

Follow up letter



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

8 July 2023

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Yearly Meeting/Meeting for Sufferings 1 July 2023

Dear Friends,

It was a joy to meet with you all last Saturday at our conjoined Yearly Meeting/Meeting for Sufferings session. Welcoming Friends joining us from across the yearly meeting also added to the richness of the session. Hopefully we can learn from the experience to enhance our normal practices and engage with some of the concerns that have been raised regarding the ability of Sufferings to serve the needs of the yearly meeting.

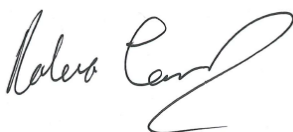
We managed to get all our necessary administrative business done and had some useful consideration of both the question of how to address ecocide and our relationship with the structures of the state. We have agreed to return to the question of ecocide at our residential meeting in October, when we will be receiving our sustainability report and have an opportunity to look at our work on the climate emergency. In the meantime, I'm sure many area meetings and individual Friends will be considering their own response to the call to support the campaign, and we include information on how to join the campaign should that be right.

We also expect to return to the church and state question, after Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations has explored it at their forthcoming conference.

Unfortunately, we were unable to give time to the minutes received on contemporary slavery and the welcome of the émigré communities from the Sudan and we will have to return to these as well.

I look forward to seeing you next at our residential meeting in Leeds from 6th to 8th October. In addition to the matters mentioned above, we are also expecting to consider the minutes received from area meetings on the matter of membership with a view to moving forward on that question.

In Truth,



Robert Card
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

Ecocide. The Meeting heard a response from Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee on how they are considering the matter of Ecocide with the area meetings that have sent minutes on this matter. If your area meeting wishes to be involved in these continuing discussions please contact Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship, on OliverR@quaker.org.uk

The following papers are included in this mailing:

- MfS minutes July 2023
- Functions checklist



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 July 2023

Minutes

MfS/23/07/01 Opening Worship and welcome

We have begun our Meeting in worship during which passage 2.11 from *Quaker faith and practice* was read

Today, Meeting for Sufferings welcomes Friends from across our yearly meeting as we open this meeting to all. We are reminded that “in a Meeting held in the Spirit there is a giving and receiving between its members, one helping another with or without words. So there may come a wider vision and a deeper experience.” (*Quaker faith & practice* 2.11)

MfS/23/07/02 Agenda

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

MfS/23/07/03 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:

- Kerren Davey – Bristol AM alternate
- Sue Horne – North Scotland AM representative
- Faith Lydiard – Northumbria AM alternate
- Paul Mountain – Worcestershire and Shropshire AM alternate
- Robert Pritchard – Cumberland AM representative
- Dawn Snape – Bristol AM representative
- Cathy Urquhart – Brighouse West Yorkshire AM alternate

Nominated:

- Norman Alm – East Scotland AM alternate
- Kerren Davey – Bristol AM representative
- Anne Goggin – Brighouse West Yorkshire AM alternate
- Lex Ryder – North Scotland AM representative
- Mary Savage – Cumberland AM representative

We agree to these changes.

MfS/23/07/04 Appointments

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

Book of Discipline Revision Committee

Release with immediate effect:
Simon Gray, Central England AM

Quaker Housing Trust

To serve with immediate effect until Annual Retirement Meeting 2026:
Peter Kennedy, East Scotland AM

Quaker Life Central Committee

To serve with immediate effect until 31 December 2026:
Graham Dragon, Hampshire & Islands AM

Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee

To serve with immediate effect until 31 December 2025:
Ruth Harvey, Cumberland AM
To serve with immediate effect until 31 December 2024:
Charlotte Lake, Southern Marches AM

Representative to France Yearly Meeting

To serve as the representative for 2023:
Tricia Bridgewater, North Wales AM

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee

To serve with immediate effect until Yearly Meeting 2025:
Amelia Schafer-Rutherford, Gloucestershire AM
To serve with immediate effect until Yearly Meeting 2024:
Imi Hills, West Weald AM
Release with immediate effect:
Gill Reid, West Scotland AM

For information, the following appointments were made as between-meeting appointments by the clerks of Meeting for Sufferings:

Representative to Netherlands Yearly Meeting

To serve as the representative for 2023:
Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick, Luton & Leighton AM

b) Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group brings forward the following nomination:

Meeting for Sufferings Support Group

Les Hereward, Representative from Cornwall AM to serve for the rest of this triennium

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

MfS/23/07/05 Prison and Court Register

Deborah Mitchell (Falmouth Local Meeting, Cornwall Area Meeting) was found guilty and fined £650 at Chelmsford Magistrates Court on 15 February following a charge of obstructing or disrupting a person engaged in a lawful activity. This relates to Deborah's involvement in Just Stop Oil and peaceful action on 2 and 8 April 2022 outside Purfleet oil refinery in Essex.

