

# Minutes of Meeting for Sufferings 05 April 2014

## **MfS 2014 04 01    Worship.**

Paragraph 16.01 and parts of section 16.03 of *Quaker faith & practice* has been read in our opening worship, and we have remembered former members of this meeting who have recently died.

## **MfS 2014 04 02    Minutes.**

The minutes of our meeting held on 1 February 2014 have been signed.

## **MfS 2014 04 03    Adoption of agenda.**

We have reflected on issues to be considered during our meeting and have agreed the agenda.

## **MfS 2014 04 04    Revisions to *Quaker faith & practice*.**

Michael Phipps, convenor of Church Government Advisory Group, has spoken to paper 2014/04/03 proposing revisions to Chapter 8 of *Quaker faith & practice*. The revisions to section 8.09 and 8.10, setting out the role of Quaker Life Representative Council, are further to minute S/13/07/04/b and minute 32 of Yearly Meeting 2013. Revisions to section 8.14 provide a more accurate description of Friends Trusts Limited.

We agree to the proposed changes and forward the draft text to Yearly Meeting 2014 for approval and adoption.

## **MfS 2014 04 05    Revision of the Book of Discipline.**

In February Meeting for Sufferings recommended to Yearly Meeting that a process for revising the Book of Discipline be initiated. Meeting for Sufferings also agreed that more testing and threshing would be useful on a number of issues and asked the Recording Clerk to bring questions and proposals to assist this (minute S/14/02/06).

The Recording Clerk has spoken to paper MfS 2014 04 04.

We agree to establish and appoint a Review Preparation Group. We ask the Recording Clerk to prepare Terms of Reference for our approval in June. We ask Central Nominations Committee to bring to our September meeting the names of 9-12 Friends to serve on the Group.

We encourage the Recording Clerk to work with BYM Trustees to ensure that sufficient staffing resource is made available to support the work of the Review Preparation Group; and to put in place appropriate partnership agreements with partner organisations where necessary.

### **MfS 2014 04 06    MfS Arrangements Group Terms of Reference.**

We have considered revised Terms of Reference for Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group (paper MfS 2014 04 05).

We approve the revised Terms of Reference, as amended in the meeting.

### **MfS 2014 04 07    Government cuts: welfare benefits.**

Further to minute S/14/02/11 we receive minute QPSWCC 14/15, along with a draft statement on economic inequality (paper MfS 2014 04 06).

We agree that the statement is a useful starting point for use by Friends and within Meetings as a basis for action and speaking out. We encourage Friends to use this statement in their Meetings as a basis for reflection and action. We thank QPSW for their work on this.

Further to minute S/14/02/05 Advocacy: Speaking Out, we agree to adopt the following text as a statement made on behalf of the Yearly Meeting:

*Quakers in Britain commit ourselves to action to redress the growing inequality of wealth and income in our country.*

*Our vision of equality springs from our profound sense of the worth of every human being. Every person's life is sacred and in this we are all equal. Neither money nor status can serve as a true measure of the value of any individual or group. Nor can wealth be true riches if it is based on unlimited personal enrichment and not shared for the good of all.*

*The progressive movement towards greater economic equality of the mid 20th century has been in reverse since the 1980s. Britain has become one of the most unequal societies in the developed world, where wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a minority. The richest 20 per cent of our population have almost a hundred times the wealth of the poorest 20 per cent. It is estimated that around one in five of the population, or around 13 million people, live below the UK poverty line.*

*Government expenditure cuts have imposed unacceptable burdens on those least able to bear them. Many in Britain now go hungry or depend on food banks. Many face homelessness, or insecure housing in the private rented sector. People with disabilities and those affected by mental illness and chronic conditions are having their incomes squeezed. Poverty and hunger, and the anxiety and stress that go with them, are blighting the lives of vulnerable people, from children born into difficult circumstances to working age poor people and elderly people.*

*We recognise that these crises and injustices spring from forces at work within the global economic system. These forces infiltrate our hearts and minds, capture our politics and threaten our common basis for life on earth. This is nothing less than economic violence, which challenges our Quaker spiritual commitment to peace.*

*Many Quakers across Britain are helping to supply and staff food banks and lunch clubs, support housing provision, volunteer in advice bureaux and community projects in areas of deprivation and support claimants. We will continue this urgent work with others to mitigate the effects of cuts that diminish the quality of life for millions in our society. We want to hear and understand the true stories of those affected, so that our shared humanity can be at the heart of our responses to poverty.*

*However, action that aims merely to alleviate the worst effects of inequality is not enough. As we wrestle with the implications of our testimony to equality, Quakers feel called to act more radically to tackle the underlying causes. This calling requires spiritual struggle and real practical change. Our testimonies are moving us to work for very different ways of organising our common life. We are also moving towards spending and saving our own resources in ways that are more compatible with our values, and away from uses that diminish the lives of our fellow human beings and the rich variety of life forms with which we share our planet.*

*As we long for a society of deep compassion and loving kindness in which we 'help one another up with a tender hand', we must witness to a different way of living, and help build the world anew.*

We also receive minute 7 of Sheffield and Balby Area Meeting held on 12 January 2014 regarding the public sector and welfare benefit cutbacks, which we forward to QPSW Central Committee.

