

Calling Letter



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

20th September 2019

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Dear Friends,

As you know, our next meeting is to be held over the weekend of 4th – 6th October at Woodbrooke. The evening meal is scheduled from 6pm and our first session starts at 7.30pm. When you arrive, Woodbrooke asks that you first check in with their staff at the reception desk and then register as usual with MfS Support Group who will be in the Rendel Harris Room with papers. If the reception area is crowded, you could settle into your room before picking these up.

The agenda is attached with supporting papers and we hope that the explanations are clear. Where possible we will use draft minutes to help us in the meeting. On Saturday morning, we will spend the sessions considering the progress we are making in tackling climate breakdown, both nationally, locally and individually. We will look at how we are following the 'Recommendations for Action' agreed by Meeting for Sufferings in 2017 and how we can continue to work towards a more sustainable world. I hope you will be able to bring information about what Friends in your area are doing in relation to the climate emergency. (I was very interested to read about Finchley Friends' litter-pick in this week's 'The Friend'.)

The groups we break into will not be based on geographic areas this time but will be a bit more random and we hope this will encourage you to get to know each other better.

We have a break after lunch and more business later in the afternoon. Saturday evening will offer a choice for you – special interest groups to go deeper into various topics or an opportunity for other quieter activity. There will be lists and sign-up sheets for these when you arrive.

On Sunday morning we will hear about BYM's advocacy and speaking out on the various concerns that Sufferings and Yearly Meeting have recognised, but before that, we wish to consider how we should react to those AMs who have asked again for us to look at the issue of assisted dying. Should we explore this issue together, and if so, how? (Note that we want to consider process rather than the issue itself at this time).

Woodbrooke's regular timetable includes Meeting for Worship from 8.30-9.00 on Saturday morning and Epilogue from 9.30-9.45pm on both Friday and Saturday evening. Both will be in the Cadbury Room too but are, of course, optional.

And so, Friends, we have quite a full agenda but we hope plenty of time for discernment, for sharing and for worship together. As always, do let us know before the meeting if you have any particular queries about any item or if there is further information that we should know (sufferings@quaker.org.uk). We will be able to come to the meeting with our hearts and minds prepared and ready to listen for the still, small voice.

In peace and friendship,



Anne Ullathorne, Clerk

Papers enclosed with this mailing

Agenda

MfS Arrangements Group August 2019 meeting minutes

MfS 2019 10 Forward Agenda

MfS 2019 10 05a & b – Court & Prison Register

MfS 2019 10 06 – Safeguarding

MfS 2019 10 07 – Sustainability

MfS 2019 10 08 – BYM Trustees minutes September 2019

MfS 2019 10 10 – Quaker Stewardship Committee report

MfS 2019 10 11 – Quaker Recognised Bodies

MfS 2019 10 12 – MfS Appeal Group

MfS 2019 10 13 – Assisted dying

MfS 2019 10 14 – Speaking out & advocacy

n.b. the following papers will be available on the day of the meeting:

MfS 2019 10 04 Membership

MfS 2019 10 09 Appointments

A reminder of how you can prepare for the meeting

- Register (to help staff prepare rooms and refreshments)
- Go through the 'Essential Information'
- Read the agenda papers in good time
- Contact the other representative/alternate from your area meeting or body
- Consider possible names for a standing nominations group
- Send any comments or questions to the clerks, before the meeting



Yearly Meeting of the
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Agenda

Meeting for Sufferings, October 2019

Held over the weekend of 4 – 6 October at Woodbrooke Quaker Conference Centre,
1046 Bristol Road, Birmingham B29 6LJ. All main sessions in the Cadbury Room.

Time	Item	Paper
Friday		
16:00	Arrivals	
18:00	Evening meal	
19:30	Session 1	
1	Opening worship	
2	Welcome and introductions	
3	Agenda Adoption and acceptance of the weekend's agenda	
4	Membership (Tabled paper)	MfS 2019 10 04 To note
5	Court and Prison Register – Part A (05a) • Updated entries Court and Prison Register – Part B (05b) • To receive a paper from the Recording Clerk, along with minute QCCIR/19/31b from Quaker Committee from Christian and Interfaith relations	MfS 2019 10 05 For decision
6	Safeguarding To receive a paper regarding the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse	MfS 2019 10 06 For information
21:30	Epilogue	
Saturday		
7:45 - 8:30	Breakfast	
8:30- 9:00	Morning worship (Cadbury Room)	
09:15	Session 2	
7	Sustainability To consider progress throughout our Yearly Meeting, on our shared commitment to become a low-carbon, sustainable community.	MfS 2019 10 07 For information

Time	Item	Paper
10.30	Short Break	
11:00	Sustainability - small groups	
12.30	Lunch	
13:30	Free time	
15:30	Tea/coffee	
16:00	Session 3	
8	BYM Trustees report To receive minutes of the recent meeting and hear from the clerk of Trustees.	MfS 2019 10 08 For information
9	Appointments (Tabled Paper)	MfS 2019 10 09 For approval
10	Quaker Stewardship Committee To hear from the committee about its work.	MfS 2019 10 10 For information
11	Quaker Recognised Bodies To approve and register a Quaker Recognised Body.	MfS 2019 10 11 For approval
12	Meeting for Sufferings Appeal Group To lay down the group on the conclusion of their work	MfS 2019 10 12 For approval
18:15	Evening meal	
19:30	Session 4	
	Special Interest Groups Details to be confirmed during the weekend	
21:30	Epilogue	
Sunday		
8:00 - 9:30	Breakfast	
9:30	Session 5	
13	Assisted dying To receive minutes from North West London AM and Staffordshire AM	MfS 2019 10 13 For information
14	Speaking out and advocacy To hear from Anne van Staveren, the BYM Media Relations Officer and Grace Da Costa, the Public Affairs and Advocacy Manager	MfS 2019 10 14 For information
	As led	
11:15	Short Break	
11:45	Worship	
12:30	Lunch and departures	



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At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ on 22 August 2019

Minutes

Present: Margaret Bryan, Robert Card, Karen Draycott, Gill Greenfield, Anne Ullathorne, Sherry-Ann Mitchell, Juliet Prager, Neil Jarvis (part), Mark Lilley

1. Reflections on the last MfS

We have received comments from the Support Group.

2. Meetings attended by the clerks and others

Margaret and Anne met with Adwoa Bittle and Elisabeth Allen (General Meeting for Scotland), Catherine James and Tricia Jones (Meeting of Friends in Wales) and Paul Parker and Neil Jarvis to discuss matters of common concern. We noted in the particular differences between the three jurisdictions of BYM.

3. Forward agenda

We have reviewed our forward agenda which informs our planning. In our consideration of 'matters expected to return in due course' we will ask central committees to update us when they report to us in December.

4. Agenda planning: October 2019

We have planned the agenda for our October meeting.

5. Other matters

Margaret will attend the meeting of YMAC on 28th September.

6. Dates of future meetings

Monday 21 st October 2019		
Monday 16 th December 2019		
MfSAG 2020	Mfs Mailings (Fridays)	MfS 2020
Friday 21 st February	20 th March	Saturday 4 th April
Thursday 16 th April	22 nd May	Saturday 6 th June

Thursday 20 th August	18 th September	Friday 2 nd – Sunday 4 th October
Tuesday 20 th October	20 th November	Saturday 5 th December

We close, planning to meet again on Wednesday 21st October 2019 at Friends House.

Margaret Bryan
Clerk



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Meeting for Sufferings Forward Agenda – October 2019

The following items are currently proposed or being considered by Arrangements Group. These plans may change.

Central and standing committees

Although it's helpful to have dialogue with the committees, they aren't required to report to MfS. We've received reports in recent years and in 2018 and 2019, reports from all four standing committees were scheduled to come to the December meeting. Arrangements Group will review this approach after December.

Dec 2019	Young People's Participation Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports from central and standing committees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations ○ Quaker Life Central Committee ○ Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (including update on future planning) ○ Quaker World Relations Committee • Quaker Council for European Affairs triennial report • Epistles from other YMs • Gender diversity • Yearly Meeting Review Terms of Reference
Feb 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yearly Meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agenda for YM 2020 ○ MfS Annual Report to Yearly Meeting 2020 ○ Dates of future YMs • Quaker Housing Trust triennial report
April 2020	Letter of greeting to Ireland YM
July 2020	
Oct 2020	Yearly Meeting – reflections
Dec 2020	Young People's Participation Day



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Court & Prison Register

Introduction

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) was established in 1676, to consider the sufferings experienced by Quakers for their faith. Gradually the practice of recording Friends' names in the 'Great book of Sufferings' lapsed; but in 1997 MfS decided to maintain a register of Friends before the courts or imprisoned for matters of conscience. This enables us to record events, as well as to uphold the Friends concerned and to share information about their witness.

DSEI

In early September the ExCeL Centre in London hosted DSEI, Defence and Security Equipment International, an arms fair which brings together arms dealers and military delegations. The 'No Faith in War' day of action took place on Tuesday 3rd September, during a week of protests. Nearly 50 Quakers were arrested on the day. Area Meetings have sent some names, but at the time of preparing this paper there was no information about formal charges.

Sustainability

Further to minute MfS/18/07/11, we have been informed that following action at Extinction Rebellion events in April, Ian Bray appeared at City of London Magistrates Court on 6 September 2019. The case has been passed up to Southwark Crown Court, and a pre-trial hearing on Fri 4 Oct 2019. He has been charged under joint enterprise alongside 6 other defendants, with criminal damage over £5,000 pounds and additionally going equipped with paint.

Ian Bray is also due to appear at City of London Magistrates Court on 17 October 2019 for the spray chalking of Downing Street in November 2018.

Ian Bray is due to be tried at Inner London Crown Court from 11 May 2020 for the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) occupation in April 2019.

He will not now face charges for Obstruction of the Highway arrests relating to actions in October and November 2018 as the 6 month period in which the CPS must make charges for minor offences has now passed.



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Court & prison register

Earlier this year, questions were raised by York Area Meeting about the parameters of the Court & Prison Register (minute MfS/19/04/05(b) refers). Meeting for Sufferings is now asked to consider this again, helped by:

- a) A minute from QCCIR
- b) A paper from the Recording Clerk

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations

Because the questions had arisen from a situation involving another church, MfS sent the minute to Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations, which has responded with the following minute:

QCCIR/19/31 Minutes received (part minute)

We have received Minute MfS/19/04/05 Court and Prison Register with the background of York AM's Minute 4/2019. In considering the details of both these minutes we make the following observations.

We cannot offer any detail on the meaning of Canon Law as referenced in the York AM Minute and suggest that the basis of this issue is in employment law.

