



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

17 May 2024

## To members of Meeting for Sufferings

I look forward to seeing you again on 1st June at our next session of Meeting for Sufferings.

We have a full day.

In the morning session, in addition to our usual routine business, we will consider the reapplication for Quaker Recognised Body status made by Quaker Concern Over Population (QCOP).

In December 2023, we agreed to allow different pronouns to be used in the Quaker Marriage Declaration. The Church Government Advisory Group has done the work on this, and we will receive draft amendments to this text in *Quaker faith & practice*. The wider consultation on possible changes to the Quaker Marriage Declaration is still with area meetings.

We then expect to receive a report from the Yearly Meeting trustees on work they are doing on our behalf and they will be seeking our guidance.

The long history of our engagement in Israel and Palestine through the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) programme, has kept us informed about the ongoing issues – recently reaching heart-breaking proportions – faced by people living in this area. After lunch, we will spend time holding Israel and Palestine in the light, and reflecting on what love requires of us. Quakers in Britain are frequently asked to make or agree to statements on Israel and Palestine and this is a timely opportunity to reflect prayerfully on the situation.

The focus of our meeting will then shift to the ways we work together, locally, in our area meetings, and nationally – a well run ‘house’ releases our time and energy to live out our faith in the world. As a church, we have governance requirements and we will receive a report on area meeting compliance. Safeguarding is an element of compliance, and some Friends will share how this is working in their meetings. We will also be updated on the progress of agreeing Memoranda of Understanding with area meetings.

Our online Preparation Meeting will be on 22 May, from 7.00 pm to 8.30 pm. The topic, Quaker advocacy in the forthcoming General Election, is likely to be of interest, as it is of great relevance to us all. The session will be led by Grace Da Costa, our Public Affairs and Advocacy Manager. To allow wider participation in this session, we are experimenting by making it open to Friends beyond MfS representatives, but registration is required.

Our time together is a time of fellowship, of listening to one another, and of listening prayerfully to the leadings of the spirit. May we live up to the Light that we have, and hope that more may be granted to us.

In Truth,



Robert Card  
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

#### **Papers enclosed with this mailing**

Agenda

Minutes from MfS Arrangements Group

**MfS 2024 06 06** Minutes from Area Meetings and other Quaker bodies

**MfS 2024 06 07** Revision of *Quaker faith & practice*

**MfS 2024 06 08** Quaker recognised bodies

**MfS 2024 06 09** Minutes and report from BYM Trustees

**MfS 2024 06 10** Israel and Palestine

**MfS 2024 06 11** Area Meeting compliance

**MfS 2024 06 12** Safeguarding

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

- Read the agenda and papers in good time
- Contact the other representative/alternate from your area meeting or body
- Send any comments or questions to the clerks ([sufferings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sufferings@quaker.org.uk)), before the meeting to be received by morning of **29 May**.



Yearly Meeting of the  
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## Agenda

### Meeting for Sufferings – 1 June 2024

In-person at Friends House and by video conference, open for arrivals from 9.30am for 10am start

	Item	Paper
<b>10am</b>	<b>Session 1</b>	
<b>1</b>	<b>Opening worship</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Agenda</b> Adoption and acceptance of the agenda	
<b>4–5</b>	<b>Items to be taken on draft minute:</b> Membership (To follow) <b>(04)</b> Appointments (To follow) <b>(05)</b>	<b>MfS 2024 06 04–05</b> For decision
<b>6</b>	<b>Minutes from area meetings and other bodies</b> To receive and share minutes for information as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South Wales AM/CCR De Cymru on Ecocide</li> <li>• General Meeting for Scotland on indeterminate sentencing</li> <li>• London West AM and London Young Adult Quaker Meeting on gender questioning children</li> <li>• Sussex West AM on the Salter Lecture</li> </ul>	<b>MfS 2024 06 06</b> For information
<b>7</b>	<b>Quaker faith &amp; practice revision</b> Church Government Advisory Group brings minor amendments for Chapter 16, the marriage declaration	<b>MfS 2024 06 07</b> For decision
	<b>Shuffle break</b>	

	Item	Paper
<b>8</b>	<b>Quaker Recognised Bodies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To receive applications for registration <b>(08a)</b></li> <li>Reregistration of Quaker Concern Over Population <b>(08b)</b></li> </ul>	<b>MfS 2024 06 08</b> For decision
<b>9</b>	<b>Report from BYM Trustees</b> To hear from the Clerk of Trustees and Yearly Meeting Treasurer	<b>MfS 2024 06 09</b> For information
<b>12.30am</b>	<b>End of Session 1</b>	

**12:30am Lunch break**

	Item	Paper
<b>1.45pm</b>	<b>Session 2</b>	
<b>10</b>	<b>Quakers in Britain: our work in Palestine and Israel</b>	<b>MfS 2024 06 10</b> For information
	<b>Shuffle break</b>	
<b>11</b>	<b>Area meeting compliance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To receive a report on annual area meeting compliance for 2023</li> <li>An update on the agreement between trustees of charitable bodies of BYM</li> </ul>	<b>MfS 2024 06 11</b> For information
<b>12</b>	<b>Safeguarding in our meetings</b> To hear from BYM's Safeguarding Officer and an area meeting safeguarding coordinator	<b>MfS 2024 06 12</b> For information
<b>4pm</b>	<b>End of Meeting</b>	



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

At a meeting of

## **Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group**

Held online 13 March 2024

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Elizabeth Allen (Clerk), Robert Card, Ivan Hutnik, Lex Ryder, Mary Savage, Jean Scott Barr

**In attendance:** Siobhán Haire, Neil Jarvis

We began our meeting with a period of worship.

#### **1. Welcome and introductions**

We welcome Lex Ryder and Mary Savage to the Arrangements Group. We have introduced ourselves.

#### **2. Meetings attended by the Clerks and others**

Robert and Elizabeth attended a Zoom meeting of the Group to Review Central Structures on 28 February.

#### **3. Review of Meeting for Sufferings in March**

We have reviewed the minutes from Meeting for Sufferings in March. We have assigned minutes 13 and 14 – both concerned with the future of Meeting for Sufferings and its arrangements – as gold minutes. Each minute also includes a degree of ongoing work, which we expect to return to, so we have also included them in our minutes of continuing business.

We note the recommendations from the Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings (GRYYM), which do not need Yearly Meeting approval to progress. The Arrangements Group has been asked to continue with experimenting on the holding of Meeting for Sufferings and to work on community building. We have also been asked to work more closely with Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, including taking forward the concept of appointing MfS representatives on a rolling basis. We ask our Clerk to contact the Clerk of YMAC to initiate an informal conversation on how we might work together and the best time to

start. It might be helpful to start by sharing our forward plans. We have heard that through our MfS Clerk, there is regular contact with the Yearly Meeting Clerks.

We thank the Support Group for their report, which we have reviewed.

We ask staff to consider the points raised about administrative arrangements, including paying for the Friday evening meal, dealing with paper expenses claim forms, and provision of paper copies of the meeting papers.

We note the need to remind Friends online about use of the 'yellow hand', and Friends in the room about returning their badge and lanyard before leaving. We also note the suggestion that we highlight opportunities for community building on Friday evening before MfS.

We encourage the Support Group to continue their endeavours to make registration a smooth process. We are pleased to note that the group is thinking about the new triennium and how best to hand over to their successors.

#### **4. Residential meetings in new triennium**

We have discussed the merits of when to hold our first residential meeting in the next triennium. The decision of Meeting for Sufferings in March to endorse GRYYM's proposal to move to a continuing Yearly Meeting, and for MfSAG to work more closely with Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, might affect how we use our extended residential meeting most effectively. Consequently, we feel that it might be sensible to postpone the residential meeting until later in 2025.

Given the time constraints on finding a venue, MfS in June might be too late to make a decision about the date of the next residential meeting. MfSAG therefore takes the responsibility to decide the date. We agree that the next residential meeting will be held from 3–5 October 2025.

#### **5. Minute from Leeds AM**

In response to our request for information to help with our discernment regarding the minute from Leeds AM – Shadow Minister for Peace and Disarmament, we have received a carefully prepared paper from staff. We thank them for this. In light of the briefing paper, we have considered the Leeds AM minute.

We are mindful to consult further on this and ask staff to contact Northern Friends Peace Board and Peacemakers to see if they are doing work in this area.

