

Follow up letter



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

7 October 2022

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings 1 October 2022

Dear Friends

I was, as always, glad to be at Friends House for Sufferings, though circumstances beyond our control meant that a smaller number of Friends than usual was able to attend in person. Perhaps because of this I felt a great sense of space, both in the room and in the agenda.

After our opening worship the business of the meeting began with a number of matters taken on draft minute. We hope this was a useful way of handling administrative items, designed to free up precious time for other discernment. Do you agree? The Arrangements Group will be convene next Tuesday (11 October) to review the meeting, so please let us have your thoughts.

The work of reviewing Meeting for Sufferings has been gathering pace since it began earlier this year and Sarah Donaldson, clerk of the Review Group, gave us a flavour of progress so far. There have been many opportunities to engage with the review, and if Friends have any more comments to make they need to send to the review group reviewgroup@quaker.org.uk with all speed. The final recommendations are expected at our meeting in December.

After our regular report from BYM trustees we welcomed Elizabeth Allen, clerk of General Meeting for Scotland. Minute 37 of Yearly Meeting 2021 laid upon Meeting for Sufferings the responsibility to “receive and consider interim reports [on the three strands of climate justice, gender diversity and anti-racism] on Yearly Meeting’s behalf and to share examples of successful practice” and this was an opportunity to hear about the ways in which Quakers north of the border are responding to these three strands and putting their faith into action. Elizabeth’s inspiring report is attached to these papers.

In the afternoon we began with a short item on the name change of Meeting of Friends in Wales, – henceforth to be known as Crynwyr Cymru – Quakers in Wales (CCQW).

You will remember that Central Nominations Committee asked that we look again at the current guidance (from 1992) about appointing only members to central

committees. Meeting for Sufferings set up a review group and their recommendation was clear: that it should be possible to appoint attenders to serve on central committees. After lengthy deliberation Friends could not reach unity about the wisdom of accepting this recommendation now. The meeting felt that the much broader issue of the meaning of membership, which was mentioned in the group's report, also needed to be considered. Quaker Life is already looking at Ways of Belonging, and events of the last two years have changed the ways in which we relate to each other in meetings across the country, so the time feels right to give this our attention. Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group is tasked with suggesting a way forward.

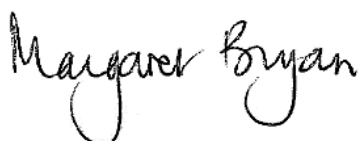
Our last item of business was the Sustainability Monitoring Group's (SMG) report for 2022, showing again what a range of work is been done by Friends locally and – on their behalf – by Friends centrally. Attached to these papers is the latest version of our Recommendations for Action which Meeting for Sufferings revised at our meeting at the end of last year.

The SMG has one member and there should be three – please consider whether you could offer service in this way and join Caroline on the group. It is well-supported by staff and reports to Meeting for Sufferings once a year. Please let sufferings@quaker.org.uk know of your willingness.

Finally, I'd like to flag up two of the items of business that are coming to our December meeting.

- First, the work on Simplification being led by Trustees. They are offering further workshops in October and November on their developing thinking entitled "*Engaging with centrally-managed work*". See Quake! 22 September for details.
- Secondly, we have already received 30 or so AM responses, out of a possible 70, to the question of what word to use instead of the term 'overseer'. Has your AM considered this or has it anything to say on the matter? Please send minutes by the end of October to sufferings@quaker.org.uk.

In Friendship



Margaret Bryan
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

The following papers are included in this mailing:

- Functions checklist
- MfS minutes October 2022
- General Meeting for Scotland report
- Recommendations for Action



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings

Held at Friends House and by video conference on 1 October 2022

Minutes

MfS/22/10/01 Opening Worship

During opening worship *Quaker faith and practice* 19.57 was read. We also remembered George Gawlinski, representative for Norfolk and Waveney Area Meeting, who died suddenly yesterday.

