

Follow up letter



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

16 July 2021

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings 10 July 2021

Dear Friends

With our meeting last Saturday we have reached the end of another triennium of Meeting for Sufferings. It must surely be the most unusual! In the last 18 months alone the Arrangements Group has cancelled, shortened, extended and added meetings, and also planned five additional information and threshing meetings. It is a tribute to you all as representatives or alternates that you have engaged with everything – perhaps reluctantly in the initially unfamiliar medium of Zoom – and we have learned much together. Thank you for all your contributions, whether spoken or silent, and for your consistent dedication and commitment.

We heard from Trustees about the financial position of the Yearly Meeting, and the annual report and accounts, along with the document *Our faith our work* are available online. The slides that were used in the meeting to illustrate finance trends are attached to this letter, and I hope you will share them with your AMs when you report back. The challenge of reaching a balanced budget by 2023 is great, and the Quaker work of putting Faith into Action needs our financial support more than ever.

As Caroline Nursey said in her introduction to the Trustees report “Central committees are responsible for discerning their priorities. Then it is for senior staff to determine how best to deliver them within the budget we set as trustees”. The priority-setting began with Meeting for Sufferings’ vision statement [*Our Faith in the Future*](#). Central committees – whose members are of course nominated by Central Nominations Committee and appointed by us – come back to us regularly to report on progress.

At this meeting we heard about both our worship and our witness. Staff in Quaker Life spoke about their developing work of supporting Quaker Communities. The clerks of QPSWCC, who have shared their new strategy at previous meetings, explored with us what this new strategy might mean. As we acknowledged in our minute, there is considerable tension between the process of planning for the future and the natural desire to already know the outcome. The complexity of our national organisational structure does not make this easy.

Sufferings’ role is of course to challenge, but also to listen, to learn, to understand and above all to trust and support those whom we have appointed to discern the way forward on our behalf.

Naomi Major spoke to us about the involvement of Young Adult Quakers at Sufferings. She has also sent the following:

This year there will be a buddying scheme for young adults at Yearly Meeting Gathering. This has been set up to give those attending the chance to share the journey of Yearly Meeting Gathering with someone else. We hope this will deepen and enrich the connections between those involved. We also hope that some older Friends (over 35) will be interested in taking part to build inter-generational links. This year, this is a pilot scheme. It is only open to over 35s if they are being matched with young adults, and the number of places is limited. More details including the sign-up form are here: [2021 Buddying at YMG – QForms \(quaker.org.uk\)](https://www.quaker.org.uk) - but we need expressions of interest by Monday 19th July please.

Some of you will be appointed for the next triennium, perhaps changing from alternate to representative, and I am looking forward to welcoming you and new Friends into our Sufferings community in October. Others of you will be leaving Meeting for Sufferings now, after service of up to 6 years, and I hope you have found your service to be on the whole fulfilling. The Yearly Meeting continues to be blessed by the number of Friends willing to give up their time to engage with the issues of Quakers nationally and to communicate those back to their own groups, and I thank you for this.

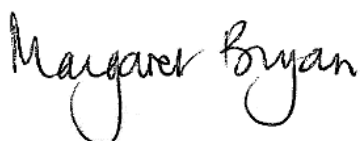
You may be looking forward to a well-earned break, but I have been asked by Central Nominations Committee to say that, if by any chance your insight into the workings of Quakers has whetted your appetite for future service then it is helpful if you fill in a [Quaker Service](#) Information form. If you're inspired by the work of Trustees, you (or other Friends) may wish to consider service as [clerk to the BYM Trustees](#)..

The next event in our Quaker calendar is of course Yearly Meeting Gathering – yet another new and exciting development in this extraordinary year. What strikes me though is that, amongst all this 'newness,' there is so much that does not change.

