



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

18 November 2022

## To members of Meeting for Sufferings

I am looking forward to welcoming you all to our last meeting of 2022, to be held online and in person on Saturday 3 December.

As on previous occasions I encourage to you to attend in whichever way suits you, but please note that, once everyone has registered, arrangements for the day's catering will be made. Although last minute changes to plans can sometimes be unavoidable, please bear in mind the implications in terms of cost and food waste.

The business before us falls into 3 parts:

1. **Standing items:** these include membership and appointments, Quaker recognised bodies and minutes from Area Meetings, and the use of the term 'overseer'
2. **Substantive matters:** the review of Meeting for Sufferings, the Book of Discipline Review Group report and your clerks' proposal for a way forward on the issues of membership which exercised the meeting a great deal in October
3. **Reports:** from Trustees, and the yearly meeting standing committees – QCCIR and QWRC – as well as the epistles from European Yearly Meetings

You will have seen from the call to registration that Arrangements Groups has continued to explore ways to organise the agenda to allow plenty of time for discernment. On this occasion we have planned an hour-long Zoom-only session on Thursday 1 December at 16.30, during which we expect to cover all the standing items. As always we welcome your feedback on this innovation.

Yearly Meeting in 2021 (minute 13) asked us to “consider the role of Meeting for Sufferings and whether this needs to be reviewed” and we added this to the remit of the group to review Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering earlier this year. On Saturday morning we will receive their report. There will be an opportunity to discuss this item of business with members of the review group at the preparation session on Monday 28 November.

Also on Saturday morning the Book of Discipline Review Group will tell us about their work in 2022. They will be represented at the preparation session too, and ask that you bring any questions you have for them then.

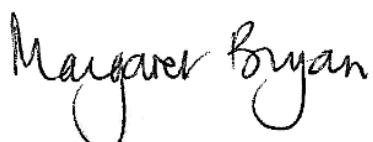
Saturday afternoon will be devoted to reports. We will hear from Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations and Quaker World Relations Committee and have our regular update from Trustees.

Representatives will recall that for several years Trustees have been exploring how we might simplify the way central work is carried out. Their minutes remind us that they are seeking simple, inclusive, sustainable structures and practices that encourage wider participation in the life of our meetings. Their report raises important questions for us and the Yearly Meeting to consider.

As I reflect on the agenda for this meeting it is clear that as a Society we are on the brink of great change. It is crucial that we approach the challenges this could bring with hearts and minds prepared. Can we honestly and wholeheartedly be open to new light?

I look forward to our day together.

In peace,



Margaret Bryan  
Clerk

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

##### Agenda

MfS Arrangements Group meeting minutes from October and November

MfS 2022 12 06 Quaker recognised bodies (QRBs)

MfS 2022 12 07 Area meeting minutes received regarding Ukraine

MfS 2022 12 08 Use of the term 'Overseer'

MfS 2022 12 11 Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering & Meeting for Sufferings second report

MfS 2022 12 12 Book of Discipline Revision Committee third report

MfS 2022 12 14 Report from BYM trustees

MfS 2022 12 15 QCCIR annual report

MfS 2022 12 16 QWRC annual report

MfS 2022 12 17 Reports and epistles from other European YMs in 2022

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

- If you haven't already done so, register for the Meeting on **3 December**, the additional business session on **1 December**, and the optional online preparatory session on **28 November**
- 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 **30 November**



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## Agenda

### Meeting for Sufferings, 1 and 3 December 2022

#### Session 1: Thursday 1 December 2022

by video conference, open at 4.15pm for 4.30pm start

	Item	Paper
4.30pm	<b>Session 1</b>	
1	<b>Opening worship</b>	
2	<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	
3	<b>Agenda</b> Adoption and acceptance of the agenda	
4	<b>Items to be taken on draft minute:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Membership (To follow)</li><li>• Appointments (To follow)</li><li>• Quaker recognised bodies (QRBs)</li></ul>	<b>MfS 2022 12 06</b> For decision
5		
6		
7	<b>Area Meeting minutes received</b> Ukraine and Friends House Moscow	<b>MfS 2022 12 07</b> For information
8	<b>Use of the term 'Overseer'</b> To receive responses from Area Meetings and Central Committees on use of the term 'overseer'	<b>MfS 2022 12 08</b> For decision
5.30pm	<b>End of Session</b>	

## Sessions 2 and 3: Saturday 3 December 2022

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

	Item	Paper
10am	<b>Session 2</b>	
9	<b>Opening worship</b>	
10	<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	
11	<b>Review of Meeting for Sufferings, Yearly Meeting and Yearly Meeting Gathering</b> To receive the group's second report	<b>MfS 2022 12 11</b> To receive
	Shuffle break	
12	<b>Book of Discipline Revision Committee</b> To receive the committee's annual report	<b>MfS 2022 12 12</b> To receive
13	<b>Quaker Membership: a way forward</b> A proposal for taking forward discernment on the meaning of membership	<b>MfS 2022 12 13</b> For decision
12.30pm	<b>End of Session 2</b>	

12:30pm      **Lunch break**

1.30pm	<b>Session 3</b>	
14	<b>Report from BYM Trustees</b>	<b>MfS 2022 10 14</b> For information
15	<b>Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations</b> To receive the committee's annual report	<b>MfS 2022 10 15</b> To receive
	Shuffle break	
16	<b>Quaker World Relations Committee</b> To receive the committee's annual report	<b>MfS 2022 10 16</b> To receive
17	<b>Reports and Epistles from other European Yearly Meeting's in 2022</b>	<b>MfS 2022 10 17</b> To receive
18	<b>Closing worship and reflection</b>	
4.15pm	<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 from 19:00 – 19:45 on 11 October 2022

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Margaret Bryan, Robert Card, Ivan Hutnik, Caroline Kibblewhite, Jane Mace, Jean Scott Barr, Jane Wilde,

**Prevented:** Anthony Woolhouse

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

#### **1. Meeting for Sufferings held 1 October**

We reviewed the October meeting and noted one gold minute (MfS/22/10/11) and one continuing minute (MfS/22/10/12). We will discuss in greater detail the way forward with the membership issue, and ask Neil to invite Oliver Robertson and the clerk(s) of QLCC to join the relevant part of our November meeting.

#### **2. Report of the Support Group**

The Support Group's report was broadly positive. They have sent out a questionnaire to representatives, the results of which we expect to see at our November meeting.

#### **3. Plans for the remainder of the triennium**

We looked ahead to future meetings and agreed the following:

- That meetings will be hybrid until the end of the triennium
- The meeting on 1 June 2024 is confirmed
- We ask staff to continue planning for a residential meeting in October 2023

#### **4. Date of next meeting**

There being no further business for us to take, we part, looking to meet again in person at Friends House at 11:00 on 1 November to plan Meeting for Sufferings in December.

We note that we expect subsequent meetings to be held as follows:

- 13 December, 7pm online (to review December MfS)

Signed on behalf of the meeting

Margaret Bryan



Yearly Meeting of the  
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At a meeting of

## **Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group**

Held at Friends House and online 1 November 2022

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Margaret Bryan, Robert Card, Ivan Hutnik, Caroline Kibblewhite, Jane Mace, Jean Scott Barr, Jane Wilde, Anthony Woolhouse

**In attendance:** Siobhán Haire, Neil Jarvis, and Alistair Fuller (item 3a)

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

The clerks have been attending the meetings convened for the different groups involved in the simplification agenda

Margaret Bryan has been attending the Group to Review Yearly Meeting.

Ivan Hutnik and Jane Wilde each attended one of the workshops on simplification convened by trustees.

### **6. Report from Support Group**

Further to minute 2 of our meeting held 11th October 2022, we have received a report on the survey of Representatives' responses to the different types of breakout groups we have tried. We are grateful to the Support Group for conducting this exercise and have noted the responses, which will inform our future experimentation.

### **7. Forward agenda**

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

#### **Meeting for Sufferings meeting in December**

a) We have heard from Alistair Fuller about work being done by Quaker Life Central Committee on new ways of belonging. Much of this work has so far been descriptive but we are mindful that Meeting for Sufferings at its October meeting made it clear that there are issues of principle that need to be addressed. We are also aware that our current membership process may not always be conducive to formation in Quaker practice. We have heard that the QLCC working group, while addressing

complementary matters, has not been asked to address these particular issues, so we see this as something that Meeting for Sufferings could usefully tackle. We recommend that members of Meeting for Sufferings be charged with thinking about the following questions and taking them back to their Area Meetings: why do we have membership? What is it for? Is it still necessary? What forms could membership take? We would introduce these questions at our December meeting and look to return to the matter as a substantive issue perhaps at our residential meeting in 2023. We are aware that the Book of Discipline Revision Committee will also be wanting feedback and discernment on this and related matters.

- b) We have noted the various reports we expect to receive and other matters that we might take.
- c) We have noted receipt of a minute from Gloucestershire Area Meeting regarding the new safeguarding procedures. We are minded to bring the matter of safeguarding back to Meeting for Sufferings in 2023 and refer the minute to staff to prepare material for such an item.
- d) We agree to arrange an additional online session earlier in the week to take some of the business to enable us to preserve some space on Saturday.
- e) We have drafted an agenda for the December meeting and ask the clerks to work with staff to finalise this.

## **8. Longer-term planning: meetings in 2023**

We have reviewed business that might properly come to Meeting for Sufferings in 2023.

## **9. Any other matters**

There being no further business to conduct, we part planning to meet again on 13 December to review Meeting for Sufferings in December. Our meeting dates in 2023 are as follows:

31 January	5 September
14 March	17 October
30 May	31 October
11 July	12 December

Signed in and on behalf of the meeting,

Robert Card, 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
Cumberland AM	22/39 Friends House Moscow and Ukraine	<b>17/9/22 Minute received</b>  <b>1/11/22 Tabled at MfSAG</b> MfSAG agreed to share this minute with MfS for information		At Meeting for Sufferings in December
Ipswich & Diss AM	19.22 f Online membership	<b>21/9/22 Minute received</b>  <b>1/11/22 Tabled at MfSAG</b> MfSAG agreed this minute will be considered as part of a broader item on membership to come in 2023		To come to MfS as part of membership item in 2023
Oxford & Swindon AM	41.22 Other communication [Ukraine]	<b>17/10/22 Minute received</b>  <b>1/11/22 Tabled at MfSAG</b> MfSAG agreed to share this minute with MfS for information		At Meeting for Sufferings in December
Hampshire & Islands AM	2022/54 Ecocide	<b>17/10/22 Minute received</b>  <b>1/11/22 Tabled at MfSAG</b> MfSAG asked for further information and referred the minute to QPSWCC for advice		Referred to QPSWCC for advice

<b>Body sending minute</b>	<b>Minute</b>	<b>Initial steps and decisions</b>	<b>Subsequent steps (if any)</b>	<b>Status</b>
Gloucestershire AM	22/60 Adoption of new safeguarding policy	<b>26/10/22 Minute received</b>  <b>1/11/22 Tabled at MfSAG</b> MfSAG asked for this item to be brought along with a planned safeguarding item in 2023		To come to MfS as part of a safeguarding item in 2023

*Updates to previously received minutes*

<b>Body sending minute</b>	<b>Minute</b>	<b>Initial steps and decisions</b>	<b>Subsequent steps (if any)</b>	<b>Status</b>
Central England AM and QPSWCC	CEAQM 2022.047 Minute received from Coventry LM [Laying down of PECAN]  QPSWCC 22/46  CEAQM 2022.082	<b>30/6/22 Minute received</b>  <b>30/8/22 Tabled at MfSAG</b> MfSAG sent the minute to QPSWCC to give its response and noted the secretary of QPSWCC has offered to visit the AM at its business meeting in October. The MfSAG awaits the outcome of these steps so it can reconsider the need for this to come to MfS.	<b>10/22</b> Minute received from QPSWCC and forwarded to the AM.  <b>22/10/22</b> Oliver Robertson attending AM business meeting  <b>1/11/22</b> Subsequent minutes received from QPSWCC and Central England. Update to MfSAG	AM content that this is now concluded

## Quaker recognised bodies

### Introduction

This paper covers reviews of existing Quaker recognised bodies and applying for registration as a new Quaker Recognised Body (QRB).

### Background

In 2015, Meeting for Sufferings agreed a different way for BYM to relate to other Quaker bodies (minute MfS 2015/12/17).

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.

### There are four different options:

**External (regulated externally)** – with a constitution, a board or management committee, and regulated by an external body such as the Charity Commission, the Scottish Charity Regulator, Companies House (where a charity is also a registered company), Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission etc.

**Linked** – by minute or appointments to part(s) of BYM's formal structure, such as: area meetings, central committees, Meeting for Sufferings, General Meeting for Scotland, Meeting of Friends in Wales etc.

**Free-standing** – Quakers who have come together to learn about or work on a particular topic. Groups are likely to have members who are geographically dispersed; with membership open, but not necessarily restricted, to all interested Friends and attenders.

**Emergent** – new groups can be listed for up to two years, and usually treated as free-standing groups.

The first three types of group are generally reviewed after five years.

Experience is showing us that all groups are different; they don't all fit neatly into these categories, but the system is 'good enough' to be sure that these groups are recognised and celebrated. It also ensures that centrally-managed work can offer support, in a way that's appropriate, useful and transparent.

### Applications

Part of the original paper to Meeting for Sufferings read:

**2.2.4.** The application is sent to the designated FH staff member. The staff member checks that the information provided meets the criteria of registration and on that basis forwards the application to MfS for approval.

**2.2.5.** If an application seems inappropriate, advice may be taken from trustees, MfS Arrangements Committee or other central groups and, once shared with the applying group, consideration given as to whether a revised application may be suitable.

Michael Booth is the current BYM staff member who receives applications. The initial task is to look through the application, check that the group clearly meets the application criteria and seek clarification when required.

A suitable staff link is identified who helps prepare the report that is presented to Meeting for Sufferings.

**There are no applications for registration as a Quaker recognised body that are ready to come to Meeting for Sufferings this time.**

## **Reviews**

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

Pressure of work has meant that some Quaker recognised bodies have not been reviewed at the correct time.

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

### **A. Action required: renewal recommended**

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to renew the registration of each of these six organisations as Quaker recognised bodies to be reviewed during 2027 (that is in five years' time). These QRBs are due to be reviewed by the end of 2022:

- 1. Experiment with Light Network**
- 2. The Kindlers**
- 3. London Quakers**
- 4. Non-theist Friends Network**
- 5. The Quaker Mental Health Fund (UK)**
- 6. Quaker Universalist Group**

## **1) Experiment with Light Network**

**Initial recognition:** December 2017, review due December 2022, Free-standing.

**Staff link:** Originally Gill Sewell, now Alistair Fuller.

**Report from staff link:** Experiment with Light remain a very active group and have adapted imaginatively and positively to online worship and community. They meet regularly, send out a regular newsletter and deliver workshops to meetings and Quaker groups. As Quaker Life establishes its new structure, we hope to work more closely with Experiment with Light in supporting spiritual nurture in Quaker communities.

### **Key information from the original application**

**Foundation:** 2009, having evolved out of the Experiment with Light movement that started around 1996/97.

**Aims:** To support, co-ordinate and develop the teaching and practice of Experiment with Light (EwL) throughout the Religious Society of Friends within Britain Yearly Meeting and beyond; to work with the Religious Society of Friends through the channels of Britain Yearly Meeting to facilitate the acceptance of Experiment with Light as a core Quaker spiritual practice.

**Publications and activities:** “Journal of the Experiment with Light Network” (published 4 times a year), guided meditation CDs, leaflets, booklets, workshop facilitators' handbook, online resources. The EwL Network runs workshops, retreats and gatherings at Quaker centres and local Friends Meeting Houses and a variety of sessions at Yearly Meeting Gatherings. In 2013 the EwL Network organised an International Gathering at Woodbrooke with 71 participants from 10 different countries. The EwL Network encourages Light groups to consult with and report to their Local or Area Meetings and Elders.

## **2) The Kindlers**

**Initial recognition:** February 2018, review due December 2022, Free-standing.

**Staff link:** Alistair Fuller

**Report from staff link:** Prior to lockdown, we had good contact with Kindlers and it was a developing relationship. Since lockdown and Quaker Life restructure, there has been more limited contact. As a group, they produce regular news and updates and are beginning to reconnect with meetings in person and I'm in contact with them about how we might support this.

## **Key information from the original application**

**Foundation:** 2008

**Aims:** The Kindlers are an experimental group working to rekindle the power of Quaker worship by renewing and deepening our spiritual practices. This is achieved through developing and delivering workshops to deepen the spiritual life of Quaker meetings and publishing associated material.

**Publications and activities:** The Kindlers provide about 40 workshops a year, which usually last a day but occasionally last a weekend. 10 workshops take place in fixed venues; the rest are at local venues by invitation of local (and occasionally area) Quaker meetings. Workshops are also offered at residential Yearly Meetings. The outcomes of the work are published in booklets for personal use and study groups, sold at Friends Book Centre, Woodbrooke and Swarthmoor Hall. The Kindlers also have links with the Vibrancy Initiative and Woodbrooke.

## **3) London Quakers**

**Initial recognition:** October 2017, review due September 2022, Free-standing.

**Staff link:** originally Jon Martin, now Alistair Fuller

**Report from staff link:** London Quakers communicate regularly via email and newsletter, and are an active group across London AMs. We have had little direct contact since 2019 (pre-lockdown), though there has been some contact in relation to the ongoing pan-London project. We have recently appointed a Local Development Worker to London and it is likely that they will become staff link in the future.

## **Key information from the original application**

**Foundation:** London Quakers started in 2009, growing out of London & Middlesex General Meeting.

**Aims:** Aim to keep Quakers across London in touch with one another, and to give us a voice in addressing the wider world by organising events and social media for London Quakers.

**Publications and activities:** Meetings, day conferences on various topics, Facebook page, website.

## **4) Non-theist Friends Network**

**Initial recognition:** April 2017, review due April 2022, Free-standing.

**Staff link:** Alistair Fuller

**Report from staff link:** There has been limited contact with this group since lockdown, but they are active and are making good use of the opportunity for online meeting. There has been a change of clerk recently and the group have initiated a successful series of Creative Conversation sessions.

### **Key information from the original application**

**Foundation:** The group was established in 2011

**Aims:** The Network's aim is to provide a forum and supportive framework for Friends who regard religion as a human creation. We want to ensure that our Religious Society of Friends is an inclusive rather than an exclusive Society. We seek to explore theological and spiritual diversity and their practical implications, in respectful acceptance of different views, experiences and journeys.

**Publications and activities:** Occasional Newsletter – appears about 5 or 6 times a year, sent by email. Annual conference held at Woodbrooke usually for around 40 people. Presence at BYM – an open session, and a table at the Groups Fair. Occasional regional events, and some occasional events at which Members speak or lead – e.g. a Retreat at Glenthorne, workshop days for Area Meetings, articles by members in The Friend and other non-Quaker publications. Occasional contacts with Friends in USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

In addition members of the network have been involved in the Theology Think Tank of the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group.

## **5) The Quaker Mental Health Fund (UK)**

until January 2021 called **The Retreat York Benevolent Fund**

**Initial recognition** October 2017, review due September 2022, Externally-regulated.

**Staff link:** Oliver Waterhouse

**Report from staff link:** Originally when I started as staff link, Mental Health matters were part of my role within Quaker Life. Since then, much of that has been passed to others, although I am still staff link. The group changed its name in 2020 from "The Retreat York Benevolent Fund" to be "The Quaker Mental Health Fund (UK)", and as broadened its aims as noted below.

