



Yearly Meeting of  
the Religious Society  
of Friends in Britain

**To members of Meeting for Sufferings**

7 February 2017

**Meeting for Sufferings 4 February 2017**

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your engagement and discipline on Saturday – the clerking team certainly felt supported for our first time at the Sufferings table, and we covered a lot of business together.

So now there are two tasks for you. First please share the following items with your Area Meetings:

1. The report of the BYM Sustainability Group and encouragement to listen to and to help each other in our commitment to become a low-carbon sustainable community.
2. Our concern about the expansion of fracking for shale gas and that Quakers call for a ban on new and intensive forms of fossil fuel extraction. Can your Area Meeting make this position known locally – the text of the minute could be used in letters to MPs.
3. The work of Quaker Housing Trust which is needed more than ever before and about which Area Meetings might like to know more.
4. Plans for Yearly Meeting in Warwick from 29 July to 5 August 2017. Look out for the spiritual preparation materials which should be out just before our next meeting.
5. The minute articulating our response to the current international situation is available for Friends and their meetings to use as they feel appropriate.

Secondly, we would like to hear any further reflections you might have on the home group sessions. Were there things you wish you had said? Amongst the issues that were highlighted was that of the need for stronger engagement with Area and Local Meetings. Friends, how might we do this? Do email [sufferings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sufferings@quaker.org.uk) if you or your AM have further ideas. (I mentioned in our meeting that we can all look for continuous improvement!)

May the God of love and peace be with you.

In Friendship,

Ann Ullathorne  
Clerk

**The following papers are also included in this mailing:**

- December 2016 MfS Minutes

**Useful Links**

**Quaker Housing Trust** - [www.qht.org.uk](http://www.qht.org.uk)

**Creating New Housing Stock** – a national event on 11<sup>th</sup> February, organised by London Quakers - [www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events](http://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events) or [www.londonquakers.org.uk/events](http://www.londonquakers.org.uk/events)  
Laurence Hall would be glad to have the email address of anyone who is interested to know more - please email

**Yearly Meeting Gathering** - [www.quaker.org.uk/events/ymg-2017](http://www.quaker.org.uk/events/ymg-2017)

**A message from Laurence Hall, Young Friends General Meeting representative**

Recent BYM research into Engaging Young Adult Friends has shown that Young adult Friends are as committed to their Quaker faith as ever but they experience numerous obstacles to express that faith in local and area meetings.

Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM) wants to work with you, the representatives to Meeting for Sufferings, to overcome these barriers to Young Quakers that exist within local and area meetings. Together we can look at what needs to change to build the 'loving, inclusive, all-age' community that MfS Our Faith in the Future' promised. First steps took place at this MfS but we need to be active beyond MfS itself, so if you are interested please contact us - [yfgm@quaker.org.uk](mailto:yfgm@quaker.org.uk)

Laurence, YFGM rep to Meeting for Sufferings

**Young Friends General Meeting** – <http://yfgm.quaker.org.uk/>

**Engaging Young Adult Friends report** - <http://www.quaker.org.uk/children-and-young-people/young-quakers>

# **Meeting for Sufferings held at Friends House, Saturday 4 February 2017**

## **MfS/17/02/01 Opening worship**

During our opening worship we have heard read section 25.07 of *Quaker faith & practice*, and we have remembered former members of this meeting who have recently died.

## **MfS/17/02/02 Minutes**

The minutes of our meeting held on 3 December 2016 have been signed.

## **MfS/17/02/03 Adoption of Agenda**

The clerk has introduced the draft agenda, which we have agreed to.

## **MfS/17/02/04 Court and prison register**

We have heard that Ian Bray of Huddersfield Meeting (Brighthouse West Yorkshire AM) was arrested on the 19 November 2016 with 14 others during nonviolent direct action against Heathrow airport expansion. On 22 December the court gave him a 12-month conditional discharge and fine of £105.

We add Ian Bray's name to our court and prison register, and hold him in the Light.