We have identified that this case highlights the difficulties of articulating the meaning of Quakerism to other faith traditions, and that in sensitive areas relating to many aspects of life this can cause problems.

We also note that there is a need for care and sensitivity in relating the details of difficult cases when these will be in the public domain.

We forward this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Mark James Lilley, clerk
Douglas Butterfield, assistant clerk

Court and Prison Register – the parameters

This paper describes the purpose of the court & prison register, and proposes a definition of what Meeting for Sufferings should record in it.

Background

Historically, Friends have a long tradition¹ of recording the ‘sufferings’ of Friends who have been persecuted for their faith. Early Friends maintained the Great Books of Sufferings, and Meeting for Sufferings itself was set up to ‘obtain redress’ in particular ‘cases of suffering’. Some local registers of Sufferings were also kept. The practice of recording Sufferings declined with the level of persecution, and the practice was discontinued entirely by the mid-19th century.

After a long interval, Meeting for Sufferings reinstated a practice of recording Friends imprisoned for their peace witness between 1984 and 1988 (in the form of a ‘file to record the names and information about Friends facing Court action or imprisonment in connection with their peace witness’), and reaffirmed this practice (after it had again fallen into abeyance) in 1997 and again in 2015. The title ‘Court & Prison Register’ appears only to have been formalised quite recently.

Issues for exploration

Why record ‘sufferings’?

Friends have a long tradition of recording ‘sufferings’. Whilst this does not appear to have been formally defined, the type of ‘sufferings’ recorded – court proceedings, imprisonment, distraint of goods, etc. – suggest that the practice has been to record instances where the state has interfered with Friends’ ability to practice their faith unmolested. In the early days, this included refusal to swear the oath, withholding of tithes and many other petty offences against the established order.

More recently, this understanding has extended to Friends acting under conscience and bearing witness through protest in ways which break the law - in the spirit of *Advices & queries 35*, which reads:

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 the prayerful support which will give you strength as a right way becomes clear.

Most recent entries in the register result from acts of civil disobedience such as obstruction of roads, illegal entry or criminal damage to military installations.

What constitutes ‘suffering’ today?

This suggests we should continue to approach the recording of ‘sufferings’ as being instances of the state interfering with Friends’ ability to worship and witness

¹ The Library published an informative blog post about the tradition of recording sufferings in 2012. You can read it at <https://quakerstrongrooms.org/2012/06/06/quaker-sufferings-records-an-embarras-de-richesse/>

unmolested by the authorities. In practice this would be limited to Friends taken to court, imprisoned or otherwise punished by the state for such activity.

Importantly, we should be clear that such actions are taken by the Friend in question acting 'under concern' – which implies a degree of discernment and testing by that Friend, either alone or with assistance from their meeting or other community of Friends. It would be for the area meeting where the Friend's membership is held to be satisfied that the Friend's actions meet this criterion in deciding whether to forward information about their 'suffering' to Meeting for Sufferings.

Details of entries are in the public domain as they are recorded in the public minutes of Meeting for Sufferings and become part of the permanent record of the Religious Society of Friends. The court & prison register therefore needs to be regarded as 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.

What is the purpose of the court & prison register?

Minuting an entry to the court & prison register serves two purposes:

- To enter the details of the matter into the permanent records of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers);
- To record the Society's prayerful upholding of Friends who are suffering for their faith.

It does not imply that Meeting for Sufferings itself has tested the Friend's concern and necessarily agrees with or condones their action.

Questions to consider

Does Meeting for Sufferings agree that the court & prison register should normally record only instances of the state interfering with Friends' ability to worship and witness by taking them to court, imprisoning or otherwise punishing them?

Does Meeting for Sufferings agree that the responsibility for establishing that Friends are acting under concern, and that they wish the matter to be recorded, lies with area meetings, or are there other bodies which do or could fulfil this purpose?

Does Meeting for Sufferings agree with the purposes of the court & prison register as set out above?

Paul Parker, Recording Clerk
September 2019



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Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

Introduction

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse has asked the Religious Society of Friends, along with many faith bodies, to contribute to an investigation into child protection. This paper explains more about the Inquiry, and how we need to respond.

Background

People matter. In the end human rights are about people being treated and feeling like people who matter. We are reminded graphically of violations of human rights far away and near at hand. In ignorance or knowingly we all violate human rights. We are all involved in the exercise of power and the abuse of power.

London Yearly Meeting, 1986 (*Quaker faith & practice* 24.49)

When Meeting for Sufferings adopted 'Our Faith in the Future', we expressed an aspiration for all Quaker communities to be loving, inclusive and all-age.

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is an important part of this. As BYM's safeguarding policy says:

Quakers are committed to: the care, respect and nurture of all vulnerable groups encountered within Quaker activities; the safeguarding and protection of children and other vulnerable people; the promotion of a culture of good practice in relation to activities promoted by Quaker meetings and groups; and maintaining and developing procedures and good practice guidelines.

Safeguarding in local meetings and at area meeting events is the responsibility of area meeting trustees, and it's good practice to have one trustee who leads on safeguarding. Each AM should appoint a safeguarding coordinator and a deputy should be appointed in each area meeting.

That said, every Friend needs to play our part in making sure our Quaker communities are safe. It's important to acknowledge the fact of child sexual abuse and address the issues. Discussions about child sexual abuse aren't easy or

comfortable. We know that some Friends are personally affected, including members of Meeting for Sufferings.

About IICSA

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) is an independent statutory inquiry covering England and Wales. Being independent means the Inquiry is not part of government and not run by a government department. Being statutory means the Inquiry was set up under the Inquiries Act 2005 and has the power to compel witnesses to give evidence.

Since starting work, IICSA has launched 14 separate investigations. This year, it began a new investigation into child protection in religious organisations and settings in England and Wales. It will look at whether there are common issues across religious organisations and settings and how they can be met and overcome.

The scope of the investigation includes nonconformist Christian denominations, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism.

It's important to emphasise that the Inquiry is not investigating any specific situation and the request is not based on any allegations.

It's also worth noting that the Inquiry is only concerned with child sexual abuse (not safeguarding of vulnerable adults).

What do we have to provide?

We have been sent a 'Rule 9 request' which asks for a statement, answering a series of questions. This is a statutory request, so we have to respond.

The request letter is 18 pages long; it contains 53 questions, some of which have subsidiary questions. They're grouped under the following headings:

- Background and overview of the Religious Society of Friends (Britain Yearly Meeting)
- Activities involving unsupervised access to children
- Incidents of allegations of child sexual abuse within the religious community
- Training and understanding of child sexual abuse
- Policies and procedures
- Arrangements in place to respond to allegations of child sexual abuse
- Internal information sharing
- Awareness raising
- Complainants, victims and survivors
- Relationship with other statutory organisations
- Vetting and barring
- Auditing, inspection or oversight
- Resources
- Interfaith work

- Charity status and interaction with the Charity Commission
- Other matters

How are we responding?

The draft statement is being drawn up by our Governance Manager, who's working closely with the Recording Clerk, the clerks to BYM Trustees, and the lead safeguarding Trustee. We're also using the services of our solicitor who is providing guidance and advice. The work involved in responding is considerable, and some resources have had to be diverted to the task.

Much of the information requested is about BYM policy and practice. Staff have been providing information already held in various parts of the organisation.

The statement also needs to include information about practice in Area Meetings. All AMs have been informed about the investigation – emails have been sent to AM clerks, AM trustee clerks, safeguarding co-ordinators and Meeting for Sufferings representatives.

IICSA agreed that we can describe typical practice at area meetings and draw on a sample of six AMs (roughly 10% of the 66 in England and Wales) to provide specific information to some of the questions. They confirmed that the sample could include:

- a range of small, medium and large AMs
- within the AMs, a range of small and larger meetings
- frequent and infrequent, children's meetings
- in different parts of the country
- a variety of rural and urban settings.

On this basis, we have contacted safeguarding co-ordinators in Central England; Craven and Keighley; Gloucestershire; Lincolnshire; London West and Southern Marches Area Meetings. We have sent them more detailed information and questions, and are working with them to gather the information we need. We're grateful to all those concerned for their help.

At this stage other AMs don't need to take action, although it's possible we'll need to be in touch again, at a later stage.

Process and timetable

- The Inquiry Panel consists of four people: Alexis Jay (chair), Malcolm Evans, Ivor Frank and Drusilla Sharpling.
- We have been contacted by and are working with members of IICSA's legal team.
- IICSA has asked us for a draft statement by mid-September, although information from the sample AMs can reach them in November.

- Having considered the draft statement, IICSA may ask for clarification or further information. Once a final version has been agreed, the Recording Clerk will sign it on behalf of the Religious Society of Friends.
- IICSA is expecting to receive all statements for this investigation by Christmas.
- The Inquiry publishes statements and attached documents. Any personal information about victims or survivors, or about people who are alleged to have abused but who have not been convicted, is redacted.
- There will be a public hearing over two weeks, starting on 16th March 2020.
- The Recording Clerk (and possibly others) may need to appear in person.
- The report of this investigation will be published about nine months after the end of the hearing.

Outcomes

The investigation is likely to make recommendations regarding practice in religious bodies. The Society of Friends will need to consider and respond to these, in due course.

Britain Yearly Meeting is committed to making sure Quaker communities are safe and inclusive places, for all ages. No organisation, and no religious body, can prevent all child sexual abuse, but it's imperative that we do whatever we can to safeguard children and young people. This investigation is an opportunity to learn from other faith groups, to help Quakers continue to improve safeguarding in our meetings.

Trustees, other committees and staff had already begun to consider the need for strengthening safeguarding practice in our national organisation and in local Quaker communities. This improvement work continues. Through our 'Simpler Meetings' project, we're developing model policies and procedures, which are expected to be available from December. There may be changes to the way we work with Area Meetings to support safeguarding, and we'll keep in touch with safeguarding co-ordinators about this.

Other churches and faith groups

Britain Yearly Meeting is a member of the Interfaith Network and the Christian Forum for Safeguarding. These groups have been useful fora for Quakers and other religious bodies to meet and learn together about the Inquiry and what's expected of us.

Safeguarding – support and advice

Support is available for survivors, wherever and wherever abuse took place. You or Friends in your area can get support from:

- The National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC)
<https://napac.org.uk> - helpline 0808 801 0331
- The NSPCC helpline - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/> - 0808 800 5000
- Childline www.childline.org.uk - 0800 1111
- thirtyone:eight can provide specialist advice on safeguarding matters - 030 300 3111
- IICSA can be contacted on 0800 917 1000
- IICSA runs The Truth project, which offers the opportunity for victims and survivors to share their experience and be respectfully heard and acknowledged.
- BYM's Interim Safeguarding Support Officer, Richard Lasson, can be contacted on safe@quaker.org.uk

There is also general information here:

- BYM information about safeguarding in meetings
<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/safeguarding>
- Safeguarding support for Quaker meetings – resources available on QGroups
<https://groups.quaker.org.uk/groups/safe/>
- Charity Commission guidance on safeguarding and protecting people
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees>

This investigation is about policies and practices in faith organisations, not about individual cases. But it's worth reminding ourselves that IICSA has been set up to learn from the past, and from people's experiences, in order to make sure children are safer in future. Survivors are at the heart of this process.