## **MfS 2014 04 08    Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations.**

Andrew Williams and John Myhill, members of Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations, have introduced a paper sharing news of the Committee's work, along with a World Council of Churches statement on the Way of Just Peace (paper MfS 2014 04 07).

The report raises a number of questions, in particular about the use of language. We have a shared faith, but do we have a shared language? We need to work on how we talk among ourselves as well as to others. This is a question that might be addressed in the forthcoming 'preparation process' we are initiating.

Friends have shared some of their experiences of ecumenical involvement. We are glad to hear that Quakers are often welcomed by ecumenical groups as people who can ask the difficult questions.

We are an 'experimental' faith, but we are reminded that we also need to preach what we practice.

Friends have welcomed the paper from the W.C.C. on the Way of Just Peace.

We are glad to have this two-way dialogue with QCCIR and look forward to continuing this positive relationship. We hope that QCCIR have the confidence to continue in their work and articulate our position joyfully.

## **MfS 2014 04 09    Letter of Greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting.**

We receive from Quaker World Relations Committee a draft for our letter of greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting to be held 24-27 April in Dublin (paper MfS 2014 04 08).

We ask the clerk to sign the letter amended in the meeting on our behalf.

## **MfS 2014 04 10    Membership and appointments.**

### **a) 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 2015:

Nominated:

Banbury & Evesham AM Representative  
Devon AM Representative  
Devon AM Alternate

Judith Mason  
Bob Lovett  
Alan Ray-Jones

East Kent AM Alternate  
Leeds AM Representative  
QPSWCC Representative

Peter Atherall  
John Arnison  
Robert Steele

Release requests received:

Devon AM Representative  
Devon AM Alternate  
East Kent AM Alternate  
Leeds AM Representative  
QPSWCC Representative

Alan Ray-Jones  
Bob Lovett  
Sheila Legg  
Eileen Fowler  
Anne Limb

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

Visitors:

Marigold Bentley	Quaker Peace & Social Witness Assistant General Secretary
Matthew Biggs	Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations
John Myhill	Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations
Peter Sender	Strategy & Development Coordinator
Anne van Staveren	Media Relations Officer
Andrew Williams	Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations

## **b) Central Nominations Committee**

brings forward the names of the following Friends for service or release as indicated:

### Central Nominations Committee

Release:

Gill Bocock	YorkAM
David Binney	Southern Marches AM
Margaret Williams	West Wiltshire & East Somerset AM (after YM Gathering).

### Friends Trusts Ltd

To serve from 1 June 2014 to 31 May 2017.

Nominate:

Janet Slade	Manchester & Warrington AM
Richard Anderson	Oxford & Swindon AM
Lucy Parker	Norfolk & Waveney AM

## Representative to other European YMs

### **Belgium & Luxembourg YM**

Belgium and Luxembourg is a new European Yearly Meeting, recognised by Friends' World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) and Europe and Middle East Section of FWCC.

Nominate:

Arthur Pritchard                      Central Yorkshire AM

(Last December, Meeting for Sufferings appointed Arthur Pritchard to attend France YM, which has decided not to meet during 2014.)

### **Netherlands YM**

To note the following appointment made between meetings:

Christina Birch                      Swarthmoor (SW Cumbria) AM.

To note the following appointments by Central Nominations Committee.

## Central Nominations Committee Clerks

Co-clerks to serve from the rise of Yearly Meeting 2014 to the rise of Yearly Meeting 2015:

Val Major                              North Somerset AM

Catherine Putz                      Brighouse West Yorkshire AM

### **MfS 2014 04 11    Minute 36 (Canterbury) Commitment Group.**

In 2011 Yearly Meeting asked Meeting for Sufferings to take forward the commitment to becoming a sustainable low-carbon community, and to report to Yearly Meeting each year on the progress of the concern. Minute 36 (Canterbury) Commitment Group was set up by Meeting for Sufferings in 2012, to work until the rise of Yearly Meeting 2014, to co-ordinate the response and support the realisation of the commitment.