We have also heard that Sam Walton of South London AM was arrested on Sunday 29 January 2017 after entering BAE Systems' Warton site in order to disarm warplanes bound for Saudi Arabia. He has been released on bail pending charges. We have been reminded that last year Meeting for Sufferings recorded Friends' concern about UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia, particularly in light of violent conflict in Syria and Yemen (MfS/16/07/13 refers).

We add Sam Walton's name to our court and prison register, and hold him in the Light.

## **MfS/17/02/05 Membership of Meeting for Sufferings**

Since our last meeting we have received the following nominations and requests for release for Meeting for Sufferings until the rise of Yearly Meeting 2018:

### **Nominated:**

Barbara Bone – Northumbria AM alternate  
Jane Edmunds – Chilterns AM representative  
Malcolm Elliott – West Somerset AM alternate  
Kathy Hindle – Hertford & Hitchin AM alternate  
Maureen Jackson – Hardshaw & Mann AM representative  
Michael Long – Northumbria AM representative  
Martin Pennock – Quaker Life Central Committee representative  
Tony Philpott – Chilterns AM alternate

### **Release requests received:**

Isobel Dunbar – Quaker Life Central Committee representative  
Jane Edmunds – Chilterns AM alternate  
Jefferson Horsley – West Somerset AM alternate  
Michael Long – Northumbria AM alternate  
Headley Parkins – Hertford & Hitchin AM alternate

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

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

Peter Bevan – Worcestershire and Shropshire AM

Tony Faragher – Cornwall AM

Janet Harland – Oxford & Swindon AM

Mavis Iredale – Mid-Somerset AM

**Other visitors:**

Jenny Brierley – Quaker Housing Trust Clerk

Lis Burch – BYM Sustainability Group Clerk

Laurie Michaelis – BYM Sustainability Group

Clare Scott Booth – Yearly Meeting Assistant Clerk

Martina Weitsch – BYM Sustainability Group

Anne van Staveren – Media Relations Officer

**MfS/17/02/06 Britain Yearly Meeting Sustainability Group report**

As to our own planet which God has given us for a dwelling place, we must be mindful that it is given in stewardship. *Qf&p* 25.07

Lis Burch, clerk of the BYM Sustainability Group, has presented its report (paper MfS 2017 02 05).

We have heard of the interesting and unusual task that the Group has in its role in relating to many different parts of the yearly meeting. There is a lot to celebrate in our Quaker engagement with climate change in many areas. There have also been several networking and supportive events that the Group has organised and there has been development in the relationships with Quaker Life and Quaker Peace and Social Witness. Our distinctive Quaker approach to sustainability is that love is the ground and foundation of our original yearly meeting concern (YM 2011 minute 36).

The Group has proposed some changes to the 'Recommendations for Action' that were originally agreed in 2014. These are now divided into 5 sections (Eldership, Oversight, Living faithfully, Right ordering and Witness). We note these.

The Group feels it is important to monitor progress in local meetings as well as centrally managed work but have yet to establish where responsibility could lie for this. We hope they may be able to report about this later in the year.

In the meanwhile, we encourage Friends individually, in local meetings and at Yearly Meeting to listen to each other and to help each other to live faithfully in engaging with our corporate commitment to become a low-carbon, sustainable community. We recognise the considerable resource implications that this may have.

We encourage BYM Trustees to work with the BYM Sustainability Group on relevant issues, including revising committee terms of reference, and addressing gaps in corporate action.

We note that BYMSG was set up in 2014 for three years in the first instance. We agree now to set up a small review group to consider whether this continues to be the

right approach and ask Central Nominations Committee to bring forward three or four names.

We thank the Group for their report and their work on our behalf.

### **MfS/17/02/07 Fracking for shale gas**

We receive minute 4 of Pendle Hill AM held 10 December 2016 regarding fracking (paper MfS 2017 02 06a).

