

Follow up letter



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

7 July 2022

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings 2 July 2022

Dear Friends

It was lovely to see you all, both in person and online, at Meeting for Sufferings on Saturday. I hope you enjoyed the meeting, with its mixture of routine business, reflection, discernment and information, and will have plenty to report to your area meetings.

As always your feedback is welcome – please email sufferings@quaker.org.uk

The morning's focus on **Faith in Action**, as shown through our work on democracy, the convening of Civil Society Voice, and the campaigns we support, and the framework for **Speaking Out** which enables our work to reach a wider audience gave us a greater understanding of the communications strategy and its workings. The presentation from staff is included in this package.

It was interesting to reflect on the work on emerging patterns for area meetings in London and Wales & the Marches which we had considered in some detail at the preparatory session on 28 June. I'm sure many of us know the problems area meetings are facing, and want to address them, but don't know where to start. Being able to hear from two different areas about the experiments they are making as they look for solutions may offer encouragement.

Lesley Richards, from Wales & the Marches, and Helen Drewery, from London, are happy to speak to any area meeting about the processes they are following. If you email sufferings@quaker.org.uk about this, your emails will be forwarded to them.

After the routine business of nominations we reflected on Yearly Meeting and the implications of its minutes for Sufferings. Arrangements Group will be looking at ways to foster our learning about the important issues raised.

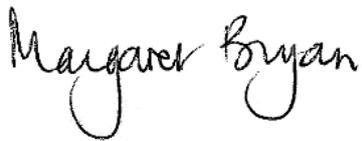
The report from BYM Trustees showed us quite how much work they do – described by their clerk as 'nuts and bolts' – on our behalf. Of particular interest to Friends at

this meeting was the developing relationship with Woodbrooke. You may contact trustees at bymtrustees@quaker.org.uk

After renewing the registration of eight Quaker Recognised Bodies we concluded with an update from Oliver Robertson on our response to the war in Ukraine. The dedicated link is <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/peace/ukraine> if you wish to know more.

I look forward to our next meeting, in October.

In Friendship

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

Margaret Bryan
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

The following papers are included in this mailing:

- Functions checklist
- MfS minutes July 2022
- Speaking out presentation

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

	Requirement	July 22
A	To set the priorities for the centrally managed work	4
B	To issue public statements in the name of BYM	5
C	To receive regular interim reports from BYM trustees	10
D	To receive the BYM trustees' annual report & accounts for information	10
E	To make a report on its own activities to YM	
F	To determine the dates of YM	
G	To deliberate on how best to support the spiritual life of the yearly meeting and to further the development of its visionary and prophetic role	4, 9
H	To keep under review and to test as appropriate the existing and new concerns referred to it by AMs and others	
I	To foster communication throughout the yearly meeting	
J	To receive minutes from area meetings	
K	To make appropriate entries in the prison and court register	
I	To appoint representatives to attend other Yearly Meetings	8
M	To receive information about changes in the composition or status of general meetings and gatherings	
N	To make changes in the composition of area meetings	6
O	To give assistance to area meetings in the amicable settlement of disputes	
P	To hear appeals against area meeting decisions	8
Q	To give guidance on policy matters referred to it by the BYM trustees from time to time	
R	To authorise action and minute as required under other sections of <i>Quaker faith & practice</i>	
S	To set up an arrangements group and support and working groups to assist its own work as it sees fit	



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings

Held at Friends House and by video conference on 2 July 2022

Minutes

MfS/22/07/01 Opening worship

During opening worship *Quaker faith & practice* 23.89 was read.

MfS/22/07/02 Membership of Meeting for Sufferings

Helen Kennedy

It is with sadness that we learnt of the sudden death of Helen Kennedy, the representative for Ipswich and Diss AM, on 20 May 2022.

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

Release requests received:

Ruth Cook – West Wiltshire and East Somerset AM alternate

Fran Hicks – West Somerset AM representative

Jane Stephenson – West Wiltshire and East Somerset AM representative

Nominated:

Sila Collins-Walden – QPSWCC representative

Ruth Cook – West Wiltshire and East Somerset AM representative

Ali Dominy – West Somerset AM representative

David Simpson – Teesdale and Cleveland AM alternate

Margaret Stocks – West Somerset AM alternate

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

Kim Ashcroft – Sussex East AM

Lesley Evans – West Weald AM

Maureen Lofthouse – Cumberland AM

Richard Vesey – Craven and Keighley AM

Richard Waldmeyer – Teesdale and Cleveland AM

Apologies:

Hardshaw and Mann AM, Lancashire Central and North AM, London West AM, Pickering and Hull AM, QWRC, Sheffield and Balby AM, West Kent AM, YFGM

Other visitors:

Grace Da Costa – BYM staff, Public Affairs & Media Manager
Helen Drewery – Pan-London Governance Steering Group Clerk
Penny Elliott – BYM staff, Quaker Church Affairs
David Loxton – BYM staff, Head of Communications and Fundraising
Alison Mitchell – Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee
Elizabeth Payne – BYM staff, Communications Officer
Cato Pedder – BYM staff, Media Officer
Lesley Richards – Symud Ymlaen (Moving Forwards) Clerk
Martin Ward – Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee

MfS/22/07/03 Agenda

The Clerk has introduced the agenda and we have agreed to it.