When you hear about IICSA on the news or in the media, it leads you to believe this inquiry is only for and about 'high profile' cases. So for a long time I felt my experiences didn't warrant inclusion. I am glad that I persevered and attended a Truth session. It turns out my lived experiences were very much due to failings from professionals in all institutions. I now feel heard and validated. Thank you.

A Truth Project participant (IICSA)

Juliet Prager
Deputy Recording Clerk



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Sustainability – Living up to our commitment

Introduction

Meeting for Sufferings holds oversight of our YM-wide commitment to work towards becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community.

Meeting for Sufferings agreed a set of recommended actions in 2017. And, last November Meeting for Sufferings agreed that it will oversee the concern, and some ways for this to happen.

This paper provides a relatively brief update regarding all of these recommendations. We could have made this a longer, more complex document – but that would have needed a lot of staff time, and made things more challenging for representatives.

Instead, we've deliberately kept this short and relevant, with headlines and highlights. There's a lot more information behind each section, so if you would like more detail, please ask committee members, staff, and/or Friends from other AMs.

There are three sections:

- 1. Sustainability – Living up to our commitment in local and area meetings**
A report about work in local and area meetings (from Quaker Stewardship Committee)
- 2. Recommendations for Action – examples of what's been happening**
An update about national work, linked to local Quaker action (from BYM staff)
- 3. Background information**
A set of appendices, to remind us of the journey so far

Having read the following papers there are also questions for you, Friends! How are you (and others) taking these recommendations forward?

At Meeting for Sufferings we will hear about each of these areas of work. We will spend some time in small groups, before coming back to the plenary for further consideration.

The focus appears to be mainly on greening Meeting Houses rather than supporting Friends in making difficult choices in their own lives and lifestyles. This may result from the way in which the questions to meetings were phrased. However, there are exceptions where Friends report on working with local sustainability and climate change groups and on the actions of some individual Friends.

Reporting and tracking measures of energy consumption/ greenhouse gas emission

Only five Area Meetings described action in 2018 to commence reporting and tracking their energy consumption/greenhouse gas emissions. Some Area Meetings questioned the value of this when the use of their buildings varied significantly month to month and between years. However, a significant number of Local Meetings are using electricity from green energy suppliers. Data from Friends House on the national scheme negotiated with Good Energy demonstrates that about 159 Local Meetings are participants with a resulting collective saving to date of about 760 tonnes of carbon emissions.

Activities planned in the future

A number of Area Meetings are planning further activities in the future in relation to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from their buildings. There is little detail about the scope of these plans, however there is a clear intention in a number of Area Meetings to better monitor and report on their energy usage from buildings in 2019.

Reporting in future Annual Reports

Reporting has evidently been a challenge for many Area Meetings. This is almost certainly in part due to the time taken for Friends to act on new requests for information in Annual Reports. Reporting in 2019 Annual Reports will probably be better. However, responses to the questions on deepening Friends spiritual engagement and sense of community around the issue of sustainability may still prove difficult to capture through this route.

Quantitative reporting on energy use and emissions appears to be especially challenging. Allied to this is the question of the value of such reporting on such a small contribution to the carbon emissions from the Society as a whole compared with the impact of the lifestyles of individual Friends.

Whilst reporting on Sustainability as a concern in Annual Reports should continue alongside of reporting on the wider activities of Area Meetings, the approach in and of itself does not offer an adequate perspective on the activity and commitment of Friends responding to climate change. There could be a risk that the Society's true commitment to sustainability is undermined by the limitations of reporting in Area Meeting Trustees' Annual Reports.

Martin Ford
Assistant Clerk
Quaker Stewardship Committee
14 September 2019

Recommendations for Action 2017 – examples of what’s been happening (September 2019)

This paper gives an example of what’s been done to take forward each of the recommendations agreed in 2017.

Eldership: rooting the commitment in our Quaker faith

1. Opportunities in local and area meetings for worship-based explorations where Friends can share how sustainability is part of their faith

In March 2019, General Meeting for Scotland asked ‘How do we liberate ourselves to focus on spiritual growth, community building and witness in the world?’

2. All Quaker bodies (central committees, Quaker Recognised Bodies and others) make opportunities to explore how their work connects sustainability with Quaker faith.

This year’s Swarthmore Lecture titled “On Earth as it is in Heaven: the Kingdom of God and the yearning of Creation” (video available – see below) was followed by discussions with the lecturer Eden Grace at various locations in Britain. The book will be published in October.

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/swarthmore

3. Resources and support for learning and discernment related to sustainability and its basis in Quaker faith.

Woodbrooke has run several courses exploring sustainability issues. (It also offers ‘on-the-road’ events but hasn’t had requests for this type of work from meetings). Courses in 2018/19 include:

- ‘A Quaker Response to Animal Suffering’ (online)
- Faith in Food (exploring food choices)
- Voices of the Earth (exploring our relationships with the world we inhabit through creativity),
- ‘Hope in troubled times’ (how can we be hopeful and live out the change we want to see in the world?)
- Exploring Simplicity’ (What the Quaker testimony of simplicity means to us today) ran at less than half the expected number.

<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/>

4. Support for ministry in all its forms (publications, art, drama, spirit-led action)

This summer Quaker Arts Network presented an exhibition at Swarthmoor Hall, ‘Seeking Routes’, along with a programme of events

<http://quakerarts.net/2019/05/17/quaker-arts-at-swarthmoor/>

Oversight: strengthening our community

1. Regular and ongoing dialogue involving BYM staff, local meetings and other Quaker organisations

Local meetings share their stories online <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/our-stories>)

BYM has published several blog posts on sustainability www.quaker.org.uk/blog

2. Face-to-face gatherings at least every two years.

BYM will work with Woodbrooke to ensure a face-to-face gathering takes place in 2020 (the last one was in 2018). This may be a national gathering as before, or may take place regionally (so as to be relevant to local Friends and aim for a lower carbon footprint).

3. Regional and national networks to build community and share resources

As just two examples: Friends in Devon and Cornwall are planning a regional 'face-to-face' gathering for next year; Quakers in Yorkshire's quarterly meeting in April 2017 focused on sustainability, and its Easter gathering in 2019 considered alternative economics.

Living faithfully: changing our lifestyles

1. Resources for sustainable living that are revised, updated and in a variety of formats

This year, QPSW staff are offering a new workshop to Quakers who are worried about climate change but don't know what to do. It will touch on how QPSW's work on climate is rooted in the Quaker testimonies, explore what 'climate' and 'justice' have to do with one another, and point to some simple actions Friends can take. www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/sustainability/living-sustainably

2. Group activities to support Friends in deepening dialogue and making lifestyle changes

Yearly Meeting 2019 invited us to examine our own privilege and lack of privilege in relation to climate change and climate justice. One of the sessions focused on 'Looking through the lens of privilege at climate justice and inclusion'. On Saturday evening, young adult Friends from across the country hosted a reflective epilogue that explores themes of sustainability, privilege and faith in action.

Yearly Meeting documents, minutes and videos are available online:

www.quaker.org.uk/ym/documents

3. Opportunities for Friends to connect with each other (e.g. through talks, workshops, blogs, newsletters, talks).

In the last 12 months there have been 9 blog posts on the BYM website about climate and sustainability. The most recent was in August, when the Recording Clerk wrote about 6 ways Quakers can support the global climate strike.

www.quaker.org.uk/blog

Right ordering: Quaker core activity and property

1. Resources to support Quaker bodies in discernment including weighing up the effects of their decisions on a wide variety of issues, and considering creative alternatives.

In our meetings, elders are responsible for upholding spirit-led discernment. There are a range of resources and support for them. 'Patterns and Examples' are one example: events that help elders and overseers to understand and enjoy their roles. Quaker Life and Woodbrooke offer these together, in various locations, and they are all-age gatherings.

www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation

1. A way of monitoring and reviewing progress by local meetings in developing low carbon, sustainable core practices and premises – with the results included in BYM Trustees' Annual Report

Please see the previous paper, which is about this.

2. Encouragement and support for all parts of the Quaker community to ensure investments are consistent with being low- carbon and sustainable, and in particular to disinvest from fossil fuels

QPSW has created a step-by-step guide for Meetings: at the last count almost half of AMs have zero investment in fossil fuel extraction.

www.quaker.org.uk/our-work

Witness: taking political action and promoting systemic change

1. Friends and local meetings use their experience as a foundation for engaging others in their local community, national businesses and politicians; take radical action for change; speak out for systemic change and for climate justice.

In Central England, Quakers are supporting children from different faith backgrounds through the Small Footsteps sustainability programme.

www.quaker.org.uk/our-work

2. Support for the above, from the centrally managed work and other Quaker bodies

More than 100 Quakers from England, Scotland and Wales were among 14,000 people who lobbied their MPs in June 2019. As well as supporting Friends who joined the climate lobby, BYM staff worked with Anya Nanning Ramamurthy who joined other faith leaders on the day of the climate lobby, and was later interviewed on national media.

www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news

www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/our-stories

The annual Quaker Activist Gathering is ‘an intergenerational, restorative and invigorating day, focused on how we do social action’. In 2018 it was held in Lancaster; the next one will be in London on 2nd November.

www.quaker.org.uk/events

3. Engagement of and connection with other parts of centrally managed work

Greta Thunberg spoke at Friends House in April 2019: BYM provided the venue for the event which was organised by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Climate Change working with The Guardian. Hospitality staff adapted rotas so that the building could be open on a bank holiday. BYM’s Youth Development Worker (West Region) co-ordinated young Quakers from Bristol to travel to the event, and two of its members, Pearl and Sam, publicly welcomed Greta Thunberg.

www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news

4. Stronger connections with work beyond BYM

Legacy funding is enabling Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) to strengthen links between Quakers around the world. We’re all invited to share inspiring stories of ‘living sustainably and sustaining life on earth, and to make the most of the resources available.

