations; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk (except for minute 09-17); Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk (except for minutes 09-16 and 17); Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship (except for minutes 09-16 and 17).

**Visitors:** Martin Atkinson, Finance Support (minutes 09-08 and 09-10); Matt Baker, Board of Quiet Company (minute 09-07); Val Brittin, Clerk, Board of Quiet Company (minute 09-07); Andrew Lane, Director, Quaker Council for European Affairs (minute 09-09); Martin Leavy, member of Quaker Council for European Affairs' Executive Committee (minute 09-09); David Loxton, Head of Communications and Fundraising (minutes 09-11 to 14); Maureen Sebanakitta, Head of Finance and Resources from 21 September 2020 (minute 09-10); Holly Spencer, Co-clerk of the Quaker United Nations Committee Geneva (minute 09-09); Jonathan Woolley, Director, Quaker United Nations Office Geneva (minute 09-09).

### **BYMT-2020-09-01 Decision to hold a virtual meeting, welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest check**

We record our decision to hold this meeting by video conference. We follow Charity Commission guidance on running charities during the Covid-19 outbreak published on 19 March 2020 that allows video conferencing where there is no such clause in a charity's governing document. The Charity Commission asks us to record this decision.

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We confirm our agenda.

During our opening worship, we have heard paragraph 26.39 from *Quaker faith & practice*.

### **BYMT-2020-09-02 Items taken on draft minute**

#### **(a) 2021 and 2022 BYM Trustee meeting dates**

We receive paper BYMT-2020-09-02a proposing changes to our dates for 2021 and giving suggested dates for our meetings in 2022. We are mindful that committees

are being asked to meet as frequently as required and to hold fewer meetings in person. We agree to meet four times a year plus a short online meeting to agree the accounts, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and to hold all but one of these meetings online.

We agree to meet as follows:

<b>2021</b>	
Saturday 13 February (9.30am to 4.30pm)	Hold online
Friday 9 April (receipt of accounts) (7.30pm to 8.30pm)	Short 1-hour online meeting to receive accounts only
Friday 11 to Sunday 13 June (residential, provisionally to be held Hinsley Hall, Leeds) (6pm Friday to 12pm Sunday)	Incorporate a training element within this in-person meeting
Friday 3 to Saturday 4 September (12.30pm Friday to 1pm Saturday)	Hold online
Friday 12 November (9.30am to 4.30pm)	Hold online

<b>2022</b>	
Saturday 12 February (9.30am to 4.30pm)	Hold online
Friday 8 April (receipt of accounts) (7.30pm to 8.30pm)	Hold online
Friday 10 to Sunday 12 June (6pm Friday to 12pm Sunday)	Residential
Friday 2 to Saturday 3 September (12.30pm Friday to 1pm Saturday)	Hold online
Friday 11 November (9.30am to 4.30pm)	Hold online

We note the importance of getting to know new trustees in particular and will plan to meet socially around any face-to-face Meeting for Sufferings meeting or Yearly Meeting and to shape induction carefully.

### **(b) Annual check of gold minutes**

We receive paper BYMT-2020-09-02b detailing the minutes and papers that should be added to our gold papers:

BYMT-2019-11-08a Financial regulations and anti-fraud policy  
 BYMT-2019-11-11 Collections strategy working group report  
 BYMT-2019-11-15 Review of link trustees  
 BYMT-2020-02-03(c) Lettings policy  
 BYMT-2020-06-04 Library collections policy and principles

### **(c) Serious incident reports**

We note two serious incident reports have recently been made to the Charity Commission by area meetings. BYM will now also make serious incident reports to the Charity Commission as a linked charity.

### **BYMT-2020-09-03 Recording Clerk's report**

We receive an update from the Recording Clerk (paper BYMT-2019-09-03) reporting on planning and change management; ways of working and changing organisational culture; buildings and operations; BYM offices; home-based staff; employment matters; programme activity; governance and events; communications and fundraising; book of discipline revision; external relations and collaboration with other organisations; and new head of finance and resources.

We have heard from members of Management Meeting on priorities for the rest of 2020.

We are pleased that Friends House has been able to open this month albeit to a very limited extent and acknowledge all the work that has been put in by the hospitality & facilities team to enable this. We recognise the complexity of reopening when the extent of the pandemic and official advice changes frequently. We are grateful to all staff whether working at Friends House or Swarthmoor Hall, working from home, or continuing on furlough. It is good to hear the progress in implementing Quaker Life's strategy and in developing Quaker Peace and Social Witness's new strategy. And good also to see how much has been delivered even though some activities have not been possible while some staff have been furloughed.

We are encouraged that staff and unions are engaging constructively with Management Meeting in consultation around a range of measures aimed at protecting jobs while reducing cost, and on a revised redundancy scheme which is fit for purpose.

We know how difficult it is to plan in times of such uncertainty and have been reminded that George Fox did not achieve his vision in his lifetime, but it is still there.

### **BYMT-2020-09-04 Safeguarding**

We receive paper BYMT-2020-09-04 from the Deputy Recording Clerk. This paper updates us on safeguarding matters and developments. We have heard from Sarah Donaldson who is lead trustee on safeguarding about how we and Quaker Life Central Committee might move forward with Area Meetings to better protect children and vulnerable adults. We will return to this as a substantive item at our November meeting and hope that trustees will complete the online training ahead of that.

### **BYMT-2020-09-05 Simplification group**

At our meeting in August, we endorsed a proposal for a set of four exploratory meetings with Friends from key bodies to continue conversations on simplifying our structures. We have heard an update from Carolyn Hayman on plans for holding the first meeting in September.

### **BYMT-2020-09-06 Review of terms of reference for Quaker World Relations Committee and Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations**

We have received an update from Nick Eyre and Ellie Harding, trustees appointed by minute BYMT-2019-02-03(f) to review the terms of reference for QWRC and QCCIR. Paper BYMT-2020-09-05 makes two recommendations.

We agree further work on this review should be paused while broader discussions on simplifying our governance structures are under way.

We also agree with the recommendation that QWRC should not be expected to hold a Consultative Forum in 2021.

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

## **BYMT-2020-09-07 Proposals to deliver the vision for Swarthmoor Hall**

We welcome Matt Baker and Val Brittin from the Quiet Company Board who join us for this item. We receive a paper prepared by Val Brittin and Paul Henderson-Grey (BYMT-2020-09-06). It outlines the steps the Board of the Quiet Company have taken to consider business models to deliver the vision we agreed in 2019 – for the Hall to be a welcoming place of historic interest and spiritual refreshment with reduced ongoing costs to make it sustainable for the long term.

We note the Board considered three options.

We approve the proposed model to reopen the Hall to visitors from March 2021 after a winter break and to close it again at a later date to complete building conservation work and undertake development projects towards getting the Hall to a sustainable footing from 2023. We recognise that the current pandemic makes it difficult to plan accurately and that some discretion will be needed in adapting to circumstances.

We ask the Board to oversee the preparation of the various projects – which will need final capital approval from Finance and Property Committee – and to set up a working group of Friends and staff with appropriate skills to help on the planning and implementation of the re-interpretation of the Hall.

## **BYMT-2020-09-08 Finance and property**

We note that our Treasurer, Linda Batten, as well Nick Eyre and Eleanor Harding – who all serve as directors of Friends House (London) Hospitality Limited (“the Subsidiary”) (“the Dual Trustees”) – have an interest in the matters under discussion arising from their role as BYM trustee and their role as director of the Quiet Company. The Dual Trustees recused themselves from consideration of, and decision on, the proposed loan.

We receive paper BYMT-2020-09-07.

### **(a) Finance and Property Committee and Quiet Company minutes**

We note the minutes from Finance and Property Committee meeting on 7 September 2020 and receive the Quiet Company minutes of 10 September 2020.

### **(b) Proposed loan**

We are aware of the financial challenges facing the Quiet Company because of loss of business due to Covid-19 though we know that the Quiet Company is essentially a very profitable business that has consistently contributed significant funding to BYM.

We have considered the granting of a loan of £1,500,000 to the Quiet Company for the purpose of providing the Quiet Company with working capital. BYM is the sole shareholder in the Subsidiary.

The proposed loan would be an additional loan facility to the existing loan facility of £250,000 granted by BYM by agreement dated 1 June 2008 ("the 2008 Loan Agreement")

At their meeting of 7 September, Finance and Property Committee recommended that BYM grants the proposed loan. We have heard that Finance and Property considered:

- the draft loan agreement between the BYM and the Quiet Company ("the Loan Agreement");
- copies of the accounts of the Quiet Company for the past three financial years;
- a briefing paper prepared by Martin Atkinson titled Hospitality Company Solvency issue, dated 5 August;
- advice from the Charity's solicitors, Bates Wells, regarding the charity law considerations for the proposed loan
- five year forecasts for the Quiet Company, produced by Emre Cevik;
- a separate report by Martin Atkinson on the Quiet Company's finances.