As Quakers we have a testimony to equality of all people and consequently a commitment to promoting the stewardship of the Earth's resources and reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and their effect on climate change.

We unite with the desire of Pendle Hill AM that BYM maximise its involvement in ecumenical and inter-faith structures that allow faith groups to have a strong united environmentalist voice on fracking. We have been encouraged to read of the work already being done by QPSW and many other friends in BYM and support friends in this work.

For some years Quakers in Britain have worked to advocate for climate justice in our central work and meetings. In 2011 we committed to 'speak truth to power' on sustainability issues. We have faith that we can tackle climate change and build a more sustainable future, but we know this is only possible if fossil fuels remain underground.

At this time we are particularly concerned about the expansion of fracking for shale gas. The UK needs to be investing in efficient and renewable energy, and reducing demand, not in additional fossil fuels. Fracked gas is not the low-carbon solution some suggest that it is and is incompatible with tackling the climate crisis. It is destructive of the environment, land and communities.

Quakers call for a ban on new and intensive forms of fossil fuel extraction, known as 'unconventional' techniques, including fracking for shale gas and oil, and underground coal gasification.

We also recommend that Area Meetings make this position known locally, and that Friends may want to join the anti-fracking Worship for Witness on top of Pendle Hill 2pm, 6th May.

We send this minute to Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) and to Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR).

### **MfS/17/02/08 Cadet Forces in Scottish State Schools**

Further to minutes MfS/16/02/14 and MfS/16/10/14 we receive minute QPSWCC 16/109, regarding the promotion of cadet forces in Scottish state schools (paper MfS 2017 02 06b).

We note that Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) is already working to counter militarisation of schools and wider society, and on peace education. However, General Meeting for Scotland last year and Pendle Hill Area Meeting more recently (see minute MfS 17/02/07) have raised issues of lack of transparency, accountability and integrity in government. QPSWCC continues to consider these issues, working with others including Parliamentary Engagement staff, and with Quakers in Scotland.

### **MfS/17/02/09 Meeting for Sufferings annual report**

We have considered the annual report of our work in 2016. We forward the report to Yearly Meeting.

### **MfS/17/02/10 Meeting for Sufferings: mid-triennium check-in**

We have spent time together in home groups, considering how Meeting for Sufferings is working. This has been a chance to remind ourselves of the purpose of Meeting for Sufferings; consider practicalities; and ask ourselves what we might do better.

We have asked: Are we doing the things that Meeting for Sufferings is asked to do? And secondly, what would help us to do this better?

The points that emerge include the following:

1. We have articulated how we are broadly fulfilling many of the requirements of *Quaker faith and practice* Chapter 7 Section 2.
2. Representatives find helpful:
  - draft minutes
  - small groups
  - and residential meetings
3. Representatives feel that the work of Meeting for Sufferings would be improved by stronger engagement by Area Meetings and Local Meetings.
4. We need to keep working on our understanding of the processes within Britain Yearly Meeting (authority, communication etc.).

We ask Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group to study the responses further, and to take things forward.

### **MfS/17/02/11 Appointments**

#### **a) Central Nominations Committee**

Brings forwards the following names for service or release

#### **Appeal to Meeting for Sufferings**

*Release with immediate effect*

Peter Eccles – East Cheshire AM

*Nominated to serve from 4 February until a decision is made and passed on to the parties involved:*

John Lampen – Central England AM

*Nominated to stand in readiness to serve should a member of the appeal group be prevented for whatever reason:*

