

Calling Letter



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

22nd November 2019

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Dear Friends,

Our next meeting is on Saturday 7th December in the Large Meeting House (The Light) at Friends House and we will be joined for the first part of our meeting by the young people on their Young People's Participation Day. They will also be with us for the end of our meeting together and some may attend part of the afternoon session. It is an opportunity for cross-generational conversations and insights! There will be a sandwich lunch provided for us and the young people or you may wish to bring your own.

You will see from the attached agenda that the main business of the morning is a session when we can hear from each of the central committees about the issues that are of most concern to them at the present time. This helps our understanding of the scale and balance of our centrally managed work and the way in which our committees who are close to this work, can guide staff and trustees when difficult decisions arise. Better understanding enables us to be clear about the role of Meeting for Sufferings in our organisation and this is an opportunity for us to have dialogue directly with the central committees.

In the afternoon, we receive area meeting minutes (from Central Yorkshire on the use of the term Overseer), and consider the revision of the terms of reference for the Central Nominations Committee (this continues work that we agreed at our residential meeting last year on the role of the Committee on Clerks). We will hear from the BYM trustees and deal with other items of routine business before the young people rejoin us for our closing worship. (Please note that we do not plan to return to gender-based issues at this meeting but that we will do so after the Inclusion and Diversity conference has been held on 17-19 January <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/diversity-and-inclusion-gathering> and after Quaker Life has had further time to respond.)

We know that we are living in difficult times – the evidence of the fragility of our life together on the planet is all around and our meeting is held just before the UK general election. We must remind ourselves of the reality of our faith, both individually and communally - faith in the loving purposes of a holy spirit that will strengthen, guide and comfort each and everyone. The articulation of our faith, and the action that it leads us to, are the most important gifts that we have and which we need to continually share with others.

I look forward to seeing you at our meeting.

In peace,



Anne Ullathorne, Clerk

Papers enclosed with this mailing

MfS 2019 12 agenda

MfSAG minutes October 2019

MfS 2019 12 06	Court & Prison register
MfS 2019 12 07a	Quaker Life Central Committee Annual Report
MfS 2019 12 07b	Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee Annual Report
MfS 2019 12 07c	Quaker World Relations Committee Annual Report
MfS 2019 12 07ci	Reports from the BYM representatives attending European YM's
MfS 2019 12 07d	Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations Annual Report
MfS 2019 12 09	Use of the term 'Overseer'
MfS 2019 12 10	Central Nominations Committee review Terms of Reference
MfS 2019 12 11	BYM Trustees minutes November 2019
MfS 2019 12 12	Quaker Recognised Bodies
MfS 2019 12 13	Yearly Meeting Review
MfS 2019 12 14	Amendments to <i>Quaker faith & practice</i>

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



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Agenda

Meeting for Sufferings – 7 December 2019

Large Meeting House, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ

Time / item #	Item	Paper Number
09:00	Arrivals	
10:00	Session 1 starts	
1	Opening worship We will be joined for opening and closing worship by members of the Young People's Participation Day.	
2	Welcome and introductions	
3	Getting to know you Led by members of the Young People's Participation Day	
4	Membership (Tabled Paper)	MfS 2019 12 04 To note
5	Agenda Adoption and acceptance of the agenda	
6	Court and prison register	MfS 2019 12 06 For decision
7	Central and Standing Committees Annual Reports to MfS	MfS 2019 12 07 For information
	Quaker Life Central Committee Introduced by Emma Roberts, clerk of QLCC (07a)	
	Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee Introduced by Robert Almond/Jeff Beatty, co-clerks of QPSWCC (07b)	
	Short break Please hold the silence in the meeting room	
	Quaker World Relations Committee Introduced by Ann Floyd, clerk of QWRC (07c) Also to receive reports from the BYM representatives that attended this year's European Yearly Meetings. (07ci)	

Time / item #	Item	Paper Number
	Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations Introduced by Mark Lilley, clerk of QCCIR (07d)	
12.30	Lunch in Ada Salter suite	
	Informal lunchtime gatherings Opportunities to meet with BYM Trustees over lunch in the Ada Salter suite An opportunity to meet with members of QCCIR in the Ada Salter suite	
14:00	Session 2 starts	
8	Appointments (Tabled Paper)	MfS 2019 12 08 For approval
9	Area Meeting Minutes received To receive a minute from Central Yorkshire AM 'Quaker terminology – overseers'	MfS 2019 12 09 To consider
10	Central Nominations Committee review To agree the revised Terms of Reference for the committee	MfS 2019 12 10 To agree
11	BYM Trustees report To receive a report from the clerk of Trustees. To receive minute BYMT 2019/11/04b regarding changes to Committee on Clerks and minute BYMT 2019/11/10 on the project 'Climate crisis – spiritual nurture and learning'	MfS 2019 12 11 For information
	Short break please hold the silence in the meeting room	
12	Quaker Recognised Bodies To register a further Quaker recognised body	MfS 2019 12 12 For approval
13	Yearly Meeting review To agree the Terms of Reference for a review of Yearly Meeting	MfS 2019 12 13 To agree
14	Amendments to <i>Quaker faith & practice</i> To receive proposals from Church Government Advisory Group regarding changes to <i>Qf&p</i> section 4.05 Children and Young People's Work Advocates appointments and section 4.39 regarding the laying down of the Library Committee	MfS 2019 12 14 To agree
15	Feedback from the Young People's Participation Day	
	Closing worship	
16.00	Close. Tea, coffee and departures An opportunity to say goodbye to Anne Ullathorne as she finishes her term of service as clerk	