MfS/22/10/02 Agenda

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

MfS/22/10/03 Membership of Meeting for Sufferings

Since our last meeting we have received the following nominations and requests for release for Meeting for Sufferings until the rise of Yearly Meeting 2024:

Release requests received:

Pat Beard – Gloucestershire AM alternate
Victoria Bentley – London West AM alternate
Nim Njuguna – London West AM representative
Nim Njuguna – Quaker World Relations Committee alternate
Barbara Penny – York AM representative
Elaine Smith – Northamptonshire AM alternate

Nominated:

Dorothy Jerrome – Gloucestershire AM alternate
Charles Phillips – London West AM representative
Magnus Ramage – Northamptonshire AM alternate
Clare Scott Booth – London West AM alternate

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

Peter Sender – Bournemouth Coastal AM

Apologies:

London West AM
Quaker World Relations Committee
West Wiltshire & East Somerset AM
Young Friends General Meeting

Other visitors:

Elizabeth Allen, General Meeting for Scotland

Sarah Donaldson, Member of Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings Review Group

Peter Doubtfire and Chloe Scaling, Group to Review the Appointment of Attenders to Central Committees

Caroline Kibblewhite, incoming Meeting for Sufferings Assistant Clerk (from January 2023)

Cato Pedder, BYM staff, Media Officer

MfS/22/10/04 Appointments

Central Nominations Committee brings forward the following names for service or release as indicated:

Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations

General Meeting for Scotland bring the following nomination for its representative on QCCIR to serve with immediate effect for a first triennium:

- Nigel Dower, North Scotland AM

Quaker World Relations Committee

Release from service with immediate effect:

- Nim Njuguna, London West AM

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee

Release from service with immediate effect:

- Kate Macdonald, West Wiltshire & East Somerset AM

For information the following appointments were made as between meeting decisions:

Appeal Group

Appointed by between-meetings decision to serve until the task complete:

- Fred Ashmore, Kingston & Wandsworth AM
- Anne Bennett, Lincolnshire AM

Yearly Meeting Nominating Group brings forward the following name for release as indicated:

Central Nominations Committee

Release from service with immediate effect

- Martin Ford, Leeds AM

Meeting for Sufferings nominations:**Meeting for Sufferings Support Group**

Nominated to serve with immediate effect for the remainder of the triennium until the rise of Yearly Meeting 2024:

- Tess James, Dorset & South Wiltshire AM

Meeting for Sufferings Sustainability Monitoring Group

Nominated to serve a second term with immediate effect for the remainder of the triennium until the rise of Yearly Meeting 2024:

- Caroline Howden, East Kent AM

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

MfS/22/10/05 Quaker recognised bodies

We agree to re-register the following Quaker recognised bodies for a period of five years (to be reviewed in 2027):

1. The Association of Talking Friends
2. Friends House Moscow
3. Glebe House (Friends Therapeutic Community Trust)
4. The Penn Club
5. QARN (Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network)
6. Quaker Concern for the Abolition of Torture (Q-CAT)
7. Quaker Fellowship for After-Life Studies
8. Quaker Peace Studies Trust

MfS/22/10/06 Prison and Court Register

Fifty-one people, including the following Friends, took action at Kingsbury Oil Terminal on 14 September:

- Sue Hampton, a member of Luton & Leighton Area Meeting
- Phil Laurie, an attender at Westminster and Faversham Local Meetings
- Rajan Naidu, a member of Central England Area Meeting
- Arne Springorum, who worships with the Quaker worship group in Prague and is in international membership of Friends World Committee for Consultation. He is known as an attender at Wandsworth Local Meeting (Kingston & Wandsworth Area Meeting).

The 51 were held in prison ahead of court hearings. Rajan Naidu was sentenced to 34 days in prison. Sue Hampton, Arne Springorum and Phil Laurie received suspended sentences and were ordered to pay costs of over £400.

We agree to include this information in the Prison and Court Register and we hold the Friends involved in the Light.

MfS/22/10/07 Yearly Meeting 2024

We receive a recommendation from Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee on the date and holding of Yearly Meeting in 2024 (minute YMAC-2022-7-17). We agree to hold Yearly Meeting 26-30 July 2024, at Friends House, London and online.

MfS/22/10/08 Review of Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings

Sarah Donaldson, Clerk of the group appointed by Meeting for Sufferings to conduct a review of Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings updated us on their work.

Friends have submitted responses to a questionnaire and been invited to participate in online sessions to discuss the issues and themes arising.

We have heard that the relationship between the components of our governance structure is not always clear, and the resultant tensions need to be addressed to allow more creativity to be released.

