

Governance Gold

No 10: November 2019

Prison and court register – update

(replaces Governance Gold 4)



For the attention of AM and LM clerks

Governance update from the Recording Clerk's Office

Quaker faith & practice (Qf&p) gives us full guidance as to how to be in right ordering for our church affairs. Our faithfulness in following our agreed process upholds our Quaker community. In these papers we are highlighting matters for your attention and action. Please keep these papers for ongoing reference.

Prison and court register

Meeting for Sufferings maintains a prison and court register. This was affirmed by minute MfS/2019/10/09.

The register consists of the names of Friends who have been before the courts for matters of conscience, i.e. Friends who come into conflict with the law when acting under concern and bearing witness to the truth as revealed to them.

The purposes of recording an entry in the register are:

1. to enter the details of the matter into the permanent records of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), acknowledging Friends' witness and their willingness to face its consequences,
2. to remind ourselves that being a Quaker does not come without cost,
3. to record the Society's prayerful upholding of Friends who are suffering for their faith, and
4. to serve as a record of the actions of the State in restricting our freedom to worship and witness.

Inclusion of information in the prison and court register does not imply that Meeting for Sufferings itself has tested the Friend's concern and necessarily agrees with or condones their action.

The local and area meeting may prayerfully help such a Friend in their own discernment as they seek to follow their Spiritual Guide and may help in holding Meetings for clearness with the Friend and continually uphold them as necessary.

Friends and meetings are reminded of the guidance that may be found in *Qf&p* chapter 13 in understanding and discerning a concern (13.02-13.07) and then testing that concern (13.08–13.13). Information about Meetings for clearness can be found in *Qf&p* 12.22–12.24 and at www.quaker.org.uk/documents/clearness-meeting-guidance-2012

Please remember that the prison and court register is a public document. Area meetings should take care therefore also to establish the facts, and to assure themselves that the Friend consents to this information being recorded and placed in the public domain, before forwarding details to Meeting for Sufferings.

How to submit entries

Area meetings (or other bodies) should send the following details to the clerk of Meeting for Sufferings:

- Name and meeting
- Date and details of the action that led to the charge, and any resultant conviction.

It is not necessary for an area meeting to record this in their minutes.

Send to the secretary of Meeting for Sufferings:

sufferings@quaker.org.uk or

c/o Juliet Prager, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.

Quaker faith & practice

“Respect the laws of the state but let your first loyalty be to God’s purposes. If you feel impelled by strong conviction to break the law, search your conscience deeply. Ask your meeting for prayerful support which will give you strength as a right way becomes clear.”

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“In 1997 Meeting for Sufferings revived the practice of maintaining a register of Friends before the courts or imprisoned for matters of conscience.” *Qf&p 7.01 (part)*

A function of Meeting for Sufferings is “to make appropriate entries in the prison and court register”. *Qf&p 7.02.k*