### **Key information from the original application, with updates.**

**Foundation:** 1919. The Retreat Benevolent Fund was re-established as The Retreat York Benevolent Fund in 2006 (update) and in 2020 as The Quaker Mental Health Fund (UK).

**Previous Aims:** To provide grants to beneficiaries (Quakers, Attenders or closely associated with Quakers) who cannot afford the fees to be able to access care at either The Retreat York or other psychiatric hospitals in the UK.

To assist in the provision of hospital treatment or home nursing in the home of any Friend wherever they are living either for mental or physical illness, including illness resulting from accidents.

To fund projects and initiatives which have a direct and demonstrable impact on beneficiaries and which advance good mental health and/or the application and understanding of effective mental health practice.

**Current aims:** To provide grants to beneficiaries (Quakers, Attenders or closely associated with Quakers) who cannot afford the fees to be able to access therapy or counselling at The Retreat York or any other provider of mental health care in the UK

To fund Quaker led projects and initiatives which have a direct and demonstrable impact on beneficiaries and which advance good mental health and/or the application and understanding of effective mental health practice.

**New (current) contact details:** Quaker Mental Health Fund  
c/o Wallingford Quaker Meeting House, 13 Castle Street, Wallingford OX10 8DL

**Email:** [clerk@quakermhfund.uk](mailto:clerk@quakermhfund.uk)

**Website:** <https://www.quakermhfund.uk/>

## 6) Quaker Universalist Group

**Initial recognition:** June 2017, review due June 2022, Free-standing.

**Staff link:** Alistair Fuller

**Report from staff link:** There has been very little contact with this group since the beginning of lockdown, but they remain active and keep the website fresh with new events and publications. They function effectively as an online community. They have contact with Judith Baker, BYM staff member who supports QCCIR.

### Key information from the original application

**Foundation:** 1979

**Aims:** To delight in the diversity of spiritual awareness. The Quaker Universalist Group believes that spiritual awareness is accessible to every one of any religion or none, and no one person and no one faith has the final revelation or monopoly of truth. Such awareness may be expressed in many different ways. We delight in this diversity. (See *Quaker faith & practice* Fifth Edition 27.04)

**Publications and activities:** Since 1979 it has published 36 pamphlets and 3 books. An annual conference is held in Woodbrooke (in 2016, 68 people attended and a similar number are due to attend in May this year); The journal Universalist is published three times per year; and a newsletter is sent by email and post to over 500 people c. 4 times per year.

## **B. Action required: to note that no review currently possible**

Meeting for Sufferings is invited to note that the link staff member has not received any response to their enquiries, so the group named below will be listed as a dormant Quaker Recognised Body in 2023. If it proves impossible to submit a report to Meeting for Sufferings by early 2024, Meeting for Sufferings will be invited to remove the group from the official list of Quaker recognised bodies.

### **1) Friends in Tune**

**Initial recognition:** February 2019, Review due February 2021, Emergent.

**Staff link:** Alistair Fuller

**Report from staff link:** Since some initial contact in 2018/19, there has been no further contact. It is unclear to what extent this is still a functioning group. In trying to conduct this review we have not been able to find any effective current contact.

**Foundation:** October 2017. The group was initiated at the laying down of 'The Leaveners', the spirit of that organisation and its members is thus continuing in a new form.

**Aims:** To encourage singing and song throughout Britain Yearly Meeting as a spiritual practice, means of outreach and deepening the bonding of Friends to build communities. The group is a committed member of Quaker Arts Network.

**Publications and activities:** Two books of songs; touring workshops and biennial major festival.

## **C. No action required: reviews outstanding**

The seven Quaker recognised bodies listed below are ones where the review is outstanding and are expected to be brought to a Meeting for Sufferings in 2023. As noted on page 2 of this report, pressure of work has meant that some Quaker recognised bodies have not been reviewed at the correct time.

### **1) Friends Community Development Trust (Uganda)**

Initial recognition October 2017, review due September 2022, Free-standing.

**2) Friends Historical Society**

Initial recognition June 2017, review due June 2022, Free-standing.

**3) Give Peace A Chance Trust**

Initial recognition December 2017, review due December 2022, External.

**4) Quaker Service Memorial Trust**

Initial recognition December 2017, review due December 2022, External.

**5) Quakers and Business**

Initial recognition April 2017, review due April 2022, External.

A review of this group was included in the report to July's Meeting for Sufferings, but it was referred back to staff for further enquiry. Staff are still seeking more information before bringing the review back to Meeting for Sufferings.

**6) The Retreat**

Initial recognition, June 2022, review due December 2022. External.

**7) Woodbrooke**

Initial recognition, February 2018, review due December 2022, External.

Michael S Booth  
Church Government Adviser  
November 2022

## Minutes from Area Minutes concerning the war in Ukraine

### Introduction

In recent months, Meeting for Sufferings has received minutes from Cumberland and Oxford & Swindon area meetings relating to the war in Ukraine, specifically asking Friends' World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) to act on security concerns of countries neighbouring Russia. These minutes are reproduced as an appendix to this paper.

### Responses which Meeting for Sufferings can make

FWCC is an independent body from our Yearly Meeting and so Meeting for Sufferings isn't able to require it to take any particular course of action. Meeting for Sufferings is, however, able to:

- receive minutes, refer them onwards, and to keep a note of concerns
- share these minutes for local and area meetings to consider their involvement
- uphold the work of international Friends through our prayers and spiritual support.

Friends may also be interested to know that a small group of Friends, supported by staff members within Quaker Peace and Social Witness, continues to meet regularly to consider how they are led to work on citizen diplomacy related to the war in Ukraine. If Friends, either present at Meeting for Sufferings, or elsewhere, wish to join this group, we ask them to contact the Sufferings email ([sufferings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sufferings@quaker.org.uk)) so that they can be connected with the relevant staff member. Prayerful upholding of this group and its work is also welcomed.

### Appendix: Minutes received

#### 1) Cumberland Area Meeting

##### 22/39 Friend House Moscow and Ukraine

We have received a minute from Keswick Local Meeting as follows:

Minute of Keswick Local Quaker Meeting for Business 4th September 2022

22.25

We have agreed to support Dorothy Crowther in her work liaising with Friends House, Moscow, who have issued this statement: "We entreat the FWCC (Friends' World Committee for Consultation) to proactively address the security concerns of all the UN member states on the western borders of Russia together with the expressed concerns of the Russian Government.

The general consultative status of the FWCC would provide a privileged channel of communication to register such a recommendation in a formal capacity. We trust that such a recommendation, once graced by mutually agreed security guarantees, could enable the countries involved to achieve ongoing peaceful co-operation within and across borders.”

We ask Area Meeting to adopt this as a concern. We have agreed to ask Cockermouth Meeting to support us in this.

We agree to accept this as a concern and to forward the minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

## **2) Oxford & Swindon Area Meeting**

54/2022 Oxford LM’s concern about Ukraine (Oxford LM minute 41.22 1 of 3/7/22)

We have received and heard read the minute on Oxford LM’s concern (minute will be circulated with these minutes). Jane Mactaggart, a member of Oxford LM, has been attending an International Meeting for Worship, held daily since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This group of worshipping Friends have been urging QUNO (Quaker United Nations Office) and FWCC (Friends World Committee for Consultation to initiate a focus on the security concerns of countries bordering Russia and Russia itself.

We have heard that Tim Gee (Oxford LM), who is the general secretary of FWCC, has travelled to the countries concerned. He will be organising a meeting in oxford Meeting House where he will share his experiences and findings.

We uphold and support Oxford Friends in this concern and agree to send their minute and this minute to Meeting for Sufferings “to inform Quakers throughout Britain about a locally held concern”. We support the international group of Friends in their work and ask Oxford Friends to remain the point of contact and information for us.

## Use of the term ‘overseer’

In December 2019 Meeting for Sufferings received a minute from Central Yorkshire Area Meeting regarding the use of the term ‘overseer’ to describe those in our meetings who hold responsibilities for oversight (paper MfS 2019 12 09).

At that time, Meeting for Sufferings referred the matter to Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC). QLCC carried out a wide-ranging consultation and reported back to Meeting for Sufferings by minute in April 2021 (minute QLCC 21.06, paper MfS 2021 04 14). QLCC’s minute recognised “there is general support for a change to the term ‘overseer’, partly because of the historical connotations dealing with hierarchy and oppression. This is the time for a change and we believe that meetings should be encouraged to use different terms as soon as possible. Meetings should be free to experiment with roles to enable the community to be loving, supportive, inclusive and all-age. … The terminology is not the most important thing.”

Meeting for Sufferings minuted in April 2021 (MfS/21/04/12 (part)):

Their [QLCC’s] minute indicates that there is general support for a change to the term, partly because of the historical connotations dealing with hierarchy and oppression.

We unite with their discernment that this is the time for a change and we encourage meetings to continue experimenting with the structure of the roles and the terminology used until the end of 2022, when we look forward to hearing the results.

## What happens now?

Over half our Area Meetings have sent minutes and these are included in a [supplement](#) to this paper for discernment. The large majority has adopted alternative terms.

Quaker Life Central Committee has sent a minute (QLCC 22.51 and also included in the supplement of minutes) from its meeting held 4-5 November 2022, part of which reads: “The roles of eldership and oversight are part of a greater whole of supporting and nurturing Friends in our meetings, and many meetings are already combining the two. We see advantages in this more flexible approach. We suggest that the focus should be on the service we are asking of Friends and then finding an appropriate term to explain that service.”

Questions for today:

- Are Friends content that the flexible approach to the role for pastoral support continues?
- and that area meetings should be able to choose appropriate terminology in place of ‘overseer’ to describe local arrangements?

## **Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering & Meeting for Sufferings**

Second Report to Meeting for Sufferings: November 2022

### **1 Executive summary**

This is a report on stage two of the work of the Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering & Meeting for Sufferings which comprises a review of the current role of Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) within the structures of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM).

This group has been encouraged to be radical and not tinker around the edges – to look afresh; to recognise the context in which we live; to note that systems set up in earlier centuries may be too burdensome for Friends in the 21st century; to keep what is good in the current arrangements. Change is inevitable and is already underway. Change agreed now need not be for all time: review must be included as part of any change.

Our findings are that:

- (i) Discernment is central to Meeting for Sufferings' role.
- (ii) Membership and representation need clarification.
- (iii) MfS can improve ways of working through experimentation.
- (iv) Improvement in communication is more problematic.
- (v) Structural relationships with YM and BYM Trustees need clarification.

We have suggested ways forward for Meeting for Sufferings to pursue in bringing about improvement in both the short and the long term.

### **2. Introduction**

Meeting for Sufferings has for the last century been seen as “the standing representative body entrusted with the general care of matters affecting Britain Yearly Meeting ... between Yearly Meetings” (Qf&p 7.02).

Since its inception in the late 17th century, MfS has always had some form of representation from across the whole yearly meeting although the nature of this has changed in response to the availability of transport. Throughout the second half of the last century constitutional change was almost constantly under discussion in BYM and the size and composition of MfS changed several times. Importantly until BYM Trustees were set up in 2006, MfS carried the trustee function for the Society. In the last review in 2011, MfS representation was defined as one member from each area meeting [together with an alternate].

This review has largely been brought about by disquiet over the relationship between MfS and BYM Trustees. Do changes in our wider society this century also call for further response?

### **3. Our task**

Last year, Yearly Meeting asked Meeting for Sufferings to consider whether its role needed to be reviewed. Meeting for Sufferings decided by minute MfS/22/03/11 to add this review to the work of the former Group to Review Yearly Meeting and Yearly Meeting Gatherings as a new second stage. We were given the following areas to focus on:

- how Meeting for Sufferings might change as part of a simpler, inclusive and sustainable structure;
- how Meeting for Sufferings can work well to complement Yearly Meeting without duplication or confusion as to the responsibilities of each;
- how Meeting for Sufferings can work well alongside BYM Trustees without duplication or confusion, and in ways which comply with charity law;
- whether there are responsibilities which would better be passed to another body;
- whether there are responsibilities of other bodies which would better be carried out by Meeting for Sufferings;
- what ways exist to foster greater transparency and improve communication between Meeting for Sufferings and the bodies which send representatives to it.

### **4. Our Process**

One initial task was to look at the functions of MfS as laid out in section 7.02 of *Quaker faith & practice*. We saw these as containing important functions:

- Associated with the visionary and prophetic role;
- Shared with YM and/or other central committees, including communication.
- Related to BYM Trustees.

There were other functions which are in the MfS remit because they need to be done by a Quaker body but are perhaps more routine; some which because of confidentiality might be better dealt with by a small group; and finally those which are ‘more how than what’, i.e. related to the life of the committee itself.

This analysis allowed us to see that there might be other ways in which some of these functions could be carried out. This could involve giving some to a new smaller body.

Our major work involved consultation with as wide a range of Friends as possible. We offered the following ways to engage with this review:

- Faith in Action meeting in the run up to Yearly Meeting 2022, for which around 60 friends registered;
- Written consultation that ran from mid-May to mid-July. We received nearly 70 responses, mostly from individuals but also from a few meetings;

- Three online workshops in September, for which a total of around 90 Friends registered.

As a group we have been impressed by the depth and thoughtfulness of responses received during our work. We have aimed to listen carefully and reflect both the positive findings and the issues of concern and are now reporting them back to MfS for further discernment.

Most of our responses felt there were good arguments for change at this time and we were encouraged to be radical. However, some Friends are attached to the ways in which Quaker bodies currently work. We have also heard from some Friends that now might not be a good time to embark upon changes in Quaker structures because meetings are coming to terms with the consequences of the pandemic, both in disrupting community but also in introducing online communications which, despite their advantages, are still not wholly seen as consistent with Quaker processes.

Our timescale has been a short one. Despite good intentions, we have not been given additional group members, indeed two of our original group have not been able to remain part of it, and so our diversity of experience has been restricted. MfS wanted us to ‘seek views from Friends not well represented at present’ and we have done our best to do so. However, it is clear to us that the avenues of communication currently available within the Society do not readily access the full diversity of Friends.

## **5. Key Findings and conclusions**

### **(i) Discernment is central to Meeting for Sufferings’ role**

Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings are the bodies which Friends expect to determine the way forward for the Yearly Meeting both in the long and the medium term. This is their visionary and prophetic role. Friends expect that spirit-led discernment will be the discipline used for such decisions, for this is where they recognise authority. This has been the strongest message about MfS and YM and may apply to other central bodies.

However they are also worried that discernment is not happening enough within our national structures. Friends feel that often a lack of time, a lack of preparation, and/or a lack of understanding of the process means that what happens is not truly spirit-led. Friends feel that the centrality of spirit-led discernment within BYM’s governance structures could and should be strengthened. Possible ways of doing this include:

- providing more opportunities for deep, worshipful discernment (i.e. by meeting more frequently);
- ensuring that sufficient time is given in meetings for faithful and considered discernment (e.g. by dealing with more routine matters in other ways);
- enabling more Friends to participate in that discernment.

Becoming a Quaker does not always mean naturally picking up how to ‘do’ spirit-led discernment. We need to learn and relearn this discipline and Friends expressed worries that there are still not enough opportunities for learning about the Quaker business method and how to use it in corporate discernment. Yearly Meeting sessions are seen as one of the best places to learn about large-scale corporate discernment.

Many current and recent members of MfS noted that MfS is capable of genuine spirit-led discernment and that this is an uplifting thing to participate in. However they recognised that sometimes effective discernment is prevented by:

- lack of time so that discernment sometimes felt rushed or even curtailed;
- lack of clarity as to why an item had come to MfS for discernment;
- the sense that a decision had already been made elsewhere and that MfS was acting only as a ‘rubber stamp’;
- the fact that the decision was only preliminary to a decision at Yearly Meeting;
- insufficient consistency of attendance evidenced by differences in levels of preparation and a lack of feeling of a continuing worshipping community.

### **(ii) Improving ways of working through experimentation**

So long as spirit-led discernment remains central to our ways of working, Friends may be ready to try new things. There is a widespread sense that there are techniques and practices that we could profit from – not just the use of digital platforms to allow remote meetings, but also more use of threshing and informal gatherings to share ideas and help prepare for the discernment process.

Threshing can be an opportunity for those who may not be in the room for the final decision to share their perspectives, and can be a chance for those who will be there to begin sorting through the many disparate ideas that they may have about the topic at hand. It may mean that when we gather in worship we can move more quickly to a shared sense of what we need to discern.

MfS members have valued the pre-meetings which already take place where they can ask factual questions, hear longer presentations, perhaps speak more informally with other representatives, and generally begin to get the issues straight in their heads. Such meetings could be readily opened to other Friends.

Once the meeting has gathered, it needs adequate time to reach the right decision. Agendas need to be arranged so that anything that does not require discernment can be dealt with another way, e.g. by circulating draft minutes or by delegating the decisions to a committee or small group.

Change can be painful but it is happening already, and in some cases delaying change may only make it more painful. Experimentation can be a good way to manage change.

### **(iii) Membership and representation need clarification**

There is a strong feeling amongst British Quakers that our membership should be more representative of the wider society in which we live. This is a different use of the word representative than that which is used for those nominated to serve on MfS. MfS members can only represent the Society of Friends as it currently is and is limited by Friends ability and willingness to serve.

This issue was not raised often with the Group. However, we did hear some support for the idea that it should be easier for more Friends to participate in discernment on important issues. The concepts of diversity and participation in the context of Quaker discernment are not completely straightforward. Our discernment process does not ask us to hear from all ‘sides’ on an issue and then decide which is the best option. It asks us to listen to what God wants us to do, recognising that anyone present might be able to articulate some or all of that for us. However in practice the presence of Friends with different spiritual experiences and insights is often helpful.

It is possible that the way in which representatives to MfS are nominated may reduce the diversity of those experiences and insights. More or less every member is nominated by a different nominating body with no opportunity to create balance across the whole. If there is a tendency towards appointing representatives who fit a particular mould, it may be that the meeting could miss out on useful ministry or otherwise have to work harder to hear what the right way is.

We heard some calls for membership of MfS to be opened more widely to Friends, as is attendance at Yearly Meeting, in order to increase diversity. The main reason given for maintaining the representative nature of MfS was the contrary perception that allowing any interested Friend to attend MfS could result in ‘lobbying’ if particular groups attended en masse in response to specific agenda items. While it would be naive to discount this possibility, it raises interesting questions about whether Friends feel this is a real risk at Yearly Meeting sessions.

If MfS is not opened to more/all Friends, then we feel that the current system of working with representatives and alternates needs to be revisited. Although area meetings and other represented groups are asked to keep a consistency of representation, this does not seem to work well in practice. There is a feeling that the worshipping community is weakened by the frequent presence of new people. A lack of shared background to an item under consideration is a particular concern.

### **(iv) Improvement in communication is more problematic**

When Trustees were set up it was envisaged that MfS could have an expanded role in communication with meetings. It is clear that this has not proved possible. Friends acknowledged that a lot of effort goes into engaging with local Friends especially by some representatives. However, communication across the whole Yearly Meeting about MfS business was felt to be much less successful. Friends did not generally feel that ‘the centre’ was to blame and were usually realistic that lots of things had been tried over many years, and yet the problem had not been resolved.