We recognise that our structures have been inevitably evolving since their inception in response to changes in the world. We have heard that the active participation of Quakers in spirit-led discernment is at the heart of who we are as the Religious Society of Friends.

The Group's next report will be coming to our meeting in December. Friends are invited to share their thoughts with the group, as soon as they are led, prior to that date.

MfS/22/10/09 Report from BYM trustees

We receive minutes from the trustees' meeting held 2-3 September (MfS 2022 10 10). Caroline Nursey, the Clerk of BYM Trustees, and Linda Batten, Yearly Meeting Treasurer, have spoken to us about the current work of trustees and the present financial position.

We heard of positive developments – the refurbished library, the peace education work which is having a real influence, and the continuing extension of the Local Development Worker programme providing support to meetings across the country.

BYM's financial position is naturally affected by current events and it may not be possible to reach a balanced budget in 2023.

Trustees are keenly aware of the increased cost of living that is affecting everyone, individually and in their meetings. We were reminded of the financial help available from the Meeting House Fund, particularly in the area of energy efficiency.

Trustees next meet in November, when the 2023 budget and simplification will be key items.

We are warmly appreciative of all the work trustees do on our behalf.

MfS/22/10/10 General Meeting for Scotland

We welcomed the opportunity to hear from Elizabeth Allen, Clerk of General Meeting for Scotland, about the joys and struggles for Quakers in Scotland in living out their faith.

The challenges facing Friends in Scotland are similar to those across BYM – an ageing and declining membership and the resulting difficulties in finding Friends to serve in roles to maintain the community; challenges of access to meetings; and structures that dissipate energy. However, green shoots are clearly emerging.

Blended meetings are here to stay and although they may increase participation, they also reduce the opportunities that face-to-face meetings provide for community building; flexibility and creativity are key. Scottish Friends hold residential gatherings for families and there is demand for more.

They also take advantage of as many opportunities as possible for influence with the Scottish Parliament through their Parliamentary Engagement Officer and the General Meeting for Scotland Parliamentary Engagement Working Group. We note that we

need to look for openings in all jurisdictions for engagement with our elected representatives.

Working with others increases our reach and effectiveness. As the African proverb tells us, if you want to go fast, go alone: if you want to go far, go together. Where possible, Scottish Friends work with others, ecumenically and with all faith groups on issues of sustainability, gender and climate justice.

We are gladdened and inspired to know of the energy and commitment of Friends north of the border that is helping to bring together such a rich variety of worship and witness.

MfS/22/10/11 Crynwyr Cymru – Quakers in Wales (CCQW)

We receive minute 2022.06.05 from Meeting of Friends in Wales regarding its wish to discontinue using the name 'Cyfarfod y Cyfeillion Yng Nghymru / Meeting of Friends in Wales' to adopt 'Crynwyr Cymru – Quakers in Wales' (CCQW). We note this change of name, and ask our Church Government Advisory Group (CGAG) to work with CCQW to consider any necessary changes in *Quaker faith and practice* to be brought back to us for approval.

MfS/22/10/12 Appointment of attenders to central committees

In February last year Meeting for Sufferings received a request from Central Nominations Committee to reconsider the current guidance, from 1992, concerning appointing only members to central committees. We appointed a review group in December. Pete Doubtfire and Chloe Scaling from the group have joined us to present the group's report (MfS 2022 10 13) and have summarised their findings and recommendations.

We have heard that the main drivers for the proposal that it be permitted to appoint attenders to central committees were to make full use of the talents found in our community and to increase the diversity of Friends appointed to support our centrally managed work.

We have heard that there is a need to consider our understanding of the meaning of membership but that formal membership itself is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for faithful service in our organisation. However, we have also heard that many Friends find it difficult to understand how someone who has not become a member of our Society should have responsibility for taking decisions on our behalf.

After a period of consideration, in which we have heard strong opinions in support of and against the proposal, we are at this time unable to reach unity on accepting the report's central recommendation that attenders may be appointed to service on central committees. We note that the Central Nominations Committee will continue under the existing guidance.