We will return to this matter at our next meeting. In the meantime, we will inform Leeds AM that their minute is still under consideration.

## **6. General election**

MfSAG asked if staff from the advocacy and public relations team might attend a future Meeting for Sufferings to inform Friends of the support and resources that will be available from BYM leading up to the next general election.

We are pleased to hear that staff welcome the opportunity to attend Meeting for Sufferings in June. If the general election is called before then, it is proposed to hold a special online session of Meeting for Sufferings for this purpose, much like one of our current preparation sessions, and we agree to this.

As this subject is important to many Friends beyond the membership of Meeting for Sufferings, we also agree in principle that this session should be open to all Friends as part of our ongoing experimentation with holding Meeting for Sufferings. We will review the practicalities of this at our next MfSAG meeting.

## **7. Any other matters**

There being no further business to conduct, we part planning to meet again on 24 April to plan Meeting for Sufferings on 1 June 2024.

Future dates for MfSAG are (all to be held online and starting at 7pm):

- 24 April
- 12 June
- 4 September
- 16 October
- 6 November
- 18 December

Signed in and on behalf of the meeting,

Elizabeth Allen  
Clerk



Yearly Meeting of the  
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(Quakers) in Britain

At a meeting of

## **Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group**

Held online 24 April 2024

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Elizabeth Allen, Robert Card, Ivan Hutnik, Lex Ryder, Mary Savage, Jean Scott Barr

**In attendance:** Siobhán Haire, Neil Jarvis, Oliver Robertson (minutes 1 to 3)

We began our meeting with a short period of worship.

#### **1. Meetings attended by the Clerks and others**

Elizabeth attended a Zoom meeting of the Group to Review Central Structures on 12 April.

Elizabeth and the Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee (YMAC) Clerk, Fred Langridge, have agreed to meet by Zoom on 19 May to have an initial conversation on how we might work more closely together.

#### **2. Forward plan**

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

We add an update from the BYM Reparations Working Group to our list for October.

We have heard that the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) is not holding a conference on Church and State. We will return to this topic later.

So far, we have received six comments on the marriage declaration. We should remind Friends of the consultation on the declaration wording in the Calling Letter for June, and in the notices during Meeting for Sufferings. The Clerks Cluster might also be used to remind Friends.

#### **3. Meeting for Sufferings in June**

We have considered potential business for Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) in June.



Previously, we asked QCCIR and Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) to do some groundwork to help our discernment on whether an item on 'Reviewing BYM's position on Israel and Palestine' might rightly be added to the agenda for MfS in June. QCCIR discussed this at their February meeting and we have received a minute from them on this matter. Oliver Robertson, BYM's Head of Witness and Worship, has attended our meeting today, to help in our discernment. We agree to add this item to the June agenda. We have considered how it might best be brought to MfS, who we might ask to speak, and what preparation we might need to make for this session. QPSW Central Committee are meeting on Saturday and we expect to receive a minute from them which will inform our planning. We will invite the QCCIR clerk and the convenor of the Interfaith Working Group to attend MfS in June, as requested in the QCCIR minute.

We looked at other business for MfS in June including Quaker Registered Bodies. The re-registration of Quaker Concern over Population (QCOP) will need to go to MfS for discernment. We will hear from BYM Trustees, although they haven't met since the last MfS.

We will take the report on AM compliance with charity regulations, along with noting the confirmation of signed Memoranda of Understanding between BYM and AM Trustees. We will also hear about how the new policy on safeguarding in our meetings is working.

We will use the preparation session on 29 May to hear from staff about the resources BYM will provide to support Friends to engage with the upcoming general election. As we know that this subject is of interest to Friends beyond the membership of MfS, we will invite all Friends to join the session online.

We note receipt of the following minutes:

- A. South Wales AM on ecocide, informing MfS that the area meeting is affiliating to Stop Ecocide International.  
We will include this minute in the June MfS papers in advance, for information.
- B. General Meeting for Scotland in response to minute MfS/23/10/16 requesting information about the situation in Scotland regarding imprisonment for public protection. The nearest equivalent in Scots Law to this legislation is the Order of Lifelong Restriction and as there are no current operational or procedural issues with this, Scottish Quakers will not ask for it to be revoked.  
We will record this information at MfS.
- C. London West AM and London Young Adult Quaker Meeting sharing their discernment which informed their response to the UK Government consultation, "Gender Questioning Children – Non-statutory guidance for schools and colleges in England".  
We will include this minute in the June MfS papers in advance, for information.

- D. Central England AM commenting on matters in Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering, and Meeting for Sufferings' (GRYYM) report received at MfS in March on the future of MfS.  
We will send this minute to the GRYYM and YMAC.
- E. Bournemouth Coastal AM commenting on the wording of the marriage declaration, appointing attenders to serve in national and local Quaker roles, and the future of MfS.  
We will send the relevant parts of this this minute to QLCC sub-group on Membership, GRYYM, and Church Government Advisory Group.
- F. Sussex West AM holding Friends in the Light as they seek a way forward regarding the 2024 Salter Lecture.  
We will include this minute in the June MfS papers in advance, for information, and send a copy to BYM Trustees.
- G. Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations regarding BYM's position on Israel and Palestine. This minute has informed our earlier discernment.

We note receipt of correspondence from the BYM Reparations Working Group on setting a date to update MfS on the progress of their work. We have already added this to our forward agenda.

We ask the clerks to finalise the agenda in consultation with staff.

#### **4. Residential meeting in 2025**

We have discussed the holding of the residential meeting in 2025. Given the current uncertainty of the future of Meeting for Sufferings, which will be discerned at Yearly Meeting in July this year, it is not possible at present to make firm arrangements. At our last meeting we agreed to move the date from March to October. We hope to be able to make final decisions after Yearly Meeting. In the meantime, we will invite YMAC to join us at our residential meeting.

We ask our staff to make a provisional booking for a venue for our meeting in October 2025, so long as there isn't a penalty for early cancellation, to allow us to change our plans if necessary. We have considered the additional costs of holding the meeting in Wales, and if a cheaper venue can't be found, we agree that staff can make a provisional booking for one of the cheaper options in England.

#### **5. Any other matters**

There being no further business to conduct, we part planning to meet again on 12 June to review Meeting for Sufferings in June.

Signed in and on behalf of the meeting,

Elizabeth Allen, Clerk

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

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

*Minutes received since last Meeting for Sufferings*

Body sending minute	Minute	Initial steps and decisions	Subsequent steps (if any)	Status
QCCIR	24/02/06 [BYM's position on Palestine and Israel	<b>12/02/24 Minute received</b>  <b>24/04/24 Tabled at MfSAG</b> Agreed to take to next MfS		To be received by MfS in June 2024
South Wales AM	2024.03.05 Matters from Environment and Sustainability Cluster [Ecocide]	<b>18/03/24 Minute received</b>  <b>24/04/24 Tabled at MfSAG</b> Agreed to take to next MfS		To be received by MfS in June 2024
General Meeting for Scotland	24/03/12 Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group interim report	<b>18/03/24 Minute received</b>  <b>24/04/24 Tabled at MfSAG</b> Agreed to take to next MfS		To be received by MfS in June 2024
London West AM [and London Young Adult Quaker Meeting]	2024/24 [Feedback to Government consultation on gender	<b>20/03/24 Minute received</b>  <b>24/04/24 Tabled at MfSAG</b> Agreed to take to next MfS		To be received by MfS in June 2024

Body sending minute	Minute	Initial steps and decisions	Subsequent steps (if any)	Status
	questioning children			
Central England AM	2024.025 [Future of Yearly Meeting and MfS]	<b>25/03/24 Minute received</b>  <b>24/04/24 Tabled at MfSAG</b> Agreed to forward to groups reviewing central structures		Sent to groups reviewing central structures
Bournemouth Coastal AM	24.7.1 Marriage declarations	<b>2/04/24 Minute received</b>  <b>24/04/24 Tabled at MfSAG</b> Minutes on this topic are being received by MfS in October 2024		To be received by MfS in October 2024
Bournemouth Coastal AM	24.7.2 Appointment of non-members to service in BYM, AM and LM	<b>2/04/24 Minute received</b>  <b>24/04/24 Tabled at MfSAG</b> Agreed to forward to CGAG and ways of belonging group of QLCC		Sent to other bodies
Bournemouth Coastal AM	24.16 [Future of Yearly Meeting and MfS]	<b>2/04/24 Minute received</b>  <b>24/04/24 Tabled at MfSAG</b> Agreed to forward to groups reviewing central structures		Sent to group reviewing central structures
Sussex West AM	24.17 [Salter Lecture]	<b>12/04/24 Minute received</b>  <b>24/04/24 Tabled at MfSAG</b> Agreed to take to next MfS		To be received by MfS in June 2024

## **Minutes received from area meetings and other bodies**

Meeting for Sufferings receives four minutes at this meeting from area meetings and other bodies.