The following points were noted:

- The proposed loan is within BYM's investment powers and the terms of the Loan Agreement are permitted by the Quiet Company's Articles of Association.
- Making the loan would not place BYM in any financial difficulty.
- The Quiet Company has shown itself on past performance to be a viable commercial subsidiary with the ability to generate significant profits for the benefit of BYM by way of donation and the trustees consider that the business plan, forecasts and projections of the Quiet Company strongly indicate that the Quiet Company will be able to generate future profits for the benefit of BYM.
- The Quiet Company is currently facing financial difficulties owing to the temporary closure of Friends House as a result of the pandemic and the consequent inability to continue trading.
- The loan provided for by the Loan Agreement bears interest at a rate of 3.6% above the Bank of England base rate from time to time. This rate of interest is considered to be a reasonable commercial rate for the loan of £1,500,000 at the anticipated level of risk.
- In all other material respects, the terms of the loan are the same as the 2008 Loan Agreement.
- Under the terms of the 2008 Loan Agreement, any current and future indebtedness owed by the Quiet Company to BYM is also secured. The new loan currently under consideration would therefore also be covered by the existing security provisions in the 2008 Loan Agreement, and there is therefore no need to create any further provisions in order for the new loan to be secured in favour of BYM on the same terms as the 2008 Loan Agreement.



- BYM will be in a position to closely monitor the Quiet Company's performance through being represented on its board by the Dual Trustees.
- The arrangements for donating the Quiet Company's profits to BYM will (in due course) have to take account of the terms of the Loan Agreement so that due payments of interest under the Loan Agreement are made to BYM prior to any such donations.

We are satisfied that making the proposed loan constitutes an investment made for the benefit of BYM in that it will provide the Quiet Company with working capital on a commercial basis at a commercial rate of interest to be earned by BYM with the reasonable expectation, given the Quiet Company's past and projected future performance, that BYM will benefit subsequently through the Quiet Company's generation of profits and such profits being donated to BYM (subject to due repayment of the interest and subject to compliance with company law).

We agree that the terms of the Loan Agreement be approved and that any two trustees be authorised to sign the Loan Agreement on behalf of BYM and in doing so to agree and approve any amendments made to the Loan Agreement after the holding of the meeting.

We agree that the Head of Finance and Resources be delegated to ensure that accounts, figures and reports of activity are received regularly from the Quiet Company, that these are carefully analysed and that the results of such analysis are regularly reported to us so that we can:

- assess the effectiveness of the Quiet Company in supporting BYM and its mission; and
- ensure that the support provided by BYM continues to be justifiable as a good and proper use of BYM's resources.

### **(c) Overdraft**

We note minute FP20/51 from Finance & Property Committee's meeting on 7 September setting out details of the Cooperative Bank's offer of an unsecured overdraft facility of £1m as part of the Government's Business Interruption Payment scheme. The Government is covering the setup costs and any interest payments for the 12 months from the date of the facility. Finance & Property Committee has recommended this facility to Trustees and has asked us to complete the documentation.

We agree to this and ask Paul Parker and Paul Henderson-Grey to sign the agreement on behalf of Trustees.

We ask that the Treasurer be notified if the facility is drawn on.

### **BYMT-2020-09-09 Britain Yearly Meeting, Quaker United Nations Office (Geneva) and Quaker Council for European Affairs**

We receive paper BYMT-2020-09-08 and have been joined by Andrew Lane, Director, Quaker Council of European Affairs; Martin Leavy, member of Quaker Council European Affairs' Executive Committee; Holly Spencer, Co-clerk of the Quaker United Nations Committee Geneva; Jonathan Woolley, Director, Quaker United Nations Office Geneva.

We have enjoyed hearing more about the work and impact of QUNO and QCEA, the collaboration with QPSW and British Friends, and the use of our funding.

### **BYMT-2020-09-10 Future shape of BYM and Budget**

We welcome paper BYMT-2020-09-09a updating the vision for 2023 we considered at our meeting on 15 August. We have now received a paper setting out parameters for setting our budget for 2021 (BYMT-2020-09-09b).

We have also received a half-year forecast for this year. We note the current projection of an operating loss of £2.6m, which is £900k worse than budget. The substantial loss of trading and event income will be offset in part by receiving grant support from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

We recognise the efforts of staff to minimise our deficit in this extraordinary year and are grateful for the reserves – built up over many years – that have allowed us to plan ahead without taking precipitate action. We remain conscious that difficult decisions lie ahead as we reduce costs as necessary over the next three years, and as we adapt ways of working to better serve Friends longer term and in a way that is both effective and affordable.

We see many creative opportunities that will allow BYM to better support Quakers to be Quakers and to ‘use (their) gifts in the service of God and the community’ (Advices and Queries 27). We want our structures, posts and programmes of work to be flexible so that they can become as distinctively Quaker as our testimonies, discipline and worship.

We ask that the language used in the next iteration of this paper, should reflect our determination to be both ‘an ordinary well run organisation with good structures and sensible practices’ and also one that ‘is made extraordinary by transcending not discarding them’ (*Quaker faith and practice*, 8.25).

We endorse the thinking behind the budget, the basis for setting the budget and the process for how the budget will be prepared. We ask staff to proceed on this basis and to present a budget for 2021 and a plan for 2022–23 at our meeting in November.

### **BYMT-2020-09-11 Yearly Meeting 2020 and Meeting for Sufferings**

We have heard an outline of the business that will be considered by Yearly Meeting 2020 and we have discussed our participation at Meeting for Sufferings to be held on 2-4 October 2020.

### **BYMT-2020-09-12 Yearly Meeting 2021**

We note receipt of an invitation from Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee (BYMT-2020-09-11) to help discern the agenda and programme for Yearly Meeting in 2021. It asks us to contribute a written paper.

We have specific subject matter to suggest and ask the clerks, with Alison Breadon and Ellie Harding, to reflect our thoughts in a response.

### **BYMT-2020-09-13 Trustees' annual report 2020**

We have reflected on how we should communicate through our Annual Report & Accounts and Annual Review, including the opportunities offered by digital means. In addition, a part-year review will be produced in November.

We ask Georgina Bailey and Jenny Brierley to support staff in the creation process.

### **BYMT-2020-09-14 Communicating trustees' work**

We have considered how to communicate our work to others.

We ask Ellie Harding to invite us to offer contributions that can be incorporated in a programme of future communications.

### **BYMT-2020-09-15 Reviewing the meeting**

We have reviewed the meeting.

### **BYMT-2020-09-16 Time with Recording Clerk**

We have spent time with the Recording Clerk.

### **BYMT-2020-09-17 Time without staff**

We have spent time without staff.

Caroline Nursey  
Clerk



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

## **Responding to racism**

In 2017, Yearly Meeting heard the call to examine its own diversity, in committee and organisational structures both locally and nationally. YM Minute 38 asked Meeting for Sufferings to look at how Quakers can remove barriers and actively seek wider participation in the full life of our meetings. BYM employed an Inclusion and Diversity Co-ordinator, Edwina Peart, to help us with this work and Edwina has previously reported to Meeting for Sufferings in October 2018 and April 2019.

Issues of race, transgender and class (amongst others) have been raised and considered within our structures and this work continues. There have been two national conferences at Woodbrooke, and the theme of Yearly Meeting in 2019 addressed diversity and inclusion, and climate change through the theme of privilege.

Conversations have been wide-ranging and reflect the overlap between race, gender and class which creates interdependent systems of discrimination and privilege.

Meeting for Sufferings has now received four minutes relating primarily to racism – three from area meetings and one from Trustees with its associated paper. These minutes follow.

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At this meeting, representatives, in small groups, are asked to consider the following questions to further our discernment:

- The mistreatment George Floyd faced, resulting in his death, was because of his race, class and gender. What can we in the UK learn from his death and how should we respond?
  - How can we best acknowledge and help heal the wounds of the transatlantic slave trade? Quakers participated in this trade of empire, and continue to enjoy its benefits as part of the wealth of the UK today.
  - How should we continue our discernment, and how can we welcome and be led by the voices and experiences of BAME people when our Society is predominantly white?
-

## **(a) Central Yorkshire Area Meeting 15 June 2020**

### **Minute of online discernment regarding Support for US Quakers**

The clerks of Central Yorkshire AM and the constituent local meetings have received the following minute from Barnsley Local Meeting regarding the death in police custody in America of George Floyd. In view of the need for a timely response we have considered it before our next meeting for worship for business. We endorse this minute and ask the clerk to send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

#### Minute concerning the case of George Floyd from Barnsley LM, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2020

We offer the following minute/ message of support to CYAM, asking that we corporately consider forwarding this minute to Yearly Meeting, requesting that our message of support be sent to the appropriate representatives amongst American Friends. We also suggest that Local Meetings consider ways in which they can, at a local level, begin discussions if they have not already done so about how best to support racial equality and justice.

‘Dearest Friends, we have been disturbed and saddened by the recent events surrounding the death in police custody of George Floyd, and the subsequent violence that has arisen from this. On the other hand, there has been a passionate and widespread upsurge of positive protest in favour of meaningful social change. Most of us Quakers in Britain are geographically distant from this tragedy, but feel deeply concerned by it. Either humanity is genuinely a family, or we are not. If we are, then we must act constructively in response to injustice. As Lord Woolley said last year, ‘the standards we walk past are the standards we accept.’

Our constructive response in this case suggests itself in two parts. Firstly, we wish to communicate our support for you at this difficult time, and to show our solidarity. We understand that Quakers, locally and nationally, will be doing whatever they can to challenge racism and to mitigate the effects of the violent disorder which has occurred since George Floyd’s death. We note with approval the clear and firm anti-racist stance adopted by American Friends Service Committee, as articulated by Shanene Herbert. We also applaud AFSC’s role in distributing groceries and other material support to people, both affected by the Covid-19 outbreak and by some protests on local shops and services.

