

Follow up letter



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

8 December 2021

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings 4 December 2021

Dear Friends

It was wonderful to see you all again on Saturday at our online Meeting for Sufferings. The agenda was full, and the reading matter copious, but I hope you sensed as I did a spacious feel to our consideration of business as well as enough time for worship and social interaction. If you have any feedback to offer the Arrangements Group please email sufferings@quaker.org.uk before Friday 10 December if possible, as they meet the following Tuesday.

The Book of Discipline Revision Committee's second report to MfS gave a full picture of the scope of their work, and there is still a long way to go. The principles underlying the work are found [here](#) and the ways in which you and Friends in your meetings can support the committee and contribute ideas to the process were in the papers at [page 14](#).

The Yearly Meeting's two standing committees, Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC) and the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR), brought us news of their activities and future plans. Both committees have a role within BYM but are also outward-facing; QWRC connects us with the global family of Friends and QCCIR with ecumenical and interfaith groups. The terms of reference of both committees are currently under review and it is possible that their reporting arrangements may change in future – reporting to MfS rather than Trustees – so it is important that we understand and appreciate the breadth of their work.

As was mentioned in the meeting, if you have any comment to make about the EMES draft travel policy please contact QWRC directly (via the Committee Secretary Michael S Booth michaelsb@quaker.org.uk) before the end of January 2022.

The Sustainability Monitoring Group (SMG) presented its annual report, and drew particular attention to the progress made by the [Quiet Company](#).

An additional member is needed for the group and if you are interested please make this known to sufferings@quaker.org.uk. The nominations committee also needs strengthening so please consider whether this could be your service to the meeting.

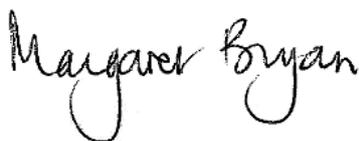
For me, the item on COP26 was the most moving part of our meeting. Our minute records the power of working in partnership with so many other communities of faith, and the leading role Quakers played in organising the Global Day of Action. Civil society groups had a huge presence outside the negotiations. We were reminded of QUNO's role on the 'inside' and the long-term work of quiet diplomacy.

Friends in your meetings may be interested in [page 78](#) of the meeting papers, with many links to information about the conference.

In our closing worship we heard these words of Rainer Maria Rilke: *I live my life in widening circles*. This took me in search of Rufus Jones ([QfP 24.56](#)) with his quiet processes and small circles, but the succeeding extract ([QfP 24.57](#)) by Sidney Bailey also caught my eye. His famous phrase is that 'peace is a process to engage in, not a goal to be reached'.

Should we not substitute climate justice, or economic justice, or living sustainably, for the word peace? For engage we surely must.

In Friendship

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Bryan". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of "Margaret" and "Bryan" being capitalized and prominent.

Margaret Bryan
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

The following papers are included in this mailing:

- Functions checklist
- MfS minutes December 2021
- A Quaker call for climate justice: BYM statement ahead of COP26

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

	Requirement	December 21
A	To set the priorities for the centrally managed work	5, 6
B	To issue public statements in the name of BYM	10
C	To receive regular interim reports from BYM trustees	12
D	To receive the BYM trustees' annual report & accounts for information	
E	To make a report on its own activities to YM	
F	To determine the dates of YM	
G	To deliberate on how best to support the spiritual life of the yearly meeting and to further the development of its visionary and prophetic role	9
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	5, 6, 9
J	To receive minutes from area meetings	
K	To make appropriate entries in the prison and court register	
I	To appoint representatives to attend other Yearly Meetings	7 (reports from representatives)
M	To receive information about changes in the composition or status of general meetings and gatherings	
N	To make changes in the composition of area meetings	
O	To give assistance to area meetings in the amicable settlement of disputes	
P	To hear appeals against area meeting decisions	
Q	To give guidance on policy matters referred to it by the BYM trustees from time to time	
R	To authorise action and minute as required under other sections of <i>Quaker faith & practice</i>	
S	To set up an arrangements group and support and working groups to assist its own work as it sees fit	4, 8



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings

Held by video conference on 4 December 2021

Minutes

MfS/21/12/01 Opening Worship

The World Has Need of You, a poem by Ellen Bass, was read during opening worship.