- 1) Cyfarfod Rhanbarth De Cymru – South Wales Area Meeting Minute 2024.03.05 on the topic of Ecocide. Meeting for Sufferings considered Ecocide in October 2023 when it gave support to local Friends for their work on ecocide law and encouraged them to work with the QPSW Faith in Action team (minute MfS/23/10/12). The minute from South Wales informs the Meeting of its response.

This minute is shared for information.

- 2) General Meeting for Scotland Minute 24/03/12 regarding indeterminate prison sentences. In October 2023 Meeting for Sufferings considered public protection sentencing and asked Friends to write to national representatives asking for a resentencing exercise. The Meeting acknowledged these sentences only applied to England and Wales and asked General Meeting for Scotland to consider the situation in Scotland and take any similar appropriate action if necessary (minute MfS/23/10/16). General Meeting for Scotland has considered this and reports back to the Meeting concluding no action is required.

This minute is shared for information.

- 3) London West Area Meeting and London Young Adult Quaker Meeting Minutes on gender questioning children. On 19 December 2023 the Department for Education published its draft guidance 'Gender Questioning Children: Non-statutory guidance for schools and colleges in England' for public consultation which closed on 12 March 2024. London Young Adult Quaker Meeting, part of London West Area Meeting, responded. The Area Meeting forwarded their minutes so that Friends across Britain Yearly Meeting can be aware of their discernment.

This minute is shared for information.

- 4) Sussex West Area Meeting Minute 24.17 regarding the Salter Lecture 2024. Meeting for Sufferings received a report on the holding of the Salter Lecture (minute MfS/24/03/11).

This minute is shared for information.

## 1) South Wales Area Meeting, 14 March 2024

### Minute 2024.03.05: Matters from the Environment and Sustainability Cluster

#### b. Ecocide

We have been reminded of the minute we agreed when we discussed this matter in November: Separated minute: 2023.11.11 with links to all papers received in November and the Notes of November discussion on ecocide. We have also received a copy of an Ecocide article in the Friend.

We have now received minutes from seven local meetings and from the Environment and Sustainability Cluster. All encourage the area meeting to support the campaign of Stop Ecocide International (SEI), which is campaigning for an international crime of ecocide, and to get involved. Some local meetings have decided to sign up themselves.

We agree to affiliate to SEI and ask the Environment and Sustainability Cluster to take this forward on our behalf.

Several of the minutes encourage us as an area meeting to send a minute to Meeting for Sufferings. The email received by our co-clerk, explains that Meeting for Sufferings has agreed to work with area meetings who share this particular concern through the Britain Yearly Meeting faith in action coordinators rather than by formal endorsement on behalf of Quakers in Britain.

We encourage the Environment and Sustainability Cluster to consider working with other area meetings and with Quakers across the world to take this concern forward. We send this minute to Meetings of Sufferings for information and ask our clerks to send it to Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) for information.

## **2) General Meeting for Scotland, 9 March 2024**

Extracted minute in part

### **24/03/12 Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group interim report**

A report from the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group (Paper H) has been spoken to by Kate Philbrick and Mike Nellis.

Meeting for Sufferings, by its minute MfS/23/10/16, requested information from us on the situation in Scotland relating to the concern about those imprisoned for public protection sentences in England and Wales. The concern expressed and adopted was to end the practice. Our minute 23/11/13 refers. We asked our Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group to provide advice, and receive their report.

Scotland has a legal framework for managing high risk offenders which differs from that of England and Wales. As explained in the report, the nearest equivalent legislation here is that of the Order of Lifelong Restriction (OLR). The OLR is made up of a minimum period of imprisonment (the punishment part, calculated by a high court judge at the point of sentence) followed by lifelong risk management within the framework of a parole licence. Oversight of this risk management is undertaken by the Risk Management Authority, a specialist body which has no equivalent in England and Wales. At this stage the Working Group does not recommend that Scottish Quakers should prioritise the revocation of the OLR legalisation; we would align with other organisations highlighting operational or procedural issues with OLRs should these arise.

We accept this advice and see no need to align with the concern Meeting for Sufferings has recognised for England and Wales.

We send this section of this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

### **3) London West AM, 17 March 2024**

#### **2024/24 Minutes from London Young Adult Quaker Meeting**

London Young Adult Quakers meet regularly in worship at Westminster and are part of London West Area Meeting. We have received from them minutes 01.03 and 02.04 from their Meetings for Worship for Business on 04.02.2024 and 18.02.2024, discerning a response to the Government's consultation on "Gender Questioning Children – Non-statutory guidance for schools and colleges in England".

We are grateful for their work that fed into their response to the Government's consultation on Gender Questioning Children. We forward this minute and the minutes from LYAQ to Meeting for Sufferings so that Friends in other parts of the country can be aware of their discernment.

We know that this is a complex and sensitive matter. We hope that LWAM Friends will continue to explore this matter and understand how all young Friends can live out their faith. We hope the minutes will feed into discernment at Yearly Meeting.

Minutes of London Young Adult Quaker Meeting for Worship for Business

#### **1. Minute 01.03 of LYAQ 04.02.2024**

After reviewing the "Gender Questioning Children – Non-statutory guidance for schools and colleges in England", written by the Department of Education (also referred to as "the Department") of the Government of the United Kingdom, we have discerned the following minutes recording our responses. These will inform a full response to the Government's consultation on the document. We delegate this task to either: a future business meeting, or Juno Lee and Kit King.

#### **01.03a Overall views**

The guidance focuses too much on the negatives, what you are not obligated to do rather than what schools and colleges should be doing. It lacks an explanation of how to implement this guidance effectively, rendering it difficult to follow. For example, it says that teachers are not obligated to use a child's pronouns but offers no guidance on what to do instead, and no guidance for teachers who want to use the correct pronouns.

It lacks any definition of many vital concepts, such as bullying and 'sex-based rights'. We question the validity of the guidance due to the authorship. We feel that this guidance is unnecessary. We question the value that this document has as it was written by the Department for Education (hereafter referred to as 'the Department'), and not by 'gender questioning children' or people that work directly with them.

This document has not been written by groups that involve trans people and completely lacks any regard for trans safety. In fact, the only groups that were contacted were groups that actively work against the rights of trans people. It seems that this document was written in bad faith and not to encourage the safety and wellbeing of the child, which must always be paramount.



The suggestion to contact the family when a child expresses the wish to transition is frankly dangerous. It is basic safeguarding procedure to keep any information that could render a child vulnerable confidential. The schools may not know the family, they certainly do not know what response they may have, and this could result in the lives of young trans people being endangered.

### **01.03b Responses to specific sections**

We wonder how the Department thinks that other young people will be affected by the social transition of one child. For example, it is very common for people to use nicknames, anglicised names, or a middle name. We question how the social transition of one child could possibly harm any other child. There is merit that another child may be uncomfortable with meeting a child who identifies in a way they are yet to understand, but to suggest that there is potential harm to be done implies a level of dangerousness of trans children. In fact, to not respect the wishes of the child around their name or pronouns constitutes harassment.

This guidance is likely contrary to The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Human Rights Act, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, this document is likely unlawful, and the Department may be at risk of legal action if this guidance becomes statutory.

The guidance mentions that relevant medical or clinical services should be consulted but gives no explanation of how this should be done safely and with the wellbeing of the child in mind.

The guidance makes many suggestions that would likely cause harm to a child. To single a child out from a community by enforcing things like exclusion from the bathroom that matches their gender, will lead to social exclusion and bullying. This directly contradicts Overarching Principle #2 which states:

“Schools and colleges should be respectful and tolerant places where bullying is never tolerated. Staff and children should treat each other with compassion and consideration, in accordance with the ethos of the school or college.”