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At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held 21 October 2019 at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ

Minutes

Present: Margaret Bryan (convenor), Gill Greenfield, Sherry-Ann Mitchell, Juliet Prager, Anne Ullathorne, Mark Lilley, Neil Jarvis

Prevented: Karen Draycott

1. Reflections on October Meeting for Sufferings at Woodbrooke

We heard the very positive feedback received from MfS Support Group and other Friends.

There was a general sense that the meeting at Woodbrooke was appreciated for the time it gave for reps to engage with the issues and each other.

2. Meetings attended by the clerks

- Margaret (and Mark, as Clerk of Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) attended one day of the recent Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee (YMAC) meeting. We have received the separated minute from the day for information.
- Margaret also went to Quaker Life Representative Council (QLRC); the theme of which was Mental Health.

3. Forward agenda

We have reviewed our forward agenda which informs our planning.

The agenda for December is looking very full and we wish to postpone the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) report until early 2020.

4. Agenda planning for the next meeting in December 2019

We have planned the agenda for our December meeting, including the Young People's Participation Day. Cat Waithaka joined us for this item.

5. Other matters

- The annual Quaker World Relations Forum is taking place on 8th February 2020. We will ask a member of MfS to attend.
- We have been invited to hold a special interest meeting at Yearly Meeting Gathering (YMG) in 2020.
- Gold minutes – this matter is held over.

6. Date and time of next meeting - 2019

Monday 16 December (11.00 - 3.30pm)

Margaret Bryan
Convenor



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Court and Prison Register

In October, Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) reviewed the parameters of the Court and Prison Register. The key decisions are repeated here for information, and guidance has been sent to AM clerks via [Governance Gold](#).

MfS confirmed that the register should contain the names of Friends who have been before the courts for matters of conscience (having come into conflict with the law when acting under concern and bearing witness to the truth as revealed to them).

The purposes of recording an entry in the register are:

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

Normally, area meetings are responsible for establishing the facts, and that Friends are or were acting under concern and wish the matter to be recorded. Including information in the court and prison register doesn't imply that MfS itself has tested the Friend's concern and necessarily agrees with or condones their action.

South East Scotland AM has sent the following information about a Friend who has been before the courts:

Justin Kenrick (South East Scotland AM): on 29 October 2019 in the City of London Magistrates Court was found guilty of peaceful protest in April. He was given a conditional discharge and was ordered to pay costs amounting to £415.

Justin Kenrick (South East Scotland AM): on 30 October 2019 appeared in Sheriff Court in Edinburgh in relation to an Extinction Rebellion protest in April. The case was delayed until 24-26 February 2020.

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to consider including this information in the Court and Prison Register.

Some AMs have sent news of other Friends' witness. When there is information about court appearances and sentencing, it will be brought to MfS.



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Quaker Life Central Committee Report to Meeting for Sufferings, November 2019

This report covers a few highlights from the last year, rather than give a comprehensive account of everything we have been involved with.

We have returned throughout the year to the issue of gender diversity, with over 70 individual Quakers and groups responding to the initial statement we produced to help discussion. As has happened elsewhere, the topic provoked strong opinions among respondents as well as some honest and raw personal accounts. We have struggled, we believe successfully, with holding different viewpoints within our own committee; our learning about the process of considering the issue could be useful to Sufferings as it undertakes its own discernment of the issue.

What would Sufferings like to know about our process and experiences to help with your consideration of this issue?

Quaker Life Central Committee has been given responsibility by trustees for overseeing the rollout of Local Development Workers (LDWs) so they are within reach of all Quaker communities in Britain, and for ensuring that all our work supporting Quaker communities is more 'meeting centred'. We will be considering our responsibilities in detail at our meeting in late November, in particular approving criteria for shortlisting possible areas to receive the next wave of LDWs, who are due to begin work in Autumn 2020. As this work is joint with Woodbrooke, we are also developing a joint strategy on supporting Quaker communities and inviting a Woodbrooke trustee to attend our meetings.

What would make this work successful and a benefit to the Society, in the view of Sufferings?