Qf&p 19.57 quotes advice from Wiltshire Quarterly Meeting in 1678, extracts of which follow

"...we have no obligation upon each other but love, which is the very bond of our society: and therein to serve the Truth and one another; having an eye to it, ready to sacrifice every private interest to that of Truth, and the good of the whole community..." "....and if anything be controverted that it be in coolness of Spirit calmly debated, each offering their reasons and sense, their assent or dissent, and so leave it without striving.... So will things be carried on sweetly as becomes us, to our comfort: and love and unity be increased: and we better serve Truth and our Society"

In Friendship



Margaret Bryan
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

The following papers are included in this mailing:

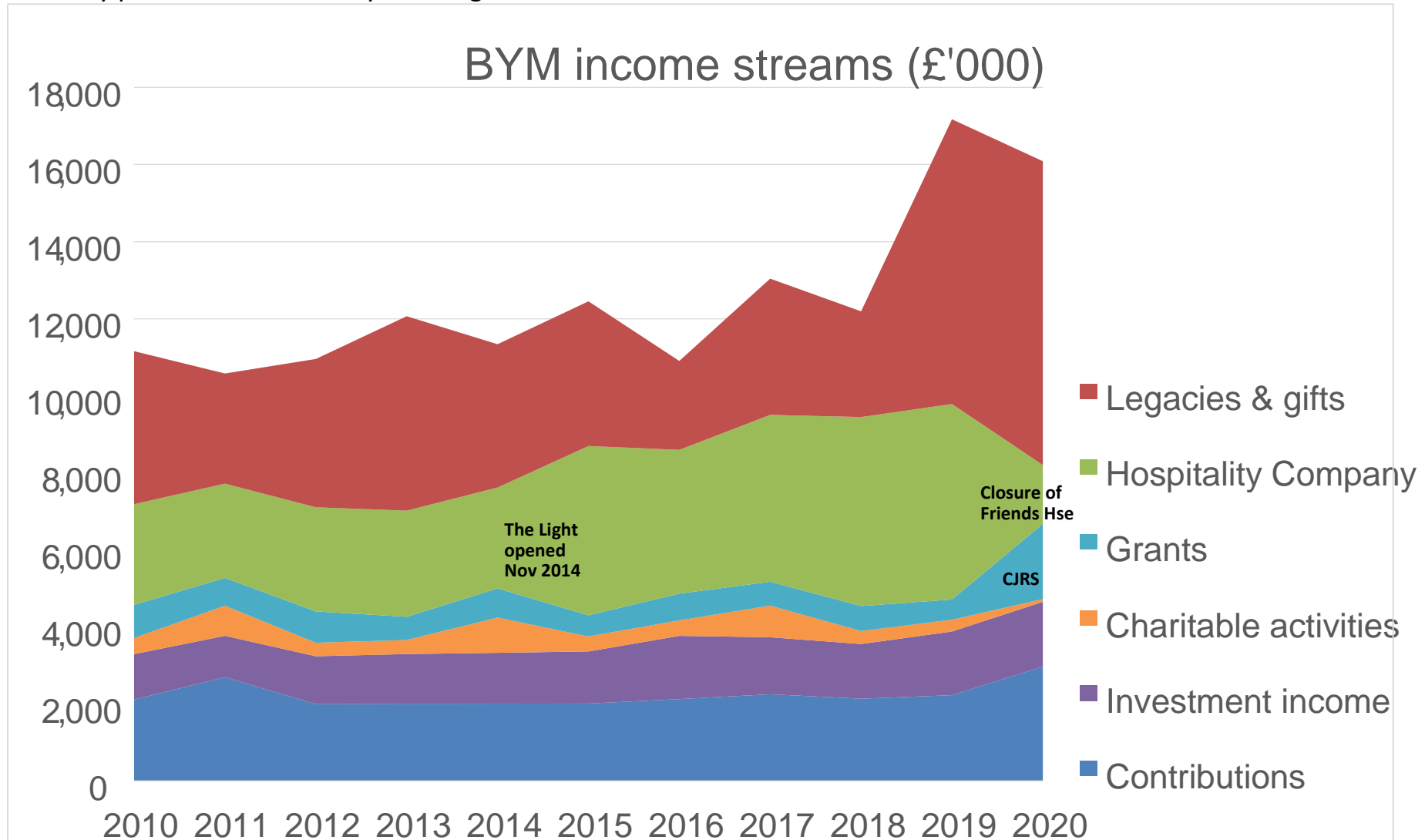
- Functions checklist
- BYM Trustees slides from the presentation
- MfS minutes July 2021