<http://fwcc.world/sustainability>

Other

Some developments and actions don't fit neatly into the recommendations – e.g.:

- Many meetings are benefitting from a national scheme with Good Energy (100% renewable energy supply) which was negotiated by BYM.
- Several committees are reviewing their ways of working – for example, Quaker Peace and Social Witness has agreed to meet three times (rather than 4) in 2020.
- BYM staff have been working to monitor and improve the carbon footprint of BYM properties and activities in Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall. The carbon footprint has been reduced by 29% since 2009.
www.friendshouse.co.uk/sustainability-csr

MfS oversight

Reports to MfS from committees

Central and standing committees haven't reported to MfS since last November: they're due to report again in December. However, there is a lot in this paper about relevant work which is overseen by committees.

It's worth noting that central and standing committees aren't formally required to report to MfS, but they do report formally every year to BYM Trustees. BYM Trustees report to MfS following each of their meetings.

Sustainability considered by MfS

This is our 2019 'substantive agenda item about sustainability'. In addition:

- In February, MfS noted that our testimony to truth and integrity underpins everything we do as Quakers and is consciously woven into our corporate work including our concern about sustainability (minute MfS 2019/02/07)
- In July, MfS received minutes from Bristol, West Weald and Southern Marches AMs (minute MfS/19/07/07)

Sustainability Monitoring Group

The Group was appointed in July. Its first meeting was in September, and concentrated on getting to know each other and the task. It will meet again in November. The SMG will be able to introduce themselves and their work in session, and will be happy to speak with Friends during the weekend.

The Group (all members of MfS) are:

- Peter Aviss (Sussex East AM)
- Tina Leonard (Oxford and Swindon AM)
- Maureen Jackson (Hardshaw & Mann AM)

MfS Reporting to Yearly Meeting

The MfS report to YM 2019 noted that sustainability was our agenda at three meetings in 2018. The full report is in the YM 2019 programme:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/ym/documents>

Background information

Canterbury Commitment

The minute of Yearly Meeting 2011 is available here:

www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/sustainability/our-faith-and-sustainability

Recommendations for Action

In February 2017, Meeting for Sufferings agreed a set of recommendations for action. It is in Appendix A.

BYM Sustainability Strategy

Some of the work needs to be done and supported by our national body. Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees have adopted a Sustainability Strategy. The ten high-level objectives are copied below in Appendix B.

Committees' responsibility

Appendix C shows what each committee is doing, to address the work identified in the sustainability strategy.

Meeting for Sufferings minute

The minute of MfS last November, confirming what will be done to oversee this concern, is copied in Appendix D.

Appendix A - Recommendations for Action (Meeting for Sufferings, February 2017)

Becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community: Revised Recommendations for Action

Introduction

Our overall aim is to encourage and support Friends and meetings in implementing the Canterbury Commitment. This paper offers recommendations in five key areas:

1. Eldership: rooting the Commitment in our Quaker faith
2. Oversight: strengthening our community
3. Living faithfully: changing our lifestyles
4. Right ordering: Quaker core activities and property; and
5. Witness: working for systemic and policy change.

Friends and meetings vary in their situations and hence in their priorities, suitable approaches and needs for support. Their needs change over time. We must therefore be responsive, with a wide and evolving range of resources in each of the five areas, and regular communication to bring those resources to Friends' and meetings' attention in a variety of ways. We also need strong networking among Friends and meetings so they can share ideas and good practice and learn from each other's experience.

The following sections identify aims and make broad recommendations in each of the five implementation areas. We have not specified which organisation should take the work forward except in a few cases where this has already been discerned.

Eldership: rooting the commitment in our Quaker faith

The aim

While Friends mostly feel ownership of our corporate sustainability commitment, many understand it in secular or practical terms and find it hard to say what is Quaker about it; others have a clear idea of its spiritual basis for themselves, but may not recognise the relevance of others' spiritual paths and experiences. Our spirituality may relate to sustainability in many ways. It may enable us, for example, to engage with loss and suffering, to celebrate beauty, to connect with others in the work for transformation, and to discern our way forward.

We need to make the commitment real and relevant to Quakers as an expression of our faith. That means:

1. Recognising and being able to articulate how our own spiritual experience and practice relates to sustainability
2. Recognising and being able to acknowledge other Friends' spiritual experiences and practices – both similar to and different from our own – and their relationship with sustainability
3. Recognising all of these as part of our corporate faith and practice

4. Being able to bring Quaker insights, values and practices to bear on sustainability issues in our lives and communities and the wider world.

Recommendations

This section of the Recommendations for Action is essentially about eldership – supporting Friends in their spiritual practice, worship, ministry, learning and discernment as these relate to our sustainability commitment. These need attention at all levels, from individual Friends and local meetings to the Yearly Meeting and other national and international Quaker bodies. In particular:

1. Local and area meetings should provide opportunities for worship-based explorations where Friends can share how sustainability is part of their faith, and how that shapes their lives, relationships and actions.
2. Quaker bodies including central committees, Quaker Recognised Bodies and other organisations, should make opportunities (including for their staff, members and networks) to explore how their work connects sustainability with Quaker faith.
3. Central departments and other Quaker bodies should work together to provide Friends and meetings with resources and support for learning and discernment related to sustainability and its basis in Quaker faith.
4. There is a particular need to support ministry in all its forms, from spoken contributions in meetings for worship to publications, art, drama and spirit-led action.

Oversight: strengthening our community

The aim

Community is fundamental to the Canterbury Commitment and underpins the whole of our recommended approach. In local meetings and in our Yearly Meeting we aim to strengthen our communities, grounded in love and worship. Such communities can be the settings where Friends and meetings engage more fully with the Commitment:

1. Listening to one another, relating constructively, working through pain and loss linked to living in a violent and unsustainable civilisation, as well as the tensions and conflict that arise out of our different responses, and supporting each other in opportunities for insight and growth
2. Strengthening our shared identity and developing a shared understanding of how Quaker faith and practice relates to becoming a low carbon, sustainable community
3. Discerning the way forward in our Commitment, rooted in the Light and following the leadings of the Spirit
4. Supporting one another in implementing the Commitment, sharing learning, insight and celebration
5. Becoming more resilient, able to cope with change and adversity.

Recommendations

The Canterbury Commitment should be owned and implemented by BYM as a whole including individual Friends, local meetings, central committees, Woodbrooke, listed informal groups and other Quaker organisations.

We all have a responsibility for embedding the Commitment in every group and every decision we participate in. Our witness should also be connected to the work of international Quaker organisations, other yearly meetings and non-Quaker organisations.

1. Regular and ongoing dialogue involving Friends House, local meetings and other Quaker organisations is needed to build community and share resources.
2. Face-to-face gatherings are also vital for maintaining and developing our community and our focus on becoming low-carbon and sustainable. We see a need for such events to take place regularly, ideally every year, but at least every two years.
3. Regional and national networks can be ways for Friends and meetings to build community and share resources without relying on paid staff at Friends House. Further networks will be needed.

Living faithfully: changing our lifestyles

The aim

We aim to support Friends in developing low-carbon, sustainable and spiritually enhancing ways of living.

Recommendations

Lifestyle change is about more than carbon reduction, it is about all of our priorities and choices including patterns of family and social life, consumption and work. We recommend ongoing and increased encouragement and support for local meetings to be adventurous in helping Friends to live sustainably – adopting, in doing this, approaches that are sensitive and loving, while also radically transformative. This means sharing the joys we find in a simple lifestyle freely chosen, while offering compassion and support to those who find change difficult.

A wide variety of resources are required to address Friends' different and changing needs. For some, personal climate impact calculators are a vital part of understanding and reducing their carbon emissions; for others it is more important to have opportunities to talk about feelings. Some want simple, practical guides to action; others like to do their own research.

1. Regular revisions are needed in resources for sustainable living such as those included in the QPSW/Living Witness Sustainability Toolkit (footprint guides, guides for practical action, study group session plans). New versions should be brought to Friends' attention in a variety of formats.
2. We hope that Living Witness, QPSW and Quaker Life will continue to work together to support Friends in deepening dialogue and making lifestyle changes, in particular through group activities. A variety of approaches are available.

3. We need to provide opportunities for Friends to connect with each other through talks, workshops, etc. Friends' experience of the practical, social and spiritual aspects of lifestyle change should continue to be shared regularly in a variety of ways, from face-to-face contact and networks to blogs, newsletters, talks and workshops.

Right ordering: Quaker core activity and property

The aim

Our aim is to support Quakers in Britain (including BYM departments and committees, area and local meetings, and other Quaker organisations) in making the Canterbury Commitment a core part of fulfilling their religious and other purposes, in making all of their activities and assets low- carbon and sustainable, and in being patterns and examples for the wider community.

Recommendations

Quaker meetings, organisations and committees may struggle with the complexity of addressing their core purposes in low-carbon, sustainable ways. They may need support to get beyond seeing these as conflicting goals, and they may need technical help with addressing buildings, land, travel, food, waste and use of money. Friends particularly face dilemmas about travelling to meetings and maintaining historic meeting houses, which are seen as vital for maintaining and developing community.

Local meetings, central committees and other Quaker organisations should be encouraged to organise themselves in low-carbon, sustainable ways. This includes looking at how they meet, where and how often.

- a. Resources should be developed to support Quaker bodies in discernment that takes account of the Canterbury Commitment, including weighing up the effects of their decisions on a wide variety of issues, and considering creative alternatives.
- b. A way needs to be agreed to monitor and review progress by local meetings in developing low carbon, sustainable core practices and premises. This might include collection of data such as annual energy use, and a regular questionnaire or survey of local meeting activities. Central committee and staff support would be required. The results should form part of the BYM Trustees' Annual Report.
- c. Encouragement and support should be given to all parts of the Quaker community to follow the example of BYM Trustees in ensuring that our investments are consistent with being low- carbon and sustainable, and in particular to disinvest from fossil fuels.

Witness: taking political action and promoting systemic change

The Aim

To create structures and policies – locally, nationally and globally – which enable people to live low-carbon, sustainable lives; and a transformed economy and society which is low-carbon and just.

Recommendations

We have heard that Friends want to take more political action and to be supported to call for and create systemic change in economics and society. In particular:

1. Friends and local meetings need ongoing support:
 - to use their experience of the joys and challenges of changing their lives and meetings as a foundation for engaging others in their local community, national businesses and politicians
 - to take radical action for change from the current system to be part of building the alternative
 - to speak out for systemic change and for climate justice.
2. This support comes from the centrally managed work (where the lead committee is the QPSW Economics, Sustainability and Peace subgroup) along with other Quaker organisations including Living Witness and Woodbrooke.
3. Many parts of the centrally managed work are engaged, including Turning the Tide, Parliamentary Engagement, Peace Education, and the Peacemaker scheme. A continuing effort is needed to strengthen and connect up the Canterbury Commitment aspects of their activities.
4. British Friends should continue to be supported to connect better with work on climate change and sustainability beyond BYM. There are opportunities to share our experience and contribute to work for change, in particular with international Quaker bodies, other churches and faith organisations, campaigning organisations and movements.