Paper MfS 2014 04 10 contains the Group's summary report. Details are to be added before the report is taken to Yearly Meeting Gathering in August.

We are glad to see this report and to note that our Yearly Meeting is making progress in relation to the commitment as individuals and Meetings. We support the group in taking forward the five key themes they outline and look forward to hearing more about the specific recommendations which will help us take more steps to support each other and move forward together.

We also receive minute QPSWCC 14/16 from a joint meeting of Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee and Quaker Life Central Committee, regarding sustainability.

## **MfS 2014 04 12 Civil partnerships.**

Further to minute 23 of Yearly Meeting 2009, in 2012 Meeting for Sufferings accepted the registration of religious premises for civil partnerships as a first step towards a change in legislation to allow same-sex religious marriage (S/12/10/04). The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 is now in place in England and Wales, and the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014 in Scotland.

The Recording Clerk spoke to Paper MfS 2014 04 11, asking whether Quaker Meetings should continue to offer civil partnership registration to same-sex partners, which would now be an alternative to state registration of marriage.

Yearly Meeting 2013, by minute 23c, asked for revised text for chapter 16 to be brought to a future Yearly Meeting to reflect the recent changes in marriage legislation.

We note that same-sex marriage is not at present permitted in the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man, and propose no change to our current arrangements for registration in these islands.

We unite with the recommendation of our Church Government Advisory Group that Quaker marriages should be registered with the state as marriages wherever this is possible, and that we should cease to register civil partnerships in association with Quaker marriages. We ask our Church Government Advisory Group to prepare text for chapter 16 accordingly, so that it can be laid before Yearly Meeting in 2015 for approval.

## **MfS 2014 04 13 Minutes received not taken elsewhere.**

### **a) From Area Meetings**

#### **1. Central Yorkshire AM and Hampshire and Islands AM regarding the renaming of the Large Meeting House at Friends House to 'The Light'**

We receive minute 17 of Central Yorkshire Area Meeting held on 11 January 2014 and minute 5 of Hampshire and Islands Area Meeting held on 11 January 2014, expressing concerns about the use of 'The Light' as an additional name for the Large Meeting House when being used by non-Quaker groups. This

matter was considered at our February meeting, and we hope the minute recorded then, along with communications from the Deputy Recording Clerk and the Clerk of the Hospitality Company, will be useful to Friends in Central Yorkshire and Hampshire & Islands.

**2. North Cumbria AM and West Cumbria AM regarding the proposed amalgamation of both AMs to form a single AM.**

We receive minute 14/4 of North Cumbria Area Meeting and minute 9 of West Cumbria Area Meeting, both held on 25/01/14. After a process of careful consideration, the two Area Meetings wish to amalgamate and form a new Cumberland Area Meeting. We are happy to endorse this.

**3. Southern Marches AM regarding a memorial to the innocent victims of war.**

We receive minute AM14/12 of Southern Marches Area Meeting, and a background note, regarding the possible creation of a memorial to the innocent victims of war at the National Memorial Arboretum. We have heard support and encouragement for this proposal, and also a question about the use of the phrase 'innocent victims of war'. We ask those meetings who would like to offer support to this proposal to be in touch with Southern Marches AM.

**b) From Central Committees and other bodies**

**4. Quaker Life Central Committee: Young People's Participation Days.**

Further to minute S/14/02/09, we receive minute QLCC/14/13/b from Quaker Life Central Committee held 14-16 February 2014 along with a paper explaining more about the proposal to hold young people's participation days alongside Meeting for Sufferings (paper MfS 2014 04 12b).

We are glad to have received clarification about how the days will work, and we hope there will continue to be considerable interest in young people's participation days. We note that Area Meetings will not be required to appoint young people, and Meeting for Sufferings representatives will not be required to accompany young people. We remain in support of the principle of young people's participation, and look forward to a participation event taking place within the next 12 months.

**5. Britain Yearly Meeting clerk and Ireland Yearly Meeting clerk.**

We receive a minute from the Britain Yearly Meeting clerk and Ireland Yearly Meeting clerk recorded on the occasion of a joint meeting held on 21 to 22 February 2014 regarding the two Yearly Meetings forming a closer relationship.



### **MfS 2014 04 13    Report from the clerk of BYM Trustees.**

Jennifer Barraclough, clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, has reported on their work. We receive the minutes of BYM Trustees' meeting held on 31 January 2014.

As well as the Trustees' surgeries which are usually held on the morning of Meeting for Sufferings, Friends are also able to email questions or comments to Jennifer.

Peter Ullathorne, BYM Treasurer, presented the review of financial activities 2013. We are encouraged to hear that our financial position at year end was considered reasonably robust.

Ethel Livermore  
Clerk