This guidance contradicts itself. For example, it says that schools should always act in the best interest of the child and then goes on to say that involving parents is a priority.

The language of this guidance is leading. Overarching Principle 3 reads:

“3. Parents should not be excluded from decisions taken by a school or college relating to requests for a child to ‘socially transition.’ Where a child requests action from a school or college in relation to any degree of social transition, schools and colleges should engage parents as a matter of priority, and encourage the child to speak to their parents, other than in the exceptionally rare circumstances where involving parents would constitute a significant risk of harm to the child.”

This section, again, does not consider the level of risk a child could be in when they express the wish to socially transition, and to suggest that the circumstances where

involving parents would constitute a significant risk of harm to the child is “extremely rare” is simply false. Galop, an LGBT+ anti-abuse charity, conducted a study of 5,078 LGBT+ people in 2022 that had the following findings:

- “43% Trans and non-binary people surveyed had experienced higher levels of abuse from a family member or members.
- “60% of respondents who had experienced abuse from their family felt that their LGBT+ identity was either the main reason or part of the reason.”
- “63% of LGBT+ people surveyed were under 18 when they first experienced abuse from their family.”
- “The most common perpetrators of abuse against the LGBT+ people surveyed were parents – mothers (45%) and fathers (41%).”
- “The impact of familial abuse is substantial – 92% of respondents told us that it had a negative impact on them.”

The definitions are also not useful and are leading. For example, “Gender identity: is a contested belief” does not constitute a definition, this is an opinion.

We fail to see any statutory duties that will be contradictory to a social transition and suggest that the Department reassess the level of risk for a child wishing to socially transition.

### **01.03c Final words**

The guidance doesn’t seem to prioritise kindness, compassion, and welcome – values we should all live by. We would like to see a workable guidance on this. Schools and colleges should not have to navigate this on their own. It is not fit for purpose.

We wonder why the government felt that they are the best authority to be giving this guidance, rather than referring schools and colleges to charities that have expertise and resources on this issue, such as the NSPCC or Stonewall. This guidance needs to be informed by research and the experiences of trans young people.

As Quakers, we believe that children are deserving of respect and that ‘that of God’ in the child should be celebrated in any way that it is expressed.

We would like the Department to ask themselves “what does Love requires of us?” regarding future work on this guidance.

### **2. Minute 02.04 of LYAQ 18.02.2024**

We discerned a response to the Government’s consultation on the Department of Education’s “Gender Questioning Children – Non-statutory guidance for schools and colleges in England”, as stated in Minute 01.03 of our previous Meeting for Worship for Business.

(Only the minutes have been provided in these papers. LYAQ’s full response to the consultation can be obtained by emailing [sufferings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sufferings@quaker.org.uk) and asking for LYAQ’s full response to government consultation on gender questioning children.)

#### **4) Sussex West AM, March 2024**

##### **Minute 24.17 Meeting for Sufferings report**

Christine has drawn our attention to the difficulties BYM trustees are facing, especially about the arrangements for the 2024 Salter Lecture. We encourage Friends to heed her advice about being as fully acquainted as possible with the issues before engaging in discussions regarding this matter. We value all Friends who offer service. We hold the Friends involved in Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, BYM trustees, and the Quaker Socialist Society in the Light as they seek a way forward. We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

## ***Quaker faith & practice* chapter 16: revised text**

### **Introduction**

In December 2023 Meeting for Sufferings received a paper about possible changes to the Quaker marriage declaration (paper MfS 2023 12 08). The paper made two recommendations: (i) to consult area meetings and others on the choice of phrases ‘with God’s help’ or ‘through divine assistance’ or another option, and (ii) to allow a choice of pronouns.

Meeting for Sufferings agreed to both recommendations (MfS/23/12/07).

In relation to the first recommendation, area meetings and others have been asked to provide responses in time for Meeting for Sufferings to consider this at its meeting in October 2024.

In relation to the second recommendation, this paper brings forward a proposal from Church Government Advisory Group (CGAG) with revised text to *Quaker faith & practice*.

### **Recommendation to Meeting for Sufferings**

The recommendation of Church Government Advisory Committee to Meeting for Sufferings could be to accept the proposed minor changes to sections 16.52 and 16.53 of *Quaker faith & practice* as detailed in this paper.

### **What are the proposed changes?**

The current declaration in English can be found in *Quaker faith & practice*, section 16.52, and in Welsh in 16.53.

The basic English declaration reads:

*Friends, I take this my friend [full name] to be my spouse, promising, through divine assistance, to be unto him/her/[commonly used name] a loving and faithful spouse, so long as we both on earth shall live.*

The proposed revised wording is:

*Friends, I take this my friend [full name] to be my spouse, promising, through divine assistance, to be unto [pronoun]/[commonly used name] a loving and faithful spouse, so long as we both on earth shall live.*

The only change is to replace him/her with [pronoun] in the second line.

The basic Welsh declaration reads

*Gyfeillion, yr wyf i yn cymryd fy nghyfaill/nghyfeilles/ . . . . . [enw llawn] yn briod i mi gan addo, trwy gymorth dwyfol, y byddaf iddo ef/iddi hi/ i [enw a*

*arferir yn gyffredin] yn briod cariadus a ffyddlon gyhyd ac y byddom ill dau  
byw ar y ddaear.*

After consultation with Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales, the proposed revised wording is:

*Gyfeillion, yr wyf i yn cymryd fy nghyfaill/nghyfeilles/ffrind/ . . . . . [enw  
llawn] yn briod i mi gan addo, trwy gymorth dwyfol, y byddaf i [rhagenw] / [enw  
a arferir yn gyffredin] yn briod cariadus a ffyddlon gyhyd ac y byddom ill dau  
fyw ar y ddaear.*

There are three changes in the declaration.

The first is in the first line to offer a non-gendered version of the word cyfaill or cyfeilles (meaning male or female friend). The word suggested is ffrind. I have been told that ffrind is an ungendered noun borrowed from English in the 16th century.

The second change is in the third line, where the options have been changed in the same way as in English.

The third change is a correction in the final line, where byw should read fyw. This is an editing error that had not previously been spotted.

### **Who can change the wording?**

The wording of the declaration is a Quaker matter, there is no legal reason for Quakers to keep to our current wording options for the marriage declarations.

As the wording is included in *Quaker faith & practice*, then currently Meeting for Sufferings has been authorised to make minor changes, while Yearly Meeting itself is the only place that major changes can be made.

Staff advise Meeting for Sufferings that the question of pronouns is a minor change that Meeting for Sufferings could accept.

Michael S Booth  
Church Government Adviser  
Secretary to Church Government Advisory Committee

## **Quaker recognised bodies**

### **Introduction**

This paper covers:

- Part A: the review of one existing QRBs for continuing registration
- Part B: the laying down of one existing QRB.

### **Background**

The guidelines for groups that would like to be a Quaker recognised body are on the BYM website [www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups](http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups). That page also contains a list of current QRBs with their contact details and brief description.

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

Each QRB is allocated a BYM link staff member.

There are no new applications to be considered at this meeting.

### **A. Reviews of existing QRBs**

When Meeting for Sufferings grants QRB status, it asks for each organisation to be reviewed in due course.

For each of review an update from the staff link about recent activities and key information from the original application to Meeting for Sufferings is included.

There is one review submitted this time:

#### **Friends with Jewish Connections**

##### **Action required**

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to renew the registration of this organisation as a Quaker recognised body to be reviewed during 2029 (that is in five years' time).

##### **Friends with Jewish Connections**

Initial recognition 2017, review due 2024, free standing group. Staff link Judith Baker.

##### **Description**

Provides support to Quaker members and attenders who have Jewish connections, as they discern how they can best help Quaker-Jewish dialogue.

## **Staff report**

Friends with Jewish Connections is a functioning QRB. It is a loose and diverse group which provides a place for mutual support and sharing. The number of Friends who wish to be included on the mailing list far outnumbers those who respond or engage. The group works with the BYM Diversity and Inclusion coordinator on anti-racism issues. As staff link, I have infrequent but useful contact, every few months.

**Current contact:** Anthony Gimpel, Leicester AM

**Email address:** available on request please contact [groups@quaker.org.uk](mailto:groups@quaker.org.uk)

## **B. Laying down of a Quaker recognised body**

### **Action required**

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to agree to remove Friends of Hlekweni from the list of Quaker recognised bodies, at the request of the group.

