



## Review of Meeting for Sufferings

### CONSULTATION

A group has been asked to carry out a review of how British Quakers can best make decisions and deal with important business between annual Yearly Meeting sessions. The group would like to consult as widely as possible with British Friends to find out what we think is important for Quakers in Britain as part of a simple, inclusive and sustainable structure.

#### Introduction

The main components of the governance of the Society of Friends in Britain are currently the Yearly Meeting itself, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees (BYM Trustees) and Meeting for Sufferings.

The **Yearly Meeting in session** is the ultimate constitutional authority: it is responsible for maintaining the gospel order of the Society which is encapsulated in *Quaker faith & practice* and for setting the general direction of British Quakers' work in the world. It delegates the detailed care of that work to standing committees [such as Quaker Life Central Committee].

The Yearly Meeting in session takes major decisions on matters which affect directly the life and work of the Society. It meets annually and is open to all members of Britain Yearly Meeting: its minutes are a matter of public record and are published annually.

**BYM Trustees** are appointed by Yearly Meeting as managing trustees of the work, assets and property owned directly by Britain Yearly Meeting. They are responsible for setting an annual operational plan and budget and undertake, on the Yearly Meeting's behalf, the legal compliance, monitoring and scrutiny functions expected of charitable bodies. Trustees ensure that the priorities for the work discerned by Yearly Meeting and put into effect by its standing committees are carried out within the legal and financial constraints.

Trustees meet throughout the year and consist of 15-20 members of the Society who serve for three-year terms. Their minutes, where not confidential, are currently shared with Meeting for Sufferings and are available to members on request. They are accountable to Yearly Meeting.

Members of **Meeting for Sufferings** are also appointed by Yearly Meeting. Meeting for Sufferings has some powers to act on behalf of Yearly Meeting between sessions; it receives interim reports from Trustees and committees; and it is a forum where concerns (particularly from AMs) can be considered and developed before eventually reaching the Yearly Meeting. It currently meets four times a year and comprises one representative from each AM and from other bodies (with named alternates) together with Trustees. Its minutes and papers are available on the BYM website.

## Consultation

Essentially this consultation has a single question:

***Given the structure we have outlined above, what do Friends across all of our worshipping communities need of a meeting for worship for business that deals with matters as required between sessions of Yearly Meeting?***

As examples, we would be interested to have responses on the following:

### *Constitution*

what is it essential that such a body (or conceivably bodies) can do?

what business should it consider?

what matters might be better dealt with in another way?

### *Membership*

should it consist of appointed representatives or be open to all Friends – or a combination?

if a representative body, who should nominate and appoint the representatives?

how large should it be?

### *Other practical issues*

how often should such a body meet?

should meetings be regular or as required by the business?

how should it meet – online, in person or as a hybrid or a combination of all three methods?

if meeting in person – where should it meet – centrally or regionally (or a combination)?

if open to all, what decisions (if any) might it need to make in closed session?

Responses are welcome from individuals or from groups, either formal (e.g. as local meetings) or informal and should be sent by e-mail to [reviewgroup@quaker.org.uk](mailto:reviewgroup@quaker.org.uk) to arrive on or before 15 July 2022.

You do not need to answer all of the above topics and you are welcome to add comments on other issues relevant to our overarching question.

On behalf of the Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gatherings and Meeting for Sufferings,

Sarah Donaldson

Michael S Booth

Convener

Secretary