MfS/22/07/04 Truth, integrity and democracy

We have received paper MfS 2022 07 05, which outlines the slow erosion of democratic rights and norms that we have witnessed in the UK in recent years.

Following the introduction of the Lobbying Act in 2014 which restricted campaigning ahead of general elections, Quakers in Britain convened the Civil Society Voice network. It has developed into a vital space for organisations to discuss and take joint action on a range of threats to civic space, for example the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act and criticism of charities who are exploring racism, colonialism and white privilege.

Democracy matters, and when it is weakened equality, peace and truth all suffer; signs of the divine order to which Quakers testify on the basis of our perception of the Light available to all to which we are called to attend. While individual restrictions upon participation in the democratic process may seem insignificant, the cumulative effect may be catastrophic and have disproportionate impact on those who are already marginalised. Quakers reject the idea that only powerful voices should be heard. Where we disagree, can we keep the argument going, listening to one another, and with mutual respect and love for as long as it takes to discern a way forward?

We have a tradition of speaking truth to power and exercising quiet diplomacy. Sometimes our role may be to minister in compassion to the oppressor as well as to the oppressed. This may be a moment when we can make significant contributions to the public realm in collaboration with other faith groups and secular organisations.

We have heard expressions of frustration and helplessness, along with anger and fear, and also of hope from Friends. We have also heard a call for assistance for local Friends to articulate and campaign on their concerns around this issue. We have heard appreciation of the Quaker Truth and Integrity Group as well as the involvement of local Friends in public affairs and hope that our central structures can work to support and enhance these initiatives.

We also receive minute 22/30 (paper MfS 22 07 05a) from Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee's (QPSWCC) meeting last weekend. We ask QPSWCC to consider how to accommodate this concern in their ongoing strategy, working in partnership with other interested parties.

MfS/22/07/05 Speaking Out – our policy in action

BYM adopted its Speaking Out Policy in 2012, and it is set out in *Quaker faith & practice* 3.27 and 3.28.

We have received a presentation from David Loxton, Head of Communications & Fundraising, together with Elizabeth Payne, Communications Officer, and Cato Pedder, Media Officer. We have been reminded of the provisions of the policy and have heard case studies of recent examples of speaking out on behalf of Quakers in Britain on current issues.

We thank our Friends warmly for their presentation and commend the efforts of our communications staff in representing us to the world.

MfS/22/07/06 Emerging alternative forms for area meetings

We receive paper MfS 2022 07 07, which is a report of work being undertaken to consider new ways for area meetings to come together.

The paper, supplemented by a preparation session about developments in London and in Wales & the Marches attended by around 60 Friends, gave insight into possible pathways to change. There is a clear understanding and appreciation of the difficulties faced by area meetings, with a dwindling number of members, in fulfilling the responsibilities laid upon them as charities.

We were asked to answer the following questions:

- Is Meeting for Sufferings content to see significant amalgamations of area meetings (and other bodies) take place?
- Are there implications that may need the attention of other Yearly Meeting-level bodies, such as the Book of Discipline Revision Committee, Church Government Advisory Group, Meeting for Sufferings Review Group (regarding how larger bodies should be represented on Sufferings), or Quaker Life Central Committee (regarding the provision of appropriate support)?

Friends recognise the importance of releasing energy for worship and witness, thus allowing their Quaker community to flourish and thrive. We are content in principle to see significant amalgamations of area meetings and other bodies. We noted however that there are implications that may need attention from Meeting for Sufferings or other Yearly Meeting-level bodies, for example – how would local Friends be represented at national level?

There was also an appetite for further consideration of the emotional aspects of the hard work of change, and a plea for finding a way to consider the issues facing local meetings as well as their engagement with area meetings.