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

	Requirement	July 21
A	To set the priorities for the centrally managed work	14, 15
B	To issue public statements in the name of BYM	
C	To receive regular interim reports from BYM trustees	09
D	To receive the BYM trustees' annual report & accounts for information	09
E	To make a report on its own activities to YM	
F	To determine the dates of YM	
G	To deliberate on how best to support the spiritual life of the yearly meeting and to further the development of its visionary and prophetic role	08, 14, 15
H	To keep under review and to test as appropriate the existing and new concerns referred to it by AMs and others	
I	To foster communication throughout the yearly meeting	08, 09, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15
J	To receive minutes from area meetings	12, 13, 14
K	To make appropriate entries in the prison and court register	05
I	To appoint representatives to attend other Yearly Meetings	04
M	To receive information about changes in the composition or status of general meetings and gatherings	
N	To make changes in the composition of area meetings	07
O	To give assistance to area meetings in the amicable settlement of disputes	
P	To hear appeals against area meeting decisions	
Q	To give guidance on policy matters referred to it by the BYM trustees from time to time	12
R	To authorise action and minute as required under other sections of <i>Quaker faith & practice</i>	06
S	To set up an arrangements group and support and working groups to assist its own work as it sees fit	

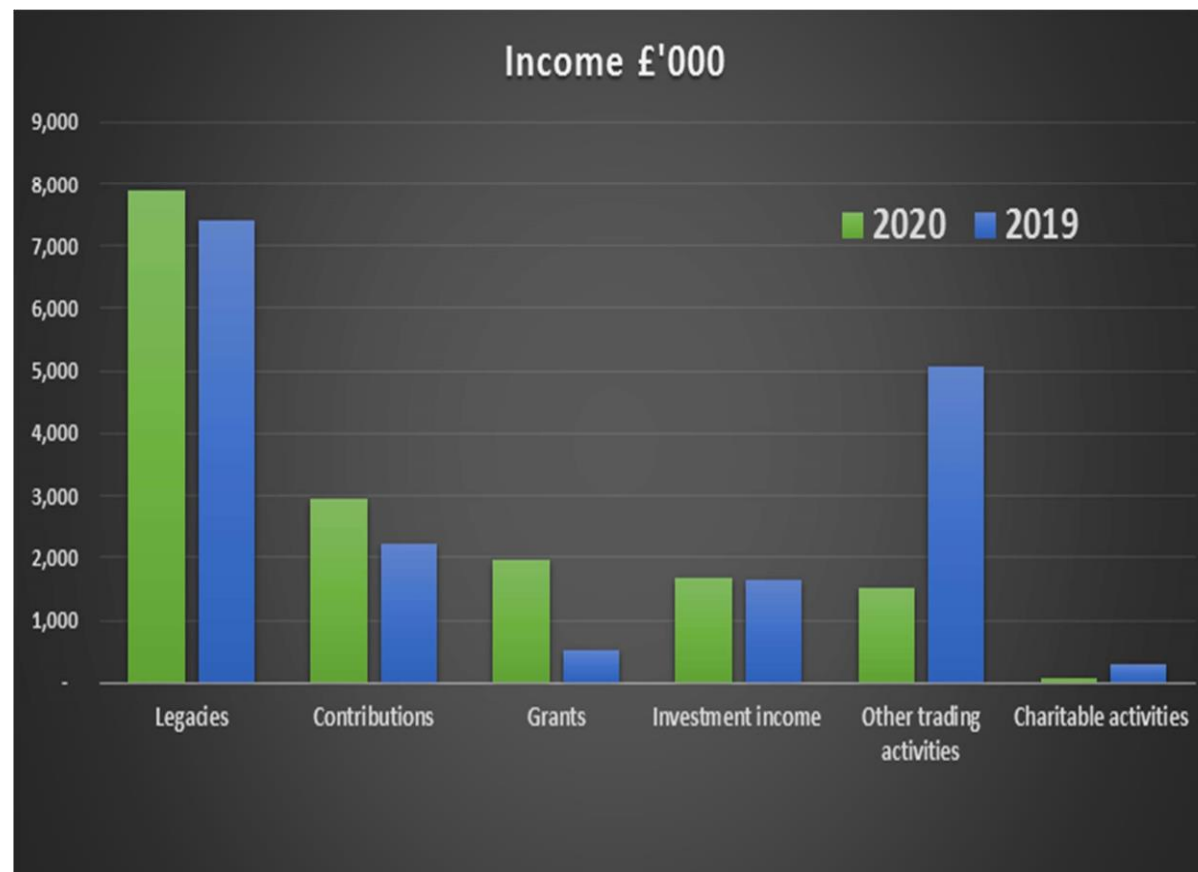
BYM Finances 2020

With key points from the Yearly Meeting Treasurer



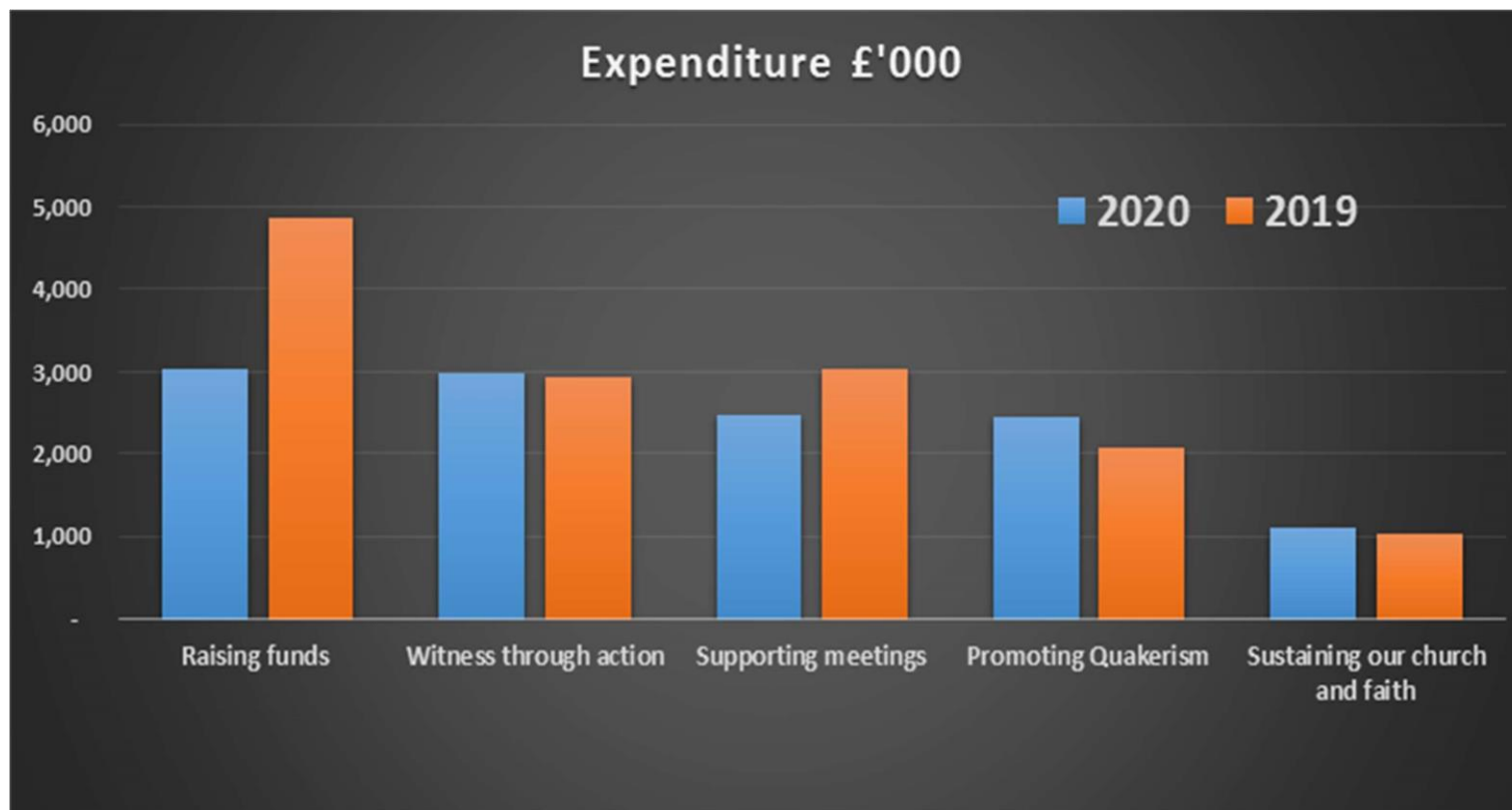
INCOME

- Our income in 2020 was £16 million.
- £6 million of this was a single large legacy, designated as requested by the donor, so is not available for our general work.
- In 2020 the Quiet Company only had an income of £1.5m, compared to £5m the previous year.
- Contributions from Friends and Meetings were higher than previous years - £3million. We need to maintain this level to give us confidence for future spending and budgeting on the work we want to do.