Some Friends had the perception that there is a group of Friends who attend their own local meeting and have little or no interest in anything happening outside it. At the same time, there is also a group of Friends who wish to be more engaged and informed about what is happening at a national level. It may be time to look again at the priorities for fostering communication across the yearly meeting, as well as the most appropriate methods for doing it. There may be possibilities in regional solutions through the Local Development Worker programme. We also heard of possibilities in using some of the Quaker Recognised Bodies more effectively in reaching Friends interested in particular topics. Some area meetings are looking at combining with others, sharing resources or working differently. Significant changes to area meetings will need to be factored in to communication plans.

One specific aspect of communication is MfS's role in receiving minutes from area meetings. Friends want area meetings to be able to communicate their discerned Quaker concerns at a yearly meeting level, although there were different suggestions on how this might best be done. One problem with the current system is that such minutes are difficult for MfS to engage with, particularly when they are received in isolation or outside of a planning cycle. A request for new work may be valid, but will always have resource implications that cannot easily be looked at on an ad hoc basis without a full context. Friends and meetings often do want to feel part of this kind of decision making and so there need to be more appropriate ways for that to happen.

#### **(v) Structural relationships with YM and BYM Trustees need clarification**

Yearly Meeting is clearly the primary constitutional authority for Quakers in Britain. Both MfS and Trustees sit below it. When our current structure was set up it was envisaged that YM and MfS would discern issues of principle and Trustees would be responsible for putting that discernment into practice, using Quaker discernment themselves to get this right. It is clear that this process is not working smoothly. The history of Friends' involvement with the Canterbury Commitment illustrates this at the YM level. We have heard much concern expressed that MfS is unable to fulfil its prophetic role within the Society because Trustees are making too many decisions, with MfS feeling more like a consultative than a decision-making body.

Friends often describe a sense that there is tension between MfS and BYM Trustees. However, the word 'tension' suggests that MfS and Trustees are pulling in different directions. What we have heard suggests more that there is friction, with the two bodies rubbing uncomfortably together.

The major problem seems to be that Friends are not clear about which body is accountable to which other body or bodies. This lack of clarity restricts the effectiveness of both BYM Trustees and MfS and gives rise to frustration among Friends. It may also have contributed to a wider lack of trust in both those bodies.

The nature of our reporting practices creates unnecessary confusion about the roles and relationships between the three bodies. Both MfS and Trustees report to YM and

both are accountable to YM and therefore open to challenge on their work. Trustees report to MfS, but this is for information only and they are not accountable to MfS (both our governing document and charity law are clear that Trustees are accountable only to YM). MfS can offer advice to Trustees, but it cannot direct their work.

It is likely that part of the reason for this is because MfS and Trustees are perceived to sit beside one another on the same 'level' (under YM) in any diagram of our structures (see Qf&p 8.05). To clarify roles and responsibilities it would make sense to 'move' MfS within the structure. MfS could go 'up', to become a continuing part of YM and therefore clarify that Trustees are accountable to it; or it could go 'down', so that its role was purely as a consultative body for Trustees. If the two bodies are to remain side by side then clarification might be gained by giving them distinct roles and spheres of influence.

## **6. Taking the matter forward**

We are left with the following questions and suggest ways forward for Meeting for Sufferings in both the short and the long term:

Discernment is central to Meeting for Sufferings' role

- a) How can we create more opportunities for Friends to learn about spirit-led discernment?
- b) Improving ways of working through experimentation
- c) How can we ensure that discernment is given enough time?
- d) How can we enable Friends to participate in important discernment?
- e) Membership and representation need clarification
- f) If MfS is to remain a meeting of representatives, does anything need to change in the system of representation?

Improvement in communication is more problematic

- g) How can we achieve better methods of communication throughout the yearly meeting?

Structural relationships with YM and BYM Trustees need clarification

- h) How can we reduce friction in the relationship between MfS and BYM Trustees?

Sarah Donaldson,

Convener, Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings.

Further questions	The decision/action to address the need	How and by whom should this be taken forward
(a) How can we create more opportunities for Friends to learn about spirit-led discernment?	Serious thought now needs to be given to how to address the need for the continuing education of Friends in the essentials of spirit-led discernment.	This is a substantial Yearly Meeting-wide issue, which might best be taken up by Quaker Life and could also involve Woodbrooke.
(b) How can we ensure that discernment is given enough time?	MfS clerks should be encouraged in their experimentation with the treatment of agenda items, including the use of permanent or temporary working groups, as allowed by <i>Qf&amp;p 7.02</i> , in order to free up agenda time for discernment.	MfS clerks and MfSAG can do this now and should continue to find ways to prioritise business that can only be done by MfS as a whole body. It may be necessary over time to revise <i>Qf&amp;p 7.02</i> in order to achieve this.
(c) How can we enable Friends to participate in important discernment?	Wider involvement of Friends in the work of MfS could be immediately encouraged by the opening of some preliminary meetings for information and/or threshing to any interested Friends: such meetings could be held nationally or regionally.	MfS clerks and MfSAG should be encouraged to be creative in continuing this work.
(d) If MfS is to remain a meeting of representatives, does anything need to change in the system of representation?	Can the current arrangements for representation at MfS be improved to enhance the effectiveness of the body as a worshipping community?	We suggest MfS asks YM to review the current representation arrangements. In the past, when MfS has done this itself, changes have been limited in scope. We suggest an external review so that more radical changes to the makeup of MfS can be considered.
(e) How can we achieve better methods of communication throughout the yearly meeting?	Further thought should be given to how mutual communication between BYM central bodies and AMs and LMs can be improved for the future. The strength (or weakness) of AMs makes a lot of difference to the way current structures work.	Communication needs to involve 'Friends on the bench' effectively and this may involve thinking about the relationship between AMs and MfS (especially as some area meetings are consolidating). This is therefore a substantial Yearly Meeting-wide issue. At this stage we think it is something for BYM Trustees to lead on.
(f) How can we reduce friction in the relationship between MfS and BYM Trustees?	Reducing friction in the relationships between YM, MfS and BYM Trustees is essential going forward. Consideration should also be given to whether it is necessary for all the current functions of MfS to be carried out by a large representative body or whether a smaller body could be of use.	The relationships between YM, MfS & BYM Trustees are the responsibility of Yearly Meeting. We suggest MfS ask YM to give agenda time to whether this issue should be addressed, and how. This could fit in with the overall Book of Discipline revision.

## **Book of Discipline Revision Committee Third report to Meeting for Sufferings**

### **Introduction**

1. Following Minute 31 of Yearly Meeting 2018, Meeting for Sufferings established the Book of Discipline Revision Committee with Terms of Reference approved in July 2018, to bring to Yearly Meeting draft text for adoption as BYM's book of discipline, together with proposals for its publication. The appointment of our initial membership of 24, including two co-clerks and an assistant clerk, was completed by February 2019 and we first met in May 2019. This is our third progress report, following those in 2020 and 2021.

### **Who we are**

2. We are a diverse committee reflecting the breadth of Britain Yearly Meeting, as required by our Terms of Reference. Since our last report in December 2021, 3 of our members have been released at their request or on completion of their term of service, and 2 new members have been appointed. One of our members temporarily stepped back from the work on maternity leave, and has now returned. Of our current 24:

- geographically, 21% live in Scotland and Wales; and of the remaining 79% living in England, broadly equal proportions are in northern, central and southern areas
- three-quarters are female
- our ages range from 20s to over 70
- the lengths and nature of our Quaker backgrounds vary just as widely, as do our life and employment experiences
- several of us face particular challenges, which reminds us all of our role in enabling everyone to take part fully.

### **Our work so far**

3. We have now met as a full committee 15 times. The first five were residential weekends face-to-face; then eight were held virtually by part-weekend zoom videoconferences during the coronavirus pandemic and its aftermath; and then two residentially face-to-face again by special permission in the second half of 2022 to enable us to work intensively together in reviewing where we have got to and planning the remaining phases of our task in detail. We have also continued to work hard individually and in various subgroups on specific topics, and held regular check-in zoom committee meetings to keep track of these.

4. Our **previous reports** described our steps to

- learn **how best to work together** as a cohesive committee
- document a set of principles for our **committee processes** and **developing content**
- develop a working understanding of the **purpose of the book of discipline**

- identify a range of different **audiences** for it, their expectations of it and how they might use it
- articulate seven key **interlinked common themes** that will need to be reflected in it, and **five key insights describing the unity of our Quaker way** which will run as threads through it
- clarify that the “**book**” will need to appear in a variety of formats and **platforms**
- test the distinction between “**core**” material in the book (what Quakers do and why – the spiritual basis) and “**supplementary**” (detail on how we do it – to be published separately)
- **engage with Friends generally** to encourage interest in our work, through activities with Woodbrooke; leading sessions at Yearly Meeting, area meetings and other gatherings; setting up an online creative project; publishing “Frequently Asked Questions” and key messages; and having a presence on social media.

## **5. By the end of 2022**, we will have

- with the help of an external consultant, developed a detailed **project plan and timescale** for completing our task by the end of this decade, which we have discussed with the clerks of Yearly Meeting (see paragraph 6 below)
- reviewed and amplified our **list of (now 28) main topics** to be covered in the new book
- prepared substantive **first drafts on 7 of these: discernment, meeting for worship for church affairs, nominations, community, sharing the Quaker experience (outreach), marriage, and trusteeship & charitable status (incorporating elements of resources/stewardship)**
- set up groups to prepare **first drafts on 5 more: testimony, spiritual experience/Quaker theology/spiritual diversity, worship, membership, conflict**
- continued over-arching work to **review all these drafts for consistency, coherence, accessibility, and choices of language and voice** to reflect inclusivity and Quaker spiritual experience; and **to compile a glossary**
- developed principles for our choice of **language to express spiritual concepts and experience**, and for the **use of quotations and extracts**
- prepared on request a paper on our understanding of the **Quaker theological underpinning of our constitutional structures**, which we have sent to Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations and to the groups reviewing Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings and other aspects of our structures to help them with their work, and which will inform our future drafting of text on these topics; we have received some helpful comments from QCCIR which we will take forward with them
- continued to identify **areas which may need discernment by yearly meeting structures** before we can produce definitive content for adoption

- started using a system for **tagging contributions and comments received from Friends** across the yearly meeting, so that these can be considered when drafting relevant text.

## **Our timetable**

6. Our project plan entails **finishing writing all the topics and sequencing and editing the material between 2023 and 2026** – we need this amount of time for the scale of that task! During that period we may need to test some further sample texts with Friends more widely, or bring specific issues to Meeting for Sufferings or Yearly Meeting for discernment so that we can produce definitive content. We then envisage bringing a **first fairly complete draft of the whole book via Meeting for Sufferings to Yearly Meeting 2027** for initial consideration. This would be followed by extensive consultation among Friends and meetings throughout Britain on the draft. In the light of that, we may then need to do some redrafting or additional writing. We aim to produce a **near-final draft by Yearly Meeting 2029**, followed by further consultation among Friends and meetings. We hope this would lead to a **final text to be presented to Yearly Meeting 2030 for adoption**.

## **Our next steps**

7. During the year ahead, we hope to:

- **share sample texts on marriage and on nominations** with Meeting for Sufferings, and through MfS representatives with area meetings and other Friends (see paragraph 8 below)
- start drafting **text on the remaining main topics** not yet covered
- continue to **review drafts for consistency, coherence, accessibility, language and voice**
- consider how and when to consult expert Friends, central and other standing committees on **issues arising** as this work progresses; how and when to come back to Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting on major matters of principle requiring further corporate discernment before drafting can be completed
- bring together **the shape of the whole book**, how the topics fit together and flow while enabling the reader to find answers to questions
- monitor our **progress against our project plan and timescale** to keep on track
- accept more **invitations from area meetings and others**, by zoom or otherwise, so far as our people resources allow, and find other ways of **engaging Friends** throughout the yearly meeting.

## **Sharing sample texts**

8. We are excited by the forthcoming first opportunity to **share sample texts on marriage and on nominations**. We want to use this to test our approach to the voice of the book, language and style and accessibility, and the balance between core and supplementary material. Your feedback will help us to shape our drafting of

the rest of the book. We are not asking at this stage for detailed drafting comments on these particular texts. The process for sharing text will begin with circulating the two sample texts (together with an explanatory covering paper including specific questions and a form for sending responses) to Meeting for Sufferings members after the December 2022 meeting. Over the following two months we will arrange online opportunities for preparing for discussion of our questions about the texts and for answering queries. We encourage you to share the texts and questions with your area meetings and others, and to send responses to us. We envisage reporting back to Meeting for Sufferings in March 2023 on what we have learned from the sharing and how we might take things forward, in the light of discernment and guidance from the Meeting.

## **How can Friends get involved?**

### **9. You can:**

- pray for and uphold the Committee
- respond constructively to the sample texts we will be sharing with you
- look at our webpage at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/resources/quaker-faith-and-practice/revising-quaker-faith-practice>
- contribute to our online creative project “Open to New Light”  
<https://padlet.com/bdrc/OpenToNewLight>
- share ideas for the new book, including telling us of inspirational and helpful pieces of writing. These can be offered using an online form (  
<https://forms.quaker.org.uk/qfp-idea/>) or by contacting the Committee Secretary by email\* or writing to Friends House
- engage with our social media accounts via *Revising Quaker faith & practice* pages on
  - facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/revisingqfp/>
  - instagram – <https://www.instagram.com/revisingqfp>
  - twitter – <https://www.twitter.com/revisingqfp>
- invite us to talk with your meeting about our work (subject to our availability).

## **Conclusion**

**10.** As always, we are hugely grateful to our Secretary and other BYM staff for all their work and support for us.

**11.** Now that we have been able to meet in person again for the first time in over two years, and our project plan and timescale are becoming clearer, we feel a renewed sense of energy. While the tasks ahead still challenge us, we know we can approach them boldly, joyfully, prayerfully and creatively. We ask Meeting for Sufferings and Friends generally to continue to uphold us.

Rosie Carnall, Catherine Brewer, Michael Phipps: Co-Clerks and Assistant Clerk  
Michael Booth: Committee Secretary

\*The dedicated email address for our work is [qfp@quaker.org.uk](mailto:qfp@quaker.org.uk)

## Quaker membership – the way forward?

At our October meeting we considered the recommendation from a group set up to review our long-established policy of appointing only members to Central Committees. Our minute ended as follows:

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

“....The struggle we have had with this issue emphasises that it is important to give due consideration to our understanding of the meaning of membership, which is much broader than the right to serve on committees...

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

Quaker Life Central Committee has previously been tasked with looking at membership – Yearly Meeting 2014 minutes 10 & 40, Meeting for Sufferings minutes MfS 2015/02/08, MfS/18/02/13 & MfS/20/10/15 refer.

Those not in membership have been variously described as ‘non-geographic’ or ‘unattached Friends’ and more recently the work has come under the title ‘New ways of belonging’.

Arrangements Group invited Alastair Fuller, Team Leader – Quaker Community, a staff member from the Quaker Life department, to their meeting on 1 November to hear about progress with this work. Arrangements Group concluded that, in light of the ministry heard at October’s MfS it is clear that the issue of membership is not confined to ‘unattached’ Friends. Indeed ‘unattached Friends’ were not mentioned.

Membership has a place in our structures that is being questioned by our nominations committees and there are broader questions to address. We heard, during the lengthy consideration in October, that for a variety of reasons our current membership processes pose a barrier to participation in the life of our Society for a variety of Friends. Meeting for Sufferings felt the urgency of this matter, and Arrangements Group does not wish us to shy away from wrestling with the issue that our review group has brought to light.

Our December agenda is already full. However Arrangements Group is keen to return to the matter as a substantive issue, perhaps at our residential meeting in 2023. We are aware that the Book of Discipline Revision Committee will also be interested in feedback and discernment on this and related matters. By way of

preparation, we recommend that members of Meeting for Sufferings be charged with thinking about the following questions, both individually and in their area meetings:

- Why do we have membership?
- What is it for?
- Is it still necessary?
- If yes, what form(s) could it take?

A draft minute might read:

**Quaker membership – the way forward?**

We ask members of Meeting for Sufferings, both individually and in their area meetings, to consider the following questions:

- Why do we have membership?
- What is it for?
- Is it still necessary?
- If yes, what form(s) could it take?

## Report from BYM trustees

Trustees held our November meeting online (but with the clerks together at Friends House) on Friday 11 November. This covering note seeks to steer members of MfS to the most important minutes from our trustee meeting and to give a bit of context. Our Treasurer, Linda Batten, and I will be happy to explain any of the minutes more fully when we speak to you at the October meeting. We had a very full agenda!

With BYM following a calendar financial year, the most time-critical item on the agenda was to agree the budget for 2023 **BYMT/22/11/05 Finance and property.**

We have been promising to bring a balanced budget for 2023, and, taking the budget as a whole, we are pleased to report we've been able to do this. The budget for 2023 has an income of around £11 million, compared to £8.5 million this year, and an expenditure of £10.7 million, compared to £10.2 million this year. However, the detail shows that the unrestricted general fund has around £650,000 more being spent than the expected income covers, mostly due to an increase in salary and utility costs, so we are still looking for ways to increase our unrestricted income.

For **Minute 22/11/11 Simple, inclusive, sustainable structures and practices**, we were joined by the clerks of Quaker Life and Quaker Peace and Social Witness central committees and by the Convenor of the Group to review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings.

Although the Review Group reports to you, it was helpful to hear their thinking because we need to ensure that what is emerging about centrally managed work ties in with it. We also heard from the three trustees appointed to the simplification group about the most recent round of workshops held since our last meeting, and what has emerged during worship with these Friends and central committees. We are hearing that evolution of the central structures and practices is needed – though how fast that should happen and exactly what will emerge is not yet clear. Trustees hope that the matter will go to Yearly Meeting in 2023 for wider discernment to inform further work and, in particular, to find out if the Yearly Meeting is led to consider changes to the central committees.

It is going to be a complicated concern to introduce at Yearly Meeting. Hundreds of Friends have been involved in threshing workshops over the last couple of years, but there will be many Friends who won't have thought about it before. Even for trustees and members of MfS who have been working on simplification together for several years, it's complicated to keep track of everything (particularly for those who were not around in the previous triennium when our consideration started).

**Minutes 22/11/14 Grant application for Woodbrooke Learning and Research**  
**and 15 Climate crisis project update** are both about Woodbrooke Learning and we were joined by one of the trustees and the co-CEO.

Woodbrooke is a separate charity with its own trustees, mission and strategy. BYM has already made a grant to Woodbrooke Learning on the Climate Crisis that is part way through. And we agreed in principle at this meeting to make a further grant of up to £800,000 to Woodbrooke Learning over the next five years to support their work and, in particular, to help them better reach young people and a more diverse range of Friends.

Caroline Nursey  
Clerk of BYM trustees

# **Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees**

Friday 11 November 2022, video conference

## **Minutes**

**Present:** Georgina Bailey, Linda Batten (Treasurer), Alison Breadon, Kit Fotheringham, Kate Gulliver, Ellie Harding, Carolyn Hayman, Caroline Nursey (Clerk), Silas Price, Graham Torr (Assistant Clerk), Frances Voelcker

**Prevented:** Danielle Walker Palmour

**In attendance:** Catherine Brown, incoming Trustee from January 2023 (except items BYMT/22/11/23 and 24); Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk; Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship; Lorna Service, Interim Head of Finance and Resources; Paul Whitehouse, incoming Yearly Meeting Treasurer from January 2023 (except items BYMT/22/11/23 and 24)

**Visitors:** Sarah Donaldson, Clerk of the group to review Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings, Alan Pearmain, Co-clerk of Quaker Life Central Committee and E Elize Sakamoto, Co-clerk of Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (item BYMT/22/11/11); Martin Ford, Interim Co-CEO Woodbrooke, and Val Brittin, Woodbrooke Trustee and Clerk of Woodbrooke's Learning and Research Committee (item BYMT/22/11/14 and 15).