Secondly, we are all too aware that the issue of systemic racism and racial inequality is also pressing in Britain. This tragic case also reminds us of the vital need to raise our voices in Britain to offer a clear alternative to intolerance and abuse, and to do what we can to support racial, social, political and economic justice in our own country. We must offer a loving, creative and constructive response to actions which we find to be wrong.

As a Religious Society, we try to cherish all of our members and attenders, with all of the gifts of their different cultures, races and ethnicities. We are painfully aware that all too often we are an organisation that is majority white. Yet we seek to be inclusive and welcoming. We remember our Friend Dorothy Case (*Quaker Faith and Practice*, 23.34) who was involved in grassroots community building. We strive to live out the statement that ‘At the centre of Friends’ religious experience is the repeatedly and consistently expressed belief in the fundamental equality of all members of the human race. Our common humanity transcends our differences.’ (*QF&P*, 23.36)

The road to such justice is a long and rocky one, but we are dedicated to playing our small part in walking it. Please be assured that our thoughts and prayers are also with you at this difficult time.'

## **(b) Manchester and Warrington Area Meeting 3 June 2020**

### **MWAM2020.06.03. Minute18. National Quaker response to the unrest caused by the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis USA.**

We have received a query from Friends House asking whether we feel it appropriate to send a message of support from Britain Yearly Meeting to Friends in the USA.

We are in agreement with this and hope that a message of support from all British Friends will go to the four Associations of Yearly Meetings in North America and also be shared across all the appropriate social media platforms. We hold all of those working for peace and justice in this difficult situation in our prayers.

We ask the Clerk to forward this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Note to representatives: a [letter of solidarity](#) was sent 25 June 2020 signed by Ann Floyd, clerk to Quaker World Relations Committee and by Paul Parker, Recording Clerk for Britain Yearly Meeting.

## **(c) Mid Thames Area Meeting August 2020**

### **20/08/06 Historic involvement of Quakers in slavery**

We have received the following minute from Newbury Local Meeting

#### 20/07/09: Quaker response to our historic involvement in slavery

Our Friend Heath McAvilley has raised a number of questions with regard to Quaker involvement in slavery and asks the question 'what does love require of us?'. We have heard that there are deep unhealed wounds as well as continuing racism, social injustice and slavery in the UK and elsewhere. We have considered the meaning and value of an apology for historic acts as well as recognising a strong conviction that action is needed as well as apology. We ask area meeting to take this matter forward.

Heath has told us more of his concern that led to his raising it with his local meeting.

'I am troubled by the historic involvement of Quakers in slavery, both in their capacity as slave owners and as participants in the related trades and investments therein.

I ask only that Friends seek discernment regarding the question: Should Quakers (BYM), as a body, make an apology for our participation in the historic slave-trade?

In recent months, several strands of my life have come together to focus my attention.

I have been fortunate enough to participate in online peace-making workshops run by Initiatives of Change. My 'take-way' from these has been to understand that true peace, not just the absence of hostilities, is unobtainable without an unconditional apology from those who should make it.

My wife and I are an interracial couple who have, unfortunately, been on the receiving end of racial abuse from all sides. Fortunately, this has not been often, but it does give us a first-hand experience of the needless tensions and indeed hate, that exists between communities.

Of course, the recent publicity surrounding police violence against non-white citizens in the United States of America, and the accompanying Black Lives Matter protests have increased my concern.

I have struggled with questions, both of my own and from Friends, these being:

- Do Quakers need to be reconciled to affected communities, given our early push for Abolition and our acknowledged good works against slavery?
- Can any individual or group apologise in a meaningful way, for actions long ago and for which they bear no personal or corporate responsibility now, nor indeed in the past?
- Is it wise to view history through the lens of modern attitudes?
- Shouldn't we be looking forward and not back?

From my own experience, I know that historic slavery remains a current and open wound in the collective memories of affected communities. It has not been forgotten or forgiven.

In response to any questions, the Spirit answers "what does love require of me?"

It is through love and not guilt that I am guided to suggest we make such an apology.'

Any apology would need to have a purpose and include action as well as words. We are reminded of John Woolman's action in 1756 (Quaker faith & practice 20.46.

We have tested this concern and are certain that it is a subject that would benefit from discernment by a wider group. We, therefore, ask the clerk to forward it to Meeting for Sufferings for their consideration.

We attach the apology from New York Yearly Meeting in 2013.

<https://www.nyym.org/content/apology-afro-descendants>

## **(d) BYMT paper and minute 15 August 2020**

### **BYMT paper (BYMT-2020-08-09)**

#### **Racism and the naming of the William Penn room at Friends House**

##### **Introduction**

This paper asks Meeting for Sufferings to support a process of consideration among Friends in Britain about the way in which William Penn is remembered.

The matter has been prompted by questions about the naming of rooms at Friends House, but it raises broader questions about how Quakers in Britain engage with and address racism.

## **Background**

Rooms in Friends House are named after Quakers who have made a difference to the world. One of them is William Penn.

It has been suggested that the name of this room should be reconsidered, given that William Penn owned slaves on his estate in Pennsylvania in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. (The suggestions have come from a letter in the Friend from Tim Gee, published 26 June – so far there have been no letters in response – and an email from another Friend to the Recording Clerk, asking whether this was under consideration.)

Understanding Quaker history is an important part of understanding Quakers and Quaker action today. Rooms in Friends House have been named after historical Quaker figures to help tell the story of Quakers to people who visit and use Friends House.

## **Considerations**

We can't deny the fact of William Penn's life, and the contribution he made both negative and positive, to society and to the Quaker movement. However, it now seems inappropriate to honour a person who promoted and directly benefitted from the slave trade. We do not wish to make users of the room who know about his story feel uncomfortable. People who use the room and know about his story will find it very uncomfortable. It may also seem untruthful to describe his life story without referring to his ownership of slaves.

Quaker values on racial equality and racial justice are fairly clear. In the past Quakers have clearly recorded a commitment to equality and to tackling racism. But there has been little focus on this in recent years, and a lot of the language (in minutes and other writings) is outdated. This could be a great opportunity for Quakers in Britain to explore what this means for us today – together and alongside other groups.

This isn't only relevant to BYM, but to the church. William Penn is quoted and referred to several times in our Book of Discipline. He is particularly associated with some Quaker meetings, including Jordans (Mid-Thames AM) where he was buried, and Blue Idol (West Weald AM) which William Penn helped to buy. There is a William Penn school and a Penn club. And we need to explore alongside other Quakers – for example, Friends in Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting are having their own struggles with addressing racism.

The Library of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain publishes [subject guides](#); the guide to William Penn acknowledges that he owned slaves.

There has been a lot of discussion and sometimes action against statues of former slaveholders. For some people, it's essential to remove statues that embody violent racism. Other people believe they should be kept, perhaps in museums, as a reminder of former horrors. Either way, a lot more needs to be done before we change the racist structures that we all live with every day.

Whatever the eventual decision about the name of the room, or the way that William Penn's story is told, a willingness to reconsider the room name is one way for



Friends in Britain to acknowledge how our understanding evolves, to engage constructively with the Black Lives Matter movement, and to discern what constructive anti-racist actions we need to take.

### Actions so far

Following BYM Trustees' meeting in August (see minute BYMT-2020-08-10, copied below) the text outside the room has been changed. The new text acknowledges that William Penn enslaved people, and notes that today we're working to understand how early Friends reconciled such actions with Quaker values. The text is marked as temporary, to indicate that this is under consideration.

## William Penn 1644–1718

Quaker preacher, founder of the state of Pennsylvania

### TEMPORARY – this sign is being revised

William Penn was born in 1644 in London. He converted to Quakerism by the age of 22, and was expelled from Oxford University for being a Quaker. He travelled with George Fox in England and throughout Europe.

Penn was an avid writer, defending religious freedom, democracy and pacifism. His writings and preaching led to his arrest in 1670 with fellow Quaker William Meade. The case led to the right for English juries to be free from control by judges.

In 1681, Charles II handed over a large piece of American land holdings to William Penn to satisfy a debt the king owed to Penn's father Admiral Sir William Penn. This land, formerly inhabited by Native American people and colonised by the Dutch and English, included the states of Pennsylvania and Delaware.

Penn drafted a charter to protect freedom of worship and civil liberties. It also included education for children, no military outposts and fair-trading with indigenous Americans. This became known as the Holy Experiment.

Abolishing slavery was not part of Penn's Holy Experiment, and he owned enslaved people. At times, Penn argued for better treatment of enslaved people, but today his words and actions clash with his apparent belief in equality.

Quakers in America did not ban their members from owning enslaved people until 1774. Quakers today are working to understand how early Friends reconciled their Quaker values with benefitting from the barbaric slave trade.

William Penn died in 1718 and was buried at Jordans Meeting House in Buckinghamshire.



William Penn's signature taken from his manuscripts, circa 1699.

Portrait of William Penn by James Possetwhite, after John Hall stipple engraving, early 19th century.

© Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

### About the naming of rooms in Friends House

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to give guidance to BYM Trustees about how to approach this. The Trustees – working closely with the Quiet Company and staff – have to take responsibility for details such as the naming of rooms, but the Trustees are keen to be guided by Friends.