### **Friends of Hlekweni**

Initial recognition 2017, Registered charity. Staff link Isabel Cartwright.

The organisation Friends of Hlekweni has closed. Some of the peace building projects it used to support are now being supported by Peace Works Zimbabwe, which is a Quaker recognised body.

Michael S Booth  
Church Government Advisor  
Quaker Church Affairs  
May 2024

## **Reregistration of Quaker Concern over Population as a Quaker Recognised Body**

### **Background**

Quaker Concern over Population (QCOP) has been a Quaker Recognised Body (QRB) for the last five years and in December 2023 its registration returned to Meeting for Sufferings for re-registration on the regular schedule. In advance of the meeting, a representative of Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM) contacted staff to raise concerns about QCOP's re-registration, and asked for this to be considered at the December 2023 meeting, rather than on draft minute.

As the agenda would not have permitted time for discernment on this matter, it was removed from the agenda, and staff undertook to facilitate dialogue between QCOP and the representative who had raised concerns to progress the issue.

This has resulted in two online meetings between the Friends involved, where concerns were raised and responded to. The position is as follows:

Individual Friends from YFGM are concerned that the 'population' movement of which QCOP presents itself as a part is not fully aligned with recent Yearly Meeting minutes on anti-racism, and our work on climate justice. In particular, they are concerned that this movement, which has strong historical and current links with advocates of population control and eugenics, is focused on denying people in the Global South the reproductive, economic, and social freedoms which people in Britain and other countries have enjoyed, while not giving sufficient prominence to the fact that individuals in richer countries place a much higher burden on the earth's resources than those in the Global South.

QCOP, which traces its roots to Britain Yearly Meeting's 2011 Canterbury Commitment to become a low-carbon, sustainable community, states its objectives as including "to help Friends to appreciate the dangers of over-population" and consider that its work is to encourage discussion among Quakers about an aspect of sustainability which is not given appropriate consideration by other groups. Its work focuses on encouraging people to only have children who are wanted and will be loved and adequately cared for. For many this means one fewer child, and increasing access to resources including good quality and safe contraception in the Global South.

QCOP rejects claims that its approach risks harbouring racist ideas. It has not explicitly considered how it would respond to racism and racist tropes at events or meetings, but members of QCOP have considered third-party guidance on anti-racism in population conversations.



While meetings between the two groups have enabled greater shared understanding, concerns remain. Both sides note that we are a diverse faith group, and it is not a requirement for a group's registration as a QRB that all British Quakers agree with their objects and activities.

### **The role of Meeting for Sufferings**

Meeting for Sufferings' role is to determine whether a Quaker Recognised Body meets the registration criteria set out in this guidance, and in particular, Friends should note the following points from the guidance:

*It matters to Friends, and to the Society corporately, that these groups uphold a Quaker ethos – core Quaker ways and values.*

*A group is eligible to register if its Quaker values and witness are upheld through its objectives, governance and arrangements.*

*A group may cease to be eligible if its activities or constitution has changed in a way that would make the group ineligible to meet the initial registration criteria.*

What the guidance doesn't currently set out is how Meeting for Sufferings should respond in a situation where there is disagreement on whether a QRB does or does not meet the key registration criteria.

### **For discernment**

Is Meeting for Sufferings willing to accept the re-registration of QCOP as a QRB?

Is it time for a review of the QRB system, including a review of the guidance and the processes which underpin it? (The current guidelines are available on BYM's website [here](#).)

Siobhán Haire  
Deputy Recording Clerk  
May 2024

## **Report from BYM Trustees**

Unusually, there are no minutes of trustees' meetings this time, as we have not met since February, and are due to meet in person at Swarthmoor Hall on 7-9 June. We are looking forward to visiting our iconic cradle in this special anniversary year, and to seeing the refurbishments that have been made.

We did gather for worship sharing one evening in April, with no business to attend to, as an opportunity to get to know one another better, and to foster a sense of community – we do not lose sight of the fact that our primary focus is serving a religious body, and this requires constant attention to the leadings of the Spirit. We should not need to remind Friends that all our discernment is born of the gathered stillness of a meeting for worship.

The weeks between our meetings are filled with activity – following up on decisions or recommendations agreed, line management responsibilities, running some committees or participating in others.

Some of us are also among the group of clerks asked to comment on and sign off public statements made on behalf of Quakers in Britain under the Speaking Out Policy agreed by Meeting for Sufferings in 2014. Of note lately there have been several statements concerning the situation in Gaza and the attack on Rafah, and the campaign to persuade insurance companies not to insure drilling and exploration for oil and gas.

On our agenda for the meeting in June we have the receipt of minutes from Central Committees, Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, Audit Committee and Finance, IT and Property Committee – we need to keep on top of what is happening in various parts of the organisation. We will also receive the annual reports on Safeguarding, Finance, Audit work (which this year covered our response to the pandemic, the preparation of the 2022 accounts, charity governance compliance, risk management and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion), Library & Collections, and Information governance.

These are all important aspects of ensuring that our religious life is supported by effective and efficient infrastructure that enables the safety of Friends, employees and volunteers, and the sound management of the resources we are privileged to have been entrusted with.

We shall also receive a proposed Communications Strategy, and hear more about the work being done on preparing options for the review of our central structures. We will also look at how we manage trustees' subcommittees.

The two items that stand out on the agenda for me, and which I hope you may give some guidance about, are board effectiveness, and the development of our corporate reparations work.

On the first, I would welcome comment on what it is that you would like to receive from trustees about their work that you do not already see. On the latter, are there experiences of reparation work at local and area meetings' level not already shared with the working group that may be helpful for us to know about?

I look forward to sharing the minutes of our gathering with you at your next meeting.

Marisa Johnson (she/her)  
Clerk of BYM Trustees

## **Quakers in Britain: our work in Palestine and Israel**

Quakers in Britain manage the UK and Ireland office of EAPPI (the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel). EAPPI is the current expression of British Quaker work for peace in the region, which dates back at least as far as 1934. Quaker presence in the region also includes the Quaker meeting and Friends School in Ramallah and the work of [American Friends Service Committee](#).

This paper describes our work in Palestine and Israel, and the principles, approaches and discernment which underpin it. We have written this paper in the style of a frequently asked questions and hope that it will help Friends to reaffirm, challenge and/or discern future work or positions on this sensitive topic and complex work.

Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee recently reviewed EAPPI work and renewed its commitment to the programme. Quaker Committee on Christian and Interfaith Relations also considered, earlier this year, our approach and attitude to peace in the Middle East. Both minutes are appended below.

### **1. What is EAPPI?**

The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) is an international programme coordinated by the World Council of Churches. It brings people from around the world to the West Bank and East Jerusalem to serve for three months as human rights monitors, or Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs).

EAPPI was founded in response to calls from the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem and the international community in general to send an international presence to stand by Palestinian Christians and non-Christians alike to support nonviolent alternatives to violence. The clerk of Ramallah (Quaker) Monthly Meeting, Jean Zaru, added her voice to these calls.

Since 2002, Quakers in Britain have managed the UK and Ireland branch of EAPPI at the request of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and on behalf of the WCC. Staff members are employed by Britain Yearly Meeting and sit in the Quaker Peace & Social Witness department.

In the UK and Ireland, we work with 16 churches and non-governmental organisations who we call our partners. Partners include NGOs such as CAFOD and Christian Aid, and churches such as the Church of Scotland and the United Reform Church.

In our advocacy work we work with many more partners to try to influence UK and Irish policy Palestine and Israel.

## **Vision and mission**

EAPPI envisions a future in which the military occupation of Palestine (the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza) has ended and both Palestinians and Israelis enjoy a just peace with freedom, dignity and security based on international law.

Our mission is to witness life under occupation, engage with local Palestinians and Israelis pursuing a just peace, and work to change the international community's involvement with the conflict, urging it to act against injustice in the region.

## **EAPPI's approach**

EAPPI uses the internationally recognised model of 'accompaniment' as the framework for what we do. This model is guided by international humanitarian law (IHL) and requires both a strategic local presence and international pressure in order to be effective.