We have developed strategies for supporting unattached Friends (those not linked to any Quaker community) and helping those young people transitioning to adulthood. As always, implementation of plans are the most important, so we are following up on these to check progress periodically. We continue to work on other short-term

projects, including consideration of the spiritual basis of our sustainability commitment.

What difference are you aware of that these strategies have made to Sufferings or the life of our Quaker communities? What would help them make more of an impact?

Quaker Life Representative Council (QLRC) continues to meet twice a year, focusing on building inclusive, outward-looking, intergenerational Quaker communities. In October, our focus was on issues around mental health in our meetings. We are undertaking a review of QLRC, which should complete in 2020.

We agreed a new Collections Strategy, which sets out the purpose of the Library in Friends House and the other items in our collections. We recognised that the purpose of our collections is to document the story of Quakerism and ensure that story is shared and understood as widely as possible. Our collections are valuable for all parts of BYM and should be utilised to assist our worship, witness and outreach. BYM Trustees at point of writing have yet to consider the Collections Strategy, so proposals in there are subject to their discernment.

How do you think the Library should support outreach and spiritual nurture in meetings?

We have heard updates about several of our legacy-funded projects. Two Quaker Youth Workers are engaging with young people (11-18) in Bristol/South West and in Sheffield/Yorkshire. They have supported young people (mainly with existing Quaker links) in both social activities and social action, such as planting white poppy seeds across Sheffield city centre.

The Engaging Young Adult Quakers project now supports sixteen young adult worship groups across Britain, while the Simpler Meetings project continues to help meetings find ways of reducing the burden of administration.



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Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee Report to Meeting for Sufferings – November 2019

This report only picks out a few areas that we feel have wider relevance to the Yearly Meeting. It does not cover the variety of very impressive work done by Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) programmes, and should not be seen as a comprehensive account of our activities.

The major ongoing issue for the committee has been the development of a new three-year strategy to guide our work. This process is ongoing and due to complete in early/mid-2020; we will have just had a Central Committee meeting before Sufferings so may have further updates. There are various questions we have to weigh up, where input from Sufferings would be useful. Under each question, we have some examples of work that may be relevant.

What sort of support do Quaker communities most value from QPSW? Lots of our work is about supporting Friends so that our local and YM-wide witness can join up and strengthen each other. But there are different ways we can do this – what resonates?

The Sanctuary Everywhere work has continued its success, with at least 98 meetings having become Sanctuary Meetings and done work locally and nationally on migration issues. This programme has had some of the highest Quaker engagement of any QPSW work, currently and historically, and meetings have told us that working together as a Sanctuary Meeting has strengthened their meeting. This work is a case study in integrating work between Britain Yearly Meeting and local meetings, and in helping to create thriving Quaker communities alongside working for a more peaceful world. The work has also aided outreach, with consistently highest engagement figures for Sanctuary-related Facebook posts and podcasts. Together with colleagues in the Communications & Services Department, staff successfully fundraised for a one-year extension of the Sanctuary Everywhere programme working on migration and refugee issues. This means it will continue

throughout 2020, with longer-term decisions on its future dependent on the outcome of the strategic review.

The Economics & Sustainability programme developed a new focus of supporting a 'just transition to a zero carbon economy', to help create the new economic models that many Friends and meetings explored in the New Economy series of booklets. The programme is also fundraising to recruit locally-based staff who will work with Quakers and other groups to develop more sustainable local economies. In preparation for the UN Climate Summit happening in Glasgow in November 2020, the programme has begun planning how Quakers can be involved; it is discussing with Quakers in Scotland, the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) and other climate and faith-based groups in Britain.

Across our programmes, activism support has been a growing area. Staff from the Turning The Tide and Economics & Sustainability programmes are specifically focused on helping Quakers carry out peace or sustainability witness locally, and staff from across QPSW have been involved in running the Quaker Activists Gathering, which this year attracted around 80 adults, plus children.

What work most excites Friends?

Our international Conciliation work, supporting moves towards peace among actors in armed conflicts, continued. In September, staff organised an intergenerational event bringing together existing Quaker conciliators and young adults to share skills and consider how Quaker conciliation should develop in the future. A publication is to follow this work, available in January 2020.

The Peace Education programme has launched a major new resource about Israel/Palestine, Olive branches and razor wire, and has begun a joint project on developing peace education in Europe, together with the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA). An independent evaluation of the programme found that the work is 'pioneering', engaging large numbers of people (approx. 40,000 in 2018), and supporting children to develop a commitment to peace and shifting the culture of education towards peace and justice. It concluded that the work 'is strategically vital to the future of the field in the UK' and is 'applying and developing a genuinely radical peace pedagogy, which so far has proved very effective.'

How important is it that work is done by Quakers? How much should we do things ourselves as opposed to supporting others to do it?