The struggle we have had with this issue emphasises that it is important to give due consideration to our understanding of the meaning of membership, which is much broader than the right to serve on committees. We have heard that the process of coming into membership should be a means of formation in our Discipline. We note that Quaker Life Central Committee has previously been tasked (Yearly Meeting 2014 minutes 10 and 40, Meeting for Sufferings minutes MfS 2015/02/08, MfS/18/02/13. MfS/20/10/15) with reviewing this. Membership has evolved over the

years since it was introduced and, in particular, in light of the different ways of working that we have been exploring over the past couple of years the nature of our community has changed. We uphold Quaker Life Central Committee in their continuing work, encouraging them to bring their report as soon as they are able.

Since we have not reached unity but realising the importance of the issue, we ask Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group to consider how the matter of membership can return to Meeting for Sufferings for further discernment.

The work with which they were tasked being complete, we agree to lay down the review group with thanks for their careful discernment.

We send this minute to Church Government Advisory Group, to the Book of Discipline Revision Committee for information, to Quaker Life Central Committee, and to Central Nominations Committee.

MfS/22/10/13 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 2022 10 14) and Caroline Howden of the SMG drew our attention to the progress against the five areas: eldership, oversight, living faithfully, right ordering and witness, set by Meeting for Sufferings in its Recommendations for Action. The report also offers an overview of what some of our central committees are doing as well as how local communities are sharing information on their work.

We note that the language around sustainability has changed. Much more emphasis is being placed on climate justice, and this is expressed in the revised strategy of the Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee, as quoted in the report.

Caroline reminded us that the Sustainability Monitoring Group should have three members, and at present there is only one.

In response to question about what we would like to see more of in the report, Friends emphasised spiritual underpinning, the question of loss and damage reparation, an occasional query – a 'what canst thou say?' about a particular aspect of our witness. We noted also that the information which comes from area meetings' annual reports and accounts is a bit out of date when finally published. How could this information be shared in a more timely fashion?

We thank Caroline warmly for her report.

MfS/22/10/14 Closing worship

We closed our meeting with a brief period of worship.

Margaret Bryan
Clerk

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

	Requirement	Oct 22
A	To set the priorities for the centrally managed work	
B	To issue public statements in the name of BYM	
C	To receive regular interim reports from BYM trustees	9
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	7
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	8, 10, 13
H	To keep under review and to test as appropriate the existing and new concerns referred to it by AMs and others	12
I	To foster communication throughout the yearly meeting	10
J	To receive minutes from area meetings	
K	To make appropriate entries in the prison and court register	6
I	To appoint representatives to attend other Yearly Meetings	
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	4
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

General Meeting for Scotland report for Meeting for Sufferings 1.10.22

Good morning Friends, I've been invited to speak to you about General Meeting for Scotland, a term which describes our place in Quaker structures. For clarity in the wider community, my preference is to call it Quakers in Scotland, which focuses on the people. This morning I want to tell to you about our Quaker community in Scotland, the joys and struggles of living out our faith, and where the light is pushing us. In doing so, I'll also be telling you how General Meeting for Scotland engages with the other churches, Scottish institutions, and wider society on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting.

Our Community

In 2021 our Quaker community in Scotland had 687 members, 550 attenders and 108 children. If you look at the statistics, we're old and our numbers are declining and like Quaker meetings throughout the country we have difficulties in finding Friends to fill our many roles. A depressing picture indeed, but look closer and you'll see the green shoots of new growth. Get more involved and you'll feel the vibrant energy of people living out their faith.

The pandemic catapulted us into learning how to use Zoom, and now 'blended' meetings are increasingly used to make it easier for Friends to take part in our worship and meetings for church affairs.

Being prevented from seeing one another face to face reduced our opportunities for community building but things are changing. At General Meeting for Scotland in September we heard about the joy of working with our children and young people, and of the richness of opportunity, which they have embraced this year. We haven't seen them at General Meeting since the start of the pandemic, so we were glad to hear that even though they may struggle to attend meeting, they still practice their faith. We are aware that Sunday Meeting for Worship might not suit families and young people so we need to be more flexible and creative in the opportunities we provide for worship and fellowship. In Scotland we have several annual national and regional residential family events and these are increasingly popular and there is demand for more. Discussions at these events have raised the challenges we face to our Quaker community as a whole, in the present time and for the future, about how we access our Quaker Meetings for Worship and what changes we need to make to ensure young people are included in our Quaker community.