The William Penn room was one of the first three rooms – along with George Fox and Margaret Fell – to be named.

Other room names were approved by Trustees in 2016. Two of the newer rooms (John Woolman and Lucretia Mott) were named after abolitionists. Those rooms, along with Bayard Rustin, are named after American Friends, and are located in the basement near to FWCC's office. Tim Gee's letter to The Friend also pointed out one of the smallest rooms (Bayard Rustin) is named after a Black, gay Quaker; and that a much larger room is named after Abraham Darby, whose industrial works caused environmental harm.

### **More about William Penn**

William Penn (1644–1718) came from a wealthy, well-connected military Church of England family. He was a pacifist and human rights advocate, who made a significant contribution to the development of modern government. He was the first governor of the state of Pennsylvania, which was named by King Charles II in honour of William Penn's father, Admiral Sir William Penn. He spent time in prison for his faith. He was wealthy – in 1681 he was the largest non-royal landowner in the world – but towards the end of his life he faced financial and family difficulties, and died penniless.

Quakers were aware of slavery from the 1650s, but at that time they did not call for an end to the slave trade, only urging that slaves should be treated better. Groups of Quakers began to denounce slavery in the 1680s. Abolitionists became more vocal in the first part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, but Quakers corporately did not actively campaign against slavery until the 1750s.

Quakers' initial success was premised on its new spirituality of inclusion, the putting of faith into action and its decision-making processes. Recently, there has been some work within Quaker communities focused on drawing a more nuanced and realistic picture of Quakers historically. For example, in 2019 Kathleen Bell did an Eva Koch scholarship on 'When Quakers got it wrong' and her work is being developed into a discussion pack.

Tackling racism is without doubt a spiritual imperative of our time. Openly working on ourselves in this regard will be an indication of where we are – collectively and individually – at this point, and the direction we wish to move in.

### **Rooms in Friends House**

Margaret Fell	1614-1702	A founder of the Religious Society of Friends; wife of George Fox
George Fox	1624-1691	A founder of the Religious Society of Friends
Sarah Fell	1642-1714	Daughter of Margaret Fell, known for her skills as a business woman and keeping accounts
William Penn	1644-1718	Founder of the state of Pennsylvania
Abraham Darby	1678-1717	industrialist, developed a new way to producing iron during the industrial revolution
John Woolman	1720-1772	American (died in UK): abolitionist, preacher
Elizabeth Fry	1780-1845	Prison reformer (born into Gurney family, bankers; married to Joseph Fry, a banker)
Lucretia Mott	1793-1880	American (née Coffin): campaigner – against slavery and for women's rights

Ada Salter	1866-1942	Social reformer
Hilda Clark	1881-1955	Doctor, humanitarian aid worker, pacifist. Member of the Clarks (shoes) family.
Kathleen Lonsdale	1903-1971	Scientist – crystallographer (Irish)
Waldo Williams	1904-1971	Welsh-language poet
Marjorie Sykes	1905-1995	Educator, member of the Indian independence movement (British; lived in India)
Bayard Rustin	1912-1987	African-American; leader in movements for civil rights, nonviolence, gay rights
Leslie Forster	1916-2014	Active in social and community housing, pacifist and conscientious objector, member of Friends House Meeting from 1947.

### **Additional notes – minutes**

#### **Management Meeting minute 2020-07**

A letter published in The Friend (26 June) has raised questions about the naming of rooms in Friends House, and in particular one named after William Penn, who was a slave-owner. We acknowledge the insensitivity of honouring an individual who benefitted so directly from slavery. William Penn's name is well-known as an early Friend, a pacifist who contributed to the development of modern government. Recently there has been an increasing awareness of other aspects of William Penn's life. It would be possible to change the name of the room; or for information about William Penn to be represented more truthfully. At this stage we are not clear about the best way forward, but feel an open conversation amongst Friends could be helpful. We agree to forward this minute, with the attached paper, to Trustees for consideration.

#### **BYMT minute**

#### **BYMT-2020-08-10 Racism and the naming of the William Penn room at Friends House**

We receive paper BYMT-2020-08-09, and minute MtM-2020-07 from Management Meeting, on the naming of rooms in Friends House and, in particular, the naming of one room in recognition of William Penn who was a slave owner.

We are grateful for Management Meeting's consideration of this matter.

As an immediate step, we ask that the communication board outside the William Penn room is amended to acknowledge that he owned slaves – alongside all the good things that he did – so that we recognise our failings and can avoid repeating them.

Tackling racism is a spiritual imperative of our time and this affects our understanding and communication of Quaker history – and how Quakers in Britain live now – far beyond the question of the name of one room at Friends House. We are aware that Meeting for Sufferings is already exploring the barriers to inclusion and diversity in our structures and hope that this paper can contribute to a loving

conversation across the Church led by Meeting for Sufferings and supported by Quaker Life Central Committee.

We will return to the question of racism at our November meeting to explore what more we as trustees should do.

We ask Management Meeting to update their paper and to forward it with this minute to Meeting for Sufferings and to Quaker Life Central Committee.



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## **Organisations applying to become Quaker Recognised Bodies**

### **Introduction**

This paper gives details of applications for registration as Quaker Recognised Bodies (QRB). Staff have looked at the documentation provided by each of the organisations and consider that the criteria for listing them as QRBs have been met.

### **Background**

In 2015, Meeting for Sufferings agreed a new way for BYM to relate to other Quaker bodies (minute MfS 2015/12/17).

- The guidelines for groups that would like to be a QRB are also on the BYM Website [www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups](http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups)
- Paper MfS 2018/07/15 gives a full introduction to QRBs:

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

The process aims to clarify benefits and responsibilities for QRBs and BYM. It's also a way to strengthen links between centrally-managed work and the wide range of exciting Quaker work being done by other groups, helping build a vibrant Society of Friends.

So far, Meeting for Sufferings has registered 69 QRBs.

### **Requests for registration**

The following organisations have applied to become Quaker Recognised Bodies:

- Forward Africa Education Trust
- Friendship Cohousing Limited
- Quakers in Criminal Justice
- Restoring Relations

### **Action required**

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to approve these organisations as Quaker recognised bodies.

## **QRBs that have been laid down**

### **China Group**

The China Group was laid down in October 2019. At the time of closure, the group had an account balance of £2307.74. The account has since been closed, and the funds were donated to the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding (SACU). In January 2020, the group was removed by the Charity Commission.

The group's papers have been added to the Friends House Library.

### **Action required**

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to acknowledge the laying down of this organisation as a Quaker Recognised Body.

Charlotte McMenamin-Walshe  
Recording Clerk's Office

## **Name of Quaker Recognised Body: Forward Africa Education Trust**

**Aims:** The trust provides funding and practical support to poor and disadvantaged secondary school children in Rwanda. At least half of the supported students attend Quaker schools. The trust works closely with the Clerk to Rwanda Yearly Meeting, Cecile Nyiramana. Quaker values and witness are active in all of the trust's work.

**Governance:** Charity Commission

**Constitution:** Trust deed, UK registered charity

**Type of Group:** External

**Foundation:** December 2017

**Publications and activities:** As a registered charity, the trust publishes an annual report. Activities include helping to maximise the educational opportunities for students, working closely with local partners, visiting schools in Rwanda, meeting students supported by the trust, creating programmes to improve English skills, discussing broader child care issues with Rwandan Quakers, and fundraising.

**Membership:** The group is strongly tied to the Quaker community. Many of the trust's supporters are long-time Attenders, and the chair of the trustees has recently applied for membership. The trust has the support of the Quaker Africa Interest Group (QAIG) and is a founder of QAIG's charity sub-group.

**Finance:** Annual budget of approximately £17,000

**Winding up:** n/a

**Archives:** n/a

**Current contact details:** Steve Kaim-Caudle, Chair of Trustees

**Phone:** 07789 631301 **Address:** 9 Devereux Drive, Watford, WD17 3DD

**Email:** [steve@forwardafricaeducation.org.uk](mailto:steve@forwardafricaeducation.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.forwarafricaeducation.org.uk](http://www.forwarafricaeducation.org.uk)

**Staff link:** Michael Booth

## **Name of Quaker Recognised Body: Friendship Cohousing Limited**

**Aims:** The group aims to establish a cohousing community for the climate crisis that is guided by the Quaker principles of truth, peace, equality and simplicity. The project aims to build a community that lives in harmony with nature. In addition to housing, the project includes an education/spiritual centre to help people through the climate crisis.

**Governance:** The Company is managed by the board of directors.

**Constitution:** Company Limited by Guarantee

**Type of Group:** Free-Standing

**Foundation:** 2020

**Publications and activities:** The group will teach people self-sufficiency, permaculture, rewilding, regenerative agriculture, deep adaptation & spiritual awareness. The group's vision is to be a centre for climate crisis education and to be an example of simple and sustainable living that enables people to survive and thrive during and after the climate crisis.

**Membership:** Nine members at present. Members are permanent residents. In the future, there will be the opportunity for non-residents to become members of a support group. All those who join the community must uphold Quaker values.

**Finance:** Capital £500k cash (private finance) and £600k mortgage to purchase site. Annual turnover about £100,000. Non-profit company.

**Winding up:** In the event of winding-up, according to English law, the liquidator shall first use the assets of the Company to satisfy its debts and liabilities. If after the satisfaction of all its debts and liabilities, any property remains, it will be given to Britain Yearly Meeting, or any other body with similar objectives to the Company.