We recommend that Quaker bodies of all kinds continue to speak out publicly on systemic change and climate justice, making the links to traditional Quaker concerns for peace and justice. Advice and other resources are needed to help them to do this. Public statements can help to strengthen our Quaker community and identity, and affirm our shared values.

Appendix B - High-level objectives from the BYM Sustainability Strategy

1. Deepen and articulate the spiritual basis for our Quaker work on sustainability
2. Equip Quaker meetings to become active communities, both calling for change and taking a local lead in creating the change
3. Equip Quaker meetings to become more environmentally sustainable
4. Strengthen community within the Yearly Meeting and build alliances of mutual support with others, including churches, faith groups and Quakers worldwide, to increase courage and resilience
5. Influence the UK government, and government at all levels within and beyond the UK, to take the bold actions needed to limit climate change to a maximum temperature rise of 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.
6. Influence the private sector and other institutions to shift away from the use of fossil fuels
7. Promote an economic system which operates within the constraints of the Earth's natural capital and ecosystems while increasing equality
8. Promote the concept and practice of a shared human security, with sustainability at its heart
9. Reduce the environmental impact of BYM's property while maintaining high quality work/service.
10. Reduce the environmental impact of BYM's activities while maintaining high quality work/service.

Appendix D – Committees’ responsibilities for current, emerging and proposed BYM work on sustainability

Responsible body	Work in progress	Emerging work and proposed changes of responsibility	Proposed additional work
Meeting for Sufferings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for committees to review progress • Reporting to Yearly Meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for committees to liaise – convening clerks’ consultations
BYM Trustees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall strategy • Resources for decarbonising FMHs, eg Meeting Houses Fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Meeting Houses Fund and other grants
Quaker Life Central Committee		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate the spiritual basis of the commitment (including a simple statement of the path we’re following?) (1) • Strengthen Friends’ spiritual discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (with QUNO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencing governments - national & international (5) • Influencing the private sector (6) • Alternative economic systems (7) • Shared human security (8) • Helping meetings engage in advocacy/campaigning (2) • Supporting broader sustainability activism • Working in alliances/movements (part of 4) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for growth of the ‘in progress’ work

Quaker World Relations Committee (with FWCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing across the Quaker world (part of 4) 		
Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-way dialogue with other churches and faith groups 		
Book of Discipline Revision Committee		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qf&p new text – yet to start 	
Quaker Stewardship Committee		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring carbon reduction in meetings – agreed but yet to start 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of carbon reduction data
Hospitality Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BYM's own property (9) • BYM's own activities (10) 		
Woodbrooke (as a partner organisation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already runs some events to galvanise / deepen Quaker activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging collaboration and community among Qs through face-to-face gatherings (run currently by BYMSG) (part of 4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New events to nurture and grow our Quaker sustainability ministry

Notes:

The numbers in brackets refer to the relevant high-level objective in the BYM Trustees' Sustainability Strategy (see Appendix B).

Consideration is still being given to where responsibility should lie for:

- Practical support for meetings to become more sustainable (3)
- Support for individual lifestyle change



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

Appendix E - Minute of Meeting for Sufferings, November 2018

MfS/18/11/18 Sustainability: living up to our commitment

In October, Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) considered four proposals (paper MfS 2018 10 15) designed to ensure every part of BYM integrates environmental sustainability into its thinking and activity - and sees this as integral to our spiritual and practical witness. The proposals were drawn up after a meeting of committee representatives, held in July, and at the request of Meeting for Sufferings.

We now agree the following recommendations (paper MfS/18/11/18):

- a) Arrangements Group already asks committees in their annual report to indicate to MfS how they are working to take forward our YM commitment to becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community. In future, we should expect committees, and also BYM Trustees and Quaker Stewardship Committee, to report annually on how their work is helping and encouraging Friends to take forward this commitment.
- b) MfS will have a substantive agenda item about Sustainability every year. Sustainability can also be considered at other meetings during the year.
- c) MfS should appoint a small Sustainability Monitoring Group. The group will comprise three members of MfS who will monitor progress. The group will monitor: the receipt of reports from Trustees, committees and area meetings that are sent to MfS; that agreed activities are undertaken; and that MfS pays attention to our sustainability commitment in its meetings.
- d) MfS Arrangements Group will continue in its role of discerning the MfS agendas, and will work closely with the Sustainability Monitoring Group.
- e) MfS will continue to report annually to Yearly Meeting on sustainability.

We ask the Recording Clerk to bring draft terms of reference for the Sustainability Monitoring Group, and our Standing Nominations Group to bring names to our next meeting.

BYM Sustainability Group met on 22nd November and the minutes of their meeting will be forwarded to the monitoring group when it is appointed.

We have been reminded of the importance of understanding the nature of a YM concern and ensuring that our testimony to sustainability, in particular, remains central in our personal and corporate lives.

We thank BYM Sustainability Group for their work and for carrying this concern on our behalf over the past four years. We now lay the group down.



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

At a meeting of

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Held at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ
6-7 September 2019

Minutes

Present: Georgina Bailey, Linda Batten (Treasurer), Alison Breadon, Sarah Donaldson, Nick Eyre, Ellie Harding (from minute BYMT-2019-09-09), Carolyn Hayman, Caroline Nursey (Clerk), David Olver (Assistant Clerk), Alastair Reid, Hazel Shellens, Graham Torr, Frances Voelcker, Danielle Walker Palmour, Chris Willmore.

In attendance: Paul Grey, Head of Operations, (except minutes BYMT-2019-09-16 to 17); Lisa Kiew, Head of Finance & Resources, (except minutes BYMT-2019-09-16 to 17); Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, (except minutes BYMT-2019-09-17); Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk, (except minutes BYMT-2019-09-16 to 17); Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness & Worship, (except minutes BYMT-2019-09-16 to 17).

Visitors: Robert Almond, Co-Clerk Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee; Jeff Beatty, Co-Clerk, Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee; by video-conference Jacqueline Noltingk, General Meeting for Scotland trustee; Emma Roberts, Clerk Quaker Life Central Committee; Deborah Rowlands, Meeting of Friends in Wales trustee.

BYMT-2019-09-01 Welcome, agenda check, conflicts of interest check, minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held 7 to 9 June 2019 have been signed by the Clerk.

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We confirm our agenda.

Later in our meeting we will be welcoming Robert Almond, Co-Clerk Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee, Jeff Beatty, Co-Clerk, Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee, Jacqueline Noltingk, General Meeting for Scotland, Emma Roberts, Clerk Quaker Life Central Committee and Deborah Rowlands, Meeting of Friends in Wales .

During our worship, we have heard read part of paragraph 3.05 from Quaker faith & practice.

BYMT-2019-09-02 Minutes received

We have received the following minutes:

- Continued minutes (BYMT-2019-090-02a);
- Property Development Steering Group 10 April and 20 June 2019 (BYMT-2010-09-02bi,ii)
- Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations 5 to 9 June 2019 (BYMT-2019-09-02c)
- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee 14 to 16 June 2019 (BYMT-2019-09-02d)
- Quaker World Relations Committee 29 June 2019 (BYMT-2019-09-02e)
- Quaker Life Central Committee 10 to 12 May 2019 (BYMT-2019-09-02f)

BYMT-2019-09-03 Items taken on draft minute

(a) 2021 dates

We receive paper BYMT-2019-09-03a giving suggested dates for our meetings in 2021: We approve the following dates: 13 February, 11 to 13 June (residential meeting), 3 to 4 September, 12 November and 9 April (training day and receipt of accounts).

(b) Appointments

Our Nominations Group brings forward the following names for appointment:

Clerk of Finance and Property Committee

Carolyn Hayman for 2020 and 2021.

Giving and Fundraising Development Group

Carolyn Hayman (to end 2021) and Danielle Walker Palmour (to end 2022).

A request for release has been received from Elizabeth Redfern as a Director of Quiet Company, with immediate effect.

We thank the Friend released from service and agree to the appointments.

(c) Operational plan 2019 progress report

We receive BYMT-2019-09-03b giving mid-year progress on the 2019 Operational Plan. We have been reassured that the Plan is flexible enough to be able to respond to changing circumstances.

BYMT-2019-09-04 Recording Clerk's report

We receive the Recording Clerk's report to Trustees (BYMT-2019-09-04) which covers the work of Management Meeting since we last met with the staffing update report as an appendix.

(1) Change processes

We have heard from the members of Management Meeting how they are preparing for the changes which will be needed to implement (a) our strategic priorities; (b) the giving and fundraising strategy; and (c) the new meeting-centred approach.

There are four strands to this change strategy:

- Governance,
- Meeting-centred support,
- New Ways of Working (including preparing for regionalisation)
- Engagement.

Each of these strands is being overseen by one member of Management Meeting, all overseen by the Recording Clerk. We have discussed each of the strands.

Change must always be God-led, or spirit-led. 'The point is that we need to be an ordinary well-run organisation, with good structures and sensible practices, which we then make extraordinary by transcending, not discarding them.' [Beth Allen, 2007, Qf&p 8.25]

Change is often challenging, particularly for those who work for us. We are deeply grateful for the hard work of all our staff and hope that they can be fully engaged in the changes.

We strongly support the programme of change which should help us become a simple church, supported by a simple charity, to reinvigorate Quakerism.

(2) Other reporting

Recording Clerk: Sustaining church & faith: Yearly Meeting Gathering, Governance reviews, Revision of book of discipline. External relations: Lobbying Act, Faith-based organisations, Visits to meetings, Reputational issues.

Deputy Recording Clerk: Impact, Communications.

Witness & Worship: Sustainability: Global climate strike, 2020 UN Climate summit, Legacy-funded proposal on greening our lives and meetings; All-age community: All-age community event, Regional youth workers, Engaging Young Adult Quakers; Witness work: Governance and strategy, Possible reshaping of programmes, Economics and Sustainability Programme, Sanctuary Everywhere appeal; Support for meetings: Joint support for meetings strategy, Head of Local Development, Outreach strategy, Conflict review, Quaker Life Representative Council. Simpler Meetings project; Library/collections: Friends Ambulance Unit and Friends Relief Service materials from WWII, New collections strategy.

Finance & resources: Data protection and management; Employment; Finance; Procurement; Property management; Fundraising.

Operations: Bake the difference; Swarthmoor Hall; Customer feedback; Facilities; Health and safety; Committee Services and Events: BYM Events, BYM committees; Databases; Online travel bookings; Young Friends General Meeting.

We have received minutes of Management Meeting for their minutes held on 11 June, 16 July and 6 August 2019.