There are four strands of accompaniment:

- Protective presence. Communities have told us that the presence of EAs reduces the occurrence of violence and lessen the severity of human rights violations. And we see an increase in incidents when the international presence is removed.
- Monitoring of human rights violations. Data and eyewitness stories are shared with partners working to uphold human rights, including Israeli peace groups and international organisations, such as the United Nations.
- Standing in solidarity with local peace and human rights groups. EAs support Israeli and Palestinian groups working nonviolently for peace, and the programme provides small grants to Israeli peace groups.
- Advocacy. We work with partners in the UK and Ireland to try to influence our governments on their policies in the region. EAs also share what they have witnessed with their local communities, faith leaders and the media, and join campaigns for change.

## **EAPPI's principles**

- We are non-partisan. We are not pro-Israeli or pro-Palestinian. We believe that the occupation of Palestine is harmful to both Palestinians and Israelis. We are not, however, neutral in terms of international law and human rights. We are unwavering in our belief that any practice used to occupy territory or to resist occupation must comply with international law. EAPPI calls this 'Principled Impartiality'.
- We support the right to self-determination for Palestinians and Israelis.
- We reject the use of violence as a means of ending the occupation. We believe nonviolence and a negotiated peace settlement based on international law is the only way to a true and lasting end to the occupation.

- Both Quakers in Britain and EAPPI have made commitments to become anti-racist organisations. We believe that all forms of racism, including antisemitism and Islamophobia, are barriers to building a just and peaceful world. We abhor the history of antisemitism and Islamophobia in the UK and around the world and the current rise in antisemitic and Islamophobic attacks. Such hatred contravenes our fundamental belief that all people are equal and precious. It is wrong and we oppose it. We believe we all have a responsibility to educate ourselves and challenge racism where we see it.

## **2. What discernment underpins the work?**

BYM agreed to manage the UK and Ireland office of the international Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine (EAPPI) when the programme started in 2002 (QPSWCC 02/124).

Since then, EAPPI work has been continued to be discerned and guided by Quaker committees over many years, and is currently governed by the EAPPI Group, which meets quarterly and reports to Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee and. The EAPPI Group includes representatives of some other churches and organisations on whose behalf we carry out the work.

In addition and separately to EAPPI, the following BYM discernment on Palestine and Israel has taken place since 2002:

- 1) Meeting for Sufferings discerned a position in 2011 asking Friends to boycott products made in Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.
- 2) Following discernment at Yearly Meeting Gathering in 2014, YM issued the 'Gaza statement' which included calls to:
  - recognise the state of Palestine
  - free Palestinian leaders held as political prisoners
  - draw armed groups such as Hamas into the political process
  - ensure the full use of international legal mechanisms to hold all parties to account for their actions including the blockade of Gaza, collective punishment of Palestinians, and indiscriminate fire by all sides
  - ensure a comprehensive arms embargo on Israel, Hamas, and armed Palestinian groups
- 3) Trustees and Meeting for Sufferings discerned in 2018 that BYM would not invest any of its centrally-held funds in companies profiting from the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

YFGM recently wrote a minute on Palestine and Israel, see appendix below.

## **3. Why don't we do conciliation or mediation?**

Conciliation or mediation are important approaches in peace-making and have been used by many Quaker peacemakers in different parts of the world.

Conciliation i.e. bringing together different sides to listen, negotiate, build or restore relationships, is more likely where power imbalances are minimised.

In a conflict such as that between Palestine and Israel, there are huge power imbalances. Israel is the occupying power, and as such has obligations to Palestinians under international law, although the Israeli government disputes this. And whilst there is violence perpetrated on both sides, human rights violations are overwhelmingly against Palestinians, as documented over the years by both Palestinian and Israeli human rights groups.

EAPPI's approaches are therefore that of accompaniment and advocacy, and not conciliation.

John Lampen recently wrote in *The Friend* that both approaches are Quakerly. Referring to the Swarthmore lecture by Wolf Mendl in 1974, he says:

'Friends who are called to be prophets can't be neutral; they identify something which is wrong and speak out clearly against it. Those who reconcile are healers; they look for common ground on which contestants can meet, find agreement, and hopefully put the past behind them. Both roles are necessary; both are important aspects of Quaker witness.'

In these terms, Quakers and EAs are called to speak out clearly, based on what we have witnessed.

John continues 'there are guidelines for Quaker prophets too: speak out, but don't demonise oppressors; acknowledge whatever positive values you find in them; don't attribute motives without clear evidence; try to understand the pressures which make them behave as they do; check your facts and be as specific as possible.'

Staff not only try to keep to these guidelines and but also train EAs in this approach. We rely on our Quaker committees to help us to speak out effectively, specifically and in line with Quaker values. We are continually challenged in this, with partners using terms and taking positions which Quakers have not yet discerned, but which may need discernment in the near future.

#### **4. What has happened since the violence of 7 October?**

Many staff have been involved in responding to the horrific events in Israel and Palestine since the attacks by Hamas on 7 October.

##### **Protective presence**

We were initially busy managing the security of EAs in the West Bank when the violence erupted and then their eventual recall to Jerusalem and evacuation home. We provided round-the-clock support to EAs via WhatsApp, phone and email during this time. Once home, we have been supporting the EAs with their advocacy (including EA Marian's [article in the Sunday Times Ireland](#) and [interview with the WCC](#); and EA Jean's [article](#) in the Glasgow Catholic Diocese publication), their

emotional well-being, and reformulating and carrying out their formal debriefing sessions.

In January, a team of six EAs (including one British and one Irish EA) entered Palestine for the first time since 7 October to re-open the Jerusalem placement, re-establishing the programme on the ground and reconnecting with key communities facing huge turmoil.

At the beginning of April, a second, larger team (including 2 British EAs and 1 Irish EA) arrived, with the hope that additional placements may be re-opened.

Alongside this work, we have continued to provide full preparation training for future teams of EAs, debriefing and advocacy training for those returning, and initiate a full recruitment round for the 2025 intake of EAs.

### **Advocacy and accompaniment**

Using learning from Covid, a form of 'digital accompaniment' was initiated after 7 October, enabling verified reports from Palestinian communities to be used in advocacy in the UK and Ireland.

As those working for peace and human rights, and other faith groups, seek to respond to the crisis, multiple new coalitions have emerged and unprecedented calls for joint speaking out. Quakers in Britain have released our own and joint statements (see list at end) and produced private briefings for elected representatives.

And we continue to support action among EAs, Friends and members of the public. We are sending weekly updates to EAs and other supporters and updating our social media accounts daily to signpost the latest news, actions and events, as well as issuing our own regular urgent actions and campaigns lobbying for change. Since October, over 6,000 of our urgent action template emails have been sent by Friends, EAs, and members of the public to politicians and other advocacy targets.

This work has included calls to release the hostages, enact an immediate ceasefire, suspend all arms sales to Israel, and resume funding of UNRWA (the UN Relief & Works Agency which provides for, and supports, Palestine refugees).

We have supported Israeli conscientious objectors to continue to speak out even at this difficult time, including hosting an Israeli CO at Friends House in March 2024 for an oversubscribed evening of discussion and action.

Colleagues in the Peace Education team have continued to support educators to talk to young people about what's happening in Palestine and Israel: pointing them to helpful resources and advice and producing a new, free peace education pack to help secondary school teachers prepare students to build peace, not war. Colleagues are setting up a skill-share exploring how to avoid antisemitic and Islamophobic tropes and have made the whole of the Razor Wire and Olive



Branches teaching resource available online for free and reduced the price of the hard copy with a discount promotion in the Quaker Bookshop.

### Links

- [TAKE ACTION - Eyewitness Stories from Palestine and Israel - EAPPI UK & Ireland \(eyewitnessblogs.com\)](#)
- [5 ways to witness for peace | Quakers in Britain](#)
- [Israeli peace activist speaks in Friends House](#)
- [BLOG: How can educators respond to events in Palestine and Israel?](#)
- [New Teach for Peace pack produced](#)

### Challenging the UK government narrative

We have worked to challenge the government's narrative that actions to hold the Israeli government to account and protests calling for a ceasefire are 'extremist'. Quakers have consistently spoken out in defence of international law as a common standard to which those in power should be held accountable. We have also been founding and active members of the anti-boycott bill campaign since the introduction of the government's new policy in 2016, shaping the campaign and guiding it through different stages of legal actions all the way to briefing MPs and Lords and drafting tabled amendments to the bill as it makes its way through Parliament now.