**Archives:** N/A at present

**Current contact details:** Jackie Carpenter

**Phone:** 07592 741 065

**Email:** [jackie@friendshipcohousing.org.uk](mailto:jackie@friendshipcohousing.org.uk)

**Address:** (to be used once the Company is established in the property) Friendship Cohousing Community, South Treveneague Farm, Goldsithney, Penzance, TR20 9YB

**Website:** [www.friendshipcohousing.org.uk](http://www.friendshipcohousing.org.uk)

**Staff link:** Simon Phillips



## **Name of Quaker Recognised Body: Quakers in Criminal Justice**

**Aims:** To advance the education of Quakers and the public in general on the subject of Criminal Justice, so that Quakers and others can contribute to the debate on justice matters and share their interests and concerns.

**Governance:** AGM makes major decisions. Committee implements policy on the day-to-day. Committee of 5 to 10 persons are elected from membership at AGM. All business meetings and decision-making are carried out according to the Quaker business method.

**Constitution:** A new constitution was adopted by AGM in February 2020 and will now be presented to the Charity Commission.

**Type of Group:** Free standing (The group will convert to externally regulated once it becomes a registered charity)

**Foundation:** 1983

**Publications and activities:** Publishes a newsletter (print and online) three times a year. Hosts an annual conference on criminal justice matters, and usually has a special interest group at Yearly Meeting. A membership list is kept for networking between QICJ members.

**Membership:** About 130-140 members

**Finance:** The main income and expenditure is £8,000 and is associated with the annual conference. The other main source of income is from membership subscriptions. Total annual budget at present is about £10-£11K.

**Winding up:** Winding up to be agreed by AGM. Assets to be transferred to a similar organisation, or as advised by BYM.

**Archives:** A long-standing member of QICJ maintains archives of publications and minutes, though these are not complete back to 1983.

**Current contact details:** Simon Ewart

**Phone:** 01736 871161

**Email:** [gicjmembership@gmail.com](mailto:gicjmembership@gmail.com)

**Website:** [www.qicj.org](http://www.qicj.org)

**Staff link:** Teresa Parker

## **Name of Quaker Recognised Body: Restoring Relations**

**Aims:** An initiative run by a small group of Friends (Members and Attenders), and others, to provide free online information for all and run workshops to help individuals and Quaker meetings to better understand and handle conflict.

**Governance:** The group is governed through a steering group which consists of individuals active in the work and with relevant experience. The steering group meets 4-6 times per year.

**Constitution:** No written constitution at present. A constitution will be written when the need arises (i.e. when the group registers as a legal body).

**Type of Group:** Emergent

**Foundation:** Informally in 2016, and formally in 2017.

**Publications and activities:** Publically available free resources online on the group website and linked wiki. The group also delivers 2-3 workshops a year. Some of the workshops are public, and others are closed workshops for individual Quaker meetings.

**Membership:** 6-10 full time members

**Finance:** Finances are currently held and administered by the Quaker and Business Group on behalf of Restoring Relations.

**Winding up:** No wind-up provisions at present. In the event of winding up the work, any surplus finances would be donated to a charity in sympathy with the group's purpose.

**Archives:** Minutes of meetings

**Current contact details:** Alistair Heslop

**Phone:** 01327 351886

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

**linked wiki:** <http://restoringrelations.org/wiki/doku.php>

**Website:** [www.restoringrelations.org](http://www.restoringrelations.org)

**Staff link:** Oliver Waterhouse



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## **Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations Annual Report to Meeting for Sufferings 2020**

The Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) is appointed by Meeting for Sufferings and is accountable to Britain Yearly Meeting through Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees. At least one member is appointed from General Meeting for Scotland and at least one from the Meeting of Friends in Wales. Ireland Yearly Meeting is invited to nominate a representative through Britain Yearly Meeting's Central Nominations Committee. Additional members may be co-opted to assist with particular issues.

*QCCIR is responsible for keeping Britain Yearly Meeting informed of relevant issues and movements which emerge from the interchurch and interfaith life of Britain, and of opportunities for dialogue and co-operation between churches, between faiths, and between faiths and churches. It liaises with other churches and communities of faith, keeping them informed of developments in the life of the yearly meeting and responding on behalf of the yearly meeting so that Friends' views on issues of faith and order are represented. QCCIR supports members of Britain Yearly Meeting, both nationally and locally, in raising awareness and understanding of the interchurch and interfaith dimension of religious and spiritual life.*

*Quaker faith and practice 9.13*

This year's QCCIR report focusses on the themes of QCCIR's work since December 2019 and offers a look forward to developments in the ecumenical landscape in the next 12 months

### **Themes in the past year**

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on how interfaith and interchurch relations are organised, and has prompted reflection on issues relating to inequalities and injustices across Britain, and what 'the church' might look like in the post-pandemic world.

All of the interchurch and interfaith bodies quickly, and effectively, moved their work 'online'. As face-to-face meetings were not possible during 'lockdown' extensive use had to be made of online platforms. These platforms were used for meetings, consultations and education and training among and within churches and faiths.

There has been a significant increase in the contact members of QCCIR has been able to maintain with ecumenical bodies during the Covid period. The complexities of the loosening of lockdown restrictions have affected other church and faith communities in different ways, and the opportunities for more frequent contact have shown the effectiveness of sharing knowledge. Qualitatively, the relationships that Friends have built up over the years with other churches and faiths have served us well and there has been a strengthening of bonds through the experience of working through the difficulties posed by Covid.

There have been positive experiences of working ecumenically in relating to government. There has been resourcefulness and mutual support, undertaken in a positive, creative and productive spirit. This has been a very different form of interchurch and interfaith 'cooperation', and it is hoped that the ecumenical movement will absorb this time and make it part of its identity and function.

## **Work in the past year**

### ***CTE relations***

QCCIR and BYM staff members have continued to engage with Churches Together in England (CTE) over the challenges and difficulties encountered by the rejection of the Quaker appointment to the 4<sup>th</sup> Presidency of CTE. We have been heartened by a deepening of some bilateral relationships through the public support for the Quaker appointment as the 4<sup>th</sup> President of Churches Together in England (CTE) from the United Reformed Church (URC) and the Methodist Conference. QCCIR has continued to bear witness to Quaker values at the CTE Enabling Group, and we hope to bring further updates to Meeting for Sufferings later in 2020 or early 2021.

### ***Changing Face of Faith***

The committee has given further consideration to the legacy-funded project *The Changing Face of Faith in Britain*. This is available as a publication on the BYM website.

One of the original intentions of the *Changing Face of Faith* project was to investigate if there were 'new groups' with which Quakers should be engaging. The research posed key questions-are we working in the right places? Should Quakers work only through the ecumenical instruments? (the ecumenical instruments are Churches Together in England, Cytyn Churches Together in Wales, Action by Churches Together in Scotland and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland as the umbrella body) . The process of seeking other groups has been an essential one to assist the committee in its understanding of the nature of the inter-church and interfaith landscape of Britain.

Friends have regular encounters with other faiths and churches at various nexus points. A new ecumenical scene is developing at local level rather than national level, although some new churches are not in local interchurch and interfaith groups.

Friends are encouraged to find ways to stimulate interaction with new churches and faith groups.

The experience the committee has had with other churches through the complex issue of the CTE 4th presidency has underlined that there is interest in other churches about Quakers. Are we ourselves open to approaches from other groups? We note that as centrally managed work is changing, we need to be sure that resources are available from QCCIR for local development workers.

We have affirmed the deep and challenging work that went into the *Changing Face of Faith*, and are heartened by the extensive material that has been produced in the texts, at YMG 2017, at the 2 joint QCCIR-Woodbrooke conferences and in our contacts with other Friends. The committee has now laid down the *Changing Face of Faith* as a piece of work.

## **Looking ahead**

### ***Covid-19 and BAME communities***

The disproportionately negative impact of Covid on the BAME community has been an enormous issue that will be played through church and faith life in a significant way. We must see the importance of this as Friends. Resources were produced during 'lockdown' that speak about the specific experience of BAME communities in relation to Covid. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) hosted a webinar organised by the Ascension Trust. Friends can access the recording via this link:

<https://ctbi.org.uk/webinar-christian-response-to-how-covid-19-is-affecting-bame-communities/>

### ***Addressing racial injustice***

The killing of George Floyd in the United States, and calls to address racial injustice in Britain, have prompted ecumenical bodies to look at ways of tackling racism in society and in churches. This process has begun in Churches Together in England, with a call '...upon all churches to travel together on this journey of racial justice'. QCCIR will keep Friends updated on this process.

The Interfaith Network UK, of which BYM is a member, has produced a reflection on Black Lives Matter at <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/news/blacklivesmatter-reflections-from-the-board-of-ifn-at-its-meeting-on-9-june-2020>

### ***Covid-19 'Events'***

Planning faith-based events/processes that will mark our path through, and out of, the Covid-19 will be a part of church/faith life in the next 12 months. There will be a need/call for churches and faiths to find ways to 'mark' this time and trauma in our social and cultural life.

## ***Learning as churches and faiths***

Within ecumenical bodies key questions have been posed: 'What are we learning as churches from the pandemic?' 'What will the church look like 'after' Covid?' QCCIR will continue to monitor responses and participate as appropriate within interchurch and interfaith bodies.