We completed the process of reframing our international work, being clear that our distinctive Quaker role is often to stay involved for a long time, being clear about the change we wish to see before exiting. International and Britain-facing work should complement each other, as shown by the experience of Turning The Tide (TTT), where the methodology was adapted with great success for use by partners in an East African context at their request. TTT in East Africa successfully combines

peacebuilding and nonviolent campaigns, and we are now considering how we can learn from the work in Britain. We are enabling colleagues running Turning The Tide Kenya to set up as a standalone organisation. We continue to support Turning The Tide work in Burundi and Rwanda, where the work is flourishing but where it is less established.

What other factors should QPSW Central Committee bear in mind while doing its strategic review?



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Quaker World Relations Committee report to Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to:

- a) Note the twofold remit that Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) has given to QWRC
- b) Reaffirm the overall importance of this remit to Friends in Britain
- c) Note the ways in which QWRC works to progress this remit, and how this is framed in terms of *Our Faith in the Future*. Note that it also relates to BYM's strategic priorities
- d) Advise on how the work could be enriched in 2020 and beyond, noting the proposed contribution to Yearly Meeting Gathering.

a. QWRC's twofold remit

QWRC's work is within the world family of Quakers.

We are charged with:

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

To fulfil the first, we seek to connect with Friends beyond BYM, to learn more about their concerns, worship and witness, and to give them an opportunity to learn more about us in BYM. Among many other ways of doing this, we serve as BYM's representatives to Quakers' global body, the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC). This entails participating in specific international meetings, mainly within our own European & Middle East Section (EMES), but also beyond.

To fulfil the second, we seek to connect with Friends within BYM on world family matters. There are many Friends besides those on our small committee (8 members) who have knowledge and experience with Friends in other countries: we look for such Friends, so as to learn from them, share with them, and involve them in our work wherever possible. If you are such a Friend, and have not had contact with us, please get in touch at qwrc@quaker.org.uk. Working alongside such Friends we

hope to deepen and widen understanding of the world family amongst British Quakers.

b. Why we believe this remit matters

We know from our own experience, and that of many others, that engagement with the world family and its concerns can be a source of inspiration.

We also know that Friends in BYM, Ireland Yearly Meeting, and in continental Europe, taken together, form less than 10% of Quakers worldwide. So when we say ‘Quakers worship quietly together, only speaking when led to do so’ we really mean this is what British Quakers (and some others) do. It would not be a good description of the mode of worship of majority of Friends around the world. It is surely incumbent on us to be mindful of this, and at the same time to deepen our understanding of the wider Quaker world and what unites us.

We have much in common. There is certainly great diversity amongst us – in modes of worship, in levels of privilege, in experience of the climate emergency, in what sustainability entails, in peacebuilding needs and witness, and much else. Yet there is unity in this diversity, for we share our Quaker faith in that of God in everyone, and we share the testimonies that follow from that faith. This leads to many shared concerns, including those that will be the focus of our Yearly Meeting Gathering in 2020 – diversity, inclusion and climate justice.

These concerns are being worked on across the world family in many ways. At the global level, FWCC and the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) are active on our behalf. FWCC’s Sustainability Communications Officer is working to connect the world family, including our own work here in BYM, so as to enable mutual learning and collaboration, and hence to build a global Quaker movement. These concerns are being explored in many global, regional and local gatherings across the Quaker world, in their own contexts. We are not alone.

For example, in 2012, FWCC held a World Gathering of Friends in Kabarak, Kenya, with a particular focus on climate justice. It issued the ‘Kabarak call’ for Peace and ecojustice, to Friends worldwide. Part of this reads:

We must change, we must become careful stewards of all life. Earthcare unites traditional Quaker testimonies: peace, equality, simplicity, love, integrity, and justice. Jesus said, “As you have done unto the least... you have done unto me”. We are called to work for the peaceable Kingdom of God on the whole earth, in right sharing with all peoples.

Key themes for Yearly Meeting in 2019, and Yearly Meeting Gathering in 2020, are diversity, inclusion and climate justice. In 2017, the Central Executive Committee, the trustee body of FWCC, wrote the following minute about issues of privilege and historical injustice, which speaks to Friends worldwide about these themes:

We have taken up a concern raised by several Friends for how FWCC's work in every part of the globe is affected by a history of colonialism and inequality, and by media distortions that influence perceptions of people in other parts of the world. Too often, Friends in wealthier countries only see images of people elsewhere in situations of poverty, misery, and need, while Friends in poorer countries see media images as if all people in wealthier countries were prosperous and successful.

We too often hurt each other by assumptions we make, stories we tell, misunderstandings, favouritism, and superficial relationships. {...} When we know each other more fully, in our homes, families, and meetings, we can better understand the full person, not just the cosmetics or stereotypes. Much work has been done in this regard over the past decades, but more remains to be done. (Conference of European Churches 17-19 (part))

It is surely important that BYM is part of all this. The remit BYM has given QWRC really does matter.

c. How QWRC works to fulfil its remit

We frame our work in terms of *Our Faith in the Future*. Here are three examples of what this means.