## **BYMT/22/11/01 Welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest check**

We welcome Catherine Brown, incoming trustee from 1 January 2023, and Paul Whitehouse, incoming Yearly Meeting treasurer from 1 January 2023.

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest, but we have noted connections.

We confirm our agenda.

During our opening worship, we heard a version of the Lord's Prayer transliterated from the ancient Aramaic into English.

## **BYMT/22/11/02 Continuing business**

We receive a list of continuing minutes including extracts from the following minute of our last meeting: 22/09/06 Quiet Company.

## **BYMT/22/11/03 Minutes received**

We receive the following minutes:

- Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations, 30 August and 21-23 October 2022
- Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee, 16-18 September 2022
- Quiet Company Board, 22 September 2022
- Quaker Life Central Committee, 28 September and 4-5 November 2022
- Quaker World Relations Committee, 15 October 2022

## **BYMT/22/11/04 Annual return**

We note BYM's annual return for 2021 has been submitted to the Charity Commission.

## **BYMT/22/11/05 Finance and property**

### **a) Finance report for 2022**

We received the quarterly finance report to end of September 2022 (BYMT 2022 11 03b) along with minutes from Finance & Property Committee's meeting on 10 October (BYMT 2022 11 03a).

We note the current deficit is largely attributable to a shortfall in legacy income which is difficult to predict. Investment income and donations are ahead of target. We are pleased the Quiet Company is making a bigger contribution than anticipated.

### **b) Budget 2023**

We receive a paper setting out the proposed budget for 2023 (BYMT 2022 11 04a). Finance & Property Committee has reviewed the proposal and commends it to us (FP22/42). We note:

- that the proposed budget for 2023 projects a small surplus for the Charity on the expectation that the Quiet Company returns to profitable trading and contributes to fixed costs of £629k and contributes £387k in gift aid income
- in spite of the surplus for the charity on overall funds, we are running a deficit of £650k on the unrestricted general fund, so if Friends and Meetings increased their giving this would go towards reducing the budgeted deficit
- the creation of two new designated funds: a Risk Management Fund (of £3.2m) and an Operational Development Fund (of £1.2m)
- a budgeted increase in fundraising income of £1.2m, primarily the result of a new approach to budgeting for legacies
- the cost-of-living increase of 6% and additional cost-of-living payments applied to staff salaries
- sharp increases in utility costs
- the major risks associated with the budget outlined in section 5 of the paper.

We agree the budget as set out in the paper.

## **BYMT/22/11/06 Operational plan 2023–25**

We receive the operational plan for 2023–25 setting out high-level work strands and principal activities to help deliver our three strategic priorities (BYMT 2022 11 04b). This includes addressing the risk posed by major changes in Quaker communities.

The plan includes a broad range of development work including:

- supporting Quaker communities and Quaker work and witness ensuring a strong public voice
- managing, developing and utilising the physical assets and resources of the Yearly Meeting, to support Quaker work
- managing governance, compliance and accountability in key areas, such as safeguarding and information governance

- ensuring strong systems and infrastructure to support the work, in finance, IT and people management.

There is also an overarching work strand relating to equity, diversity and inclusion.

We are pleased to learn of the time spent integrating the work across teams and departments and to see the plans for scheduling the work and for ongoing monitoring and review.

We note that the way the plan is drawn up is still evolving and that the intention is that all staff should be using it as an active planning tool. We agree the plan.

### **BYMT/22/11/07 Risk register**

Trustees routinely receive a report on the strategic-level risks at our meetings in June and November. Updates have been provided by Management Meeting on the seven strategic risks (paper BYMT 2022 11 04c); we note that the risk score has fallen for three risks but three risks remain rated as red (our ‘major’ risks). We have proposed amendments.

### **BYMT/22/11/08 Recording Clerk’s report**

We receive a report from the Recording Clerk (paper BYMT 2022 11 05) giving updates and news under the headings of BYM’s strategic priorities:

- Thriving Quaker communities: recruitment of Local Development Workers, capacity difficulties in some areas, Quaker Week, communications and fundraising, safeguarding improvement plan, equity, diversity and inclusion, reparations, conciliation work
- Sustainable and peaceful world: truth and integrity in public life, Civil Society Voice, campaigns and supporting faith in action, cost of living crisis, room bookings at Quaker meeting houses
- Simpler structures and practices: inclusive governance structures, QPSWCC governance, customer relationship management database, leadership team changes
- The report also includes an update on Operations covering: Quiet Company, Quaker Centres, environmental, health and safety matters, facilities and property services.

We are pleased to hear that the new Deputy Recording Clerk is settling in well. We note that Paul Grey will step down from his role as Chief Executive Officer of the Quiet Company at the end of December: after a career break he will return in a part time role as Head of Estates. We record our thanks to Paul for his work in building the Quiet Company that has not only provided invaluable funding for our work, but also become an exemplar of an ethical business and helped make Friends House such a welcoming venue for Quakers and others.

We note that almost all Local Development Workers are now in place with the final recruitments underway. We are encouraged by recent success in securing coverage of Quakers in both national and local press, by influential conversations at the party conferences, and by the focus brought to trust and integrity in public life since QPSW CC and Meeting for Sufferings were led to identify the need in this area earlier this

year. Close collaboration between staff and the Quaker Truth and Integrity Recognised Group is ensuring that we use our talents wisely. We are working closely with QUNO Geneva too.

It is a relief to see how well the Quiet Company is recovering from the pandemic despite the challenges of increasing costs and the unpredictability of further waves of Covid. And we are very pleased that Quiet Company's work with ex-offenders through Bake the Difference and Maintain the Difference will be grant funded into early 2024.

### **BYMT/22/11/09 Audit Committee's review of BYM's response to the Covid pandemic**

We receive and note Audit Committee minutes from its meeting on 13 September (BYMT 2022 11 06a). We note the Committee is bringing together an audit plan for 2023-25 and we look forward to receiving this at our next meeting for our approval.

The Committee has conducted a review of BYM's response to the Covid pandemic and we receive their final draft report (BYMT 2022 11 06b). We note Management Meeting will be formally responding to the report setting out its intentions of taking forward the report's recommendations and that we shall receive this at a future meeting.

### **BYMT/22/11/10 Health, safety and environmental committee report**

We receive an annual report from the health, safety and environmental committee covering activity since its last report to us in November 2021.

We note the work on taking steps in response to Covid for our staff and visitors to our buildings. The committee also oversees work to keep our buildings compliant and ensure we follow best practice for health and safety. Recently, the committee took on responsibility for environmental matters and we note the action it has taken and its future plans set out in section 10 of its report.

### **BYMT/22/11/11 Simple, inclusive, sustainable structures and practices**

We have been joined by Sarah Donaldson, convener of the Group to review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings (the YM Review Group), Alan Pearmain, Co-clerk of Quaker Life Central Committee and E Elize Sakamoto, Co-clerk of Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee.

We receive a paper including an outline from the Recording Clerk summarising work so far and the decision-making process ahead, as well as a report on recent activity from the trustee working group (BYMT 2022 11 07a). We have heard from Sarah Donaldson and Paul Parker about how our work ties in with that of other bodies, and from Carolyn Hayman, Ellie Harding and Kate Gulliver on our own trustee working group.

The Yearly Meeting Review Group has been asked to report to Meeting for Sufferings on a review of Meeting for Sufferings and the report is almost ready: we look forward to the consideration in December. We have heard that the group has found that spirit-led discernment is at the heart of the Society of Friends, but is not

being well practised everywhere, and that communication is a challenge across the yearly meeting. We have also heard that they have identified difficulties in the structural relationship between Meeting for Sufferings and trustees because they are seen as lying parallel to each other as both report to Yearly Meeting whereas the reality is more complex. This is not a matter for us as trustees, but we share the group's hope that Yearly Meeting will consider it.

BYM trustees, with Meeting for Sufferings, have been exploring over several years how we might simplify the way we carry out our central work and allow Friends to offer service, and retain the essence of our faith through our worship and witness. Since our last meeting, the trustee working group has enjoyed worshipping with hundreds of Friends through another round of workshops, and meeting the Central Committees and staff – and we receive minutes from both Quaker Life and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committees (BYMT 2022 11 07b and c).

We have heard a clear call for evolution – at whatever pace. It is helpful to have the question of power named in the QPSW Central Committee minute and we are aware of its complexity and of the importance of authority and delegation being in right ordering. Many of the ideas being explored are about including more Friends in discernment of important matters.

Our consideration so far is leading us to see that QPSW and Quaker Life Central Committees do need to evolve further to bring about our vision of a Religious Society of Friends whose discernment, work and witness are all invigorated by the joyful participation of many Friends according to their leadings, gifts, time, and interests. We have been reminded that Yearly Meeting 2017 asked Meeting for Sufferings to look at how we can remove barriers and actively seek wider participation in the full life of our meetings, paying particular attention to race and age diversity.

We do not yet know what changes might be needed and further discernment will be necessary – at Yearly Meeting, with the central committees and Meeting for Sufferings and beyond – for us to find the right path.

We agree to ask agenda committee for agenda time at Yearly Meeting 2023 to discern:

- How the vision for simple inclusive and sustainable structure and practices could be realised
- Whether it is time that change to our committee structure including central committees should be considered.

Although many Friends from across the Yearly Meeting have taken part in threshing workshops, there are many others who will come to the question of simplification for the first time at Yearly Meeting 2023. We ask our clerks and the group to assist Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee to prepare materials as required.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings and to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee.

## **BYMT/22/11/12 BYM Trustees' meetings in 2024**

We have agreed our meeting dates for 2024 based on our current pattern of meetings.

- Saturday 10 February (9.30am to 4.30pm), online
- Thursday 4 April (receipt of accounts) (7.30pm to 8.30pm), online
- Friday 7 to Sunday 9 June (6pm Friday to 12 pm Sunday), residential
- Friday 6 to Saturday 7 September (12.30pm Friday to 1pm Saturday), online
- Friday 22 November (9.30am to 4.30pm), online.

## **BYMT/22/11/13 Trustees' news**

We receive a report of recent activities of trustees (BYMT 2022 11 15).

## **BYMT/22/11/14 Grant application for Woodbrooke Learning and Research**

We have been joined by Friends from Woodbrooke: Martin Ford, Interim Co-CEO, and Val Brittin, Trustee and Clerk of Learning and Research Committee.

We receive a grant application to provide financial support for Woodbrooke Learning and Research (papers BYMT 2022 11 10a and b), and Val and Martin have spoken to us and answered questions. We – and Woodbrooke trustees – are clear that this grant must not cover any of the costs of Woodbrooke the site.

We know that Woodbrooke trustees are facing huge challenges.

We recognise the critical role that Woodbrooke Learning and Research plays in the life of the Yearly Meeting and in supporting Friends beyond this country.

Woodbrooke's mission is to work with individuals; BYM's role is to support meetings; and we need to be clear how the two can feed into the strategic priorities for BYM's work:

- Thriving Quaker communities
- A sustainable and peaceful world.

The grant must be used by Woodbrooke to ensure that they reach more young people and a more diverse range of Friends than has traditionally been the case and that it builds on the important work that they have done on racial justice. We hope that Woodbrooke can be experimental and creative and that the security of the grant enables that.

We agree in principle that BYM should make a total grant of up to £800k over five years from 1 January 2023–31 December 2027 with a review during 2024 or 2025 and potential break point at the end of 2025. We ask:

- our Finance and Property Committee to review the budget at their January meeting before confirming the grant
- for Alison Breadon and another trustee or member of Quaker Life Central Committee to work with Woodbrooke to agree – within the first few months – how to measure the impact of the grant and which bodies they report to.

We ask Quaker Life Central Committee to receive regular updates on the grant from Woodbrooke Learning and to review progress against the agreed key performance indicators as well as considering the interaction between the work of Woodbrooke Learning and that directly delivered by BYM.

We will be willing to consider a further grant at the end of that period depending on the success of the grant, and the priorities and financial position of BYM at that time.

We send this minute to Woodbrooke trustees, to Quaker Life Central Committee, and to our Finance and Property Committee.

### **BYMT/22/11/15 Climate crisis project update**

Martin Ford, Interim Co-CEO, and Val Brittin, Trustee and Clerk of Learning and Research Committee from Woodbrooke join us for this item.

The latest update for the Climate Crisis: Spiritual Nurture and Learning Project run by Woodbrooke covers April to September this year (paper BYMT 2022 11 09).

As well as a review of recent activity it includes a report on the impact of the work and a financial summary.

We ask our Finance and Property Committee to ensure that they understand the spending on the grant so far and the forecasts for the next period.

We have asked questions and made suggestions. We have learnt from this grant and will apply that learning to future grant making.

We thank Martin and Val for the report.

We send this minute to our Finance and Property Committee and to Woodbrooke Trustees.

### **BYMT/22/11/16 Nominations and appointments**

BYMT Nominations Group brings forward the following nominations for appointment to serve from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023 (unless otherwise indicated):

- **BYMT Assistant Clerk**  
Graham Torr
- **BYMT Elder**  
Silas Price for 2023 (and 2024 subject to reappointment)
- **BYMT Nominations Group**  
Alison Breadon
- **Lead Trustee on Safeguarding**  
Silas Price for 2023 (and 2024 subject to reappointment)
- **Health & Safety champion**  
Frances Voelcker
- **Finance and Property Committee**  
Kate Gulliver
- **MoU Group AM/BYM**  
Graham Torr
- **Quiet Company Board**  
Carol Rowntree-Jones (Leicester AM), to serve a second term 2023–25

- **Employment Committee**  
Georgina Bailey, to serve as clerk 2023–24  
Carol Rowntree-Jones (Leicester AM) to serve as the Quiet Company member for a second term 2023–2024
- **Audit Committee**  
Tina Leonard (Oxford & Swindon AM) to serve a first term 2023–25
- **Anti-Oppression Champion**  
Georgina Bailey to serve 2023–24

We agree to make these appointments.

### **BYMT/22/11/17 Between-meetings process**

We have reviewed our between-meetings decision-making. We reaffirm our process as follows:

#### **Scope**

- Between meetings decisions may only be taken on issues and matters that cannot be delayed to a meeting of the wider group, for example urgent appointments and urgent legal matters.
- Between meetings decisions cannot be taken on issues of principle or policy, or other matters that of their nature and import require discernment by the wider group, as determined by the Clerk or Assistant Clerk.

#### **Application**

- Such decisions may only be taken with a minimum of two Trustees – one at least being the Clerk or Assistant Clerk.
- Decisions can be taken in person, by phone, by videoconference or by email. In all cases, an email record should be created and copied to the Recording Clerk as secretary to BYM Trustees.
- Decisions must be reported (not confirmed, as they were decisions) to the next meeting of Trustees when a minute of the decision will be created.

#### **Signatories**

- Any two trustees may sign documents on behalf of the body when required.

### **BYMT/22/11/18 Report on a Quaker recognised body application**

We receive a paper asking for our advice on an application from a group wishing to become a Quaker recognised body (BYMT 2022 11 13), as their application is prepared for consideration by Meeting for Sufferings.

We note that minute QLCC/22/11/16 from Quaker Life Central Committee held 4–6 November 2022 establishes a small group to consider the application and prepare some advice, supported by BYM and Woodbrooke staff, to help Meeting for Sufferings discern how to respond to it.

We uphold this process and offer the support of our anti-oppression champions if that would be helpful.

We send this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee.

**BYMT/22/11/19 Legal Advice received on hirings.**

We have considered the legal advice received about a hiring enquiry (BYMT 2022 11 16) and have discussed its implications for potential future hirings.

We will return to this at our next meeting.

**BYMT/22/11/20 Meeting for Sufferings**

We have reflected on business at Meeting for Sufferings in October and prepared for the next meeting to be held on 3 December.

**BYMT/22/11/21 Communicating trustees' work**

We have considered how to communicate our work to others.

**BYMT/22/11/22 Reviewing the meeting**

We have reviewed the meeting.

**BYMT/22/11/23 Time with Recording Clerk**

We have spent time with the Recording Clerk.

**BYMT/22/11/24 Time without staff**

We have spent time without staff.

Caroline Nursey  
Clerk

## **Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) annual report to Meeting for Sufferings**

This year we spent a good deal of time revising our Terms of Reference as a Standing Committee of BYM and agreeing those revisions with BYM Trustees. This annual report to Meeting for Sufferings describes the work we have undertaken during the year since September 2021 and so omits the detailed implementation of the new Terms of Reference which occupies us at the time of writing.

QCCIR is responsible for keeping Britain Yearly Meeting informed of relevant issues and movements which emerge from the faith life in our three nations and of opportunities for dialogue and co-operation between churches and faiths. Under the revised terms of reference, it will be continued that one member of QCCIR is appointed from each of the General Meeting for Scotland and the Meeting of Friends in Wales. Ireland Yearly Meeting will continue to be invited to nominate a representative to serve with us and we benefit enormously from the rich experience of that continuing relationship.

In line with our current strategy, the weekend conference we organised jointly with Woodbrooke that took place in March took Friends through their lockdown experiences and the impact that had on them and their faith and community life to the QCCIR focus on racial and climate injustice and the scope for their potential involvement in that Quaker witness. This was an experiment for both Woodbrooke and QCCIR as the first in-person and online blended event after a long absence. It was broadly well-received, despite, or perhaps because of, that experimentation, but did not speak to every participant.

Dialogue and cooperation through representation on a number of committees of the national ecumenical bodies of Churches Together in England (CTE) and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). Working has focussed this year very much on racial justice and the emerging interest in making reparation for harm done. This has echoed for us the climate crisis impact of loss and damage that was raised so powerfully in interfaith witness around COP26 in November 2021. QCCIR has built networks this year within these national faith conversations, including visiting Friends in Scotland in Glasgow in June. QCCIR also met with visitors from other churches and faiths in Scotland. Within our current three-year strategy, in 2021–2 QCCIR’s focus shifted consciously towards interfaith relations, although our engagement with the ecumenical bodies remains strong and effective. (Attached to this report is the current QCCIR strategy to 2025, dated October 2021, for information.)

At our Yearly Meeting in 2022, we hosted two online Faith in Action events to widen the Quaker conversations about racial and climate injustice. Across the two topics we heard the personal experiences of a Black evangelical Christian, a Jew, a Sikh

and a Muslim. We learned from them all to be humble and to listen with love to the testimonies of others.

We welcomed as our guests at the Yearly Meeting business sessions the two recently appointed General Secretaries of Churches Together in England and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland to the session on 'Our Quaker communities: grounded in faith and challenging us to act' and a Muslim climate activist and a lay Jew to the session on 'Action: Learning uncomfortable lessons and taking forward our witness'.

The Interfaith Network and its Faith Communities Forum, in which we also represent Quakers in Britain, has shared its current concerns and keen interest among its different belief communities on the nature and significance of religious faith. There continues to be an active interfaith dialogue and witness to climate change, following the collaboration developed around COP26 in November 2021.