We are benefitting from having a Local Development Worker – a challenging post for anyone given the geographical scatter of Friends in Scotland, where outside the central belt it is not unusual for Friends to live well over an hour's drive and sometimes across water from their local meeting, and where most local meetings take place in rented premises. Improving our communications is vital to holding our community together. The Scottish Friend and our area and local meeting newsletters

are key communications tools, plus our Facebook page, and our Quakers in Scotland website. Our Local Development Worker, Zoe Prosser, is becoming a 'weel kent' face and by visiting and working with local meetings she is helping to connect us. Our role holders also benefit from being connected to each other and supported. Our Area and General Meeting clerks and assistant clerks have been working closely together and supporting one another for several years, as have trustees and treasurers. Zoe has extended this, enabling elders, Friends in pastoral care roles, and Friends serving on Nominations committees to form Scotland wide support networks, which we hope will also strengthen our communications.

All these measures that help to draw our Quaker community together, are great, but we have recognised that we are struggling with Quaker structures and systems that no longer function well, and in doing so some of our energy is dissipated. We aim to put our house in order and in June 2021 General Meeting for Scotland appointed a working group to identify and evaluate options for changing the way we work, which would free Quakers in Scotland to focus on spiritual growth, community building, and witness in the world. The group reported back in March 2022, listing opportunities available now to help us work together more effectively, and these are being implemented. But that was the low hanging fruit! Recognising the need to consider future structural changes to simplify the way we function, we set up a second working group. They will report to General Meeting next June.

How we are living out our faith - where the light is pushing us

Where the spirit is moving, we find energy, commitment and growth. It brings light into our darkness, gives us the courage to be bold and the strength to be faithful. What are the manifestations of the spirit moving amongst Friends in Scotland?

During this last year Scottish Friends of all ages witnessed for climate justice at a local, regional and national level, and encouraged us all to face up to the effects of climate change already locked into the system. Of course COP26 galvanised this but it was no flash in the pan, the witness continues and currently focuses on the delivery of promises made at the COP, in particular how Scotland is going to meet its net zero target. In this context, our Parliamentary Engagement Working Group is focusing on the Heat in Buildings strategy not only because of its importance for achieving Net Zero carbon emissions, but also because of its role in the reduction of fuel poverty in Scotland. We are also concerned about social and economic justice, and continue to give our wholehearted support to the push for Loss and Damage reparations for the global south and for a just transition domestically. Looking forward, we need to press for fairness at home, including challenging the immorality of continuing to sell North Sea exploration licenses. Our hope is that this is a moment when society really starts to understand what must be done and demands it will happen.

In Scotland, there are growing opportunities to introduce and embed peace education into our schools and culture and we are engaged in this work, aided by the

QPSW “Peace at the Heart ” videos. A motion to the Scottish Parliament referring to the Peace at the Heart report was signed by 34 MSPs, representing all 5 political parties. In the wake of this, the General Meeting for Scotland Parliamentary Engagement Working Group has now been invited to participate in round-table discussions to review Scottish Labour’s approach to education.

The Scottish Government is establishing a Scottish Peace Institute and our Parliamentary Engagement Officer is contributing to the round-table planning discussions to help shape it, adding a focus on fostering a peaceful society in Scotland, starting with our own homes. We hope to continue a conversation with Government about strengthening controls over state funding of arms manufacturers in Scotland. The backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine conflict gives this work added meaning and reality.

At the point when QPSW was led to lay down its criminal justice work, Friends in Scotland were led to restart it, and it has taken off. Our enthusiastic grassroots Community Justice Network is exploring a Quaker approach to bringing about a more just and compassionate society, and how community rather than criminal justice could become the norm. Their presence has attracted interest from others in the field. They are looking at the societal issues that contribute to violence in general and against women in particular, including trauma and inequalities. They are aware that the prison system is in crisis and that it does not work in dealing with, or deterring offending behaviour, and they are discussing radical alternatives. They have produced a thought-provoking booklet “Breaking Chains and Building Change” to inform Friends in Scotland of their perspective on conflict, violence and the effect of trauma, justice and punishment. Supported by the General Meeting Community Justice Working Group, and with the help of the Parliamentary Engagement Officer, responses have been submitted to relevant Scottish Government consultations. Currently the Scottish Government is rolling out an ambitious “Vision for Justice”, which includes plans to offer restorative justice across the country and the Network are engaging with the civil servants involved in this programme.