## **Ways to be involved**

Friends are reminded of the many opportunities to participate in interfaith and interchurch relations. The following is a list of annual events:

- Week of Prayer for World Peace 11 to 18 Sunday in October.

[www.weekofprayerforworldpeace.co.uk](http://www.weekofprayerforworldpeace.co.uk)

- Interfaith Week (8-15 November 2020)

<https://www.interfaithweek.org/> (England and Wales)

<http://scottishinterfaithweek.org/>

- Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (18-25 January 2021)

<https://ctbi.org.uk/category/mission-and-unity/christian-unity/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity/>

- World Day of Prayer (5 March 2021)

<https://www.wwdp.org.uk/> (England and Wales)

<http://wdpscotland.org.uk/>

QCCIR

September 2020

**Committee members serving during 2019 and up to the date of this report:**

Kate Arnot (until 30 April 2020)	South East Scotland AM
Kim Ashcroft	Sussex East AM
Claire Bowman	Central England AM
Catherine Brewer	Northumbria AM
Douglas Butterfield (until 30 April 2020)	Chilterns AM
Assistant Co-Clerk	
Clayton Cameron (from 1 May 2020)	South East Scotland AM
Penelope Cummins (from February 2020)	Thaxted AM
Gethin Evans	Mid-Wales AM
Rosemary Field (from 1 May 2020)	Cornwall AM
Stephanie Grant	Luton & Leighton AM
Elaine Green (from 1 May 2020)	Ipswich & Diss AM
Assistant Clerk	
Nicola Hoskin-Stone (until 30 April 2020)	Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire AM
	Lincolnshire AM
Mark Lilley	
Clerk	
Judith Mason (from 1 May 2019)	Banbury & Evesham AM
Janet Scott (from 1 May 2019)	Cambridgeshire AM
Evelyn Shire	Craven & Keighley AM
Eoin Stephenson,	Ireland YM
Assistant Co-Clerk	
Lynda Williams	York AM (previously Southern Marches AM)



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## **Update on minutes received by Meeting for Sufferings**

This paper updates Meeting for Sufferings on four matters previously considered by Meeting for Sufferings:

1. Poverty of UK public services
2. UK involvement in war and other state initiated violence
3. Conflict in meetings
4. Unattached Friends

A summary of each matter follows in the body of this paper – all the relevant minutes are provided in full in the appendix.

### **1. Poverty of UK public services**

### **2. UK involvement in war and other state initiated violence**

Meeting for Sufferings received two area meeting minutes at its meeting 2 December 2017 on these two subjects and they were both forwarded to Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) for advice. QPSWCC forwarded the minutes to sub-committees and subsequent action was taken, but a report was not made to Meeting for Sufferings at the time.

#### *1. Poverty of UK public services*

This concern was brought to Meeting for Sufferings by Staffordshire Area Meeting. It called for greater resources for our public services following years of under-investment. Meeting for Sufferings referred it to QPSWCC which sent it to its Economics Sustainability and Peace sub-committee in February 2018. This sub-committee minuted in April 2018:

We welcome the focus of the minute on the erosion of public services and the importance of tax policy in this issue. We think that the work that Church Action for Tax justice is doing has potential to respond at least in part to this concern, within our current resourcing, and fits within our existing work plan.

The sub-committee also asked a staff member to contact to Staffordshire area meeting. Conversations between staff and the area meeting led to the conclusion that while Friends in Staffordshire were deeply concerned about the issues, they had limited energy to take action or consider the matter further.



## *2. UK involvement in war and other state initiated violence*

Sussex East Area Meeting recognised a concern held by an individual Friend, and sent a minute to Meeting for Sufferings. The Friend proposed that Quakers should work with other peace organisations to establish the legality of using taxation for acts of violence with reference to the Terrorism Act. They also asked for organised collective action to end war.

Meeting for Sufferings sent this to QPSWCC which referred the area meeting to the range of work carried out under the Peace Education, Campaigning and Networking (PECAN) sub-committee on peace campaigning and militarism. It asked PECAN to be in touch with the area meeting and suggest that 'Turning The Tide' would be a useful resource in helping the area meeting explore these issues further.

At its meeting in June 2018, PECAN minuted that while it was in sympathy with the concern it had discerned priorities for the centrally managed peace work which address our shared testimony to peace more effectively, given limited resources. A member of QPSW staff spoke at a meeting at the area meeting to talk about the work being done in QPSW.

## **3. Conflict in meetings**

In April 2018, Meeting of Sufferings heard a report from a group asked to review our appeals process. The report acknowledged the sometimes devastating and lasting effects of conflicts within meetings and highlighted the fundamental problems both of a lack of familiarity with our Church Government and the spiritual basis of our decision making, and of the increase in mental health issues within our meetings. Meeting for Sufferings wished to prioritise preventative work by encouraging a ministry of teaching in cultivating our understanding of Quaker ways.

Meeting for Sufferings forwarded its minute to Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC), for information, recognising its remit to support meetings that are dealing with difficulties and conflict. Meeting for Sufferings asked QLCC to return to if they wished for further discernment.

During 2019, work was done under the oversight of QLCC by Quaker Life staff. This involved conducting a significant review of the support offered by Quaker Life with recommendations and suggestions for future working. The review was in part supported by NCVO Charities Evaluation Service (CES) who helped develop a Theory of Change for the review and the evaluation process. The review heard from people with a range of backgrounds and experience, including: Quakers involved in conflict work in meetings, members of the Quaker Life conflict in meetings cluster, and members of BYM and Woodbrooke staff who have supported meetings in conflict.

The report set out findings and recommendations and a proposal for a new way of working. This was considered by QLCC at its meeting in January 2020. QLCC minuted, as the appropriate body to oversee this work, its intention to adopt the work leading from the report as part of the Integrated Strategy for Supporting Quaker Communities and being included in the Local Development Team.

#### **4. Unattached Friends**

Yearly Meeting in 2014 considered membership and what it means to be a Quaker today. Yearly Meeting minutes 10 and 40 were sent to Meeting for Sufferings asking it to work with Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) to hear views of Friends, particularly young adult Friends, whose life journeys may preclude them committing to a local or area meeting.

QLCC set up a working group which struggled to make progress. It was subsequently agreed the working group had not been given a clear brief for its task and, in 2017, it was laid down. QLCC's minute noted the Engaging Young Adult Quaker project and Vibrancy project were doing related work at that time. Meeting for Sufferings noted this update in February 2018 and that QLCC was continuing its consideration. Later in 2018, QLCC sought guidance from Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) with its experience of supporting isolated Friends and as a result set up a second working group. This group collaborated with the Engaging Young Adult Quakers staff member and reported to QLCC in May 2019. This report set out the primary factors that may be involved as well as some practical steps and short-term solutions that could be considered. It made three recommendations to QLCC which the committee is now progressing.

## **Appendix: Minutes**

### **1. Poverty of UK public services**

- *Concern from AM*

#### **Staffordshire AM held 8 July 2017**

##### **Minute 07/2017/8 – Concern about the Poverty of the public services in the UK**

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

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

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

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

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

- *Minute QPSWCC February 2018*

**Minute from Staffordshire AM (MfS/17/12/07) regarding concern about the poverty of the public services in the UK:** we acknowledge and support this concern for the growing crisis in funding of public services. We refer this minute to Economics Sustainability and Peace Sub-committee and ask them to respond to this. We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

- *Minute Economics, Sustainability and Peace Sub-Committee April 2018*

**QPSW ESP 18/07 Minute received** We note receipt of minute [part of] QPSWCC18/16 Separated Minutes for consideration, regarding both Kendal and Sedbergh's ride for the common good; and Staffordshire AM's minute on their concern for the poverty of public services in the UK.

We are glad to continue to provide support and promotion of the ride for the common good as requested.

We have been asked by central committee to respond to Staffordshire AM's concern. We welcome the focus of the minute on the erosion of public services and the importance of tax policy in this issue. We think that the work that Church Action for Tax justice is doing has potential to respond at least in part to this concern, within our current resourcing, and fits within our existing work plan. We ask Suzanne to talk to Staffordshire AM about their concern.

We send this minute to QPSWCC for information.

- *Minute Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee November 2019*

**QPSWCC 19/79 Minutes from other bodies for consideration Meeting for Sufferings minutes 2017**

These two minutes were received by Central Committee in 2017 and forwarded as follows to:

- Economics, Sustainability and Peace Sub-Committee (MfS minute 17/12/07)
- PECAN Sub-Committee (MfS minute 17/12/10)

Both of these minutes were responded to by our sub-committees, but unfortunately their responses and follow up actions were not reported back to Meeting for Sufferings at that time.

We apologise for this oversight and agree to forward the minutes that were agreed.

## **2. UK involvement in war and other state initiated violence**

- *Concern from AM*

**Sussex East AM from the AM held on 14 October 2017**

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

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

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

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

We attach Rye LM's minute to SEAM 7.17

### **Rye Meeting's minute: 7.17 Taking Chris Coverdale's concern forward**

Over the last year or so Chris Coverdale has brought to Rye Meeting his concern for a renewed commitment by Friends collectively to our Peace Testimony.