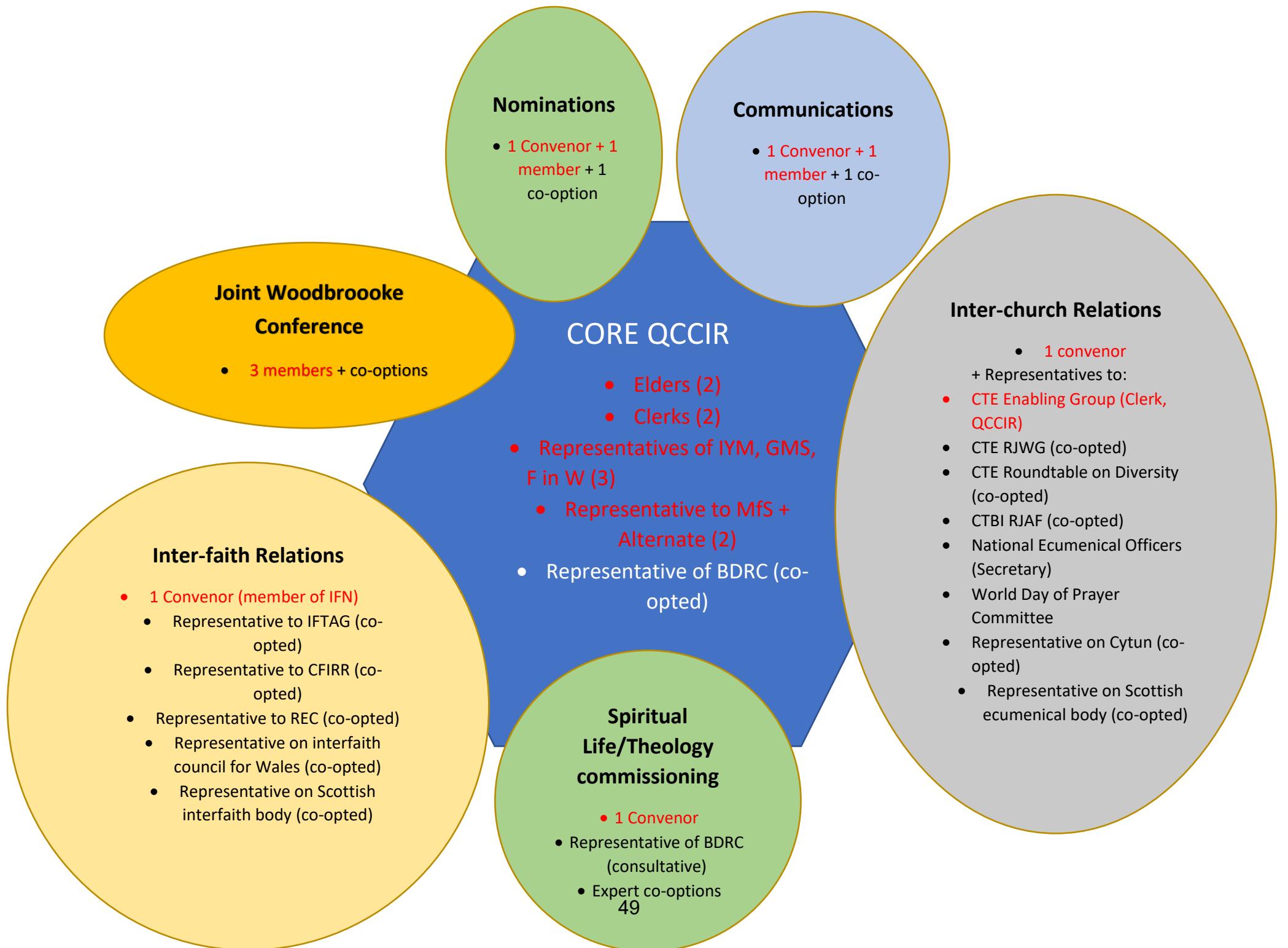
With the change in our Terms of Reference agreed now by BYM Trustees, we have work to do to develop ways of co-opting many more Friends to carry forward our testimonies at local level as well as national level, as we seek to reduce the 'hands-on' work by members of the core QCCIR. We shall endeavour to communicate and engage differently within our Quaker community, so as to build the capacity to bear witness more effectively to our Quaker truths and progressively build peaceable relationships with others whose faith experiences differ from our own.

Environmental impact. QCCIR has met online since the pandemic except for its meeting in Glasgow in June. Friends are encouraged to travel in the most ecologically friendly manner possible. The joint QCCIR/Woodbrooke conference held in March similarly encouraged those Friends attending in person to use public transport wherever possible. Friends representing BYM at events and meetings hosted by other churches and faiths have either met online or travelled by public transport.

### **QCCIR Membership list as of October 2022:**

Catherine Brewer, Claire Bowman, Elaine Green, Evelyn Shire, Janet Scott, Judith Hedges, Judith Mason, Ken Riley, Lynda Williams, Madeleine Pennington, Nigel Dower, Penelope Cummins, Rosemary Field, Will Haire.

Elaine Green,  
Clerk



## **QCCIR<sup>1</sup> Three -Year Strategy (2022-2025)**

1 This draft paper for QCCIR discernment in Autumn 2021 attempts to draft a strategic direction for our work, as derived from the outline changes in our terms of reference currently under discussion with BYM Trustees, the changes in staffing arrangements to establish an Ecumenical Officer for BYM and our initial reflections within our June 2021 meeting that emerged from these various factors.

Our draft terms of reference set out our purpose as:

- a. **responsible for exploring and engaging with opportunities for inter-church and interfaith cooperation and dialogue on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting.**
- b. **responding on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting so that Friends' views on issues of faith, order, life and work are represented to other churches and communities of faith.**

A separated BYM Trustees' minute (BYMT-2021-02-12, 'Simplification of national church and charity governance structures and practices') also proposes that Trustees intend to engage with Friends across the yearly meeting to discern how essential governance tasks can best be done:

**1) Setting the spiritual direction and ways of working of the church (Church)**

**2) Establishing strategy priorities and allocating resources for centrally managed work, to support the spiritual direction and ways of working of the church (Church and Charity)**

**3) Ensuring that the work that is prioritised and resourced is carried out effectively (Charity).**

At our meeting in June, we recorded the following in relation to the draft terms of reference as a BYM standing committee (part of minute QCCIR/21/06/05):

- i. We have valued the rich experience of meeting together on this Committee. The relationships that we build in the ecumenical and interfaith world are long-term and complex and rely on good and continuous conversations in faith. Since we are now encouraged to meet principally by video conferencing, we need to understand what

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<sup>1</sup> It has been proposed that our name, Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) is cumbersome and does not effectively convey our remit to promote faith dialogue in Christianity and beyond. **This would need to be considered by the Committee as a distinct matter, discrete from this strategy and any proposal for revision would have to be approved by Meeting for Sufferings.**

drives the move to reduce the size of the Committee still further. We believe that size should follow our outward-facing function and purpose. The proposal of nine members, including those nominated by Scotland, Wales and Ireland and our clerking team, compromises our ability to maintain our presence in representing BYM to other churches and faiths. The members of the Committee are our principal resource and this proposal brings a potential reduction by 40% in the work done.

- ii. The heart of Quakerism is its gathered community. Friends benefit spiritually from spending time together, learning from each other's experiences. We value the opportunity to co-opt on to the full Committee as well as co-opting to any working groups, but we recognise the need to establish some parameters and processes for co-option, such that these Friends also are part of our gathered Committee's faith and life. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this element of our Terms of Reference with Trustees.
  - iii. We recognise that we may need to meet together by video conferencing on additional occasions to deal with routine business. We confirm that between meetings we require our Clerks, in consultation with the Ecumenical & Interfaith Officer, to make decisions in our name on urgent matters.
- 2 Our strategic thinking begins with the *Our Faith in the Future* priorities for the church:

**A. Meeting for worship is the bedrock of living as a Quaker**

In worship we become one with the Spirit, with each other and with our true selves. The Spirit is the source of strength and guidance for all we are and do. Our way of worship is open to all, and we are making it more widely known.

**B. Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all-age**

All are heard, valued and supported both in our needs and our leadings. Everyone's contribution is accepted according to their gifts and resources. All are welcomed and included. There are clear and effective ways of working together on shared concerns. Fellowship and fun strengthen the bonds between us, enhancing a loving community.

**C. All Friends understand and live by Quaker discipline**

Our discipline is actually 'Letting go and letting God': not 'Thou shalt' nor 'I will' but 'What does Love require of us?' It works when we understand it and practise it. Because we understand it, we can share it with

others. Our testimony guides us, but we have to work on what it means for each of us personally.

**D. Quaker values are active in the world**

Our lives speak peace, equality, respect for the earth and all its inhabitants. We offer friendship to all and solidarity to the marginalised. We speak truth to power with love. We hold those in power in the Light. We find creative and nonviolent ways to get our message across. We are in this for the long haul; we're not afraid to take risks. We are called to live in the place where our 'deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet'.

**E. Quakers work collaboratively**

We are well aware that we can't put the world to rights all by ourselves. We value the important work of others. By engaging with them we are already changing the world. We want to break down barriers; we refuse to prejudge who is or is not an ally.

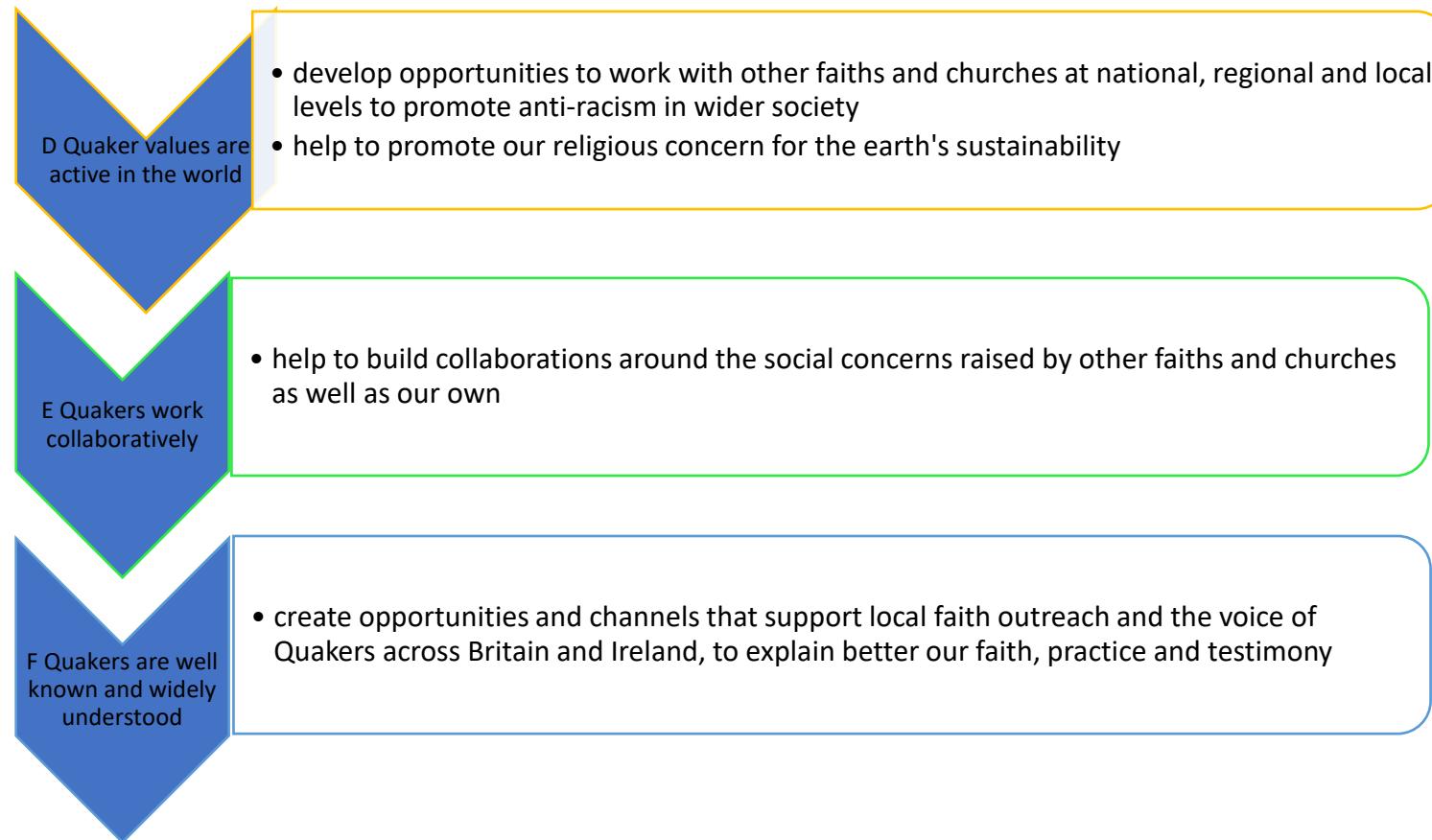
**F. Quakers are well known and widely understood**

We are active in our local communities, reaching out in friendship, making more use of our meeting houses for events and for renting or lending out. All members are ready and equipped to explain our Quaker way confidently and clearly to anyone who asks, as well as to speak publicly on issues of concern. We share our practices as appropriate and make full use of relevant media to reach out widely. In an increasingly divided world, we try to offer 'patterns and examples' of a caring community.

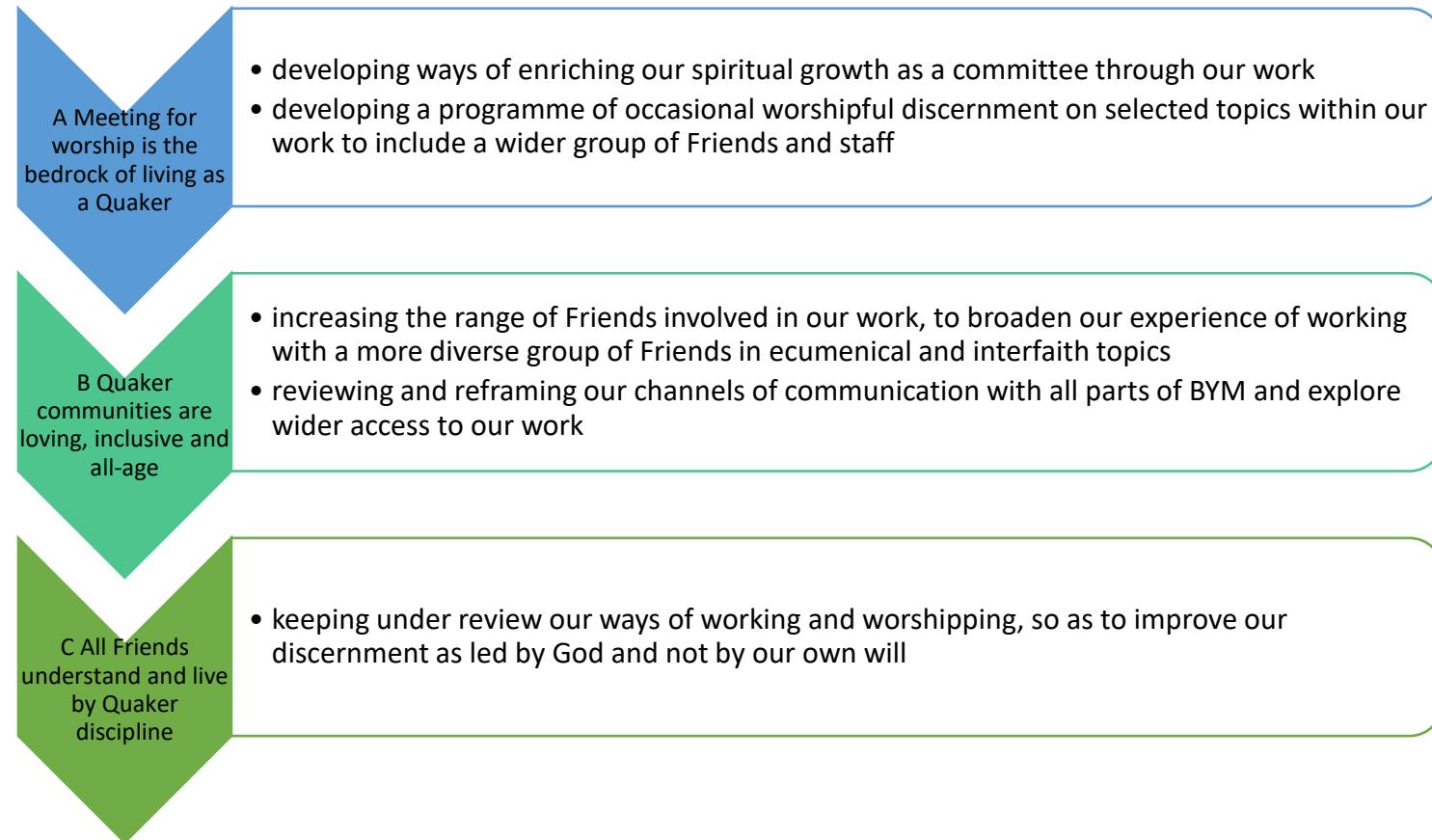
We need not assume that our work can address all of these priorities equally. Our ecumenical and interfaith remit to contribute to *the spiritual direction and ways of working of the church* suggest that we focus our work in accordance with priorities D, E and F, as supported in the application by priorities A, B and C.

## A Framework for 2022-2025

Our aims over the next three years to 2025 will be to:



And we aim to achieve this through



## A Workplan for 2021-2022

- i. Our annual report to Meeting for Sufferings for the year ending June 2022 will focus largely on the revision of the Terms of Reference for this Committee now underway and the process begun by this paper of reviewing the strategic plan for our work over the subsequent period.
- ii. We shall also seek ways in this current year (2021-2022) to encourage BYM Friends to take opportunities to participate in interfaith and interchurch relations wherever they can. This is particularly important in light of the discerned decisions of Yearly Meeting 2021 on our action for justice; to that end, we have embarked on a review of our communications and events programme. (This sits within a number of the strategic priorities listed above.)
- iii. We shall aim to open discussions with Regional Development Workers already appointed to develop mechanisms for supporting local Meeting initiatives, again informed by Yearly Meeting 2021. Wherever possible, we shall involve Young Adult Friends living within the locality to work with us on local interfaith projects and appoint a Young Adult Friend to represent us on national initiatives.
- iv. We shall deliver our biennial joint Woodbrooke conference in March 2022 and attend by representation the QWRC Forum in 2022 and routinely review Minutes of their meetings to identify common concerns.
- v. In June 2022 we shall meet in person in Glasgow and meet with local Friends; this will be our only in-person committee meeting in this year.
- vi. Arrange for the maximum impact of Friends' exchanges with our guests to YM on interfaith concerns, including a Special Interest or worship-sharing event at YM 2022

## A Workplan for 2022-2023

Overall, we aim to strengthen our collaborative relationships between BYM and the other churches and faiths in Britain in times that do not stand still, but offer glimpses of the peaceable kingdom. Taking each of the aims that are set against the strategic priorities, this draft proposes that we attempt to complete the following during the year June 2022 to June 2023:

- 1 *develop opportunities to work with other faiths and churches at national, regional and local levels to promote anti-racism in wider society*

Increase our engagement with the CTE and CTBI (through BYM Diversity & Inclusion Officer, Edwina Peart) and increase our communications on this concern with local Friends involved in interchurch and interfaith activities.

Engage in developing our emerging anti-racist identity as a church amongst other churches and faiths.