Friends are becoming aware of the inter-connectedness of aspects of our witness, much of which focuses on the harm cause by exploitation. When people are exploited, it results in slavery, poverty, violence and hopelessness. When the earth is exploited, it results in climate chaos, endangered species, resource depletion, poverty, violence and hopelessness. Communities, including our Quaker community have a significant role to play in putting things right - mending the hurt.

Engaging with the Scottish Parliament

Much progress has been made with our advocacy work through meetings with MSPs. We have had positive recognition of the work Friends are doing and the values we stand for, through two motions in the Scottish Parliament: Maggie Chapman MSP commended the decision by Yearly Meeting regarding reparations; and Paul McLennan MSP commended the QPSW report on Peace Education.

The Scottish Parliament is considering two Bills on human rights:

- The Incorporation of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots Law, which is being amended to comply with the ruling of the Supreme Court on the competence of certain sections
- A broader Scottish Human Rights Bill, which would incorporate four UN Human Rights treaties into Scots Law.

Quakers in Scotland have had Zoom meetings on Human Rights and this new legislation may prompt further discussions on what human rights are, how they can be made meaningful for all citizens, and where there might be pitfalls.

Working with others

The way we work is as important as the work we do. As the African proverb tells us, if you want to go fast, go alone: if you want to go far, go together. Where possible, we work with others:

- Through the International Development Education Association of Scotland we are helping to bring peace education into the classroom.
- We have regular meetings with Christian Aid in Scotland to identify work we can do together. As well as climate justice, we have a shared interest in peace education and I am currently working with Christian Aid Scotland staff to produce a set of resources to help people explore the meaning of peace. One emerging issue that potentially is of common concern is gender justice and, in particular, its links to climate justice. West Scotland Area Meeting is supporting a group exploring their concern on gender-based violence. During COP26 they held a conference and produced a booklet on how the economic system and the climate emergency affect women. Members of this group are taking part in an ecumenical conversation on this issue, hosted by Christian Aid. Those involved are planning to make a collective effort to mark the UN 16 days of action in November on gender-based violence.
- Much of our climate justice work is done with Stop Climate Chaos Scotland and our Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Andrew Tomlinson, is now the Convenor of their Policy and Advocacy Group. In this capacity, he was part of the delegation meeting with the Scottish Government's team working on the new Climate Change Plan, and with the CEO of the Climate Change Committee. In October, during the lead-up to COP 27, Friends in Scotland will be encouraged to contact their MSPs asking them to support Stop Climate Chaos Scotland's statement on the phasing out of oil and gas, and calling on the Scottish Government to join the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance.

In addition to these working relationships, General Meeting for Scotland extends its social and peace witness through linking with a wide variety of organisations focused on specific issues which are of concern to Friends At each General Meeting, we hear

from a themed group of these organisations about their work and how our appointed link people contribute to it, as Quakers.

General Meeting for Scotland plays an active part in the ecumenical community in Scotland. In general there is a move towards greater ecumenism and fostering bonds of friendship. Formally and informally we are included in gatherings, Zoom meetings, chats and cups of tea, as well as actions taken together by the churches. You could say that we are getting to know one another in that which is eternal. For a while we were less well connected to the interfaith community but we have put this right now and we hope our links will flourish.

In summary, Quakers in Scotland are increasingly and effectively working with others. We are becoming better known, respected and understood through our advocacy work. We are making connections between our concerns and becoming more aware of how they link in a wider context, and how the issues that concern us emanate from the same root causes. At the same time we are struggling to hold our church together and help it to function under the pressures of modern life. We have embraced the need for radical change and are looking for creative solutions. We know that other churches are having to change their ways of working – we are not alone.

Elizabeth Allen
2nd September, 2022

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

Revised by Meeting for Sufferings, December 2021

Introduction

In 2011, Yearly Meeting made a commitment to become a low-carbon, sustainable community ('Canterbury Commitment').