SPENDING

- Our expenditure was £12 million, which is less than our original budgeted expenditure of £14.5 million.
- Without the large legacy, our surplus of £4.1 million at the end of 2020 would have been a deficit of £1.7m.
- Our need to achieve a balanced budget by 2023 is unchanged.



- We carry forward a balance of £92 million at the year end: over half of this is tied up in our properties, and a further £13million is in endowment and restricted funds.



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings

Held online from 10.00am to 4.00pm 10 July 2021 by video conference.

Minutes

MfS/21/07/01 Opening Worship

During opening worship section 23.10 of *Quaker faith and practice* was read.

MfS/21/07/02 Membership of Meeting for Sufferings

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

Release requests received:

Stephanie Grant – QCCIR representative

Maggie Taylor-Sanders – Southern Marches AM representative

Nominated:

Penelope Cummins – QCCIR representative

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

Visitors invited to represent area meetings in the absence of the appointed representative or alternate:

Kerren Davey – Bristol AM

Ann Davison – Southern Marches AM

Sue Walton – Sussex East AM

Apologies:

We receive apologies from Bournemouth and Coastal, North Scotland and West Kent Area Meetings, which have not been able to send a representative on this occasion.

Other visitors:

Robert Almond – QPSWCC Co-clerk

Jeff Beatty – QPSWCC Co-clerk

Naomi Major – BYM staff, Quaker Life

Rachel Matthews – BYM staff, Quaker Life
Wendy Hampton – BYM Staff, Quaker Life
Bridget Holtom – BYM Staff, Quaker Life
Neil Jarvis – BYM staff, Recording Clerk's Office
Anne van Staveren – BYM staff, Media Relations Officer
Clare Wood – BYM staff, Quaker Peace and Social Witness

MfS/21/07/03 Agenda

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

MfS/21/07/04 Appointments

a) Central Nominations Committee brings forward to following names for service or release as indicated:

Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA)

Nominated to serve from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2024:

Haifa Rashed – North London AM

Nominated to serve as alternate from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2024:

Rebecca Bellamy – Oxford & Swindon AM

Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee

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

To serve at Yearly Meeting Gathering 2021:

Anna Sharman – North London AM

Harry Albright – Leicester AM

Yearly Meeting Pastoral Care Group

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

To serve at Yearly Meeting Gathering 2021 and until Yearly Meeting 2024 (subject to DBS checks):

Sasha Lawson-Frost – Young Friends General Meeting

To serve at Yearly Meeting Gathering 2021 (subject to DBS checks):

Brian Ashley – North Scotland AM

Ireland Yearly Meeting

Second representative on 16 April 2021:

Mike Clark – North Wales AM

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations (QCCIR)

Release from service:

Joyce Robertson – Meeting of Friends in Wales representative

b) Yearly Meeting Nominating Group brings forward the following names for service or release as indicated:

Yearly Meeting Nominating Group

Release with immediate effect:

Kellie Turner – Manchester & Warrington AM

Central Nominations Committee

Appointed by between-meetings decision of the Meeting for Sufferings clerks.

To serve with immediate effect from 1 June 2021:

Gill Greenfield – Mid Somerset AM

c) Meeting for Sufferings Standing Nominations Group brings forward the following names for service:

Meeting for Sufferings Support Group

Appointed by between-meetings decision of the Meeting for Sufferings clerks.

To serve with immediate effect from 24 June to end of Meeting for Sufferings 2021–2024 Triennium:

Keith Walton – Kingston and Wandsworth AM

Brian Wardrop – Mid-Essex AM

We appoint and release the Friends named accordingly, and thank them for their service.

MfS/21/07/05 Prison and Court Register

Ian Bray, a member of Brighouse West Yorkshire Area Meeting, has been acquitted in a landmark verdict at Southwark Crown Court on 23 April. Ian was on trial with others from the 'Shell 7' group, for criminal damage to the Shell HQ building in London's Waterloo in April 2019. This was an Extinction Rebellion (XR) action which could have led to a maximum five-year prison sentence and/or a £10k fine. The jury delivered its not guilty verdict for each defendant, despite the Judge ruling that five of them had no defence under the law.

Sue Hampton, a member of Luton & Leighton Area Meeting, was arrested and charged in relation to a Climate Emergency protest in Harpenden, and appeared in court on 28 May.