*2 help to promote our religious concern for the earth's sustainability*

Introduce at least one new channel of communication to support any localized interfaith or interchurch work on this concern, in active collaboration with related staff in QPSW and FWCC/QWRC as we move through the COP26 experience

*3 help to build collaborations around the social concerns raised by other faiths and churches as well as our own*

Seek ways to explore how we can hear more from local active Friends involved in interfaith exchanges

*4 create opportunities and channels that support local faith outreach and the voice of Quakers across Britain and Ireland, to explain better our faith, practice and testimony*

Arrange for the maximum impact of Friends' exchanges with our guests to YM on interfaith concerns, including a Special Interest or worship-sharing event at YM 2023

Engage from a theological grounding on themed events on anti-racism, the historical Quaker involvement in slavery and our responsibilities in the climate emergency.

Offer active support for one event that aims to explain the Quaker faith to other religious groups.

*5 develop ways of enriching our spiritual growth as a committee through our work*

Develop additional committee worship events or conversations to enrich our community and learning.

Continue to share opportunities to access materials or events for personal spiritual growth.

*6 develop occasional events to bring access to worship around our work to the wider BYM and staff*

Offer other events or new materials each year to the wider BYM or staff community to share our work and worship and to support local interfaith initiatives.

Visit Friends in Wales in person in June 2023.

*7 increase the range of Friends involved in our work, to broaden our experience of working with a more diverse group of Friends in ecumenical and interfaith topics*

Identify and co-opt one or two Friends outside of our committee to represent us and our work on specific projects or topics, ensuring that we receive their reports and meet with them.

In particular, co-opt Friends with theological knowledge and understanding to engage with us on national matters that, within the interfaith and ecumenical agendas, require statements of Quaker faith, conscience and discipline.

Invite QWRC, QPSW, QL and YFGM representation to attend any events of common interest.

*8 review and redevelop our communications with all parts of BYM and explore wider access to our work*

Implement and improve our new communications methods to support internal and external dialogue and understanding of interfaith difference and religious literacy, involving specialists outside the committee to draft informed responses to consultations as necessary.

*9 keep under review our ways of working and worshipping, so as to improve our discernment as led by God and not by our own will*

Ongoing responsibility of the Clerks and Elders of this Committee for the manner of holding meetings for worship for business.

Ensure that in this year, one meeting over a weekend is held in person and consideration is given to blending other meetings or events.

Arrange our meetings in line with the budgets set and taking into account the climate impact of our activities and any other directions set by Meeting for Sufferings.

## ANNEX

### QCCIR Duties (within Our Faith in the Future framework)

a. appoints Friends to represent Britain Yearly Meeting on inter-church bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Churches Together in Britain and Ireland,</li><li>• Churches Together in England.</li></ul>	<i>Faith in the Future</i> <b>E</b>
b. appoints Friends to represent Britain Yearly Meeting on the Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom.	
c. liaises with Friends representing Britain Yearly Meeting on inter-church bodies in Scotland and Wales: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Action of Churches Together in Scotland/ Scottish Christian Forum</li><li>• Churches Together in Wales (Cytûn).</li></ul>	<i>Faith in the Future</i> <b>B</b>
d. arranges meetings/gatherings for Friends active in inter-church and interfaith work within Britain and Ireland, encouraging dialogue and mutual support.	
e. identifies, considers and clarifies theological, social and other related issues arising in the life of Britain Yearly Meeting from our inter-church and interfaith involvement within Britain and Ireland. QCCIR will aim to draw these issues to the attention of Meeting for Sufferings.	<i>Faith in the Future</i> <b>D/F</b>
f. produces booklets, pamphlets and study guides on inter-church and interfaith topics.	
g. produce an annual written report focusing on the strategic role of the committee, the significance and impact of its work, and future plans (see item 2c).	<i>Faith in the Future</i> <b>B</b>
h. comply with the requirements set out in Quaker Faith and Practice and with the applicable policies and procedures adopted by Meeting for Sufferings, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, Management Meeting and other Central and Standing Committee of Britain Yearly Meeting	<i>Faith in the Future</i> <b>C</b>

i. ensure that its work, including that of any working groups is manageable and achievable within available resources	
j. respect the existence of the climate emergency and will aim to minimise the impact of its operations and travel, including in respect of its meetings and the meetings of any working groups.	
k. ensure that the Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC) is regularly updated on inter-church and interfaith developments, which may inform or impact upon our dialogue with Friends worldwide.	<i>Faith in the Future</i> <b>B</b>
l. promote interfaith and inter-church dialogue through hosting guests from other faiths or churches during Yearly Meeting.	<i>Faith in the Future</i> <b>E</b>
m. draft responses on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting to consultations on issues of faith, order, life and worship which are relevant to the activities of Britain Yearly Meeting.	<i>Faith in the Future</i> <b>F</b>
n. nurture Friends (Members and Attenders) – especially within local meetings – in their awareness and understanding of the inter-church and interfaith dimension of religious and spiritual life, encouraging them as appropriate, responding to requests for information and facilitating mutual learning and sharing knowledge.	<i>Faith in the Future</i> <b>B/F</b>
o. work with others across Britain Yearly Meeting to develop efficient mechanisms for collaboration (see item 2d).	<i>Faith in the Future</i> <b>E</b>
p. engage young adult Friends (Members and Attenders) in aspects of its work to develop expertise and to provide continuity (see item 4e).	<i>Faith in the Future</i> <b>B</b>

## Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC) annual report to Meeting for Sufferings

Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC) work is within and across the world family of Quakers. We are charged with a dual remit:

- Enriching understanding between British Friends and Friends worldwide.
- Engaging Quakers in Britain in Quaker issues and concerns around the globe.

QWRC committee members are also appointed as BYM representatives to Friends World Committee for Consultation – European and Middle East Section (FWCC-EMES).

### A. Overview

In 2022 our main focus was enabling Friends from Britain Yearly Meeting to engage with other Yearly Meetings and Quakers from Yearly Meetings around the world to attend Britain Yearly Meeting as well as strengthening our relationships with EMES and other sections of FWCC.

We also have new terms of reference and hope that these will be fully implemented.

The committee is supposed to have six members but we have only had five members in 2022 with only three members continuing their service in 2023. We are working with Central Nominations Committee to address this issue.

We have also considered how our work can be anti-racist and sustainable.

### B. QWRC in 2022

Our activities included

#### a. Liaison with the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) and representation on European and Middle East Section (EMES-FWCC)

We continue to interact online with people from EMES-FWCC and other Sections through regular events such as EMES representatives' meetings, EMES peace & service network meetings and FWCC Quaker Conversations.

This year EMES held its first blended annual meeting in Paris. Two committee members attended in person and two online. At this meeting we accepted the EMES sustainability policy and those of us who attended in person were glad to travel by train.

The theme was: **From Crisis to Connection: working creatively to heal our fractured world**

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2 (NRSV)*  
The epistle is available at  
<https://fwccemes.org/news/emes-annual-meeting-2022-epistle>

At this meeting we were moved to hear of the work that Quaker communities in countries neighbouring Ukraine are doing to support those who have fled the war and those who are still there.

We also held meetings with Tim Gee, FWCC General Secretary, and Michael Eccles, EMES Section Secretary, where we heard about the work FWCC and EMES are planning for 2023.

#### **b. Guests and worship at Britain Yearly Meeting 2022**

Given the continuing uncertainty around travel and restriction due to the pandemic, we decided to invite guests from other part of the world to attend online only. We invited eight guests, two from each FWCC section, focusing on Yearly Meetings and groups who would not normally be able to attend. This posed some challenges regarding language, time differences, internet connectivity and familiarity with British Quaker processes. We were challenged to think creatively and remember that our ways of doing things are not the 'right' or the only ways. While the attendance of guests varied, the efforts we made were appreciated. We feel it is an important way of developing increasing understanding between Quakers around the world and hope to do this again.

We held two welcome sessions online and an informal get together for Quakers from other Yearly Meetings who attended in person. This informality worked well and we hope to repeat this in 2023.

The four blended semi-programmed worship sessions were well-attended and appreciated despite some technical challenges. These were led by Quakers from Bolivia, El Salvador, Poland and Uganda.

#### **c. Supporting BYM representatives to European Yearly Meetings**

The late appointment of BYM representatives to European Yearly Meetings meant that we were unable to hold the planned session to explain their role and enable them to learn from each other. We hope to resume this in 2023.

#### **d. Twinning**

We have started to consider how we can develop guidelines to help British meetings that would like to twin with meetings in other countries. We hope that this will help people to develop mutually respectful and fruitful relationships with Quaker communities in different places. We are learning from those who have already done this. If we have the capacity, we hope to develop these guidelines in 2023.

#### **e. Inclusion and Diversity**

We continue to consider this in all our activities, seeking to engage with Quakers around the world in a spirit of mutuality and openness. Our experience of supporting Quakers from countries with limited or restricted access to services made us realise that some BYM systems and processes inhibit participation.

### **C. Opportunities and Challenges in 2023**

While we are already beginning to work in accordance with our new terms of reference, it will take some time for these to ‘bed down. We need to think carefully about how we co-opt members in ways which are inclusive and rewarding for those involved.

In 2023 we plan to focus on:

- Welcoming friends around the world to Britain Yearly Meeting and, with Woodbrooke, hosting the EMES annual meeting in May 2023. We hope this will be an opportunity for British Friends to get to know EMES Friends.
- The FWCC World Plenary will be held in South Africa and online in 2024. We hope to help British Friends prepare for this and expect to be involved in the discernment to appoint representatives from BYM to attend in person.

Our ability to do this work alongside our usual responsibilities is dependent on the committee being at full capacity. We hope we will have new members in 2023.

## **Queries for MfS**

- How might we best enable British Friends to prepare for the 2024 FWCC World Plenary?
- How else could we encourage more British Friends to engage with Quakers around the world?

Tracey Martin, Clerk  
November 2022

## Epistles and reports from BYM representatives attending other European Yearly Meetings in 2022

- Belgium and Luxembourg YM – Jane Harries, South Wales AM / CCR De Cymru
- France YM – Tricia Bridgewater, North Wales AM / CCR Gogledd Cymru
- German YM – Till Geiger, East Cheshire AM
- Ireland YM – Derek McLean, North Scotland AM and Diana Lampen, Central England AM
- Netherlands YM – Jan Arriens, Southern Marches AM
- Nordic Yearly Meeting – Alastair Thomas, Lancashire Central & North AM
- Switzerland YM – Jonathan Lingham, London West AM

### Belgium and Luxemburg YM

**Epistle from Belgium and Luxemburg Yearly Meeting 2022** annual gathering held at Chant d'Oiseau, Brussels, Belgium 17–19 June 2022

#### Community, Compassion, Unity

To Friends everywhere:

Dear friends, lieve vrienden, chers amis, liebe Freunde, Léif Frënn, queridos amigos, cari amici, greetings.

28 friends from Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Germany, Wales and England gathered in the peaceful Maison Notre-Dame du Chant d'Oiseau (Bird Song)

<http://www.chantoiseau.be/language/en/>

This gathering was two years in the making and was our first in person since 2019. We each came with our individual gifts such as unique life experiences, cultural diversity, inner guidance, loving hearts, hope, courage, and curiosity. Some also arrived feeling disconnected from one another, weary and awkward.

Jennifer Kavanagh and Edwina Peart were invited to bring fresh perspective on the theme of Community, Compassion, and Unity.

Jennifer grounded the three topics in the truth of our interconnected oneness. This mutuality extends into all forms of life throughout the universe. The reality, though, is that a community can never be perfect. We are not saints. We can love each other, disagree, and make each other uncomfortable. Compassion, however, is a relationship of mutual benefit with no dividing line between giver and receiver. We are called to take action and responsibility for one another. Unity is not uniformity. Unity is found in and through the Divine within us and can hold paradoxes for us.

Edwina challenged us to think about the application of these concepts of community, compassion, and unity in our Quaker community using the lens of the war in Ukraine. She noted diverse instinctive reactions to welcoming war refugees into our communities accepting native Ukrainians while creating barriers for African, Caribbean and Middle East nationalities. Who are we welcoming into and excluding from our local Quaker community? Are we willing to really question why attenders leave Quakers?

After these two presentations, breakout groups were formed in English, French, and Dutch recognising the rich language and cultural diversity in our Yearly Meeting.

There was also time for individual presentations and discussions on subjects such as community building at Pendle Hill, which currently holds a daily blended meeting for worship with 10 people or more in 'The Barn' and perhaps 100 online. We discussed in what form of meetings might our Quaker community go forward with face-to-face, blended, or online as we have used all three since the pandemic began.

Presentations/discussions were also led on Diwan House in Brussels, a local charity for refugee asylum seekers to which our Meeting has long given practical and financial support, and how we can critically look on security concerns in our world today in order to explore longer-term peaceful solutions. We are particularly mindful of present conflicts and tensions in Eastern Europe.

In the final all-participants session of the day, Jennifer and Edwina posed questions for us to answer in a variety of ways including a one-to-one inner/outer circle exercise, increasing person to person communication in a simple context, something we haven't been able to do since the pandemic started two and a half years ago. The main day ended with a guided social, musical and spiritual evening demonstrating the connection of the rhythm and sound of the musical genre known as "Gospel" or "The Blues" with the human spirit and heartbeat.

On Sunday morning before closing Meeting for Worship, we were challenged by Jennifer and Edwina and given individual time to reflect, through writing or drawing imagery, on the Unity that we each aspire to reach, reflect and generate in our Yearly Meeting. With this encouragement, we hope to walk forward together into the post-covid world discovering new ways to communicate and build community with compassion for all.

- In Friendship • Met hartelijke groeten • Bien amicalement • Mit freundlichen Grüßen
- Mat Frändleche Gréiss • En Amistad • In amicizia

Ruth Harland, Clerk

Submitted by epistle drafting committee of Sasha Hologne, Janice Thomson, and Daniel Clarke Flynn

## **France YM**

### **Report from France Yearly Meeting**

Friday October 28th – Sunday October 30th 2022, Le Lazaret, Sete, France

I was delighted to have been invited to this very special AA (Assemblée Annuelle) of Quakers in France. Firstly it was the first that had been held in person for 3 years, as many others, but secondly because it coincided with the 200th anniversary celebrations for the Quaker Meeting House just up the coast in Congénies. I had already visited Congenies several times before and it is a place I just love.

The AA was held in a family holiday camp right on the coast. We all had mixed feelings about the heat wave that coincided with the AA. On the one hand we enjoyed walks in warm sunshine, swimming in the sea and yoga on the beach. On the other, we recognised that this was probably a sign of the more troubling aspect of climate change.

The accommodation was excellent, with several large rooms we could use for events and breakout activities. The restaurant was huge and looked over the sea and we enjoyed superb cuisine in the company of families, youth groups and other groups like ours.

The AA started with the CAR; Conseil d'Administration Representatif. We were a small group – just 17 Friends there in person, with 5 online. I was a little surprised to discover that the CAR and the entire AA was conducted only through the medium of French, with no translation facilities. I was glad (maybe relieved?) that my French was good enough to follow most of it. Parts were blended and other parts were not. The technology held up sometimes but did not always cope well with making the event inclusive to Friends at home.

The CAR started with the usual sorting out of technical issues and a very short silence – just about 2 minutes, which took me by surprise, being used to much longer periods of silence. The business covered the accounts and how they might manage them better, the official recognition of a same sex marriage (which had occurred several years before and where one partner had already died), the planning of a commemorative tapestry for Congénies (inspired by our Quaker Tapestry), the sale of the old Centre Quaker Internationale in Paris and the plans for the purchase of a new one. There was also a call to pay for Friends in roles to receive training – something that had not been done before. I was reminded how lucky we are in Britain having Woodbrooke on our doorstep and bursaries to help with costs.

We then settled into our accommodation, met together to be greeted by the manager of the centre and were offered some local wines as aperitif in the courtyard. We then had plenty of time to chat and get to know each other.

### **Attendance**

French Quakers are very thinly spread across France. Many of them know each

other but actually see each other very seldom. The weekend AA was planned with lots of down time to allow for people to catch up with each other, which they especially relished as it had been so long since most of them had met. This worked very well for me too as it gave me time to meet and chat to lots of people.

The Quaker community falls roughly into three groups: French (but often with connections to Britain), British Expats and American Expats. There are currently 5 'Groups' (what we would call local meetings) of Quakers in France: Paris, Languedoc (centred on Congénies), Nantes and Toulouse and a group that meets online called the 'Ami(e)s Isolé(e)s, with a new group currently forming in L'Aquitaine. I was the only representative of another Yearly Meeting attending in an official capacity (due to France AA's dwindling resources), but we were also joined by a Swedish Friend, two Friends from Switzerland, a visitor from Madagascar and Michael Eccles from EMES / FWCC.

The numbers varied day by day but we were about 50 Friends during the weekend, including quite a few young adult French Friends who I really enjoyed getting to know. They brought laughter, energy and much inspiration to the gathering.

### **Language**

A decision had been taken earlier in the year to conduct all the AA business entirely in French in recognition of the fact that this was France's Yearly meeting held in France, and to encourage more French people to attend. Apparently the numbers of French Friends attending had been low previously when the meeting had been conducted mostly in English. Success in this was mixed. The Quakers attending all felt it important to conduct the business in French and this had been achieved. A Madagascan visitor was able to join in with the whole weekend, despite having no English. Contributions were lively, frequent and from almost everyone present.

However from time to time there was some criticism of errors in French pronunciation and grammar, with a few breakdowns in understanding as a result. Agreeing the minutes from the business constituted not only a lesson in right ordering at times, but also in the correct use of French Grammar. I was struck by how gentle, amiable and relaxed this process was; Friends showing great humility and really helping each other with a tender hand.

Coming from Quakers in Wales, where we conduct our business bilingually, the sensitive and important issue of language was of particular interest to me. The challenges were different in France but there were many similarities; the importance of respect for all, the fact that when trying to express deep and complex matters from the heart we generally feel more able and comfortable doing this in our mother tongue, and the vital ingredient of patience as we ensure that language-wise at least, we are being truly inclusive. Talking with Swiss Friends over lunch one day, the same issues arise in their yearly meeting, but with three languages instead of two.

## **Theme**

After dinner at 9pm on the Friday night, we all gathered for the introduction to the theme of the weekend: "Comment L'Esprit me guide-t-il? Comment s'ouvrir à la voix intérieure?" How does the spirit guide me? How can we open ourselves up to the inner voice? It promised from the start to be an inspiring weekend and did not fail in that regard. We concluded the evening with an epilogue: simply a short inspirational reading, which again surprised me. My previous experience of epilogue was that it had often started with a reading, but then followed by 30 or 45 minutes of worship sharing. However I was quite relieved actually, because it was already very late.

## **Activities**

During the weekend we took part in lots of activities to help us get in touch with the spirit; mindful walking, yoga, spontaneous dance (more successful for some than others (including me!) blindfold clay modelling, colouring, drawing. We were led by an English Friend who lives in France.

After the keynote speech, we broke into groups for an activity that we would call 'worship sharing'; contemplating some key phrases from David Lorimer's talk and sharing our thoughts. My group was beautifully led by our Swedish Friend and was very deep and moving. The snippets we contemplated were very simple, which led to great creativity.

## **Keynote Speaker**

The keynote speaker was David Lorimer; writer, poet and Programme Director for the Scientific and Medical Network. David had led 'Panetarymic' exercise on the beach in the early morning of Saturday. These exercises had been devised and promulgated by a Bulgarian Peter Deunov, whose work David had learnt Bulgarian in order to understand (quite a feat, I understand, even for a linguist). David's lecture was on the theme of 'How to know the spirit' and covered a vast range of works and beliefs over centuries of theological thinking on the subject, including from Duenov.