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

These are as follows:

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

- *Minute from QPSWCC February 2018*

**Minute 68.17 from Sussex AM (MfS/17/12/10) on payment of taxes for terrorism and war:** we acknowledge the importance of the issues raised in relation to the Peace Testimony. We refer Sussex AM to the range of work carried out under the PECAN Sub-committee on peace campaigning and militarism. We ask PECAN to be in touch with Sussex AM and suggest that TTT would be a useful resource in helping the Area Meeting explore these issues further.

- *Minute PECAN Sub-Committee June 2018*

### **QPSW PECAN/2018/31 Concern from Sussex East AM and Meeting for Sufferings**

We note receipt of QPSWCC 18/16 Separated Minutes for Consideration (part) (paper F), and Paper E.

Sam Walton has introduced the background to this concern and reported on his conversations with Peter Aviss, the clerk to Sussex East Area Meeting, and Chris Coverdale, from whom this concern originates. Sam has shared his recommendations with us.

We have reflected on the concern of Sussex East Area Meeting and unite behind the spirit of Chris Coverdale's concern, some aspects of which are rooted in our shared testimony to peace. We encourage his continued work on this concern. We will share the concern widely and note that Sam Walton plans to speak about our peace work to Sussex East Area Meeting. As Quakers we firmly hold our testimony to peace and take action individually, locally, and corporately through our QPSW staff's work on

peace campaigning, networking and education. While in sympathy with the concern brought to us by Sussex East Area Meeting, we have discerned priorities for the centrally managed peace work which address our shared testimony to peace more effectively, given our limited resources. As Quakers we oppose all war. Therefore, we are also concerned about the concern's singular emphasis on the legality of war and ask Sussex East Area Meeting to reflect further on its concern.

We send this minute to QPSW Central Committee.

- *Minute Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee November 2019*

### **QPSWCC 19/79 Minutes from other bodies for consideration Meeting for Sufferings minutes 2017**

These two minutes were received by Central Committee in 2017 and forwarded as follows to:

- Economics, Sustainability and Peace Sub-Committee (MfS minute 17/12/07)
- PECAN Sub-Committee (MfS minute 17/12/10)

Both of these minutes were responded to by our sub-committees, but unfortunately their responses and follow up actions were not reported back to Meeting for Sufferings at that time.

We apologise for this oversight and agree to forward the minutes that were agreed.

### **3. Conflict in meetings**

- *Meeting for Sufferings April 2018*

#### **MfS/18/04/05 Appeal Review Group report**

Today we have heard that we all need to engaged with this issue and that we need to prioritise preventive work by encouraging a ministry of teaching in cultivating our understanding of Quaker ways.

It is important for us to ask for support and advice from Quaker Life at an early stage and to be realistic in our expectations.

We forward this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee, for information, recognising its work to support meetings that are dealing with difficulties and conflict. We encourage the committee to return to Meeting for Sufferings if they wish for further discernment.

We also note Quaker faith & practice 4.23 recommends that there is a standing conciliation group within each area meeting, or groups of area meetings. We ask Quaker Life to report back to us when they feel able, as to how meetings in Britain Yearly Meeting are being supported in conflict transformation.

- *Quaker Life Central Committee January 2020*

#### **QLCC 20.15 Conflict in Meetings review**

We have received paper QLCC 2020 01 15 from Oliver Waterhouse who gave an update on the conflict in Meetings review. We agree that QLCC is the appropriate body to oversee this work and we adopt it as part of the Integrated Strategy for Supporting Quaker Communities.

We endorse this work being included across the Local Development Team. We would welcome future updates on the progress of this work.

We forward this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

#### **4. Unattached Friends**

- *Yearly Meeting 2014*

##### **Minute 10: What it means to be a Quaker today: Membership**

Membership of our Religious Society, or any religious or spiritual community, is a means to an end and not an end in itself. But is it just a pragmatic arrangement to enable us to operate as a corporate body; is it part of a process of coming to belong, or is it first and foremost a spiritual experience, the beginning of a new way of being and a new set of relationships?

The story of Mary and Martha in Luke's gospel account challenges us: could it be that those of us who take on the responsibility of membership are the Marthas who are freeing space for others to attend to what love requires of them? Or is it part of a faithful life to take on the burdens and joys of membership? Can we come to understand better the different paths that we all have taken and will take in the future and give thanks for the diversity amongst us?

We have heard that coming into membership can bring with it, for some, a sense of transformation and empowerment but for others it has not been easy. It can be a long journey of discipline and striving.

There will be many opportunities this week to share our thoughts and experiences on this topic, not least the response groups taking place tomorrow morning and the summing up process which will culminate on Friday morning.

##### **Minute 40: What it means to be a Quaker today – summing up**

Further to minute 10, we have had the opportunity to share our experience through response groups (minute 28 refers), lectures, a talking wall and through small group sessions. We have now heard reflected back to us the experiences shared during this week.

This Yearly Meeting Gathering is the culmination of the consideration over the past three years of the theme 'What it means to be a Quaker today'. This year the focus has been on commitment and belonging: what membership of the Religious Society of Friends means, both for members and non-members. We are on a journey together that is rooted in our worshipping groups. Being a Quaker today means living out our faith in the world, through witness and action. Whether member or attender, we are all equal in human spirit and before God.

Part of the significance of what it means to be a Quaker concerns the institution and processes of membership. We have heard that membership is a spiritual discipline and is valued by large numbers of Friends, although some Friends wish for adjustments in the process. Chapter 11 of Quaker faith and practice, which was adopted by the Yearly Meeting in 2007, offers us principles for our membership procedures which allow flexibility about process. We commend to area meetings further exploration of the procedures currently allowed. Their greater flexibility and tender use of language might enable frank and caring conversations with attenders

and allow some to consider membership in a new light. We remember that attenders do sometimes have to be asked, and may need accompaniment during this journey.

We recognise that the path of membership will not be right for everyone. Meetings delight in the gifts and leadings of both members and attenders. What is important is the quality of relationships, the sense of community, encouraging one another and offering love to all who come amongst us.

We have heard of a need for a yet more flexible approach to membership for some people, including particularly young adult Friends, whose journeys may preclude them committing to a local or area meeting. We ask Meeting for Sufferings, working with Quaker Life Central Committee, and having sought the views of those concerned on this matter, to consider how to respond to this call.

- *Meeting for Sufferings September 2014*

### **MfS 2014/09/07/a Membership, commitment and belonging**

Yearly Meeting minutes 10 and 40 record discernment relating to the nature of membership.

Meeting for Sufferings has been asked to work with Quaker Life Central Committee to seek the views of Friends, particularly young adult Friends, whose life journeys may preclude them committing to a local or area meeting, and to consider how to respond to the call for a more flexible approach to membership in such cases. We will return to this matter at a future meeting."

- *Quaker Life Central Committee 2017*

### **QLCC/2017/31 Pastoral care of unattached Friends**

We have received paper QLCC 2017 06 12, the minutes on the third meeting of the Working Group held 3-5 March 2017.

Iain Law has reported. This group has struggled, feeling unclear about what they were supposed to be doing and not finding much useful new work or much new to say. We were probably not clear enough ourselves what was being asked and we recognise that in future we must ensure that we are totally clear before charging a group to do work on our behalf.

We recognise that projects like Engaging Young Adult Quakers and Vibrancy are doing related work. We are aware that there are also issues around the nature of membership and where membership should rest which might benefit from further exploration, and that there is some experience of on-line Meetings for Worship. However we are not clear that we should pursue these topics now.

We thank the group for its efforts and lay it down.

We will include this topic in our Annual Report to Meeting for Sufferings who were asked by Yearly Meeting to work on this with us.

- *Meeting for Sufferings February 2018*

### **QLCC 2017 annual report to MfS received February 2018**

Extract:

Diversity: c) our first consideration of the pastoral care of unattached Friends (forwarded to us by Meeting for Sufferings following BYM 2014) foundered, but we hope to restart consideration at our next meeting;



### **MfS/18/02/13 Pastoral care of unattached Friends**

Yearly Meeting 2014 (minutes 10 and 40) asked Meeting for Sufferings to work with Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) to seek the views of Friends, particularly young adult Friends, whose life journeys may preclude them committing to a local or area meeting, and to consider how to respond to the call for a more flexible approach to membership in such cases. Our minute MfS 2014/09/07/a Membership refers.

QLCC has reported previously that it had set up a working group. QLCC has now reported that this group has been laid down and the Central Committee is continuing its consideration.

- *Quaker Life Central Committee 2018*

### **QLCC/2018/06 Unattached Friends**

Our first attempt at this was unsuccessful (QLCC 17.31 refers). To aid us in finding our way forward we will invite a speaker from FWCC, who have experience in this area. We will also ask the Engaging Young Adult Quakers group to recommend a speaker.

### **QLCC/2018/67 Support for Unattached Friends**

Harry Albright has presented a report on support for Unattached Friends and how Friends World Committee for Consultation supports geographically isolated Friends.

We have benefitted from hearing about how FWCC supports isolated Friends. The key appears to be letting people know that whilst they may be physically isolated they are not spiritually isolated. We recognise that our pattern of Area Meetings holding membership was established when the pattern of life was very different. Today there are more ways that Friends can be brought together e.g. on-line meetings, on-line courses. There are also other groups doing similar work around unattached Friends.

We agree to appoint a working group to consult with others attempting work in this area, e.g. the EYAQ's group. Alistair Fuller, Alan Pearmain and Jeffrey Dean have agreed to do some further thinking and consultation on needs and opportunities.