Ben Pink Dandelion – Pendle Hill AM

**Friends Trusts Ltd**

*Release with immediate effect:*

Tony Crofts – Bristol AM

**Central Nominations Committee**

*Release with immediate effect:*

Georgina Torabi – Devon AM

Alethea Wigzell – Cornwall AM

**Representatives to other European Meetings**

*Nominated to serve for*

**Ireland YM – 20- 23 April 2017 (invitation confirmed)**

Marilyn Higgins – South East Scotland

**Belgium & Luxembourg YM - 12-14 May 2017 (invitation awaited)**

Marion Fairweather – South East Scotland

**Netherlands YM (19-21 May 2017)**

Rachel Ramaker - Sussex West AM

**Switzerland YM – 2-5 June 2017 (invitation awaited)**

Jane Mace – Gloucestershire AM

**Nordic YM – 29th June - 2nd July 2017 (invitation confirmed)**

Fred Ashmore – Kingston & Wandsworth AM

**France YM – 21-24 October 2017 (Invitation Confirmed)**

Joshua Habgood-Coote – Sussex East AM

**German YM – 2-5 November 2017 (Invitation Confirmed)**

Julia Gordon – Northumbria AM

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

**b) Yearly Meeting Nominating Group**

*Release with immediate effect:*

Dawn Filtness – Norfolk & Waveney AM

We release this Friend and thank her for this service.

**MfS/17/02/12 Quaker Housing Trust**

Jenny Brierley, clerk of the Quaker Housing Trust, has presented a triennial report of its work in 2014-2016 (paper MfS 2017/02/10), and she has responded to questions. She has reminded us that the housing crisis is truly shocking but that there is nothing inevitable about it and we need to respond creatively.

We are pleased to hear of the work done by the Trust in supporting a wide range of social housing projects and we note that more funds are needed to continue the work, particularly in these times of growing economic and social difficulty. Changes to the

benefits system have adversely affected many people and tackling the root causes of housing injustice, as part of Yearly Meeting's wider work, remains essential.

We thank the trustees for their work and for this report and encourage Friends to continue to support Quaker Housing Trust both in prayer and in financial and practical ways.

### **MfS/17/02/13 Yearly Meeting 2017**

Deborah Rowlands, Clerk of Yearly Meeting and Clare Scott Booth, First Assistant Clerk of Yearly Meeting, have told us about the proposed agenda and programme for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017 and we have been able to ask questions.

We have heard of the aim to create an inclusive, warm and loving atmosphere that nurtures us as we try to live in the Kingdom of God here and now. There will be more space in the agenda this year to enable Friends to meet with each other informally or to take time for personal reflection. The programmed agenda focusses on movement building: working with others to make a difference and there will be spiritual preparation documents for Friends and meetings to use around the end of March.

### **MfS 17/02/14 Response to the current international situation**

"We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love and unity" (Margaret Fell, writing to Charles II in 1660). Quakers in Britain see these values now under growing threat around the world, not least from recent developments in the United States of America.

We condemn all acts of government which set people against one another; which discriminate against people because of who they are or where they were born. We reject policies which condone suspicion and hatred; which turn away those who need and depend upon our help. We were not put on Earth for this, but to be a people of God, to live in harmony with each other.

There can be no peace without justice; no love without trust; and no unity without equality. Our faith urges us to welcome the stranger as our equal and friend, feed those who are hungry and shelter those who are homeless, needy and frightened.

Alongside Quakers in the USA, and their American Friends Service Committee, we stand with those whose lives are blighted by racist, discriminatory policies and those whose faith is denigrated by association with a tiny violent minority. We pray for the courage and steadfastness that will be needed as we uphold our testimony of equality, justice, peace, sustainability and truth. For us, prayer is inseparable from action.

Humanity needs leaders of integrity and conscience, ready to be held to account by individuals and institutions, national and international. We pray for those in positions of power. We call on them, as public servants, to work with all of good faith to build the world we seek, to fertilise the soil in which the tender shoots of peace, love and unity may flourish.

We wish to send our prayerful support to Friends in other Yearly Meetings as they continue to work towards the peaceable kingdom and ask Quaker World Relations Committee to do this, as appropriate, on our behalf.



We suggest Friends and meetings use this minute as they feel appropriate, as we reaffirm our core values.

**MfS/17/02/15 Close**

We close, intending to meet again on 1 April 2017.

Anne Ullathorne  
Clerk