### Links

- [Paul Parker: The government's extremism definition is the latest in a long list of threats to civil society campaigning | Third Sector \(archive.ph\)](#)
- [Quakers condemn crackdown on right to protest | Quakers in Britain](#)
- [UK must take urgent action after ICJ genocide ruling, Quakers say | Quakers in Britain](#)
- [Quakers brief MPs and peers on right to boycott](#)
- [Quakers cited in Lords debate on right to boycott bill](#)

### Ecumenical and interfaith work

BYM's ecumenical and interfaith work has sought to uphold interfaith relations during this difficult time and counter government attempts to smear some religious and faith groups as extremists. After the horrific attacks of 7 October, Quakers in Britain reached out privately to Jewish leaders in the UK to express Quaker sorrow and solidarity, and staff across BYM have signposted and supported Friends to join and organise a number of ecumenical prayers and vigils for peace for Palestine and Israel. BYM interfaith colleagues worked with Plum Village UK to bring together thousands of Muslims, Jews, Quakers, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and others for a silent multifaith peace walk through central London in January in response to the violence. The walk was covered by major news outlets with a follow-up, larger walk now planned for June.

Quakers in Britain also spoke out in solidarity with the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) and the Inter Faith Network (IFN) after the government withdrew its crucial funding of the IFN, stating the MCB's membership as a reason. Quakers in Britain staff developed template lobbying letters for Friends to send to advocate against the decision.

### **Links**

- [Peace is every step: thousands join silent peace walk](#)
- [Quakers urge government to continue funding Inter Faith Network](#)

### **Responding to trauma**

The attacks of 7 October and the devastation of the ensuing Israeli attacks on Gaza have been traumatic for EAs and staff with many having close links and relationships with Palestinians and Israelis affected by the violence.

In September 2023 we had hired two trauma specialists to deliver two full days of training on the Community Resilience Model (CRM), looking at managing vicarious trauma and regulating 'fight or flight' responses. This was a major piece of work, following many attempts to improve the resilience training and provision of emotional support for EAs before and after their service.

We have also been supported by others during this time. EAPPI UK & Ireland partner Christian Aid, for example, gave us a wellbeing grant for staff.

### **Contentious room bookings**

One consequence of the violence in Palestine and Israel has been an increase in requests to staff for advice on room bookings, both in Friends House and local Meeting Houses. This is longstanding support provided – especially when room bookings have become contentious – but there has been a marked increase in this work since 7 October.

## **5. How does this work align with Quaker commitments to anti-racism?**

We take the commitment by BYM to become an anti-racist church very seriously.

EAPPI and Quaker positions on Palestine and Israel have always attracted criticism, but also presented many opportunities for interfaith engagement and relationship-building.

We see combatting antisemitism and Islamophobia as ongoing work for the whole of Quakers in Britain. Staff have undertaken training on antisemitism over recent years and training and guidance on recognising and opposing it for all EAs. BYM is developing guidance on antisemitism for Quakers more generally, working with Jewish organisations and those with lived experience. We will share this with Friends once it is complete.

In 2022–2023 we commissioned consultant Henna Zamurd-Butt of [Engage Inclusivity](#) to review EAPPI UK & Ireland’s policies and work practices through an inclusion, diversity and equity lens. Her report was finalised in 2023 and staff have been working to implement the recommendations.

## **6. Does the work connect with other Quaker agencies?**

Our work connects with several other Quaker agencies including Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC, the global body connecting Quakers), the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) and American Friends Service Committee (AFSC, the largest Quaker organisation in the USA putting faith into action), particularly on joint Quaker agency statements.

## **7. Where can I find out more about the EAPPI work and Quaker positions?**

We would like to remind Friends of the resources available on EAPPI’s [www.eyewitnessblogs.com](http://www.eyewitnessblogs.com) website including the latest EA blogs and actions as well as deep dives into the history and current issues facing Palestinians living under occupation and the Israelis who oppose it.

Friends who want to be updated about the work of EAPPI and the experiences of EAs can subscribe to the EAPPI [newsletter](#) or follow EAPPI on [X \(twitter\)](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

Quakers in Britain has issued many public statements in the months since 7 October. A small selection is below:

- [Quakers in Britain are shocked and deeply saddened by the major escalation of violence in Israel and Palestine](#) – 11 October 2023
- [Network of Christian Peace Organisations open letter](#) to the Foreign Secretary – 20 October 2023
- [Quakers hold Friends School Ramallah in the Light after three alumni shot in the USA](#) – 29 November 2023
- [UK must take urgent action after ICJ genocide ruling, Quakers say](#) – 30 January 2024
- [Quakers condemn crackdown on right to protest](#) – 11 March 2024
- [A different future is possible: Quaker organizations share a vision for peace in Palestine and Israel | American Friends Service Committee \(afsc.org\)](#) – 12 April 2024

QPSW Middle East Programme staff  
May 2024



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

At a meeting of

## Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee

A meeting held online  
27 April 2024

### QPSWCC 24/20      MIDDLE EAST POLICY POSITIONS

Staff have introduced a paper discussing our current policy positions and language in relation to Palestine and Israel (QPSWCC 2024 04 02iii-v). In our discernment we have reflected on *Quaker faith & practice* 24.11:

*The peace testimony is about deeds not creeds; not a form of words but a way of living. It is the cumulative lived witness of generations of Quakers... The peace testimony is not about being nice to people and living so that everyone likes us. It will remain a stumbling block and will itself cause conflict and disagreement. The peace testimony is a tough demand that we should not automatically accept the categories, definitions and priorities of the world. We look to the Spirit, rather than to prescriptive hypothetical statements. The peace testimony, today, is seen in what we do, severally and together, with our lives. We pray for the involvement of the Spirit with us, that we may work for a more just world. We need to train to wage peace.*

*London Yearly Meeting, 1993*

We cannot avoid or ignore the fact of a significantly changed situation in Israel/Palestine.

We note that, unlike some of our partners, the *current* Quaker position on Palestine and Israel has focused on occupation and has largely remained unchanged over the last ten years. Some Friends, as reflected in YFGM Minute 2024.02.10, have indicated that they feel disconnected from our current positions and language. Quaker reputation

internally and externally rests on our commitment to peace and truth, which requires us to speak to reflect this new situation. Quakers need to be prepared to be a bit brave and develop our language so that it reflects this, while ensuring that we do not jeopardise the long-term and pragmatic relationships we have with our partners.

We are a peace church. We are called to speak truth to power with love. It matters what language we use. Labels can be used to take sides: as a peace church we are concerned with all sides. Some of the new language and conceptual framing about Israel/Palestine, such as apartheid or genocide, will be seen as taking sides. But principled impartiality is not neutrality. Quakers have a deep experience of this work rooted in profound faith-led work. This has led us to identify facts and positions that we have a duty to share publicly. We have pledged solidarity with all people committed to building peace in the region. We have a responsibility to them to use specific language where we feel it is appropriate.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings and the EAPPI Group.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Lingham', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jonathan Lingham  
Clerk

# Young Friends General Meeting

23-25 February 2024

York Friargate

2024.02.10 Palestine

We have watched in horror the most recent escalation of a decades-long conflict in Palestine, particularly in the Gaza strip. The cycle of violence has no winners, only victims, including both Israelis and Palestinians.

The military assault in Gaza not only takes lives, but seeks to threaten the very existence of Palestinians as a people. This is not a genocide in the making; it is a genocide in progress, rooted in the systematic dehumanisation of an entire people, and an attempt to erase that culture and identity. We see it as a moral imperative to respond corporately as Quakers, to continue to learn but also to speak out, and to use our power in whatever capacity we have, individual and collective, to resist and oppose genocide and our own government's collusion in it.

In many ways, the settler-colonialist actions of the state of Israel mirror that of Britain's bloody past, and our own government along with others is responsible for supporting the state of Israel both with words and weapons.

Britain's history doesn't mean we can't speak out on injustice elsewhere - but in doing so, we need to acknowledge, understand, and criticise our own history and the privileges that it brings us today.

In condemning the actions of the Israeli state, and of the British state which upholds them, we emphasise our care and sorrow for the individuals at the heart of this conflict. The 'innocent victims', the terrorists and freedom fighters, the conscript and volunteer soldier - all are unique, precious, children of God.