BYMT-2019-09-05 Trustees' news

We receive a report of the activities of Trustees since our last meeting (BYMT-2019-09-05). This also includes a report on the Clerks' Away Day which David Olver and Caroline Nursey attended on behalf of BYM Trustees.

BYMT-2019-09-06 Finance

(a) Quarterly Report

We receive the Finance Report covering the second quarter to end June 2019 (BYMT-2019-09-06a).

(b) Finance & Property Committee minutes

We receive the minutes of the meeting of BYMT Finance & Property Committee held on 25 July 2019 (BYMT-2019-09-06b).

(c) Property Upkeep Designated Fund

The Property Upkeep Designation Fund is held to fund the structural maintenance and capital developments of all the properties of BYM. We note the recommendation in FP 19/44 (Property Annual Report) and agree that the purpose of the Property Upkeep Designated Fund be broadened to include capital expenditure at Friends House and other properties.

(d) Responsible investment

We have heard that a coalition of charities and others coordinated by Bates Wells are seeking a court declaration on the law relating to charity trustee duties in relation to responsible investments and public benefit, following engagement with the Charity Commission. We agree to contribute £1,000 towards legal costs and contribute our experience to the case being developed. We believe that seeking legal advice will inform the Society's discernment of a moral position; taking part in this action is also an opportunity to influence others to further consider responsible investment.

(e) Investment Management

Rathbone Greenbank is currently completing a number of anti-money laundering checks. We confirm that Linda Batten (Treasurer), Carolyn Hayman (Trustee) and Lisa Kiew (Head of Finance and Resources) have been approved to provide instructions on the portfolio on behalf of the other BYM trustees.

BYMT-2019-09-07 Property strategy

We receive the BYM Property Steering Group interim report (BYMT-2019-09-07). The report outlines various possibilities for developing Friends House/Drayton House so that we can generate more income. We are pleased to note that the report is clear that any development should minimise CO2 and other negative omissions and consumption and that the possibility of altered fabric performing environmental benefit such as generating renewable energy should be explored.

a) Friends House

We have considered what usage of Friends House by Friends we consider essential, alongside hospitality and income generation. Friends House must be a place of visible Quaker worship.

We confirm that the possibility of hosting an annual Yearly Meeting event is essential, while recognising that the pattern of Yearly Meetings and Yearly Meeting Gatherings is likely to continue to evolve. Friends House should continue to host Quaker activities as well as other functions such as café, bookshop and events. Office space for BYM should be retained in Friends House.

We ask the Property Development Steering Group and the Board of Quiet Company to consider the draft vision for Friends House, alongside the revised Lettings Policy, and bring both to us at our next meeting.

We ask the Steering Group to explore the options of creating additional lettable space on the second floor of Friends House and of raising the floor of the courtyard to create an outside courtyard garden at first floor level with a large event space at ground floor level. We recognise the need to test ideas widely with Friends.

b) Drayton House

Drayton House is an investment property that generates income to support the work of BYM. We are clear that we would prefer not to take back the direct management of Drayton House when the current lease ends, and that we should explore options around a longer-term engagement with an educational provider.

We ask the Steering Group to examine further scenarios 1, 2, and 3 for development of Drayton House, including options for financing.

c) Swarthmoor Hall

We are pleased that the Steering Group considers the proposals developed by the Quiet Company for Swarthmoor Hall to be likely to allow it to become more environmentally and financially sustainable for future generations.

We are grateful to the Steering Group for their thorough and creative work and ask them to continue overseeing the feasibility of this work on our behalf.

BYMT-2019-09-08 Safeguarding

We receive a safeguarding report (BYMT-2019-09-08) covering The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA); Review of archive folders; Internal improvements; Governance oversight; Communications; Safeguarding support for meetings; Risk.

Sarah Donaldson, our Safeguarding lead Trustee, has introduced the paper to us and updated us on progress. Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk, has also spoken to us. We are aware that there is much still to do, particularly to recognise the voices of survivors and to ensure that they are supported.

We need to set time aside to train ourselves further as trustees and for deeper consideration of what we can do to ensure all Quaker communities are safe for everyone, especially for children and vulnerable adults.

We note the significant challenge of responding fully to IICSA by their deadline and of reporting back on behalf of the whole yearly meeting when responsibility is split between so many charitable entities.

We expect to return to this at our next meeting and thank staff for their work. BYMT-2019-09-09 Trustees of General Meeting for Scotland and Meeting of Friends in Wales

Deborah Rowlands, Meeting of Friends in Wales, and (by video-conference) Jacqueline Noltingk, General Meeting for Scotland joined us for this item. We had an informal discussion covering devolution, advocacy, implications of the meeting-centred approach, and the use of the BYM grant to each body.

We are grateful to Deborah and Jacqueline for joining us and for the work of the two bodies.

BYMT-2019-09-10 Quaker Life Central Committee and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee

We are joined by Robert Almond and Jeff Beatty, Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee Co-Clerks, and Emma Roberts, Quaker Life Central Committee Clerk for this item. We receive QPSWCC minute 19/35 (BYMT-2019-09-09).

This is the annual session for the two Central Committees with trustees and our opportunity to discuss the key issues on their agendas and the implementation of strategic priorities.

We have heard that both Central Committees are on a journey to align our work with the strategic priorities that have been discerned. We recognise the challenge in ensuring that our work is both spirit-led and informed by data, and learning, that shows the impact of what we do over an appropriate time-scale.

We would like reporting to be clearer about what is, or is not, being achieved. We recognise the challenge of engaging all meetings in our work, and re-invigorating what we do by responding to emerging concerns.

There are many reasons why we need to ensure that everything we do is focussed. This includes the need to ensure that the level of work, and how we do it, is sustainable medium term.

We look forward to working closely with our Central Committees and are happy to send trustees to meetings whenever that might be useful.

We are grateful to Robert, Jeff and Emma for joining us and for the work of the two Central Committees.

We send this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee.

BYMT-2019-09-11 Simplifying structures and practices

We have received paper BYMT-2019-09-11 on simplifying structures and practices, which is one of the three strands of work from our Strategic Priorities - agreed earlier this year. Robert Almond and Jeff Beatty, Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee Co-Clerks, and Emma Roberts, Quaker Life Central Committee Clerk have joined us for this item.

The paper suggests this priority as having three strands:

- Simplifying national church and charity governance structures and practices,
- Support for simplifying local structures and practices,
- Simplifying BYM's internal processes.

We agree that the three strands in the paper give us a useful structure through which to keep track of the change processes underway. We have discussed the strand on simplifying national church and charity governance structures and practices.

We want structures that help us live adventurously so that the spirit can live and that also delivers accountability – perhaps in more creative ways. The change process should include:

- identifying a clear purpose for committees around a spirit-led purpose and whether it is a governance committee or a group delivering work;
- seeing if that purpose is still relevant and whether it needs to have a committee to do it;
- considering how well the purpose is fulfilled currently and whether a committee is the best way to do it;
- identifying the costs - financially and environmentally – of the committee compared with other ways of delivering that purpose.

We agree that we, as trustees, are responsible for supporting and leading this process as set out in the paper.

We ask our Nominations Group to find two trustees to work with Management Meeting on next steps. We will return to this at a future meeting.

We send this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee.

BYMT-2019-09-12 Yearly Meeting Gathering

We have received an invitation to help discern the agenda and programme for Yearly Meeting Gathering at Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee at their meeting on 28 September (BYMT-2019-09-12).

The deadline for any paper is 16 September.

We note that David Olver will prepare a paper, including points we have raised, and that Ellie Harding will attend Agenda Committee on our behalf.

BYMT-2019-09-13 Trustees' annual report

We have received paper BYMT-2019-09-13 from Georgina Bailey, Frances Voelcker and Ben Robinson (Publications Manager) about the Review that accompanies the Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts.

We have discussed the group's ideas and welcome thinking around video and other non-digital versions in particular. We would like more plain speaking and serious messages included.

BYMT-2019-09-14 Preparing for Meeting for Sufferings

We have discussed our participation at Meeting for Sufferings to be held on 4-6 October.

BYMT-2019-09-15 Reviewing the meeting

We have reviewed the meeting.

BYMT-2019-09-16 Time with the Recording Clerk

We have spent time with the Recording Clerk.

BYMT-2019-09-17 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

Caroline Nursey
Clerk



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Quaker Stewardship report to Meeting for Sufferings

Introduction

Quaker Stewardship is a Yearly Meeting Committee. It's required to report annually to Yearly Meeting and doesn't have a formal relationship with Meeting for Sufferings.

Quaker Stewardship Committee's purpose is to give help and guidance to meetings in the stewardship of their finance and property and to enable them to meet the requirements of charity law; encouraging openness, accountability, transparency and integrity in all our affairs (*Quaker faith & practice* 14.38). We particularly welcome this opportunity to communicate with Meeting for Sufferings at a time when Britain Yearly Meeting is

- encouraging area and local meetings to simplify their ways of working;
- planning significant changes to the way that area and local meetings are supported;
- revising the church government sections of *Quaker faith & practice*; and
- grappling with the increased burden of external regulation being imposed on charities including churches.

Stewardship within our church

Britain Yearly Meeting is a single church with a hierarchical structure and the way in which area and local meetings work is organised and run is set out in our book of discipline. Our Quaker business method, in which the way forward is discerned by the worshipping group as a whole, is fundamental to the way in which we operate. Adherence to our testimonies and the highest standards of integrity are demanded of us all. This applies as much to our collective stewardship of LM, AM and BYM resources as to our individual conduct.

Yearly meeting has always seen the need to monitor what is happening locally. From the beginning, it asked for annual reports from quarterly (later monthly and then area) meetings, first orally and then in writing (Qf&p 1.04). These reports aimed to ensure consistency of conduct among Friends and to obtain information as to the state of the Society. The questions to be answered ranged from 'how the Truth has prospered ... since the last yearly meeting' to a query in 1723 about defrauding the king of his customs and excise. The current requirement to send area meeting annual reports and accounts and to describe action on sustainability follows this long tradition.

Our priorities as a church are clearly stated in *Advices & queries* 34 "Respect the laws of the state but let your first loyalty be to God's purposes.". We are held to account by the world and we feel responsible (and judged) as a national Quaker community. Worldly considerations affect the format of our reports, but our primary consideration must always be to show to how our stewardship is enabling us to carry out Quaker work.

Stewardship of our charities

Although BYM is one church, it is many charities. Each AM is a separate charity and as such is legally accountable. Although we have to appoint trustees, every individual in the AM is responsible for this as a consequence of their membership of the church. There is a tension between Quaker business method, where we are all involved in discernment, and the secular expectation that trustees will set the strategic direction of the charity. This is true as much between AM in session and AM trustees as between Meeting for Sufferings and BYM trustees. Managing this successfully is essential to making the role of AM trustee a manageable task, not a nightmare.