MfS/22/07/07 Appointment of Meeting for Sufferings Clerks 2023

We receive the following nominations, and appoint, to serve from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023:

Clerk – Robert Card – Dorset & South Wiltshire AM

Assistant Clerk – Caroline Kibblewhite – Dorset & South Wiltshire AM

MfS/22/07/08 Appointments

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

Meeting for Sufferings Appeal Group

Nominate to serve with immediate effect until the work is complete:

Helen Drewery – South London AM

Liz Hoffbauer – Norfolk & Waveney AM

Keith Walton – Kingston & Wandsworth AM

Book of Discipline Revision Committee

Release from service with immediate effect:

Craig Barnett – Sheffield & Balby AM

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Nominate to serve from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2025:

Hilary Topp – Central England AM

Friends Trusts Limited

Renominate to serve with immediate effect until June 2023:

Nigel Barnes – Northumbria AM

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations

Nominate to serve with immediate effect until 30 April 2024:

Ken Riley – East Scotland AM

Quaker Housing Trust

Renominate to serve until Annual Retirement Meeting, April 2024:

Peter Ranken – North East Thames AM

Representatives to European Yearly Meetings

Nominated to serve as the following representatives:

- Ireland Yearly Meeting 2022:

Derek McLean – North Scotland AM

Diana Lampen – Central England AM

- German Yearly Meeting 2022:

Till Geiger – East Cheshire AM

- Switzerland Yearly Meeting 2022:

Jonathan Lingham – London West AM

- Belgium & Luxembourg Yearly Meeting 2022:

Jane Harries – South Wales AM

- Netherlands Yearly Meeting 2022:

Jan Arriens – Southern Marches AM

- Nordic Yearly Meeting 2022:

Alastair Thomas – Lancashire Central & North AM

MfS/22/07/09 Reflections on Yearly Meeting 2022

We received Yearly Meeting minutes 25, 27, 31 and 33 which are of direct relevance to Meeting for Sufferings.

The theme of Yearly Meeting, held in blended form at Friends House in May, was 'Faith, community and action'.

- Faith: How do we experience worship, community and witness?
- Community: How can we build Quaker communities that respond to challenges and put faith into action?
- Action: How can we transform thinking and action in Quaker communities and wider society?

In taking time to reflect on Yearly Meeting 2022 we heard tremendous enthusiasm for the experience of the blended meeting, recognising the excellent technical support that enabled it. Those present in person were also enthusiastic about the spaciousness afforded by moving the preparatory sessions online in the preceding week.

With regard to the themes in the minutes we received, we heard that our discernment on reparations is still at an early stage. We still may not fully understand the implications of our decision, which must involve work within our own worshipping groups as well as more widely. We are not alone among faith groups in looking at this issue. The Yearly Meeting minutes empower and require us to act on anti-racist and anti-oppressive work, uncomfortable though this is bound to be for many.

We ask our Arrangements Group to consider how we might take this matter forward in future meetings.

MfS/22/07/10 BYM Trustees

We receive MfS 2022 07 10 introduced to us by Caroline Nursey, Linda Batten and Danielle Walker Palmour, and also the annual report and accounts for 2021.

Trustees have met twice since our last Meeting for Sufferings, including in Leeds at the Quakers in Britain Yorkshire Centre. Friends heard about the range of business Trustees have covered, and were able to ask questions. We are glad to know of their engagement with Woodbrooke Trustees about how the two organisations can best work together to complement each other.

MfS/22/07/11 Quaker recognised bodies

We have reviewed the registration of each of the following organisations:

- Friends of Hlekweni
- Friends Southern Summer Events
- Northern Friends Peace Board
- Quaker Concern for Animals
- Quaker Esperanto Society / Kvakera Esperanto-Societo
- Quaker South Asia Interest Group
- Quaker Voluntary Action
- The Quaker Tapestry

We agree to renew the registration of these groups for a period of five years, and ask for the registration to be reviewed again in 2027.

We have additionally received a request for registration from British Friends of the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) as a Quaker Recognised Body. We agree to this request and ask for the registration to be reviewed after a period of five years in 2027.

MfS/22/07/12 War in Ukraine

In March, Meeting for Sufferings received prepared ministry on war in Ukraine and following discernment agreed a minute (minute MfS/22/03/23) which it sent to Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC). We receive QPSWCC separated minute 22/15 in response. We have also received a spoken update on the developing situation and work that Friends have undertaken in response.

Friends are deeply grateful that BYM staff and QPSWCC have been able to act so quickly and offer all involved our prayerful support.

MfS/22/07/13 Closing worship

We have closed our meeting in worship together.