Meeting for worship is the bedrock of living as a Quaker: Not all Quakers worship in the same way as we do. One of our objectives is 'to deepen understanding of different forms of worship and engage BYM as opportunities arise'.

Quakers work collaboratively: for QWRC this means working with Friends in BYM on international aspects, and also collaborating with FWCC both within our own Europe and Middle East Section, and globally.

Quaker values are active in the world: Another QWRC objective is 'to deepen QWRC understanding of Quaker witness around the globe and engage BYM in this'. There are many opportunities for mutual learning and collaboration across the world family, and we may be more effective when working together on issues such as climate justice than separately.

We also see our work as relating well to BYM's three strategic priorities. In particular, it contributes to thriving Quaker communities.

Some highlights of our work in 2019 have been:

The YM workshop on sustainability across the world family, arranged jointly by QWRC and FWCC: this was packed, and very well-received.

QWRC guests at YM and visits to meetings afterwards: our guests were Arne Springorum (Prague and Central European Gathering) and Ludwig Quirog (Philippines). Ludwig was prevented but contributed virtually about the impact of

climate change in his homeland, and the need for action on our part. Arne spoke eloquently in the sustainability workshop and in other settings as well as visiting Friends in Manchester, Leeds, Thirsk and Swarthmoor Hall.

QPSW's guest, Benard Agona, Director, Turning the Tide (TTT), Kenya: TTT began here, was then picked up in Kenya with much support from QPSW, and is now inspiring us in return. It's a great example of mutual learning across the world family.

John Muhanji, Friends United Meeting (FUM) Director of African Ministries: John spent three weeks travelling among British Friends in Essex, Woodbrooke, London, Leeds, Halifax, Hebden Bridge, Bristol, Exeter, Newcastle, Durham, and Jordans. It was a rich experience for him and his many hosts and will be followed up. The success John and his team have had in 'church planting' may have lessons for us in BYM, and certainly gives pause for thought.

Our two residential committee meetings in Edinburgh and Bristol: both these were rewarding opportunities to meet with local Friends, and to share experiences of the world family with them. We are grateful for their hospitality and fellowship.

Programmed worship at YM/YMG: QWRC began this at YMG 2017, and it has now become a regular feature of YM. It enables British Friends to experience different forms of Quaker worship, often led by Friends from elsewhere, such as Eden Grace, the 2019 Swarthmore Lecturer.

Participation in EMES Representatives Meeting in Budapest: the theme was 'Living in a Foreign Land'. It reinforced the need to consider our own privilege and to seek to understand how we are viewed by others and why. We were reminded that looking for God in everyone can help us get beyond this.

QWRC Forum 2019: the topic was *Working towards right sharing of resources and sustainable living as a global Quaker movement*. We saw this as preparation for YM 2019, and those who came were very positive about the experience.

Connecting with BYM representatives to EMES YMs, and with EMES to BYM: we brought most of them together in a crowded YM workshop to share experiences of the representative role. We are following this up with a consultation of BYM representatives about how QWRC can support them more effectively.

d. QWRC's plans for 2020, including YMG

Our plans are broadly similar to those in 2019, and will include:

- 1) Residential meetings hosted by Friends in Lewes (March) and Bangor (September)
- 2) Bringing 3 or 4 world family guests to participate in YMG (1-7 August, Bath) and arranging visits to meetings for about two weeks thereafter. Confirmed guests, subject to visas being granted, are from Rwanda and Uganda.

- 3) Offering programmed worship opportunities at YMG
- 4) Arranging workshops and other opportunities at YMG for our guests to interact with British Friends for mutual learning and potential collaboration.

e. Advice from MfS

Here are some queries on which advice would be particularly welcome at this meeting or later.

- 1) What else might be done to engage your Quaker communities with Quaker issues and concerns around the world? Would hosting one of our world family guests be of interest?
- 2) Is there more help you can give us? Is there something you would welcome from us?
- 3) Are there particular concerns on which you would welcome a 'world family' take?

We can be reached at gwrc@quaker.org.uk

Ann Floyd, Clerk QWRC
November 2019



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Reports from Britain Yearly Meeting representatives attending European Yearly Meetings in 2019

Our representatives to other European Yearly Meetings have sent written reports, which are followed, below, by the epistle from each Yearly Meeting if available.