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

MfS/23/07/06 Quaker Recognised Bodies

We agree to register the following two bodies as Quaker Recognised Bodies for a period of two years:

- Friends of Pardshaw Quaker Centre
- Peace Works Zimbabwe (PWZ)

The following three Quaker Recognised Bodies have been reviewed and we agree to re-register them for a period of five years:

- Quaker Bolivia Link
- Quaker International Educational Trust
- Quaker Rainbow

MfS/23/03/07 Appeal Group

The Group appointed by minute MfS/22/07/08 to hear an Appeal in accordance with *Quaker Faith & Practice* 4.25 has informed us it has concluded its work and relayed its decision to those concerned. It has asked to be laid down and we agree to this.

MfS/23/07/08 Loyal address in March 2023

Quakers are occasionally invited to present a 'loyal address' to the monarch. This tradition dates back several hundred years. An invitation was received to present an address in March 2023. Twelve Friends attended, and presented the address as follows:

"As representatives of Quakers across Britain and Northern Ireland, we give thanks for the grace of God as shown in the life of the late Queen Elizabeth and we offer prayers for you on your accession.

We thank you for speaking out for the environment over many decades. Quakers believe that a just solution to the climate crisis requires interrogating and disrupting our existing economic systems, which are not operating within ecological limits or upholding the wellbeing, dignity and equality of all.

For us, equality means everyone feeling welcomed and valued for who they are, that we see their equal spiritual worth as a child of God. Who are we to reject what God has created? Our differences are a blessing, and we should rejoice in them. When we connect with other people then our differences do not divide us.

We have welcomed trans and gender diverse people within our Quaker worshipping communities. We have committed to being an actively anti-racist church, and to

making reparations for our past involvement in slavery. It is a moral imperative on us all to try to repair the harm done, as echoes of that harm are still felt today.

We are grieved to see the harms caused by fighting in Ukraine and the many other armed conflicts throughout the world. Every casualty, civilian or soldier, is a valued human life lost or damaged. We may think wars end through force of arms or negotiation, but peace is maintained by building relationships, mutual dependency and shared prosperity.

We hope and pray that you will be guided by the example of Jesus Christ and serve wisely and lovingly, and can counsel your governments to do the same.”

MfS/23/07/09 The practice of giving a loyal address

Young Friends General Meeting has sent us their minute 2023.02.06 setting out their reasons for not wishing to participate in providing a loyal address in March this year. We have been asked to consider both our current attitude to monarchy and the overarching issue of speaking truth to institutions of power and privilege. We are grateful to Young Friends for bringing this matter to us. Can our participation in civic ceremonies of this sort be a faithful witness to the alternate Gospel Order to which we are committed, or is it rather an expression of complicity with the domination system of worldly powers?

We hope to return to this matter of the faithful relation of church and state at a future date.

MfS/23/07/10 Ecocide

We receive minutes from Hampshire & Islands, Bristol, Pickering & Hull, Manchester & Warrington, Cornwall and Devon area meetings asking Britain Yearly Meeting to support the aims and campaign of Stop Ecocide International.

We have heard from Elize Sakamoto and Jonathan Lingham of Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee on the committee's priorities in this area and about the informal group of central committee members with members of the area meetings with an interest in making 'ecocide' an international crime. We thank our Central Committee for their thinking on this matter.

All area meetings with an interest in this are invited to join this informal group to consider this further and details will be shared following this meeting.

We agree to allow additional agenda time at our residential meeting taking place over three days in October when we shall be considering climate and sustainability matters at length.

MfS/23/07/11 Closing worship

We have concluded our time together with waiting worship and look to meet again in October.

Robert Card
Clerk

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

	Requirement	July 23
A	To set the priorities for the centrally managed work	
B	To issue public statements in the name of BYM	8, 9
C	To receive regular interim reports from BYM trustees	
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	
H	To keep under review and to test as appropriate the existing and new concerns referred to it by AMs and others	9, 10
I	To foster communication throughout the yearly meeting	10
J	To receive minutes from area meetings	10
K	To make appropriate entries in the prison and court register	5
I	To appoint representatives to attend other Yearly Meetings	4
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	7
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