I have to admit that David lecture, which was delivered in fluent French, was one bit where I struggled somewhat to understand. It was long, (I had not realised quite how much the French love a long academic lecture – we had several over the course of the weekend) quite fast and very dense. Enough food for thought for weeks of activities, if not longer. I am afraid my 'inner voice' at this point, although trying to keep up and be nurtured, was also shouting 'please slow down!! David took us through many eras of thought on the spirit (such as the era of faith, intelligence, love, prophecy), our relationship with the spirit (often expressed as a female entity) and through many writers and their works. The sub-text to the lecture was: 'to faith, add knowledge' and we considered how faith changes as knowledge increases.

Some take-aways for me from this lecture included the idea that we need to know where we are coming from before we know where we are headed: our birth / rebirth, our darkness and light, our sleep and forgetting, our incubation in silence and our

reawakening. I was interested also in the theory of the evangelism of Mary Magdalene (not a prostitute as Pope Gregory had claimed but one of Jesus' true followers). The story goes that Mary had come to France and had settled in Languedoc after Jesus' death – I had visited a museum and churches on the south coast in Saintes Maries de la Mer previously, which had recounted this tale. David took us through some of Mary's testimony – the gospel of Mary - which had been translated into Occitan (southern French dialect). I found the parts we considered very moving and strangely familiar, despite their age. For example she described followers of Christ as 'Friends of the Spirit', rather than servants.

### **Centre Quaker International (CQI)**

I learnt that the Centre Quaker International is a 'cultural' organisation (rather than a charity) which managed a Quaker Centre in Paris, which had been gifted to France by American Quakers as they left at the end of the second world war. There had been much debate over a number of years, about what to do with the centre, but due to a number of significant problems with the building, they decided to sell it. CQI was then responsible for the money raised.

A decision was taken to set up a new not-for-profit organisation jointly owned by CQI, the Assemblée Annuelle des Quakers and individual Quaker Groups. CQI and the AA would contribute the same amount to the new organisation, with Groups invited to contribute a nominal sum to participate. The new organisation would then be responsible for buying, setting up and running a new Quaker Centre in Paris, which would be more 'fit for purpose'.

As often happens with property issues, this process had not been without difficulty and upset. However at the CAR the proposal was agreed and confirmed in the AGM of the AA, where decisions of the CAR are ratified officially. French law being different from ours, the state requirements of the CQI, the AA and the new organisation are quite different from ours, and although I did not completely understand it, they seem to be much lighter touch than those of the Charities Commission.

So the upshot of all this, is that in a few years' time, we can look forward to a new Quaker Centre in Paris.

### **Booklet: Ami(e)s Francais(es)**

I was given a booklet of French Quakers, which I devoured on the first night. It had been put together finally (after a lot of encouragement and effort) in 2020 and contained both a photo of each Friend, an account of how they became a Quaker and how they live out their Quakerism. I thought it was a lovely way to get to know them all while they are still living (well, most still are). Oftentimes, we only really find out about the life of Friends when they die. The accounts were not selected because they were particularly eminent or famous Friends, but ordinary 'Friends on the Bench.'

I found the booklet inspirational on a number of different levels and intend to suggest this idea to Quakers in Wales. Over lunch, a young French Friend I was chatting to about this, suggested putting this on our website as a kind of blog. Brilliant!

### **Congénies**

We left Le Lazaret in shared cars at about 3pm on the Sunday and regrouped in Congénies, to celebrate its 200th year anniversary. The Friends in Residence, Amy and Chamba made us all very welcome. It was lovely to see them again. We all regrouped in the village community centre for an official welcome from the Mayor (a lady not to get on the wrong side of, apparently) and we were treated to a lively, interesting, long and extremely entertaining (apparently, I thought I did not get all the jokes) lecture, delivered at lightning speed by an eminent historian on the persecution of the protestants in southern France during the last 400 or so years. I was a bit frustrated as I estimated I understood only about half of the talk, but was encouraged when I asked a native French speaker, and he admitted that he had only got about 60% of it himself! Protestantism being more common than Catholicism in that part of France, the persecution had had a profound effect on the local history and bits of its story I had already encountered many times in local monuments in the region. Obviously the development of Quakerism formed part of this story.

We ate together that evening in a marquis in the beautiful garden at Congénies. It was a warm, balmy evening full of mosquitoes, which was unexpected given that it was nearly November. The dinner conversation at my table was warm, friendly and animated by a Friend who, over many years, has created the meeting house garden. She is an Irish woman who I have met many times before, and who lives nearby. She was complaining about the loss of the vocative in the Welsh language, because she maintained Welsh would have been so much easier to understand, had they kept it. Having thrown us all into utter confusion, along with the wine (always present at a Quaker gathering in France) excellent food and great company, we had a delightful evening full of laughter.

The Amis Residents had done an amazing job of arranging for everyone to stay either at Congénies or nearby in B&Bs. We met for breakfast and then more lectures. However the technology failed for Friends at home, causing delays and some disruption. I am not sure how this was resolved - a kind Friend drove me to the station where I took my train to leave, sad that I could not stay for the rest of the celebrations. However I needed to work the following day.

I left with a warm feeling of togetherness and acceptance. I had met so many Quakers from France – French, English and American – who I will keep in touch with, to further strengthen the bonds of Friendship.

Tricia Bridgewater

## **Epistle from France Yearly Meeting**

October 2022, Domaine de Lazaret, Sète and Congénies Quaker House

To all our Friends throughout the world:

This year we spent a weekend together in a spirit of exchange and communion at the Domaine de Lazaret in Sète by the Mediterranean Sea. We gathered with the purpose of exploring how we can open ourselves up to the Inner Voice and ways in which we can be guided by the Spirit. This gathering was made special by the fact that it was followed by events held in Congénies to mark the bicentennial of the Congénies Quaker House.

In connection with our theme, we invited David Lorimer, author and lecturer, to speak about his vision regarding the Spirit and ways in which we can connect with It. His rich and complex presentation highlighted how powerful a force love is and that we must know ourselves in order to know the Spirit.

In addition, we were introduced to accessible practices for rendering ourselves available to Divine inspiration. There were physical exercises to enhance awareness of the body and its relationship to the Inner Light. We also experienced “flow state” by engaging in creative tasks. Finally, we practiced deep listening as a way to better feel our connection with each other.

To be known by others requires profound knowledge of ourselves.

The current geopolitical context in Europe led us to a discussion of peace on the continent. For this occasion, we invited representatives from EMES-FWCC, QCEA, Friends House Moscow, and QUNO to give presentations. Through these, we learned of various actions being taken by European Quakers, notably in response to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. We are inspired by the Spirit-led actions of these different organizations. And our thoughts are with them and our Friends in Eastern Europe, who have been agents of aid and peace during this time of conflict in Europe.

The question foremost on our minds was, how can we continue following our peace testimony in times of war?

Upon arriving at the Quaker House in Congénies, we were warmly welcomed by our Friends in residence as well as by others from the local community. What a joy to find ourselves together in this charming place replete with history for the occasion of its bicentennial! A lecture given by Patrick Cabanel to an audience of 120 Friends and local residents plunged us into the history of the Protestants of the region. This along with presentations by Jean Paul Chabrol and Edouard Dommen made clear the spirit of resistance and resilience demonstrated by these 17th century Protestants. The first French Quakers in particular were led by the Spirit to confront violence with nonviolence.

The power of the Spirit can manifest itself anywhere, even in the face of adversity.

A panel discussion that brought together several Friends from France and one from Quebec made clear the necessity of creating more French-language content and of strengthening ties amongst Francophone Quaker communities around the world. We were also reminded that the spiritual life of each individual is essential to the construction of a Quaker community.

It is the individuality of each person that enriches the collectivity.

## **German YM**

### **Epistle from German Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends 2022**

At last, after 3 years of meeting online or in blended meetings, we could meet again in presence: 135 Friends including 22 children and young people, delegates from France, Great Britain, Ireland and Switzerland and guests from Georgia, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, the Czech Republic and the USA were gathered in the Haus Venusberg in Bonn from the 13th – 16th October 2022.

On arriving, we were surprised in the opening session to be offered an inspired and inspiring selection of five quotes from five epistles of other countries, which gave us the opportunity to reflect, share and get to know one another better. Nordic Yearly Meeting's question, „Am I aware of what I am called to do?“ connected us back from the world to the theme of our own yearly Meeting „What is the spirit moving us to do in the present day world“. In the following worship sharing and also in the Meeting for Worship the next day we could clearly sense the current themes in our society and the resulting rifts and polarisations of opinions. From the way we approach the climate catastrophe, to the pandemic and measures to deal with its consequences, from the impact of the war in the Ukraine, and the decisions our political leaders are making, to issues around gender which continue to surface, the question „what does the Peace testimony mean for Quakers today?“ burns within us.

We were reminded by Denise Vosseler from Switzerland Yearly Meeting in her Richard-Cary-Vorlesung that the inner light is a yearning and thus a mover for our spiritual journey, and that only with spiritual nourishment can we find our way through difficult times. She pointed us towards our common source. We shared in groups the many different ways her words had touched us.

In our Business Meetings we were finally able to decide to begin work on renovating our Quaker House in Bad Pyrmont, which will bring a breath of fresh air and let light in to the dark rooms in the basement. This is the beginning of a new path to help us make the house our own and to fill it with life. The character of this historical Meeting House will be preserved. We are planning to begin fundraising for the project. While joyful that we could secure the future of our house, we also share an outrage at the the growing threats to all life on this planet, which are more and more noticeable.

The German Yearly Meeting is therefore happy to hear about and support the work of a new Quaker initiative for peace, ecology and justice – Earthcare Witness. Friends are encouraged to get involved. We are also planning to create a network and a forum for peacework. The idea is to thereby support the important work many Friends are already engaged in, and to enable better coordination. A particular concern of ours is the call to the governments of the Russia Federation, the Republic of Belarus and the Ukraine to respect the human right to conscientious objection.

Amidst the existential challenges we face, the spirit moves us to listen to our heart, when it urgently calls us to act in love and truth.

Bonn, 16th October 2022

Jochen Dudeck & Anne Pommier

## Ireland YM

### **Report from Ireland Yearly Meeting 2022, 11-14 August**

I was honoured to be appointed as Representative for Britain Yearly Meeting at Ireland Yearly Meeting (IYM) at the beginning of August. IYM has always been both Northern Ireland and The Republic combined. It was a wonderful experience! Every session started with deep gathered worship for half an hour or so. The Clerks did a magnificent job. We were joined online by Barbara Luetke, from the USA. She writes Historical Quaker novels. She came to Woodbrooke, on an Eva Koch scholarship, to make sure she was accurate in the Quaker history in her novels. And in another session the speaker was Esther Mombo from Kenya. The joys of zooming!

In person we were joined by Nozizwe Madlala Routledge, from South Africa; but now in Geneva as head of the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO). John and I have known her for many years since she had just been released from prison after all her campaigning against Apartheid. The next time we went she was a Member of Parliament! Also joining us was Tim Gee, now Head of Friends World Committee of Consultation (FWCC).

The Public Lecture, which was available online was given by Lynn Finnegan, with the title “Embodying the Quaker Testimonies in Service of a Living Planet: the challenge of asking beautiful questions”. It was so good to have such a positive and stimulating approach.

There were many choices for the times we weren't in the main sessions. I went to two very moving worship sharing sessions.

The whole atmosphere was relaxed, positive and friendly.

Personally, it was a joy to be back in Northern Ireland, without the challenge of The Troubles, and to reunite with many old friends and make many new ones. I hope to

remain in contact with some of them. It was quite hard to say goodbye! I say I left my heart behind!

I have already shared this report in my own Meeting's newsletter, and forwarded it to the Central England AM Newsletter.

Diana Lampen

**Report from Ireland Yearly Meeting**, Belfast, 11 – 14 August 2022, Stranmillis University College.

**Theme:** Hope, Renewal, Healing - Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. (Romans 12:2)

This was a very intimate and relaxed YM with around 80 Friends present and up to 20 Friends joining via zoom. Irish Friends gave a warm welcome to representatives from the UK and several European countries. Business was kept to a minimum to provide space for a number of international speakers, mostly women. Because of the small numbers I had warm and recurring encounters with several Friends over the weekend. There were strong themes of empowering women, anti-racism, climate change, tackling injustice and working for peace.

**Barbara Luetke**, spoke to us from Missouri, USA on the theme of 'My Spiritual Journey – writing Historical Quaker Novels'. Barbara explained that she wanted to bring alive the story of young Quaker women in the early years of the Society. Her first novel The Kendal Sparrow is about the life of Elizabeth Fletcher. She has recently moved to live in Missouri and has become aware that the past prosperity of the hemp industry there was built on African American slavery and is researching this.

**Jacqueline Stillwell**, from New Hampshire, USA, spoke to us on the theme of 'Sharing God's Abundant Love'. She is General Secretary of Right Sharing of World Resources, an independent Quaker not-for-profit organisation which promotes a ministry of right sharing and right relationships, sharing God's abundant love with our brothers and sisters in Kenya, Sierra Leone, and India. Grants are given to marginalised women to start a business who come together in groups to support each other. Jackie asked us: are we aware that we always have enough and more to share, and do we pay attention to the difference between what we need and what we want?

'Celebrating Women's Prayer Meetings and Peacemaking'. **Esther Mombo** Associate Professor in Theology at St Paul's University in Limuru, Kenya joined us online. She has a particular interest in the nature of prayer meetings and the role of women in peacemaking. She explored with us her work with the United Society of Friends Women, and how they develop strategies to navigate the culture of power that comes from a triple heritage of patriarchy. The Society was set up originally by

missionaries, started as a prayer group, but then became an empowering way for women to interpret and share the scriptures together. It has given them hope as they put their trust in God to lead them through difficult situations. The Prayer Groups provide care for the vulnerable and disadvantaged, but also question how they as women can challenge the cultural and socioeconomic systems that breed conflict in order to resist injustice and build peace. The United Society of Friends Women sets an inspiring example to women across the world.

‘My Journey to Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) and hopes and dreams for the future.’ We welcomed **Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge (QUNO)** who was appointed as Director of the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva in November 2021. Nozizwe is a pacifist and lifetime campaigner for human rights and justice, and brings all this experience to her new role. She shared some of her past struggles in South Africa, which set out her path to peacemaking through times of imprisonment and hopelessness during the apartheid era. Following the light and hoping for ‘freedom in our time’ was what sustained her and the other campaigners.

Nizizwe told us that the current QUNO programmes in Peace and Disarmament, the Human Impacts of Climate Change and Human Rights and Refugees are all interconnect with the aim of fostering lasting global peace. A fourth pilot programme, Sustainable and Just Economic Systems, looks set to be made permanent if funds allow. She said our enemies are not external ones requiring increasing military spending, but ill health, poverty and homelessness. Courage is the ability to overcome fear. In the depths of my vision it doesn’t matter if I’m afraid

The public lecture ‘ Embodying the Quaker Testimonies in Service of a Living Planet: The Challenge of Asking Beautiful Questions’ was given by **Lynn Finnegan**, member of Coleraine Meeting, currently worshipping with Limerick Friends. Lynn is a writer for the International Institute of Sustainable Development, an independent think tank working to create a world where people and the planet thrive. She is also an illustrator, and lives in the Cloughjordan Eco-village, Co. Tipperary with her husband and two small children.

Lynn challenged us to ask what does it mean to be a spiritual community when the living planet is under threat? She urged us to build our relationship with our landscape and to see the world as something sacred. Good, beautiful questions are more interesting and useful than the right answers; they can have the power to open up the possibility of relationship and move us towards a more shared humanity. We learnt about the idea of the 'Tragic Gap' presented by Parker Palmer, a US Quaker writer - the gap between the hard realities of life and what we know is possible. Lynn explored various understandings of hope from 'eco-psychology' literature and Quakerism, including Joanna Macy's 'active hope' and the notion of 'living in the power of love.'

To move toward a world in which both people and the planet can thrive, we must have the courage to stand in the Tragic Gap - as Quakers have been doing for centuries. Our faith asks us to see the world both as it is and as it could be; we should fully acknowledge and welcome both our anger and our optimism, both our grief and our love for the Earth. Lynn suggested that we need to bring the whole of our sustainability journey under the ordering of the Spirit, surrendering ourselves to the way of Love. She ended with the challenge 'See you in the Tragic Gap.'

### **"What does love and our Peace Testimony require of us?"**

In a period of discernment we remembered Nozizwe Madlala – Routledge's statement that to achieve peace, we must prepare for peace. We asked how can we help prepare for peace in Ukraine? What would restorative justice look like for Ukraine, and for Russia? How would it look for European communities and institutions to be "pre-positioned for peace"? These are challenging questions in a time when our societies and governments are becoming increasingly militarised.

After the experience of lockdown it was a great joy to meet together with Friends in Ireland along with international visitors and speakers. I found the talks and the lecture inspiring and left with a sense of hope about the future. And I remember Lynn Finegan's words on the usefulness of asking beautiful questions which have the power to move us towards a shared humanity.

I have family connections with Dublin and Galway and plan to return to IYM next year in Dublin. I have shared my experiences in Belfast with Friends and friends in West Scotland Area Meeting, and in my local meeting in Orkney where I live. I am writing a report for the WSAM newsletter.

Derek McLean

### **Epistle from Ireland Yearly Meeting**

14 August 2022

To Friends everywhere.

We send loving greetings from Ireland Yearly Meeting, held in sunshine from 11<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> August 2022 at the green and leafy campus of Stranmillis University College, Belfast. The theme of this year's Yearly Meeting was 'Hope, Renewal, Healing' supported by the Bible verse '*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind*' (Romans 12:2).

This was our first Yearly Meeting to take place in Belfast, and also our first 'hybrid' meeting. With the help of a skilled volunteer technical team we were able to welcome visitors and speakers both in person and from around the world. It was a joy to gather again after the cancellation of Yearly Meeting 2020 and the online only event

of 2021. The hybrid nature of the event was really enriching, and enabled us to welcome visitors from distant locations than usual. Barbara Luethke joined us from Missouri on Thursday evening for the Ministry and Oversight session to talk about her novel ‘The Kendal Sparrow’ based on the life of Elizabeth Fletcher, a young 17<sup>th</sup> century Quaker. On Friday, we welcomed Esther Mombo from Kenya, who told us about the inspirational peacemaking work of the United Friends Women’s prayer groups. Friends joining via Zoom from places including Mexico City, New England and Dublin were able to ask questions and take a full part in the proceedings.

Two Friends who continued this global theme included Tim Gee, new Director of FWCC and Jacqueline Stillwell, Director of the Right Sharing of World Resources. They both challenged us with questions. How can we reach out to Friends across the world and connect in our spiritual lives? How do we decide what is enough for our needs? Can we share more generously with those whom relatively small amounts of money can have a huge impact? We are called to make a more radical expression of our faith and surrender ourselves to the ordering of the spirit.

The Public Lecture this year was given by Lynne Finnegan, a Young Irish Friend, on the subject *Embodying the Quaker Testimonies in service of a living planet*. Lynne challenged us with a series of ‘beautiful questions’ about what it means to be a member of a spiritual community when the living planet is under threat. If we can surrender ourselves to the way of Love, we are nearer to bringing the whole of our sustainability journey under the order of the spirit.

Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, director of QUNO in Geneva spoke about her journey as a lifetime campaigner for peace and justice. This included time spent in prison in South Africa during the apartheid era. We heard about the current QUNO programmes in Peace and Disarmament, the Human Impacts of Climate Change and Human Rights and Refugees, along with the newer concerns of Sustainable and Just Economic Systems and Retrospective Justice.