Further to minute MfS/2021/04/04, John Lynes, a member of Sussex East Area Meeting, was found guilty of breaching Section 14 of the Public Order Act 1986 in the course of an Extinction Rebellion event in Parliament Square in September 2020 and ordered to pay £180 fine (for breaking the terms of a previous conditional discharge), £500 costs, and £34 victim surcharge.

We agree to include this information in the Prison and Court Register. We hold Ian Bray, Sue Hampton and John Lynes in the Light.

MfS/21/07/06 Quaker Recognised Bodies

We receive paper MfS 2021 07 07. Registration of Quaker Recognised Bodies is periodically reviewed – normally five years after initial registration although emergent groups are listed for up to two years before review.

We agree to renew registration of the following five organisations as Quaker Recognised Bodies:

- Quaker Disability Equality Group (Freestanding Group for a further five years)
- Quaker Values in Education (Freestanding Group for a further five years)
- Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs (Externally Regulated Group for a further five years)
- Quaker Decriminalisation Network (Emergent Group – renew as Emergent Group for a further two years)
- Quaker Roots (formerly Roots of Resistance) (Emergent Group – renew as Freestanding Group for five years)

MfS/21/07/07 Leigh-on-Sea Local Meeting

We endorse the transfer of Leigh-on-Sea Local Meeting from North East Thames Area Meeting to Mid-Essex Area Meeting noting this is at the request of the local meeting and has the agreement of both area meetings.

MfS/21/07/08 Young adult involvement in Meeting for Sufferings

During this triennium we reserved four places on Meeting for Sufferings for adult Friends under the age of 35. Naomi Major, the Engaging Young Adult Quakers project manager, introduced her report on this experiment.

We are pleased to hear about the positive experiences of the young representatives. In considering the recommendations made in the paper Friends acknowledged the anomaly of being a representative without a constituency; however, finding a way to strengthen links to Area Meetings may be a challenge.

We are keen for the appointment of young adult Quakers to continue and we need to ensure that MfS is a welcoming space for everyone, which does not replicate a structure that works only for the already privileged.

We commit ourselves to the following actions;

1. To make clear that the call for nominations to MfS should encourage Area Meetings to appoint younger Friends and to remind them that they can send a younger Friend in place of the existing representative at any time
2. To ask the MfS Support Group to give consideration to a buddying system for new reps of any age or experience

We ask staff to continue exploring ways of taking this matter forward.

MfS/21/07/09 BYM Trustees and annual accounts

We receive the minutes of the June meeting of Trustees (paper MfS 2021/07/100). Caroline Nursey, Clerk of BYM Trustees, and Linda Batten, Yearly Meeting Treasurer, introduced their report.

We have heard much about the essential nature of communication between MfS and Trustees and the need for ways to improve our mutual understanding.

The June meeting's full agenda included the first in a series of sessions of anti-racism training for Trustees, and they reached agreement on a statement for internal use, which has been published on the BYM website. We welcome this.

The Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts for 2020, and 'Our Faith, Our Work' will shortly be available on the Yearly Meeting website. Both income and expenditure have reduced as a result of the pandemic, and without the large legacy received during the year (the majority of which is designated) we would have had a deficit of £1.7m.

Finances in 2021 have been stretched and income at end-May is already 25% below that which was budgeted for the year. The Quiet Company, which usually produces a significant part of this income, is still not able to operate at pre-pandemic levels.

Expenditure was exceeding income before the pandemic and Trustees' original intention was to correct this by the end of 2024. However, with a forecast deficit of £2m, action needs to be taken sooner so that our work in the world has the income to support it.

These are challenging times, and change is inevitable. However clear the need, that change may also be painful. We know that Central Committees and staff are working together to discern priorities and determine how best to deliver them within the budget set by Trustees, and we offer them our prayerful support.

MfS/21/07/10 Simplification of Central Governance Structures

Trustees Carolyn Hayman and Ellie Harding gave us a brief interim report on the five workshops with Meeting for Sufferings representatives held during April and May. There are plans for further workshops at Yearly Meeting Gathering and roadshows across Britain in the autumn with the intention of involving more Friends in this exploration.

MfS/21/07/11 Meeting dates in 2021–22

In the light of consideration at MfS in June 2020, Arrangements Group has reviewed the pattern of our meetings agreed for the next triennium. Friends are concerned that there may not be enough time in this schedule for proper attention to be given to the matters before us.