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting – Haifa Rashed

Finland YM – Mary Woodward

France Yearly Meeting – Lesley Grahame

German Yearly Meeting – Annette Duensing

Ireland Yearly Meeting – Marie McCusker & Tina Cunningham

Netherlands Yearly Meeting – Silas Price

Sweden Yearly Meeting – Matt Alton

Switzerland Yearly Meeting – Harry Allbright

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting

15-17 November 2019, Drongen Abbey, Belgium

This was my first time at Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly meeting, which this year was held just outside Gent in a Jesuit owned abbey. It was an impressive building and peaceful location, whilst the main hint of the Jesuit ownership as far as I could tell was the wifi password being 'Ignatius'!

The weekend started with dinner on the Friday, where I was pleased to meet the Friend representing Netherlands Yearly meeting – a fellow visitor. The Friday evening included a short meeting for worship and the first business meeting, which was followed by a thoroughly enjoyable activity called 'speed Friending'! Based on the style of speed dating, we were given a list of questions and five minutes to spend with each Friend in front of us until the bell rang and we had a new Friend to speak to. I really enjoyed this as a getting-to-know-you exercise and will use the concept for future Quaker events.

Around 40 people were in attendance at the yearly meeting, including the 5 children who attended the children's programme. What struck me was the challenge posed by the need to operate in three different languages (English, French and Flemish). It raised the question of how to ensure that everyone could participate fully. When I arrived I was given a name badge with the three languages written on it and I had to cross out any language(s) I didn't speak – a good way of indicating who understood which language. Some Friends had a blue sticker on their badge, which indicated that they were willing to act as interpreters. This system worked well from my perspective. The first epilogue was in Flemish and entirely Bible based, which I really enjoyed.

The themes for the weekend were 'Living Adventurously' and 'Trusting the Light in our Daily Life'. The keynote speaker was Paul Parker, Recording Clerk of Quakers in Britain, who gave an overview of his spiritual journey and how he came to Quakers. He reminded us that transformation is more often than not a gradual process, and that living adventurously and trusting the Light in our daily lives can be about the small changes we make and leadings we experience. We then broke off into worship sharing, where we shared our own experience of living adventurously prompted by the Spirit.

After lunch we participated in a session on the Quaker testimonies. I found myself in the Francophone group, and thoroughly enjoyed discussing what a commitment to simplicité, intégrité and durabilité (simplicity, integrity and sustainability) means for us as individual and collective Quakers.

On the Saturday evening, we participated in a quiz on the Suffragettes and were asked the uncomfortable question about why Quakers hadn't been supportive of women's suffrage. This led to a wider reflection on diversity and inclusion and the challenging realisation that whilst Quakers have historically been at the forefront of

many social movements, we don't always get things right. This debate is in alignment with Britain Yearly Meeting's concern on diversity and inclusion, clearly we as a Quaker movement (in Europe, and USA at least) have a long way to go in this regard, however with intention, reflection and humility I feel we can make progress.

Something that struck me was the presence of alcohol at the evening gatherings. On reflection, given that we were in a Belgian Abbey the sale of beer wasn't perhaps so surprising, however when I explained to some Friends that Quaker gatherings in the UK tended not to include alcohol, we had a lively debate about this!

On Sunday morning meeting for worship was held, followed by meeting for worship for business, where the epistle was agreed. I was impressed by the excellent clerking of the business meeting. It occurred to me how different the experience of this yearly meeting was to Britain Yearly meeting, not just in terms of size, which is inevitable, but the fact that here the Friends had organised the weekend themselves, which takes a lot of organisation, planning and effort. Not that this isn't the case in Britain (!) but there is no paid staff support here. Also the focus is less on the business side of things, which made it a different experience. The emphasis seemed to be more on community building.

Finally after lunch we were given the option of seeing a bit of Gent, guided by a local Friend. I chose the street art tour, where we were shown street art produced on the edge of town at a recent international street art festival. I was delighted to be shown street art from a Palestinian artist and to discover some really powerful graffiti, including the phrase 'no one is illegal'. Our guide also explained how he had initiated and organised an 'introduction to Quakerism' evening locally, which was well attended, by around 40 people. This led to the establishment of the Quaker worship group in Gent.

I left the weekend feeling grateful for the opportunity to connect, reflect and worship with Friends from Belgium and Luxembourg. Given the timing of the meeting, with the ongoing threat of Brexit looming, such connections seem more important than ever.

Haifa Rashed

Finland Yearly Meeting report

Ikko Centre, near Tampere, 22-24 March 2019

Warm, friendly, welcoming, inclusive AND ENORMOUS FUN!



Picture of the swan – credit Jane Rose

Our theme was “Building community: how our Friends community does and could support its Attenders and Members as individuals”

We began building community over our Friday evening meal, and continued by sharing our responses to these questions: what thing or things have attracted me to Quakers and Quakerism? What has attending Meeting for Worship or membership of the Religious Society of Friends given to me? What is the strength of a community?