MfS/21/12/02 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 2024:

Release requests received:

Harry Albright – Quaker Life Central Committee alternate
Jeffrey Dean – Quaker Life Central Committee representative

Nominated:

Zélie Gross – Quaker Life Central Committee representative
Diana Jeater – Hardshaw and Mann AM alternate
Richard Melling – Hardshaw and Mann AM representative
Sally Sparrow – Ipswich and Diss AM alternate
John Spencer – West Kent AM representative
Laura Wirtz – Quaker Life Central Committee alternate

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

David Bowgett – Worcestershire and Shropshire AM
Karen Dickson – Wirral and Chester AM

Apologies:

Mid-Wales AM / CCR Canolbarth Cymru
Young Friends General Meeting

Other visitors:

Michael S Booth – BYM staff, Recording Clerk's Office
Catherine Brewer – Book of Discipline Revision Committee
Rosie Carnall – Book of Discipline Revision Committee
Elaine Green – Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations
Neil Jarvis – BYM staff, Recording Clerk's Office
Michael Phipps – Book of Discipline Revision Committee

MfS/21/12/03 Agenda

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

MfS/21/12/04 Book of Discipline Revision Committee

Further to minute MfS/20/10/17, we have been joined by Catherine Brewer and Rosie Carnall, co-clerks, together with Michael Phipps, assistant clerk, to introduce the Committee's second report to Meeting for Sufferings (MfS 2021 12 05).

The Committee has identified a provisional list of 26 main topics, prepared substantive first drafts on five of these and started work on two more. It has also begun to identify areas requiring discernment by the Yearly Meeting prior to producing content for adoption. A process for reviewing drafts for consistency, coherence, accessibility and choices of language and voice to reflect inclusivity and different experiences has begun. We have sought greater clarity on the principles underlying the choice of language.

We recognise that we are at an early stage of the process but are confident that the Committee is proceeding well and are very grateful to the Friends involved for their work and for their clear report.

MfS/21/12/05 Quaker World Relations Committee

Tracey Martin, clerk of Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC), has joined us today and introduced the committee's annual report (MfS 2021 12 06).

QWRC's remit to enrich "understanding between British Friends and Friends worldwide" has taken a different shape this year, with wider participation through a greater number of online events. QWRC is active in EMES (the European and Middle East Section) offering support and a follow-up meeting to the representatives we appoint to European Yearly Meetings. EMES is the section of Friends World Committee for Consultation to which BYM belongs.

Minute 35 of Yearly Meeting this year asked QWRC to explore how to work with Friends in other Yearly Meetings in making progress in response to the climate crisis, addressing racial inequality and welcoming gender diversity. Meeting for Sufferings has been asked to receive reports of this work from QWRC so that we can hear of good practice.

QWRC has been asked to share the draft EMES travel policy with BYM, in the hope that it might contribute to reducing the carbon footprint of our activities. This matter will be forwarded to the Recording Clerk, and QWRC would be happy to receive comments from Friends before their next meeting in February.

QWRC's fulfils its remit to engage Quakers in Britain in the very wide range of Quaker understanding and practice around the globe through FWCC.

We thank QWRC for their report.

MfS/21/12/06 Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations

We receive the annual report from Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) and its three-year strategy for 2022-25 (paper MfS 2021 12 07).

We have been joined by the Committee's clerk, Elaine Green, who has introduced their report.

We were glad to learn of the Committee's work in 2020-21 and welcomed the opportunity to see the new 3-year strategy, resting on the framework of *Our Faith in the Future*.

The strategy is ambitious and our collaboration with others will be key to its success. Ecumenical work is not confined to QCCIR; we are part of EAPPI and the QPSW climate justice programme is active with other faith groups.

In the work plan for 2022-23 we recognise the emphasis placed on the themes of our Yearly Meeting (minute 35 refers). In particular QCCIR's focus in 2022 will be on engaging friends across the Yearly Meeting with the issues of Climate Justice and Racial Inequality, which are both currently high on ecumenical agendas. We look forward to learning more as the year progresses.

We thank QCCIR for its report.

MfS/21/12/07 Reports from other European Yearly Meetings

Despite the difficulties we currently face with holding meetings during the Covid pandemic, we are pleased many Yearly Meetings took place in Europe this year. We have received reports from Friends appointed to attend Finland, France, Netherlands and Switzerland Yearly Meetings. Our paper included links to Epistles from these Yearly Meetings where available along with Epistles from German, Ireland, Norway and Sweden Yearly Meetings.