As we go forward we will strive to do what we can, how we can, to work for peace. We recognise the value of hope in complementing the actions we take for peace - of keeping our faith that, one day, "freedom from the scourge of war will ... be brought about through the faithfulness of individuals to their inmost convictions" . (part of QF&P 23.92)

As we ask ourselves '*what does love require of us?*' we recognise the need to preserve the peoples, practices and culture of Palestine, through action direct and indirect. We uphold our members in their ministry, and will commit to standing with them in their work for peace.

We are reminded of the words of Friend Bayard Rustin, that "We need in every community a group of angelic troublemakers who really will disrupt. Our power is in our ability to make things unworkable. Not with any weapons because that is not our weapon. The only weapon we have is our bodies, and we need to tuck them in places so things, wheels don't turn."



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

At a meeting of

## **Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations**

Held online via Zoom over the weekend of Friday 9th - Sunday 11th February 2024

### **QCCIR/24/02/06          QCCIR and BYM**

- iii. Our Secretary has spoken about the prospect of a position statement, drafted by Quaker Life on the Quaker discernment of the situation in the Middle East. **(Paper 03c)**.

We understand that there is a growing need to look again at the Quaker approach and attitude to peace in the Middle East and whether the current discernment on Israel-Palestine is still appropriate in today's circumstances.

One dimension of this matter is the relationship between Quakers, as a church, and Jewish faith organisations in Britain. This in turn includes our stand against antisemitism.

QCCIR holds the formal relationship with representatives of the Jewish faith in Britain, whilst Quaker Life is the department of BYM which leads on the work of becoming an anti-racist church and antisemitism is included in that work. At our meeting in June 2023, we met informally with a member of the Jewish Reform Synagogue in Cardiff and refreshed our understanding of expressions of modern antisemitism. We believe we have insights and expertise which will be helpful to the discernment of a revised position in response to this concern.

We ask that the clerk of QCCIR and the Convenor of the Interfaith Working Group be invited to participate in the discernment around Israel-Palestine, especially if it comes at Meeting for Sufferings.

We ask for this part-minute to be sent to Meeting for Sufferings, Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee and to Quaker Life Central Committee.

We invite all members of the Committee to submit any thoughts on the concerns of antisemitism and Islamophobia to the Clerk and Convenor of the Interfaith Group.

Elaine Green, Clerk

To; Meeting for Sufferings  
Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee  
Quaker Life Central Committee



## **Area meeting compliance**

This paper covers two related matters:

- A report on the annual returns from area meetings on compliance
- An update on the Memoranda of understanding between trustees

### **1) Annual compliance returns**

#### **Recent changes to compliance reporting**

Friends will recall that in previous years, the annual return process was managed by Quaker Stewardship Committee (QSC), who reported directly to Yearly Meeting. When QSC was laid down, Yearly Meeting agreed that reporting accountability for Area Meeting Governance would sit with Quaker Life Central Committee, who would report to Meeting for Sufferings, who would then report to Yearly Meeting. Accordingly, this year you receive a minute from Quaker Life Central Committee (appendix 1), and this report which includes more up to date data.

This year, the annual return from Area and General Meetings, and the annual safeguarding return, were combined into a single online questionnaire.

#### **Reports for 2023**

48 Area / General Meetings out of 73 total sent in their annual returns by the deadline, and the report to Quaker Life Central Committee was based on those returns only. A further 14 have now been received, bringing the total to 62. This means that 11 returns are currently outstanding and the Recording Clerk is liaising with these Area and General Meetings directly.

Here are some key findings from the data submitted so far:

- 6 Area or General Meetings which are registered charities reported not submitting their Annual Report to their regulator within the deadline for their most recent financial year. Some delays may have been due to the Charity Commission's new online submission system which took effect in 2023 and caused delays as trustees needed to register for it.
- Excepted charities: 3 have yet to send BYM their annual report and 3 reported to BYM after the regulator deadline.
- 11 Area Meetings reported having had a vacancy or shared responsibility for either their Clerk of Trustees, Treasurer or Safeguarding Co-ordinator role during 2023. In some cases, although not all, this may indicate a difficulty in finding and appointing suitable Friends to serve.

- 6 Area Meetings are not registered with a third-party Safeguarding Advisory body; most of those registered are registered with 31:8.
- 21 Area Meetings report having Safeguarding Concerns arise in 2023.
- All Area Meetings have a Safeguarding Policy, which was being regularly reviewed by trustees, as were Health and Safety policies.
- Roughly half of Area Meetings have a complaints policy, fire safety policy and code of conduct for employees and volunteers.
- Roughly half of Area Meetings regularly consider their key risks and manage them using a risk register or similar system.
- 2 Area Meetings reported serious incidents to the Charity Commission or OSCR in 2023.
- 8 Area Meetings noted concerns about record-keeping of key information, although a majority of these had plans to rectify which were in action.

A more detailed report was sent to Quaker Life Central Committee in March 2024, and they have sent a minute to Meeting for Sufferings reflecting their discernment.

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to send a minute to Yearly Meeting, noting the number of Area Meetings where regulatory reporting requirements are not being met, and the number of outstanding returns to BYM.

## **2) Update on MoU between trustees of area meetings, other charitable bodies and BYM trustees**

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the constituent charitable bodies of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain was agreed by Meeting for Sufferings in October 2023 (MfS 2023 10 13). Its purpose is to clarify existing relationships so that we can share the same understanding of our duties to, and expectations of, each other. The document has been circulated to area meeting trustees for signature.

This process is ongoing and signed documents are being collated. Representatives are encouraged to remind their area meeting trustees about this as an initial flurry of signatures has now dwindled. The initial deadline for signature has now passed.

## **Appendix:**

At a meeting of Quaker Life Central Committee  
9 March 2024

### **QLCC 24.17 Area Meeting annual return for compliance report**

We receive paper QLCC 2024 03 05 to discuss the Area Meeting annual return for inclusion in the compliance report.

This year the annual safeguarding report and governance report were combined into a single online form (shared as an appendix to this report).

The report included:

- 34 questions, covering basic information, regulatory compliance, safeguarding, sustainability, policies and risk management, record keeping and serious incidents/notifiable events.
- 44 responses from Area Meetings were received by the deadline (26 outstanding at deadline). The receipt of the rest is expected by our May meeting.
- There were three additional responses before this report was complete, and BYM's own responses have been added, giving a total of 49 responses (total possible: 71).

Ollie Waterhouse has joined us and spoken to this item. He reported that all meetings have a safeguarding policy but it is unclear where a few of them are receiving their specialist advice from. There is a need to investigate where these meetings are getting their advice. Woodbrooke is looking to provide some “sheep-dip” training in this area.

Only four AMs were able to provide data for energy consumed/CO2 emitted but there is a lot of engagement in many meetings on wider sustainability issues.

Most meetings have a data protection policy and a health and safety policy. Most don't have a complaints policy in place.

Fifteen AMs/GMs said they did not regularly consider key risks, and manage these through a risk register or similar system.

Weaknesses include a lack of consistency in whether meetings have policies in place, and whether Trustees are holding responsibility for policies such as safeguarding, data protection and complaints. Responsibility for other policies, such as Health & Safety, Fire Safety and Hire/Lettings is frequently devolved to local meetings. This can lead to inconsistency if trustees do not have an overview of them.

Ollie reported that the revised Trustees Handbook is almost ready.

We thank Ollie for joining us and providing such a clear and helpful report. We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Harry Albright, Co-clerk and Rachael Swancott, Co-clerk

## **Safeguarding**

The Arrangements Group thought Meeting for Sufferings would appreciate receiving an update on safeguarding. Quaker Life Central Committee is responsible for oversight of safeguarding in our meetings and Trustees are responsible for safeguarding relating to our centrally managed work.

At this session you will hear from Mark Mitchell, BYM's Safeguarding Officer, who will share his thoughts on:

- why we need Safeguarding in Quaker meetings
- how the BYM Safeguarding Officer and team support area meeting Safeguarding Coordinators
- policies, procedures and DBS requirements.

You will also hear from Keith Walton, Safeguarding Coordinator for Kingston and Wandsworth Area Meeting, who will talk about safeguarding from his perspective.