One of our all-age activities gave us concrete expression of that community. During the Saturday morning business meeting Michael Eccles of Europe and Middle East Section (EMES) and I had helped four-year-old Elvin create a picture of a whooper swan, Finland’s national bird - just then beginning to arrive from the south, the first herald of the long-awaited spring. Everyone drew round their hand and cut it out, curled the fingers to represent feathers, and stuck their ‘feather’ to the body of the swan, showing how as individuals we each have our own shape and way of being and together we make up our Quaker community.

In the afternoon, Michael and I took part in the business meeting. There was great joy as two people were accepted into Membership, bringing the total of Finnish Members to twenty-four. There are three worshipping groups in Finland: a well-established one in Helsinki, a rapidly-growing one in Tampere which meets at

lunchtime on Saturdays, and a much more scattered Northern worship group, whose members live 30 to 200 km apart and meet up when they can. Finnish Friends gather twice a year - in November, as Finland descends into winter darkness, and in March to give something to look forward to in that darkness. Finland YM have an executive committee of four Friends, who meet monthly to deal with any business needing attention, including nominations and search matters, finance, legal matters arising from being a society rather than a church, and arranging the twice-yearly get-togethers. In Jane Rose's words "We, together with our clerk decided we would be a light committee and do just what needed to be done to ensure the life and Spirit of the Yearly meeting. Our clerk, Leena is good at delegating and knowing what her limits are and we all feel supported by each other". This way of working seems worth exploring, especially for those AMs that are struggling to find people for certain roles.

Britain Yearly Meeting is currently much concerned with diversity and inclusion and Finland YM was a perfect example of this in action. Some people were extremely fluent in both English and Finnish, others more at home in one, while some spoke only their native language. There was no fuss, no special appointments, but constant attention to making sure that all present understood what was being said. Four-year-old Elvin was extremely good at quietly taking part in Meetings for Worship, slipping off his chair when he'd had enough and going to the table where he could do his colouring. Throughout the weekend Friends paid him attention, included him in conversations and activities wherever possible, played with him and made sure his father was supported throughout the weekend.

Discussion of oversight: Michael Eccles spoke of oversight in general and how it works within his Midlands LM and AM. I spoke of my experiences, good and bad, of oversight in the various Meetings in which I've worshipped: this led into a general sharing session of established practices and new ideas. Much of what was said resonated strongly with me in regard to General Meeting for Scotland – climate, distances, and geography all affect how frequently people can gather face to face, so electronic methods of communication are essential. Friends were encouraged to think outside their immediate community and consider intervisitation within Finland as well as attending EMES gatherings and other Yearly Meetings – representatives are sent to Nordic, Sweden, and Britain YMs.

A Clearness Meeting gave Friends the opportunity to experience something many hadn't encountered, or with which they were not familiar. One was conducted in English, the other in Finnish, so that we could be in the group in which we felt linguistically comfortable. We in the English-speaking group were all very grateful to Risto, the focus person, for sharing so very deeply with us in what was not his native language.

The letter to Finland YM from Meeting for Sufferings was much appreciated, especially the expression of unity with Europe – "Britain Yearly Meeting greatly

values being part of the European family of Friends and we will continue to be European Friends come what may”.

What I personally loved / appreciated: Jane Rose’s generosity and warm welcome as she invited me to stay with her for a few days before travelling with her to Tampere, giving me the opportunity to get used to being in Finland, and enabling me to visit the Moomin museum in Tampere before we joined the others at Ilkko.

I hadn’t previously met any other Finnish Quakers, but from the outset was made welcome and included throughout the weekend, having a wonderful weekend with “friends I hadn’t met before” and experiencing yet again that close community that can develop when two or more Quakers are together, sharing worship, meals, and ways of doing things.

I loved hearing others speak of what Quakerism means to them, seeing how much we have in common and what we can learn from each other. I greatly appreciated the warmth of the welcome extended to me and the appreciation of my contributions, both in speaking and simply by being present.

The small scale of the gathering meant I could make connections with everyone, even those who weren’t able to be present the whole weekend, both in session and in the wide-ranging conversations at meals. We were offered opportunities to dance, to sing, to take part in a ‘Quaker scavenger hunt’ and to go out into the darkness and slither on the ice in search of the Northern Lights.

On a personal level, I yet again received confirmation that if I am faithful, words will be given, most noticeably during the clearness meeting, when I couldn’t think what questions I could contribute, and when I was invited to ‘speak out’ in some of the sessions.

I felt deeply nourished by the whole weekend and all the people I met: I was struck by how much we have in common, and enjoyed finding out how we do things differently. I greatly appreciated the care and attention given to making sure that no-one felt excluded for any reason. I cherish the memory bird-watching at breakfast and the swans flying high above us when we went out into the darkness in search of the Northern Lights. I loved being adopted into the Finnish Quaker family, and hope to make a return visit before too long.