We see this as a good time to experiment.

We thank Harry for his report.

- *Quaker Life Central Committee May 2019*

### **QLCC/2019/33 Unattached Friends**

We have received paper QLCC 2019 05 07 from Alan Pearmain, Jeffrey Dean and Alistair Fuller, on support for unattached Young Adult Quakers (minute QLCC 18.67 refers).

We have spent considerable time discerning this matter as a committee and in small groups. We have refined our possible ideas for further exploration and are now ready to ask for endorsement or feedback and contributions from the Engaging Young Adult Quakers Steering Group, Meeting for Sufferings and Management Meeting.

We ask our clerk to update and prepare the report and to send this along with this minute to these bodies.

We thank Alan, Jeffrey and Alistair for the report and endorse it.

- *Quaker Life Central Committee November 2019*

**QLCC/2019/63 Unattached Friends**

We have heard a verbal report of progress since the finalisation of our strategy.



Yearly Meeting of the  
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## **Book of Discipline Revision Committee: First report to Meeting for Sufferings**

### **Introduction: Who we are**

Following Minute 31 of Yearly Meeting 2018, Meeting for Sufferings established the Book of Discipline Revision Committee with Terms of Reference approved in July 2018, to bring to Yearly Meeting draft text for adoption as BYM's book of discipline, together with proposals for its publication. The appointment of our initial membership of 24, including two co-clerks and an assistant clerk, was completed by February 2019.

We are a diverse committee reflecting the breadth of Britain Yearly Meeting, as required by our Terms of Reference. Of the initial 24:

- geographically, 17% live in Scotland and Wales; 21% in northern areas of England; 29% in central areas; and 33% in southern areas
- more than half are female
- our ages range from teens to over 70
- the lengths and nature of our Quaker backgrounds vary just as widely, as do our life and employment experiences
- several of us face particular challenges, which reminds us all of our role in enabling everyone to take part fully.

Two of our members gave birth shortly before our first meeting, and we have welcomed their partners and three babies/toddlers to our residential gatherings. We hope we will complete our work before the babies become adults!

Two others of our initial membership have asked to be released, and we have now requested replacements.

### **Our work so far**

We have met 6 times from May 2019 onwards, five of them as residential weekends face-to-face and the sixth – during the coronavirus pandemic – virtually by zoom videoconference. Between these meetings a number of subgroups have worked on specific tasks. Presently we plan to meet as a full committee some three times a year whether face-to-face or virtually, with other work continuing between times individually and in groups.

Coming together as people who had in many cases not met one another previously, our initial priority has been to **get to know each other** in the things that are eternal, and to learn **how best to work together** and to use our varied skills and experiences collaboratively. We have spent some time exploring this through a range of different activities in order to establish a secure, trusting and confident base for our joint working in full committee and in groups. This has led us to document a set of principles for our committee processes focussing on inclusivity, accessibility and good Quaker practice.

Our next priority has been to explore the **scope of the revision**, and how we might approach the task in terms of its overall structuring and sequencing. We set up a group to look at project management methods and IT and other system tools. We have developed a working understanding that the **purpose of the book of discipline** is to reflect who we are as a community and where we might be going; to share our Quaker story of where we have come from in order to explain why we have reached where we are; to give guidance on what it means to be Quakers in BYM, reflecting and expressing and nurturing our spiritual life and our Quaker way; and to act as a testimony to the grace of God as shown in the lived experience. We have also identified a range of different **audiences** for it, their expectations of it and how they might use it.

To take this forward we have agreed some principles for our work in developing **content** – including spiritual underpinnings; reflecting the diversity of our community; and the language, tone and voice of the “book” as a whole. We are clear that we are engaged in a major root-and-branch revision of the whole of the “book”, not just some minor amendment. We have identified seven key interlinked common themes that will need to be reflected in it, and five key insights describing the unity of our Quaker way which will run as threads through it. These principles, themes and insights have emerged from our experiments in writing, individually and in groups, some sample texts to illustrate the range of what might appear in a table of contents and in passages on, for instance, church affairs, meeting for worship, and caring for one another. We have been helped in all this by hearing of the deliberations of the Revision Preparation Group leading up to the YM 2018 decision to proceed with the revision, and the reflections of the previous Book of Discipline Revision Committee which worked from 1985 to 1994 to produce the present *Quaker faith & practice*. We have also been familiarising ourselves with books of discipline used by previous generations within BYM and by other yearly meetings.

We have referred in shorthand to a “**book**”, but we are clear that the material will need to appear in a variety of formats and platforms – printed, electronic, audio-visual and more, with different ways of accessing it. We have not yet decided whether there should be one or more printed volumes, nor how they should be titled, nor whether church government and anthology material should be integrated together or separated.

## Our next steps

Following those preliminary ground-preparing activities, we are embarking on substantive work to develop text, starting as requested with **church government** core text and identifying supplementary material needed. We aim to create a clearer map of what content needs to be included, which topics have a church government element, what are the fundamental principles which will affect a range of other content, and a sift of areas needing discernment by yearly meeting structures before we can produce definitive content. One sub-group is working in detail on these mapping/sifting exercises, and two other sub-groups are exploring ways of drafting content on topics such as eldership/oversight and marriage, drawing on our earlier work on language, tone and voice. At our meeting later in October 2020 we will review the outcomes and plan our next actions.

We expect to consult central and other standing committees on **issues arising** as this work progresses. We will also come back to Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting as and when we identify matters of principle requiring further corporate discernment.

Another strand of our activity is **engaging with Friends generally**, on which we have a sub-group working. We contributed to the Woodbrooke conference for area meeting representatives and others in November 2019 on “Why have a Book of Discipline?”, and took away a number of useful learning points for our work. We ran an introductory special interest group at Yearly Meeting 2019, and had planned a series of activities for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2020 which we may be able to take forward at the re-scheduled YMG in 2021, with meanwhile some online activities during the rest of 2020. In collaboration with us, Woodbrooke ran a successful series of four online workshops on “*Prayerfully/Joyfully/Creatively/Boldly Revising Quaker faith & practice*”, each of which attracted some 70 Friends. We have also opened an online creative project which invites Friends to share visual, verbal and musical responses to passages in Quaker faith & practice. We hope to be able to accept other invitations to engage with Friends individually and in meetings. We use Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as our current main communication channels, and issue key messages after each of our meetings. We have created a “Frequently Asked Questions” document which can be downloaded from the [BYM website](#). Our online collection tool remains open for Friends to suggest material for inclusion in the “book” which we welcome, and we will look at contributions in detail as we come to prepare relevant text.

We are hugely grateful to our secretary and other BYM staff for all their work and support for us.

We feel daunted and excited by the size and importance of our task. We welcome the support of Meeting for Sufferings and Friends generally in this.

Rosie Carnall, Catherine Brewer, Michael Phipps: Co-Clerks and Assistant Clerk  
Michael Booth: Secretary



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## **Yearly Meeting 2020**

### **Background**

Yearly Meeting 2020 will be held online on the afternoon of Sunday 15 November. The meeting will consist of two sessions on the afternoon of Sunday 15 November, separated by a break. In the first session a range of necessary business will be considered. The second session will consist largely of an extended Meeting for Worship. Each session will last approximately one hour. Attendance will be limited to around 1,000 Friends due to the limitations of the Zoom platform used. There will be no separate provision for children and young people.

This paper sets out the expected agenda and informs Meeting for Sufferings that some business is likely to be delegated to it to be dealt with between meetings of Yearly Meeting.

### **Yearly Meeting agenda**

This short Yearly Meeting will be able to deal with only the most essential business. Consideration of substantive topics will be deferred until Yearly Meeting 2021; Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee will plan this event in due course.

The agenda for Yearly Meeting 2020 is still being finalised, but is expected to include the following:

- Appointment of Yearly Meeting clerks
- The report of Meeting for Sufferings
- The report of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees
- Such appointments as can only be made by Yearly Meeting
- The call to area meetings for nominations to Meeting for Sufferings for the next triennium
- Receipt of other reports which can be taken on draft minute
- Receipt of epistles and testimonies
- General Epistle
- Naming of clerks for YM 2021

The clerks of Meeting for Sufferings and BYM Trustees will be invited to speak to their annual reports, to bring them up to date, and to take any questions.

## **Other required business**

Yearly Meeting will be invited to delegate all other necessary business to Meeting for Sufferings, to be dealt with at the December meeting. This is likely to include:

- All other nominations matters
- The review of terms of reference for Central Nominations Committee and of the YM Committee on Clerks
- Record of Meeting for Sufferings membership changes
- Receipt of the Tabular Statement
- The report of Quaker Stewardship Committee
- Receipt of any other reports requiring attention
- Any other matters requiring attention in the interim

## **What's required of Meeting for Sufferings?**

At this stage, no specific decisions are required by Meeting for Sufferings. It would be helpful if Meeting for Sufferings could ask its Arrangements Group to make available agenda time in December to deal with the delegated business above.

## **What happens next?**

Registration will open soon. It will be phased, to make sure that all those Friends whose attendance is essential to the holding of Yearly Meeting and any invited visitors have places, before general booking opens. This will be announced in *Quake!* and via the usual communications channels.

Registration will be a simple online process, and allocation of places will be on a first-come-first-served basis.

Paul Parker  
Recording Clerk