Margaret Bryan
Clerk

Speaking Out

- Speaking out policy
- Working with press & broadcast media
- Working with social media

let your life speak

Advices & queries 27

Quaker faith & practice 3.28

- Discernment of Yearly Meeting statements
- Meeting the need for other public statements or comments called for at short notice
- Delegation to the Recording Clerk

Quakers in Britain – **Strategic communication objectives**

- Help Quaker communities to thrive
- Engage Quakers in BYM Work
- Secure BYM funding
- Bring Quaker values to the world
- Show Quakers are active and relevant
- Increase the number of Quakers

Speaking out policy - provides guidance on two areas of speaking out

- Using a position agreed by Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings
- Making a statement based on an agreed position – e.g. relating it to a topical situation, or adding our name to a joint statement

Relating an agreed position to a topical situation

- Grounded in a discerned position
- Reflect a recent or current Quaker concern
- Reflect Quaker values
- Consultation with relevant clerk whenever time allows
- Approved by the Recording Clerk or Deputy

Adding our organisation to a joint statement

- Joint message reflects a Quaker concern
- Prepared to share a platform with the co-signatories
- Acceptable language and tone
- No harm to other Quaker work
- Approved by clerk of - relevant committee and trustees

Working with press & broadcast media:
living our witness in the world

Quakers to pay slavery reparations

Kaya Burgess, Religious Affairs Correspondent
Thursday June 02 2022, 12.00am, The Times



Quakers founded the first recognised anti-slavery group in Britain, but were also one involved in the slave trade

ALAMY

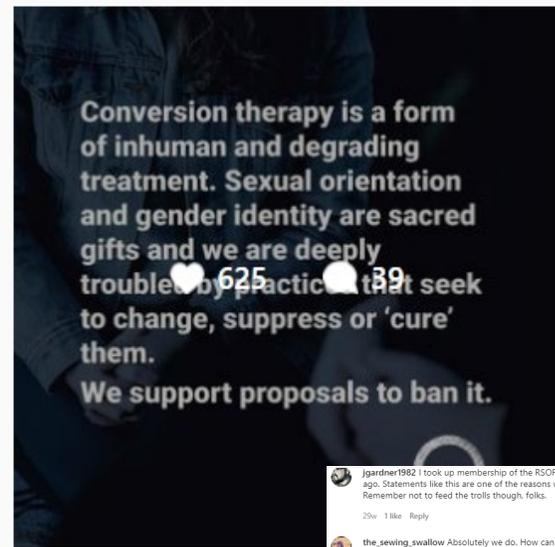
Quakers have been told to pay reparations for the religion's involvement in the slave trade.

At an annual gathering in London last weekend, 1,900 members of the group known formally as the Religious Society of Friends heard "powerful evidence" about the extent of involvement in slave ownership and investment in companies that traded in human lives.



Working with social media

- interact with and build an online community of people
- used widely to share and exchange news, ideas, opinions and information, and to mobilise action



- igardner1982 I took up membership of the RSOF a few weeks ago. Statements like this are one of the reasons why. Remember not to feed the trolls though folks.

29w · 1 like · Reply
- the_sewing_swallow Absolutely we do. How can I help further?

29w · 1 like · Reply

— View replies (1)
- evangelicalcoach Thank you for doing this work ❤️

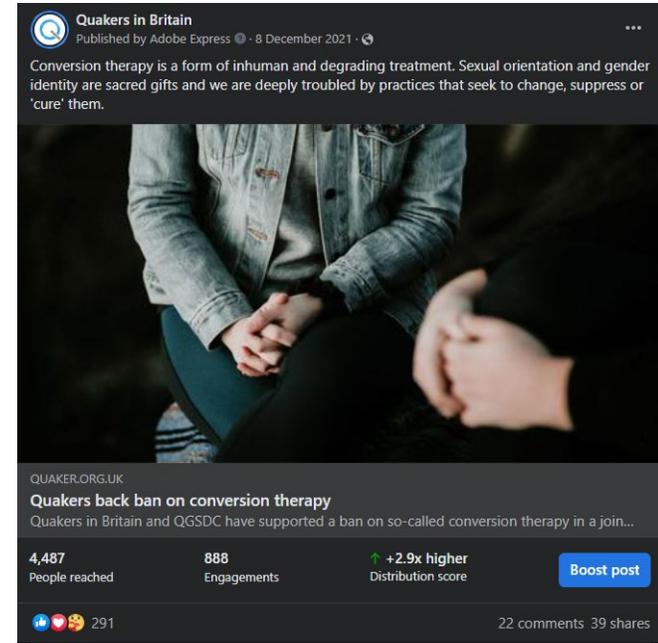
29w · 1 like · Reply
- evanceidia 🙏

29w · 1 like · Reply
- magdajbarbosa ❤️

29w · Reply
- boundbyhand 🙏🙏🙏

29w · Reply
- gadymart Fearfully and wonderfully made ❤️

29w · 3 likes · Reply



#BanConversionTherapy



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