In 2021, Yearly Meeting renewed and strengthened this commitment. The meeting recognised the climate crisis is here and called for climate justice. It called for personal witness to build into collective action; for eldership, building resilient communities, right ordering and witness. It acknowledged that climate justice is anti-racist work.

Our overall aim is to encourage and support Friends and meetings in implementing these commitments.

These recommendations are grouped 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.

1 Eldership: rooting the commitment in our Quaker faith

1.1 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:

- a) Recognising and being able to articulate how our own spiritual experience and practice relates to sustainability
- b) 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
- c) Recognising that our commitment to sustainability is deeply connected to our commitment to equality, truth and simplicity
- d) Recognising all of these as part of our corporate faith and practice
- e) Being able to bring Quaker insights, values and practices to bear on sustainability issues in our lives and communities and the wider world.

1.2 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:

- a) 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.
- b) 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.
- c) Central committees 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.
- d) 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.

2 Oversight: strengthening our community

2.1 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:

- a) 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
- b) Strengthening our shared identity and developing a shared understanding of how Quaker faith and practice relates to becoming a low carbon, sustainable community
- c) Discerning the way forward in our Commitment, rooted in the Light and following the leadings of the Spirit
- d) Supporting one another in implementing the Commitment, sharing learning, insight and celebration
- e) Becoming more resilient, able to cope with change and adversity.

2.2 Recommendations

The Canterbury Commitment should be owned and implemented by BYM as a whole including individual Friends, local and area meetings, central and standing committees, Meeting of Friends in Wales, General Meeting for Scotland, Young Friends General Meeting, Quaker Recognised Bodies 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.

- a) Regular and ongoing dialogue between Friends in their local and area meetings and other Quaker organisations is needed to build community and share resources.
- b) 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. Gatherings should be inclusive and enable all Friends to participate and contribute.
- c) Regional, national and online networks can be ways for Friends and meetings to build community and share resources. Further networks may be needed.

3 Living faithfully: changing our lifestyles

3.1 The aim

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

3.2 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.

- a) There are many useful resources (such as footprint guides, guides for practical action and study group session plans) published by other organisations. BYM, Woodbrooke and other Quaker bodies can signpost to useful materials. Friends are encouraged to make full use of these resources.
- b) BYM and Woodbrooke work together to support Friends in deepening dialogue and making lifestyle changes, including through group activities. A variety of approaches are available. Friends are encouraged to make use of these opportunities.
- c) Friends are also encouraged 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.
- d) Lifestyle change is about living in the world. Friends are encouraged to engage with, learn from and mutually support family, friends, neighbours, and others, so that we can walk with and alongside each other on this journey.

4 Right ordering: Quaker core activity and property

4.1 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.

4.2 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.

- a) Quaker bodies are encouraged to draw on available resources to support their discernment in ways that takes account of the commitment, including weighing up the effects of their decisions on a wide variety of issues, and considering creative alternatives. This includes drawing on specialist resources available from non-Quaker sources (for example, professional expertise regarding properties or fuel).
- b) Area Meeting Trustees should include information about the area meeting's work to become a low-carbon, sustainable community in their annual reports. This might include data such as annual energy use, and local meeting activities gathered through surveys.
- c) All parts of the Quaker community are encouraged 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.

5 Witness: taking political action and promoting systemic change

5.1 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.

5.2 Recommendations

We know Friends are keen to influence the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments and public bodies, to call for and create systemic change in economics and society. In particular:

- a) Friends, as individuals and in their meetings and organisations, 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 and to be part of building the alternative
 - to speak out for systemic change and for climate justice.

- b) Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee's current strategy focuses on two core interlinked themes: Peace and Peacebuilding, and Sustainability and Climate Justice. This approach was supported and affirmed by Yearly Meeting in 2021. QPSWCC's strategy recognises the importance and urgency of the climate crisis, and the vision includes:
- achieving more by focusing on fewer activities
 - prioritising work where Quakers have a distinctive approach that can enhance change
 - supporting greater action by local and area meetings and by Quaker Recognised Bodies while also undertaking centrally-managed work
 - greater agility – for us to respond quickly where this is needed, even if this means laying down or pausing some work
 - cross-programme activity
 - drawing on a wide range of skills and gifts offered by members, attenders and staff
- c) British Friends should continue to connect 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.