Although BYM is many charities, it is still one church. Each area meeting has its own way of organising its work, with few or many committees, property management centralised or devolved to local meetings and so on according to local needs. Despite this variation, every AM is working within the rules laid down in Chapter 4 of *Quaker faith & practice*, which makes it relatively straightforward for BYM to support the work of AMs and for Friends from different AMs to share good practice. The move towards regional support for AMs should provide further opportunities for AM trustees to meet together and support each other.

QSC's current work

In a nutshell, QSC's job is to support trustees and treasurers, to monitor compliance with charity law and regulation, and to keep BYM informed about stewardship issues. Its current work is focussed on revising the trustees' handbook, supporting AMs in simplifying their work as a charity, and helping AMs that are excepted charities to register. The last is a one-off piece of work that affects the rather fewer than half of AMs in England and Wales that have a turnover of less than £100,000 and are not currently registered charities. They are being asked to register by March 2021 and QSC is planning the support that will be needed to sort out and problems with this process, particularly in relation to property ownership and associated trusts.

Simplifying the work of AMs raises a number of important issues that concern QSC. The need for stewardship work to be rooted in its spiritual basis, and the importance of keeping to Quaker business methods have been highlighted above. QSC is keen to encourage AMs to adopt a risk-based approach to their work, so that trustees focus their efforts into high risk areas such as ensuring that the meeting's money and property are protected, that children and young people are safeguarded, and that essential reports and accounts are prepared.

Area meetings are being encouraged to consider radical ways to reduce the burden of trusteeship. These include merging AMs, having a single set of trustees for more than one AM, or, in London, a single charity for a group of AMs (an umbrella body). This proliferation of different models for AMs or umbrella bodies could require unmanageable complexity for our church government at the national level and make it difficult for Quakers in one area to understand how the Church is run in other areas. If mergers and groupings develop in an ad-hoc manner, there is also the risk that AMs could unintentionally be left isolated.

Review of QSC

BYM is currently carrying out a review of QSC that is due to report to Yearly Meeting in 2021. This is looking at how the work currently carried out by QSC should be done in future and how it should fit into the organisational structure. Do monitoring compliance and supporting trustees and treasurers have to go together or does the support fit better with other support for meetings? Should QSC report to YM in session as at present or to Meeting for Sufferings and BYM trustees? Does it have the right terms of reference? And so on.

Questions for Meeting for Sufferings

1. How do we help our meetings to keep sight of the spiritual basis of our stewardship?
2. How do we manage the dual responsibilities of AM in session and AM trustees in setting the strategic direction of our AMs?
3. How much diversity in the organisation of AMs can BYM support?

Ursula Fuller
Clerk



Yearly Meeting of the
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Organisations applying to become Quaker Recognised Bodies

Introduction

This paper gives details of applications for registration as Quaker Recognised Bodies (QRB). Staff have looked at the documentation provided by each of the organisations and consider that the criteria for listing them as Quaker recognised bodies have been met.

Background

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

- The guidelines for groups that would like to be a QRB are also on the BYM Website www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups
- Paper **MfS 2018/07/15** gives a full introduction to Quaker recognised bodies.

A Quaker recognised body (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.

The process aims to clarify benefits and responsibilities for QRBs and BYM. It's also a way to strengthen links between centrally-managed work and the wide range of exciting Quaker work being done by other groups, helping build a vibrant Society of Friends.

So far, Meeting for Sufferings has registered 66 Quaker recognised bodies.

Request for registration

The following organisation has applied to become a Quaker recognised body.

Quaker Family History Society.

Action required

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to approve these organisations as Quaker recognised bodies.

Chloe Scaling
Recording Clerk's Office

Quaker Family History Society (QFHS)

Aims: QFHS is a family history society specifically for people with Quaker ancestry from the British Isles, sharing their common interest, which goes much beyond genealogy, and loves to explore the riches of Quaker history and culture. Their main stated objective is to promote and encourage the public study of family history, genealogy, heraldry and local history with particular reference to Quakers worldwide.

Governance: The Society is administered by an Executive Committee of not more than ten members; currently they have eight.

Constitution: They are an unincorporated association, and a registered charity Registered charity no. 1100843.

Type of Group: External.

Foundation: 1994

Publications and activities: Their principal publication is a journal, Quaker Connections, which has been in continuous publication three times a year since the society's foundation in 1994. Additionally, they hold three meetings a year aimed at the wider membership, one of which – the AGM – is always in the London area, while the other two are held at varying locations all around the country.

Membership: 177 members. It is not a Quaker organisation and membership is open to anyone interested in the history of British or Irish Quakers. About one third of the membership are members or attenders.

Finance: 2018: Income of £2669 and expenditure of £2302.

Winding up: The constitution says as follows (clause 9)

The Society may be dissolved by a resolution passed by not less than three quarters of those members present in person or by proxy with voting rights at either an Annual or Extraordinary General Meeting called for the purpose and for which twenty eight days' prior notice has been given in writing. Such a resolution may give instructions for the disposal of any assets held by the Society after all debts and liabilities have been paid, the balance left to be transferred to some other charitable institution or institutions having objectives similar to those of the Society.

Archives: The administrative archives of the Society are held by the current Secretary. There are no other significant archive holdings.

Current contact details:

Ben Beck, Secretary
72 Milton Court Road, London, SE14 6JJ
secretary@qfhs.co.uk

Website: <https://www.qfhs.co.uk/>

Staff link: Lisa McQuillan, Records Manager & Archivist



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MfS Appeal Group

In November 2018, MfS recorded that an appeal had been received, and appointed five Friends to form an Appeal Group (MfS/18/11/05). The group comprised: Anne Bennett (Lincolnshire AM), Jeffrey Dean (Manchester & Warrington AM), Jonathan Fox (Leeds AM), Joseph Fuller (Gloucestershire AM) and Patricia Jaggard (Hampshire & Islands AM).

The group has now concluded its work. Because of the sensitive nature of appeals, Meeting for Sufferings isn't told about the details and the Appeal Group does not report on its decision.

Report arising from the work of the Meeting for Sufferings Appeal Group

Report to Meeting for Sufferings

The Appeal Group has completed its work and has reported its decision back to the appellant and to the Area Meeting. It is time for the group to be laid down.

Joseph Fuller

Convenor of the Appeal Group
25.04.2019

A draft minute might read:

Appeal to Meeting for Sufferings

In November 2018 we agreed to establish a group to consider an appeal made under the guidance set out in Quaker faith and practice chapter 4 (minute MfS/18/11/05). The Appeal Group has carried out its work and reported its findings both to the appellant and the Area Meeting concerned. Accordingly, we lay down this group and thank its members for their service.



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Assisted Dying

Introduction

North West London and Staffordshire Area Meetings have both sent minutes to MfS about assisted dying.

Arrangements Group feels MfS should not try to reach a conclusion on this matter at one meeting. In recent years, MfS has sent emerging concerns to Area Meetings for further consideration.

This concern may, in time, need to go to Yearly Meeting.

Background – recent Quaker discernment

In 2010, MfS received and noted a minute from North Scotland AM, which expressed opposition to the End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill which was going through committee stage at the time (it was defeated). This was recorded as ‘for information’ and MfS did not express its own view.

In June 2014, MfS forwarded minutes from London West AM and Leeds AM, regarding end of life care to Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC). In December 2014 QLCC came back to MfS; the minute noted that this had been a starting point; this is a huge subject, and Friends were encouraged to explore together (MfS 2014/12/12c).

QLCC continued its own work, which was more generally about end-of-life issues rather than the more specific topic of assisted dying. In July 2016 MfS noted that a recent Quaker Life Representative Council had focused on death and dying, and QLCC had published a short leaflet ‘*Love and Loss*’.

In 2016 Leeds AM published a book ‘*Assisted dying: a Quaker exploration*’ which was sent to all local meetings.

QLCC laid down its End of Life Working Group at the end of 2016.

An emerging concern?

Both Staffordshire AM And North West London AM have adopted a concern which they hope our Yearly Meeting will also adopt. They would like our Yearly Meeting to advocate for a change in the law, to enable medically-assisted death in certain circumstances.

Background – legislation

This is an extremely short introduction – Friends who want to explore this further will find much more information available from the two AMs, and from the organisations listed below.

Assisted suicide is illegal under the terms of the Suicide Act (1961) and is punishable by up to 14 years' imprisonment. Trying to kill yourself is not a criminal act. Euthanasia – whether voluntary or non-voluntary - is regarded as either manslaughter or murder. The maximum penalty is life imprisonment.

As mentioned above, the Scottish Parliament rejected the End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill in 2010; an Assisted Suicide Scotland Bill was rejected in 2015. The Westminster parliament rejected an Assisted Dying Bill in 2015. (On that occasion, 'leaders of all the UK's major faith groups' wrote to MPs to oppose assisted suicide.) There was a backbench debate in the House of Commons on 4th July this year.

In Britain there are several independent bodies working for a change in the law:

- Assisted Dying Coalition <https://assisteddying.org.uk/>
- My Death, My Decision www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/
- Friends At The End www.friends-at-the-end.org.uk
- End of Life Choices, Jersey www.facebook.com/endoflifechoicesjersey/
- Humanists UK <https://humanism.org.uk/campaigns/public-ethical-issues/assisted-dying/>
- Humanist Society Scotland www.humanism.scot
- Dignity in Dying www.dignityindying.org.uk and Dignity in Dying Scotland www.dignityindyingscotland.org.uk

Assisted Dying: A Quaker Exploration, published by Leeds, AM, is available from the Quaker Bookshop: <https://bookshop.quaker.org.uk/search?q=assisted+dying>

Questions for Meeting for Sufferings

At this stage, Meeting for Sufferings is asked to consider whether this concern could usefully be sent to AMs for their consideration, before coming back to it later.

If so, what sort of timescale would be appropriate? What processes and information would help Friends' consideration?

Alternatively, are there other ways that the Yearly Meeting could explore this concern – for instance, through a Quaker Recognised Body?

Or does Meeting for Sufferings feel this is something for individual Friends and local meetings to take forward, working with and alongside other organisations?

Further consideration

Whether or not MfS wishes to take this forward as a Yearly Meeting, there are Friends in both Area Meetings who will be happy to share background information, and speak to Quaker meetings about their concern.

North West London AM held 22 May 2019

Minute 19.05.06 A Concern – Care for the Dying

We have heard a concern that a minority of dying people suffer unbearably and are beyond the reach of palliative care.

If they are mentally competent and have a prognosis of death within six months, they should have a right to medical help to bring their own lives painlessly to an end.