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting was cancelled.

We are reminded of our place in the family of worldwide Friends and are grateful to the service of Friends in Friends World Consultation Committee and its Europe and Middle East Section for helping bind us together.

MfS/21/12/08 Appointments

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

Book of Discipline Revision Committee

Nominate to serve until the work is complete

Christine Trevett – South Wales AM

Friends Trusts Limited

Renominate to serve from 1 June 2022 to 31 May 2025

David Harries – South Wales AM

Group to review the appointment of attenders to central committees

Nominate to serve until the work is complete

Chloe Scaling – Hardshaw & Mann AM / YFGM

David Beale – Cumberland AM

Peter Doubtfire – Central England AM

Liz Eddington – Lancashire Central & North AM

Jan Lethbridge – West Scotland AM

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations (QCCIR)

Release from service

Kim Ashcroft – Sussex East AM

Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA)

Release from service

Haifa Rashed – North London AM

Quaker Life Central Committee

Nominate to serve from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2024

Gilly Charters – York AM

Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee

Renominate to serve from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2024

Elize Sakamoto – North West London AM

Adam Drury – South East London AM

Quaker World Relations Committee

Renominate to serve from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2024

Tracey Martin – Leeds AM

Renominate to serve from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022

Felicity Breet – Northumbria AM

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee

Nominate to serve with immediate effect to Yearly Meeting 2022

Mary Aiston – Kingston & Wandsworth AM

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

Meeting for Sufferings Support Group

Nominate to serve Meeting for Sufferings Triennium 2021–2024

Ann Kurra – Southern East Anglia AM

Sue Moloney – Thaxted AM

Anna Sharman – North London AM

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

MfS/21/12/09 Living up to our commitment on sustainability

Meeting for Sufferings' Sustainability Monitoring Group considers how Quakers in Britain are meeting our commitment to becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community. We receive the Group's annual report (MfS 2021 12 10a). This sets out progress against the five areas set by Meeting for Sufferings in its Recommendations for Action: eldership, oversight, living faithfully, right ordering and witness. The report also tells us how our central committees and local and regional communities are living up to our commitment.

We have heard a call to explore the spiritual basis for our commitment to sustainability and have also noted the positivity of the Quiet Company's strategic environmental and sustainability plan. We have also been encouraged not to abandon the gains we have made from our experience of online meetings in our eagerness for physical proximity.

The Sustainability Monitoring Group brings forward proposed changes to the Recommendations for Action (paper MfS 2021 12 10b). We have also received suggested amendments to the text to better reflect the fact that our yearly meeting covers three nations. We forward these to the Sustainability Monitoring Group and ask them to make relevant changes. We agree to these revisions.

Area Meetings are asked to report annually on how they are becoming low-carbon, sustainable communities. Quaker Stewardship Committee gathers this information from Area Meetings' annual reports and accounts and we receive a report (MfS 2021 12 10c).

We are grateful for this report and thank the group for their work. We encourage Friends interested in joining the Sustainability Monitoring Group to make themselves known to the Standing Nominations Group.

MfS/21/12/10 United Nations climate change conference (COP26)

We have heard from the Recording Clerk and the Head of Witness and Worship about the work done in our name at COP26 held in Glasgow in November.

After a great deal of preparatory work, a large cohort of BYM staff were present for a fortnight of intense work, alongside Friends from QUNO and QCEA. There was a powerful sense of the impact of working in partnership with so many other communities of faith, and the civil society presence was huge.

We have been deeply moved by Paul's and Oliver's reports.

It is probably still too soon to say what precise impact this will have on our current and future work. The outcomes of the conference may be debated but we, the privileged, must remain acutely aware that for some people the issue of climate justice is much more urgently pressing.

We wish to record our deep thanks to friends across Scotland in particular West Scotland AM for their preparation and practical support for all those involved.

Finally we note that Minute MfS/21/10/10 of our October meeting (United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26)) read, in part: "Recognising the urgency of these issues [of climate justice], we ask staff to prepare a statement based on our past discernment and from our further consideration here today as a focussed summary of our position for Friends and others". The prepared statement was released in the run up to the conference and is attached here for reference.

MfS/21/12/11 Quaker Recognised Bodies

We receive paper MfS 2021 12 12.

We agree:

- to renew the registration of the Living Witness as an 'External Group' for a period of five years
- to register RJ Working as a Quaker Recognised Body ('External Group') for a period of five years.