Space was deliberately left in the programme to consider what Love and our Peace Testimony requires of us in these turbulent times. The death and destruction in Ukraine following the invasion by Russia has made us long for hope, renewal and healing more than ever. We were asked what does the Peace Testimony mean to modern Quakers? 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’ (London Yearly Meeting, 1993)

Signed on behalf of Ireland Yearly Meeting

Denise Gabuzda, Clerk

Pleasance Perry, Asst. Clerk

William D.A. Haire

Pauline Goggin

## **Netherlands YM**

### **Report from Netherlands Yearly Meeting 10/11 June 2022**

*Theme: Inclusive Security*

The original plans for a residential meeting were unable to go ahead as the usual venue was used at short notice to house Ukrainian refugees. Instead, a Zoom meeting was held on the evening of Friday the 10<sup>th</sup>, followed by an in-person meeting in Amersfoort the next day.

Uncertainty about the arrangements meant that I was not notified about what was happening until the day before. My attendance was therefore confined to the Zoom meeting.

When introduced by the Clerk of Netherlands Yearly Meeting, Peter Spreij, I conveyed how inspired we always were by the breadth and depth of the activities undertaken by Dutch Friends.

Most of the opening session of the YM was devoted to business, especially nominations. Much of that had a familiar ring to it. At the end of the session there was an excellent introduction by Kees Nieuwerth to the theme of the Annual Gathering, “Inclusive Security”. As the Epistle (attached) reflects, this was taken further on the Saturday, when Netherlands Yearly Meeting decided to rejoin the Dutch InterChurch Peace Council, which it had decided to leave in 2002.

This was the second time I had attended as BYM Representative, and I found myself warmly welcomed back. An abiding impression was the extent to which the war in Ukraine was uppermost in Friends’ minds. The war was not remote, but was just several hundred miles away, across land. For Dutch Friends, the fact that their country was overrun and occupied within living memory means that the conflict in Ukraine has a special resonance. The Peace Testimony was central; what did love require of us to take it forward?

Jan Arriens  
28 June 2022

### **Epistle from Netherlands Yearly Meeting**

held on Zoom (June 10th) and in person (June 11th) in Amersfoort

Greetings to Friends everywhere

After two years of coronavirus pandemic, this Annual Gathering, too, was special. Important topics that are close to our hearts came together in the content of the event as well as how it took shape. ‘Due to circumstances’, we gathered online via Zoom on Friday evening and in person on Saturday. On Saturday we were the

guests of the liberal Christians (a collaboration of the Mennonite congregation, the Remonstrant congregation, and the Association of Liberal Protestants) who offered their hospitality in their church building in Amersfoort. The reason for this set up for our weekend was, that the location we had originally booked for the entire weekend, suddenly was needed to provide shelter for refugees from Ukraine.

The theme of our Annual Gathering was ‘Inclusive security’. An important part of the agenda of our meeting for worship for business was our membership of the InterKerkelijk Vredesberaad, IKV (the Dutch InterChurch Peace Council), which we had suspended in 1999 and ended in 2002. During this Annual Gathering, we decided to become active members again. In our role within the IKV council itself as well as via this organization, we intend to develop both the theme ‘rethinking security’ and the correlation between peace and ecojustice. We are strongly aware of the responsibility as well as the commitment that we have taken upon us, also represented in the Kabarak Call for Peace and Ecojustice of Quakers worldwide in 2012.

On Friday evening, Kees Nieuwerth shared with us the historical background of the concept of “Inclusive security”, starting with the establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948 in Amsterdam. Jan Schaake of the workgroup ‘Inclusive Security’ explained to us in detail what ‘rethinking security’ means and how this strategy could be realised in the period from now until 2040. Quite clearly he explained which steps we can take to move toward that dot on the horizon. In our base groups, we spoke about: what does this mean for us personally, for us as Dutch Quakers, and in relation to the current affairs?

We concluded, in the words of a well-known song, which Jan reminded us of: “It has already started, don’t you notice?” We can continue with and build on what we already do. In the small and in the big things, as they are one.

We head home in hopes and with the intention of contributing to the Light finding its way into our broken world.

Peter Spreij  
Clerk

## Nordic YM

### Report from Nordic Yearly Meetings 2022, 30 June to 3 July.

I am very grateful to Britain Yearly Meeting for appointing me as their representative to attend the Yearly Meeting Gathering of Norwegian, Swedish, Danish and Finnish Quakers. Because of Covid, this was the first occasion for some years that they had been able to gather in person. The meeting was held in Kungälv, a town a little north of Göteborg (Gothenborg) in Sweden. This was on the pre-1814 border between

Denmark-Norway and the then short length of Swedish coast, with an imposing castle to mark its significance. It was also not far by road from Norwegian centres of population.

The Gathering was held in Nordiska folkehögskolan, the Nordic Folk High School, a residential college in parallel with the main Swedish education system, intended mainly for young adults. Founded in 1947 with internationalist ideals, it was based on Danish Grundtvigian ideas of the 1870s. We were fortunate to have Mariama Elise Guldagger, the daughter of one of the founding couples among us. As well as all the Nordic flags (including those of the Faroes, Greenland, the Åland Islands and the Sami people), the college was also flying the Pride (rainbow) flag to emphasise the equality of all and to counter the populist views of some local politicians.

Having travelled by air from Edinburgh (which avoided congested Manchester airport) to Copenhagen and by train and bus north, I was glad to arrive in time for supper and was made very welcome at a table of Norwegians. This was followed by a formal welcome meeting at which I presented travelling minutes from BYM and from Lancashire Central & North Area Meeting. Later we were joined by Alastair Mackintosh, billed at the keynote speaker, who had had a difficult journey via Heathrow. The meeting was already a gathered one and as we moved into the Epilogue; its tone was set by the refrain of Leonard Cohen's 'Anthem', chosen by the young Quakers present:

"Leave aside your perfect offering. There are cracks in everything – that's how the light gets in."

I went to the Norwegian YM meeting for business (in Norwegian) and found the agenda very similar to ours, including an item about their Tabular Statement, which (unlike ours) has important financial implications, since their membership entitles them to receive a share of the national church tax in proportion to their registered membership. Financially they came out of Covid quite well, with lower income but also lower outgoings for YMs held on Zoom rather than in person. They seem to have gained young participants attending online from widely scattered locations, so some of the discussion was of right ordering, resolved by treating the online meetings as additional meetings for worship of the Oslo meeting.

I joined the "Pacifist not passivist" workshop series, which was obviously much concerned with how to react to the Russian invasions of Ukraine since 2014 and especially since February 2022. There was concern that not enough effort had gone into diplomacy to avert the conflict, although this included both Finland and Sweden making the change from their long-standing neutrality to membership of NATO. There had been minimal opposition in the respective parliaments to these decisions, but this also reflected very wide support in public opinion.

It seemed important to contrast Sin – doing something you know to be wrong – with Evil – inventing an ideology and scenario to justify your wrong actions. The two need

different responses: atonement, forgiveness and reparation for sin, but opposition to and rejection of an evil ideology.

Again, it is important to distinguish between the scenario posed by the question: “What would you do if you or your family were attacked?” versus the over-simple corollary that you should join your country’s armed forces. You would probably choose to defend your family, even at the cost of your own life. But a soldier is trained to obey orders unquestioningly, and is deprived of all freedom of decision or conscience in a war that may be fought remotely (aircraft, drones, missiles) and with remote chains of decision of which the soldier is not a part.

Passivism implies inaction against injustice. Pacifist responses can include palliation, relief for victims and refugees, searching for conflict resolution, support and building quiet contacts with fellow pacifists (such as with Friends House Moscow) and planning for future repairs to damage. We should pray for the moments when it will be possible to make a difference.

There was time for a session of ‘silent walking’ – first making ourselves aware of the earth, air, and nature and then treading lightly through the surrounding woodland.

Alastair Mackintosh, speaking ‘Towards a Quaker Spirituality’, drew on extensive understandings, including the 1947 citation for the Nobel Peace Prize which had recognised that Quakers aimed ‘To build in the spirit of love what had been destroyed by hate.’

A plenary session gave us the opportunity to learn about and practice holding Meetings for Clearness, taking the example (in the case of the group I was with) of someone seeking clearness about a balance between running their own life and addressing the Ukraine war, in what might become an expanding demand for time and resources. The process helped to clarify the question for the focus person, and widened the range of possible activities and how they might be addressed on both spiritual and practical levels. The group appreciated having a calm process of consideration that gave guidance without steering.

While Norwegian and Swedish Quakers are clearly thriving, I hope that it will be possible for BYM, or perhaps FWCC/EMES, to better support the sparse numbers and activities of Quakers in Denmark and Finland. If I can help in relation to Denmark, please let me know.

In the words of the co-clerk’s endorsement to my BYM travelling minute: “It has been lovely having Alastair participating with us at this Nordic Gathering. Light to all of you from all of us.”

Alastair Thomas  
July 2022

## **Epistle from Nordic Yearly Meeting 2022**

To Friends everywhere,

The open and friendly landscape around Nordiska folkhögskolan welcomed us after the pandemic and the war we are now experiencing in Europe. The people who created this place saw indeed “the Light in the crack,” that Leonard Cohen sings about in his thoughts-provoking poem “Anthem” which the young people gifted us, in the epilogue on the first night. The lines from the song that have resonated with us are: ‘Forget your perfect offering, there is a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in’.

Many expressed joy at being able to gather again in person but we were still grateful for digital connections enabling Friends from a distance to join with us for some of our sessions.

Quakers have the capacity to gather into silence and explore, creating a culture of trust and safety. A Friend who was delayed expressed their surprise at encountering such a Gathered (or Covered) Meeting so early in our weekend. That trust enveloped us in many ways during our time together: including the experience of being in the earth – not on the earth – together, in each meeting for worship as well as in our meetings for clearness.

In addressing the theme for the gathering, “Seeking a Quaker Spirituality for our Times” Alistair Macintosh suggested that the task for us Quakers today is to practice holding “hospitable spaces” before the new and uncertain situations we frequently face.

We have been reminded that meeting for clearness is a cornerstone of Quaker practice. We had the opportunity to experience this in small groups, in which a chair for silence was included in the circle. We affirmed that “deepening the question may be more important than answering the question”.

One of the interest group topics was related to being a pacifist today rather than a passivist. How do we experience the war deep inside us?

The most valuable parts of life are being destroyed in the natural world, both for animals and humans. The soil and the air we breathe is being taken from us. War is a system that removes our free will and independence. War is also about what happens when a piece of land which has been destroyed is to be re-established and rebuilt and wounds are to be healed. This takes time and work must be done to put all the small parts together by working for peace at all levels. With a Quaker outlook on life, we can be torchbearers when hope for peace fades.

Another workshop encouraged us to ask questions about how we tie our spirituality to our work with sustainability. In this process of approaching right relationship with

animals we might begin by acknowledging all the animal products fulfilling a quiet place in our homes before considering what we are possibly called to do.

With all this in mind we were invited to consider how we might use each day in a blessed way, asking: “do I see what I am called to do?”

Eleven-month-old Sanni’s vocal ministry has spread joy in the gathering over the whole weekend. The older children and young people had their own program. Alistair shared an ancient Celtic story about the value of sharing; even if it comes at a cost, it may still be with the right thing to do. Creativity formed a significant part of the activities, and the children and young people enjoyed many opportunities to walk and play together – forming new friendships without being hindered by language differences.

Faith is a way of life. We ask ourselves as we leave: “What was awakened in you?” “What will you bring back to your worshipping community?”

A blackbird calls. Another responds. We are walking together in pilgrimage.

In peace and gratitude,

Nordic Yearly Meeting Gathering  
30 June - 3 July 2022

## **Switzerland YM**

### **Report from Switzerland Yearly Meeting, 3-6 June 2022**

From 3-6 June 2022, twenty-four friends (and a lively Bichon Frisé called O'Maley de la Felhoutte) gathered in the mountains near Zurich for Switzerland Yearly Meeting. A few others were able to join via Zoom. I represented BYM in person, and took our greetings to them. And brought theirs back.

Some years ago I used to travel to Switzerland occasionally for work, flying to Geneva in just a couple of hours. But, in keeping with our Quaker concerns about the impact of air travel on the planet, this time I went by...folding bike, several trains, and a bus. Friends told me that the scenery would be better, travelling by train; and it was.

So, eleven and a half hours after leaving home in London I arrived at the eco-friendly Herzberg Conference and Training Centre, in a slight drizzle, but very much looking forward to the weekend ahead.

Now that meeting face-to-face was once more possible, unsurprisingly the theme chosen for the event was “Being together once more – togetherness and listening”. This theme was woven throughout our agenda.

Much of our time was spent on personal and group reflection: how had Covid affected Quaker worship and community; and what was our own experience of God. Themes that continue to be explored in Quaker meetings across the UK. Early morning “silent walks” helped our reflection and enabled us to immerse ourselves in the beauty of our surroundings, for me a very different quality of silence from the one I’m used to at my local meeting in Westminster.

Understandably some of our reflection was coloured by the war in Ukraine, then in its fourth month. One of our sessions was devoted to considering alternatives to violence in this context, requiring us to draw deeply on our beliefs. The piece that Oliver Robertson had prepared for Sufferings in April contributed to our discernment.

Alongside all this we learned more about the important work of the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) from its new Director, Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, and how they continue to use spirit-led “quiet diplomacy” to encourage better listening and understanding among the diplomatic community in Geneva, home to many international organisations<sup>1</sup>. Their work is currently focused around four themes: peace and disarmament; climate change; sustainable and just economic systems; and human rights and refugees. BYM rightly continues to provide them with significant financial support.

Later, Nozizwe, with her husband Jeremy reflected on their former lives in apartheid South Africa, and their work to promote a non-violent response there.

Switzerland Yearly Meeting remains small (around 80 members), and faces many of the challenges that BYM has. But those who were there were enthusiastic and cautiously optimistic about the future of their Meeting. The very fact that they were able to meet in person once more was a cause for much celebration. Their epistle is attached to this note.

It is always good to meet people from other Meetings. I took away many memories. The genuinely warm welcome from Swiss Friends. The glorious setting, in clear Alpine air, God’s presence much in evidence. The discipline of travelling in a carbon-friendly manner so that I could show commitment to “living out my faith”, even though my journey was long, complicated, and cost a lot more than flying. But most of all Swiss Friends’ joy at being able to meet and worship together in person for the first time in three years. This was wonderful to experience. Their gathering was truly founded on love. I was glad to have been a part of this.

Jonathan Lingham, London West AM

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<sup>1</sup> The World Trade Organisation (WTO); World Health Organisation; UNAIDS; Conference on Disarmament; International Organisation for Migration (IOM); International Labour Organisation (ILO); UN Human Rights Council; UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

## **Epistle from Switzerland Yearly Meeting**

### **Being together again: Togetherness and Listening**

Switzerland Yearly Meeting's annual gathering brought nearly 30 people physically together with other Friends joining remotely for sessions that reminded us that digital meetings can bring us all together, but our presence lets us all shine.

Friends reflected on some of the best things about our weekend gathering...

- The simple fact that it happened, and we could be together
- Well-managed discussions during the business meeting
- Successful use of worship sharing for exploring the experience of Corona lockdown and the challenges to pacifism in a time of war
- Herzberg, our beautiful location
- John Woolman's "seeds of war" more broadly applied to the climate, women, and more
- Seeing people come together after our first session and hearing the hum of voices
- Being a slice of bread in Jeremy's toaster during his Alternative to Violence Project (AVP) session
- Emi, the cute little white bichon
- Candied orange peels
- An afternoon nap with the sounds of the oncoming thunderstorm
- The manifest love between everyone gathered.

Friends travelled up the gentle hills north of Aarau on the warm Friday afternoon before the long Pentecost (Whitsun) weekend. This marks our 10th year at the Herzberg; always a wonderful retreat from the hectic world below. Any good event starts with an apéro, followed by shared meals throughout the weekend and a night cap to punctuate our day's journey through sessions exploring our theme, "Being together again: Togetherness and Listening." We solemnly marked the passing of dear Friends. We missed their presence dearly but cherished their memory as we reflected together on more sombre global events, wars, destitution, mass migrations, human-wrought climate change, the pandemic, the mobilization of and expenditures on weapons. Such reflections may leave us feeling helpless, hopeless, and ineffectual but our keynote speakers inspired us that "together, we can create change."

Nozizwe Madlala Routledge is the new director of the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO). She took over from our good Friend, Jonathan Wooley, who entered a well-deserved retirement with his wife Pilar in Mexico. Nozizwe inspired us with stories of her activism as a student in South Africa. She described how, as a political prisoner, the voices of unseen women inmates expressing their togetherness in harmonized song raised her spirits. Later, as the deputy defence minister in South Africa's post-

apartheid government, Nozizwe's initiatives to look at defence through a human security lens – helped create the necessary conditions to prevent war. Peace is more than preparing for war. Change for the good is possible.

Jeremy Routledge, Nozizwe's companion of more than 30 years, introduced us to the tools of the Alternative to Violence Project (<https://avp.international>). His efforts to raise the awareness of South African prison inmates to resolving conflict without violence, inspired us to consider developing our own programs to help needy communities in Switzerland.

We considered the conflict and violence in Ukraine. We asked what we can as Quakers and global citizens do, to prevent war and ameliorate its consequences? We remembered John Woolman's advice to "look upon our treasures, and the furniture of our houses, and the garments in which we array ourselves, and try whether the seeds of war have any nourishment in these possessions or not". Quakers have always faced probing questions and difficult choices in times of war. We affirmed that individually and corporately there is much we can do before, during, and after war. Yes, we can:

- Facilitate deep listening and reconciliation
- Monitor disinformation in the media
- Advocate for the provision of humanitarian aid
- Support conscientious objectors
- Advocate for sanctions despite their impact on us
- Strengthen our partnerships and
- Rehearse the logic and instruments of nonviolent conflict resolution just as vigorously as NATO rehearses manoeuvres to use weapons to deter war.

We engaged with each other in and out of other optional workshops. We learned of James Nayler's example of standing up for what you believe, even if those actions may be considered blasphemous. Nayler's story gave us an opportunity to explore our shadow selves and the shadow of our Quaker organization from a Jungian perspective. Do we always live up to the virtues that we feel define us? Do we always stand up for what we believe? We joined together to find "That of God in everyone" and ask, "how does God manifest in us", especially in these most trying times. Can we love our enemy as ourself? The weekend was our first full gathering following the lifting of all COVID lockdown restrictions. We reflected on being together again, asking ourselves how the pandemic impacted our community and worship practices. We acknowledge that meeting online provides opportunities for geographically distant members to join in communion. However, we conceded that meeting in person is an infinitely better, more enriching experience. The energy and connection of joining hands in our circle is hard to describe.

Our annual gathering also provided time for silent retreat and reflection, particularly in the wee hours when we witnessed a powerful storm and lashing rain. Weather did

not deter us from silently walking in the verdant forest at dawn, listening to bird song, and opening ourselves to the spirit moving within us. Some Friends more gently came together in movement exercises. Gentle movements together, nature, and the voices of birds at an early hour are all remarkable. They all remind us that we must always listen for God's voice and find the light at all times, not just before and after the maelstrom. What do we do now as Quakers to manifest our witness to the essential importance of peace and reconciliation as the means to end war?

But we are Quakers! We cannot simply end with questions... we must end with dance, song, and an affirmation that Yes, We Can!