North West London AM finds this concern genuine and asks the Clerk to forward it to Meeting for Sufferings to reflect & discern whether Quakers might truly support a change in the law to allow assisted dying.

Tim Heath
Clerk

Staffordshire Area Meeting Minute 9 Assisted Dying

Staffordshire Area Meeting have considered the following Minute received from Wolverhampton Local Meeting:

“Minute 8 Assisted dying (Business meeting 7th July 2019)

‘Friends in Wolverhampton Meeting have spent time in consideration of the issues around assisted dying and how this practice relates to our Quaker faith. We are united in asking Area Meeting to agree a minute asking Meeting for Sufferings to encourage BYM Friends to approach their MPs to explain the changes we need, and also to work with other organisations such as "My Death, My Decision", "Friends At The End", "Humanists UK" and "Dignity in Dying" to get a change in the law which would allow people to have a medically assisted death in the UK if that is their wish. This law would need to be surrounded by clear safeguards, as in Switzerland, to prevent any misunderstanding or mis-use of the law. The present situation divides us. There are some who can afford the £10-15,000 to travel to a clinic for the purpose of achieving a medically assisted death should they wish, and those who cannot’.

This concern comes originally from a Friend whose considerably disabled daughter had to travel to Switzerland to end her life, with the help of Eternal Spirit, Basel. We believe that we should respect the wishes of those who make a considered decision that life is now intolerable for them through pain or other distress. We unite with this concern and will send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings. We ask Friends in Britain to accept the principle of assisted dying, and to express those views, encouraging our Members of Parliament to take this into law. The support of Britain Yearly Meeting will enable us in speaking truth to power.

At present we only allow people who can afford to travel to have this choice. It also requires their accompanying relatives or friends to break the law. We should not be requiring people to have to end their lives sooner rather than later, because they need to be fit enough to travel as well as being rich enough. The alternative of attempting suicide in the UK can have dreadful consequences.

Statistics show that over 80% of the population agree with the principle of assisted dying, yet MPs have voted strongly against. (Rob Marris, then an MP, who introduced the defeated Private Members' Bill, asked why he thinks this is so, replied along the lines of "because they don't trust the electorate".)

General public - 80% in favour
Medical profession - 50% in favour
MPs -26% in favour.”

Concerns were raised about the level of safeguarding which would be included in the legislation. However, the principle needs to be established before specific safeguards are agreed.

Friends shared personal experiences in support of the Wolverhampton Minute. There were reservations based on the level of safeguards and whether or not we should await our appropriate 'time to go'. Overall, with these exceptions, the meeting was in unity. Reassurance was given that there would be a great deal of further discussion in Britain Yearly Meeting before a final position is arrived at.

We, therefore, agree to send this Minute to Meeting for Sufferings in support of the Minute from Wolverhampton LM.

Berry Dicker
Clerk



Yearly Meeting of the
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Speaking Out

About this agenda item

Arrangements Group has included this matter, in response to questions from several Friends about advocacy, and how our Yearly Meeting speaks out on matters of concern.

Meeting for Sufferings is responsible for our 'speaking out policy' which applies to BYM committees and staff, but also to our local and area meetings. The guidance (see below) empowers the Recording Clerk, as appropriate, to communicate discerned positions.

In session, we will hear from Anne van Staveren (Media Relations Officer) and Grace da Costa (Public Affairs and Advocacy Manager). There will also be opportunities to speak with them (and other staff) informally during the weekend.

Introduction

During 2013 Meeting for Sufferings' Speaking Out Group drafted guidance for Friends on Speaking Out, and it was accepted in February 2014 (minute MfS 14/02/05 refers). The full guidance is attached for reference.

There are three strands in our vision document 'Our Faith in the Future' which speak of communication and engagement. We seek a future:

- Where 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'."

- Where 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.”

- Where 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.”

At the MfS special interest group at BYM in 2019 one rep said ‘What Friends in my meeting want to know is, what is MfS DOING about... (insert any matter of current concern)???’ It was a reminder of the importance of communicating what we do effectively.

One thing to remember before answering the question though is that MfS meets only 5 times yearly and its agendas are determined by a mixture of routine matters - nominations, correspondence, reports - and the monitoring of groups we have established to carry out specific tasks - reviews, things laid upon us by minute of YM. Also important is our engagement with Area Meetings and, through them, with the membership of Britain Yearly Meeting on matters of common concern. It is not easy, nor necessarily desirable or appropriate to respond quickly with a public statement on the hottest topic in the news on any given MfS date before proper time has been allowed for discernment.

However this is not to say that nothing is being done. The Communications Team at Friends House is continually active in the following ways:

- Collaborating with other faith groups e.g. in signing letters to politicians or the press
- Responding to consultations
- Engaging in private correspondence with other faith organisations at peer-to-peer level
- On social media platforms
- Blogging
- Keeping our website up-to-date

In October 2017 and November 2018 MfS had presentations from communications staff on their work, supported by a wealth of information about the actions taken.

This perhaps invisible work is made possible by tapping into previously discerned positions – the oldest and most well-known of these being the Peace Testimony – so the comms team can make timely statements that are in line with Friends thinking without waiting for the next MfS.

Read about ‘How Quakers do politics’ on the BYM website:

www.quaker.org.uk/resources/free-resources/political-guides

For information about recent public letters, statements and government submissions on issues of concern to Quakers Recent public letters, statements and government submissions on issues of concern to Quakers:

www.quaker.org.uk/resources/free-resources/quaker-concerns-1

You can sign up to the email list to receive notice of press releases by emailing Anne van Staveren – annev@quaker.org.uk

Margaret Bryan,
MfS assistant clerk
August 2019

Appendix - Speaking Out As Quakers, Advice for Meetings

Communicating publicly about our faith and the testimonies is an essential part of our lives and something all Quakers are encouraged to do. The following advice will help local and area meetings speak out confidently.

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS), the body that represents Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) between sessions, has agreed a Speaking Out policy. This is a short summary.

The Speaking Out policy identifies two categories of speaking out:

- a Yearly Meeting statement, which defines a new position on an area of concern;
- public statements and comments, which are addressed primarily to the wider world.

Yearly Meeting statements

Yearly Meeting statements establish an agreed text about a Quaker position on a matter of concern and are agreed by BYM or MfS. These may be in the form of a minute or a stand-alone statement.

If a Yearly Meeting statement is used by a local group, it is important to make clear where the BYM statement ends and where comment begins.

Yearly Meeting statements establish and explain the witness of Friends on an issue of concern. They arise from a process of discernment by Yearly Meeting in session or by Meeting for Sufferings and are primarily addressed to Friends in Britain Yearly Meeting.

Such witness arises from the leadings of the Holy Spirit and is tested in the gathered meeting. It is an expression of love and truth. To be convincing, it must arise from our engagement with the issue addressed as well as from our testimonies.

When rightly discerned, we believe our Yearly Meeting statements will convey a spiritual quality that reflects their origin. It follows that these statements should not be strident, recriminatory, judge-mental, self-righteous, clichéd, or ill-informed. Neither should they be narrowly prescriptive.

Our Yearly Meeting statements are addressed first and foremost to Friends, to state the Yearly Meeting's discerned position, to explain how we came to it and to encourage all Friends to unite with it. When we speak out to the world, our voice is not always heard, but our Yearly Meeting statements should nevertheless galvanise us to put our convictions into action.

Public statements and comments

Public statements and comments may take the form of a press release, letter to the media, broadcast interview or online comment.

They will use language appropriate to the particular audience. They also have a role in keeping other Quakers informed.

If an area or local meeting makes its own statement, it should include the name of the meeting in the title or opening text. It should not be implied that they are statements from Quakers in general or of Quakers in Britain.

Quaker meetings are advised to set up procedures for making public statements and comments. This will involve consultation among a specified group, including the clerk of the meeting. When speaking locally Quakers are encouraged to draw on statements and comments made by Quakers in Britain and to contact the Advocacy & Public Relationships team, who can support and advise on the most effective use of different types of media.

When communicating publicly on behalf of Quakers, the views expressed must have been discerned by an appropriate Quaker body.

Public statements and comments are made by BYM staff and committees to explain Quaker witness in more specific terms. They are also made by Quaker meetings at local level, by special interest groups and by individual Friends. They are primarily addressed to the wider world, though they also play an important role in keeping Friends informed.

The general principles that guide BYM statements are also relevant to public statements. Such comments should be grounded in discernment and should convey a spiritual quality that reflects their Quaker origin. They contribute our religious witness to the evolving discourse around current events and broader issues of world affairs, using language that will be widely understood by non-Quakers.

Public statements and comments should follow the basic principles indicated in Quaker faith & practice. Friends must be careful to explain the provenance of their statements and must not claim to speak on behalf of BYM without explicit authority.

Nevertheless, the message should derive from agreed policy of Quakers in Britain (normally evidenced by minutes, agreed BYM statements and/or *Quaker faith & practice*).

There should be sufficient current or recent concern among the body of Friends it is speaking for to justify speaking out on this subject. The way it is expressed should conform with Quaker values. No area of Quaker work should be jeopardised by the message. If this is a possibility, those considering making the statement should ensure that it can be justified.

Meetings, groups and individuals are encouraged to seek advice from relevant Friends and to consult BYM's Advocacy & Public Relationships team.

Who speaks out?

When a meeting issues a public statement or comment, the clerk will normally sign it, unless another arrangement has been agreed. Whoever signs will be involved in the decision-making process and must always agree to their name being used.

Non-public messages

Letters to elected representatives or others with influence should not be publicised by the sender, unless it states it is an open letter. However, in practice even private letters may be quoted by recipients.

Taking action

Quakers who participate in marches or vigils should be aware they may be identified as Quaker spokespeople. When taking part in a demonstration, an organised Quaker group will be clear about the objectives, that the organiser/s is one that Quakers support and the event is intended to be peaceful.

Some may wish to participate in nonviolent direct action. If there is an intention to break the laws of the state for conscience's sake, participation by any Quaker should be tested with their worshipping group. If a Quaker group trains or supports actions intended to break the law, this should be tested by their responsible body and trustees.

Joint statements are those which BYM (or another Quaker body) supports alongside other bodies. Quakers often have a share in the drafting of such statements, which are addressed to the wider world and/or to agencies responsible for delivering relevant policy.

Joint statements make a necessary contribution to Quaker action. Statements on behalf of Quakers in Britain are subject to careful scrutiny by BYM staff, using a checklist authorised by BYM. Joint statements will only be endorsed when we are willing to support all their messages and to share a platform with all co-signatories, when language and tone are acceptable to Friends, and when we are confident that such statements will not harm other Quaker work that may be going on quietly. Joint statements are reported to the relevant BYM committees, to which they may also be referred for a further process of discernment.