MfS/21/12/12 BYM Trustees

We have heard from Caroline Nursey, clerk of Trustees, and Linda Batten, Yearly Meeting Treasurer, and receive minutes from the Trustee meeting on 12 November (MfS 2021 12 13).

Their meeting focussed on the Operational Plan and budget for 2022. Trustees also heard from the clerks of QPSW and Quaker Life about their current challenges: QPSW has been through a turbulent process of refreshing their strategy and Quaker Life is looking at the ways in which they will take over the work of the soon-to-be laid-down Quaker Stewardship Committee.

The restructure of Quaker communications is complete and that of QPSW is almost finished.

Another important development is that recruitment of Local Development Workers is well underway. This should be completed by mid-year.

Not unexpectedly income and expenditure have both been below budget for 2021. Looking ahead to 2022, we forecast income to be about £1.1m more than this year, but expenditure will still exceed this. Nevertheless a balanced budget is hoped for in 2023, but there are still many uncertainties.

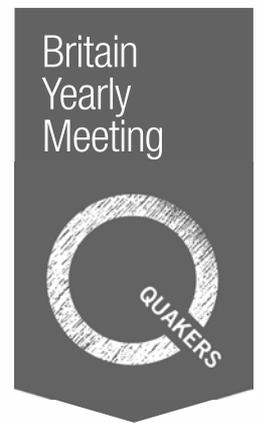
The Treasurer urged Friends to consider whether they can give more to support the work we want to do.

We thank Trustees most warmly for their work in difficult times.

MfS/21/12/13 Closing worship

We closed our time together in worship

Margaret Bryan
Clerk



A Quaker call for climate justice: Britain Yearly Meeting statement ahead of COP26

We are at a point of crisis for humanity and for the living world. Climate breakdown, poverty, oppression, forced migration and violent conflict are deeply connected. They are driven by an economic system based on exploiting people and nature to extract profit for a few.

We must act now to transform our economy and society for a just and peaceful future. We must demand change through political action, and enact change in our communities.

Broken promises

We have heard the UK government claim to be a global leader on climate. But we also see proposals for new coal and oil extraction; irreplaceable ancient woodland felled for new roads; and millions of people struggling to heat their leaky homes while the government cancels insulation grants. Ambitious pledges are hollow when actions undermine them.

The UK's COP Presidency promised 'the most inclusive COP ever'. Delegates and activists whose vaccinations have not been recognised, or who have been prevented from attending by unclear quarantine rules, have seen this promise broken. The presence of Indigenous and global South leaders and activists at COP26 is essential, in order to hear from all voices. With so many people prevented from attending, it is more important than ever to add our voices to their calls for justice.

What justice requires

Rich countries like the UK have done the most to cause the climate crisis, and owe the rest of the world an immense 'climate debt'. For centuries, our wealth and emissions have been enabled by imperial expansion, leaving people in the global South facing the worst impacts of a crisis they have done little to cause. We must rapidly cut our own national emissions to zero, without relying on carbon credits or future negative emissions technologies; and we must provide our fair share of funding for a global just transition beyond fossil fuels. Paying our debts also means finding money for communities already bearing the brunt of climate breakdown, by setting up an international loss and damage fund paid for by polluters.

We will rise to the challenge of the climate crisis only through love and cooperation. Successful international negotiations rest on honesty and integrity. We hold our politicians and negotiators in the Light, to be bolder and braver for the climate, for all our sakes. At COP26, there must be no more loopholes, no more exemptions for aviation or military emissions. We cannot outwit the atmosphere with accounting tricks.

Our Quaker call to action

Working to build a more just and peaceful world is at the heart of what it means to be Quaker. Our faith does not permit us to stand by while the splendour of the world is destroyed for short-term profit. As in the days of early Quakers, we sense this is a time of prophecy and want to uphold the prophets in our midst and in the wider world. We uphold all people taking action for climate justice, whatever their contribution.

We commit to listening to the experiences of dispossessed people around the world, and to putting their rights at the heart of our response. On 31 October, Quaker communities will be gathering for worship, holding in the Light all environmental defenders and communities at the sharp end of the climate crisis. On 6 November, we will join thousands of people on the streets of Glasgow, across Britain, and around the world, in a day of action for climate justice. We call on Friends, and all those who are called to live for truth and justice, to join us.