After further consideration today we agree to the proposal for meetings in 2021 and 2022 in paper MfS 2021 07 12, as follows:

2021

- 2 October – meeting in-person, Friends House (with facilities for Friends to join online) preceded by online induction to the new triennium
- 4 December – online, with a preparation session in advance

2022

- 4–6 March – residential meeting (venue to be confirmed)
- 2 July – online, with a preparation session in advance
- 1 October – online or in-person (London) with a preparation session in advance
- 3 December – online, with a preparation session in advance

We ask MfSAG to keep the frequency of meetings under review, and we note additional online meetings can be arranged if needed.

MfS/21/07/12 Naming of William Penn Room

We receive minutes from Northamptonshire and North Somerset Area Meetings on the decision to remove William Penn's name from a meeting room at Friends House.

We have been reminded that the decision to name rooms after Friends is part of the Quiet Company's commitment to using our buildings in ways that tell the Quaker story.

For practical reasons, the room name is unlikely to be changed until early 2022 but there is no intention to write William Penn out of the Quaker story. Trustees have asked staff to bring proposals for ways in which a full account of Quakers and slavery can be told. It will be helpful to listen to the views of a newly-emerging 'Black, Brown and People of Colour' Quaker group.

MfS/21/07/13 Covid security in prisons

North Wales Area Meeting has shared its minute 21/58 (paper MfS 2021 07 13) for information. It urges all meetings to contact national government representatives asking them to address Covid security in prisons.

MfS/21/07/14 Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) Strategy

Following the development in 2015 of our vision statement *Our Faith in the Future* Trustees, along with Central Committees and MfS, began a process of discerning what this vision would mean for the work of BYM the charity. Priorities for the work were defined as: thriving Quaker communities, a sustainable and peaceful world, and simple structures and practices were adopted by the Yearly Meeting in 2019.

Both Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) and Quaker Life (QL) began reviews of their strategy in the light of these priorities, and QL's new strategy is already in place. QPSWCC brought us news of their progress during 2020-21 (minutes MfS 20/10/09 and 21/02/13 refer) and we expressed ourselves content with the top-level

direction of travel. The detail of the Central Committee's discernment over many months is in paper MfS 2021/07/14 along with minutes received from Central Yorkshire, Cornwall, East Cheshire, Gloucestershire, Hertford and Hitchin, Leicester, Mid-Somerset, Staffordshire, and Worcestershire and Shropshire Area Meetings.

Today's meeting provided an opportunity to hear more about the ways in which the word of the strategy might become flesh.

Robert Almond and Jeff Beatty (QPSWCC co-clerks) have spoken of the Central Committee's work so far and the challenges that still lie ahead, welcoming the comments and suggestions of Friends as they look to realise the aim that the work should be distinctively Quaker; integrated locally, nationally and internationally; and well-governed.

We have heard a call for better communication, and more participation in discussions and workshops, as well as a need to build on the good work of the past. We acknowledge the tension between planning for the future at the same time as already wanting to know the outcome.

World events over the last 18 months have had a huge impact on us all, with restrictions on our patterns of work and way of worship, loss of personal interaction and a dramatic change in our finances. Uncertainty adds pressure to a review such as this, but the Central Committee has been working hard to discern the ways in which established programmes and the work that demonstrates Friends' Faith in Action can be sustained into the future. We know that QPSW holds together a complex web of activity and recognise that the Central Committee has a vision of a more agile organisation, engaging with Quaker Recognised Bodies, Friends in the regions and Local Development Workers, and collaborating with non-Quaker partners.

We thank the Central Committee for their report and uphold them as they continue discerning the detailed shape of their work.

MfS/21/07/15 Support for Quaker Communities

In April last year we received the Integrated Strategy for Supporting Quaker Communities and Quaker Life staff members Rachel Matthews, Wendy Hampton and Bridget Holtom joined us today to explain how new arrangements in Quaker Life are helping to put the strategy into practice.

We have had the opportunity to gain clarity on some of the changes.

We welcome the paper MfS 2021 07 15 which gives information in graphic form on what is being done, how, where and who is doing the work. We hope this will be shared widely with Friends.

MfS/21/07/16 Closing worship

In this, the final meeting of the triennium, we have reflected on our time together with thankfulness. It has been a time of joy and frustration, of learning and seeking guidance.

In the paraphrased words of Waldo Williams:

We have felt the support of his handwithin a mystery that we do not always understand.

Margaret Bryan
Clerk