Mary Woodward

France Yearly Meeting report

Domaine Lyon St Joseph, 25-28 October 2019

This was my second visit to France Yearly Meeting, and it was great to see both familiar and new faces among the 60 or so other attendees. The event was held in Domaine Lyon St Joseph, in the hills outside Lyon, where we experienced summer, autumn and winter seasons in one weekend.

The theme was 'Enabling Action through the Quaker Way', and gave a sense that the way we do things is very important to us. In addition to our Simplicity, peace, integrity and equality, the French Friends testimonies include community and eco-responsibility, giving the acronym EPICES, (spices) adding spice to life. However it was noted that over-attachment to the testimonies risks making a creed of them, our methods are an important part of what defines us to ourselves. One much used method is to set up committees, or small working groups who implement decisions made in unity.

Last year the big and difficult decision to be made was about leaving the Quaker International Centre in Paris, in search of a more visible building. I was unclear on what progress had been made, but it seemed like the decision had taken root and was being worked on.

It was decided last year to set up a working group to look at the possibilities for re-activating French Quaker Peace Service Committee, and the group reported its deliberations to this year's FYM, where its findings were endorsed by a unified Meeting.

Quakers have been active in promoting diversification of employment and investment, working in geographically dispersed communities with NGOs and faith allies. They've played a leading role in opposing Eurosatory, (Paris arms fair even bigger than the UK Defence Sales Equipment International, aka DSEI).

They have been soul-searching for the unique Quaker contribution that keeps them together as an effective force for good. Quakers have been founders and founding members of Oxfam, Shelter, Greenpeace, Amnesty, Choose respect, refugee support groups. Few people know this, and if Quakers are to grow, we need to increase our visibility so people will seek us out. Some are working on this through social media. 'Building Peace together', published last year offers us a recipe book for peace-making. If we want to feast on and in peace, we need a fridge as well as a recipe book, and we need to know what is in the fridge, what needs replenishing, so an audit is on the menu.

Right action that stems from spiritual discernment gives strength to overcome fears, take risks and to accept not being ready, and to do it anyway.

In the UK, acting on religious leadings gains extra political respect in many quarters, while in France it is more likely to arouse suspicion.

Helen Rowlands led a very interesting session on the practices of spiritual discernment, the leadings of love and truth, and acting on the basis that 'I can do no other'. The latter was brought home to me when a Friend mentioned in passing the refugees who had lived in her home. When I praised her generosity and courage in sharing her home with strangers, she said simply that it was normal, what one did if someone else was in need, and not significantly praiseworthy. While some British Quakers have supported spare room schemes, especially through www.qarn.org.uk, the expectation of hospitality is rare and admirable where I come from.

One Friend suggested there are only 3 prayers in the world, please, thank you and wow! Quaker activism is inspired, prepared, ready to take risks, ready to let others act, and strategic.

These qualities were illustrated by 3 activist Friends including our own Jude Kirton-Darling MEP, who talked about the rising levels of intimidation endured by politicians, especially young women, and the choice to carry on 'standing for love'.

Telling the truth on climate could change everything. The cutting edge of climate justice is how we treat people on the move, displaced by climate-related scarcity, conflict or loss of habitable land. The crisis is not of migration but of enforced displacement. Carla Goffi pointed out the capitalism is maintained by violent structures.

The authority of violence is vulnerable to the credibility of those who walk the talk of race, class and climate justice.

It is hard to approach defeats and recover from a barrage of 'bad news', but local bottom up struggles are vital. Small victories add up, for example common actions on human rights, migration rescue, and precariousness at work

Our French Friends are widely dispersed, few have the luxury of a weekly meeting, but what they lack in numbers they make up in commitment, determination and energy. While they don't have a central, staffed Friends' House, they are involved in international Quaker bodies - QUNO, QCEA, EMES (Europe and Middle East Section of Friends' World consultative committee.

How can we support them? Let's spread the word, share our resources and be open to new light. Quakers have been instrumental in starting organisations that are now household names, such as Amnesty International, Oxfam, Greenpeace, Shelter, SERVAS, but few people know 'what Quakers have ever done for us'.

If we tell people they are far more likely to want to join us, meaning we'll be able to make even more of a difference

Lesley Grahame

German Yearly Meeting report

Bad Pyrmont, 3-6 October 2019

The theme of this year's German Yearly Meeting (GYM) Wenn Worte die Stille durchbrechen – Worte und Taten im Quakerglauben (When words break through the silence – words and actions in Quaker faith – my translation) mostly featured on the second day of the conference. Here it was introduced in the Richard Carey lecture. In the afternoon all parallel workshops picked up on different aspects of the theme (e.g. traditional Quaker language, speaking as a Quaker in public or using poetry to express oneself). These were run in chatroom-style with no convenor but guiding questions to start participants off in their exploration, allowing much scope to shape exchanges according to our own needs and interests. In the session I attended, most of us commented how well we felt this approach had worked.

A long-running topic of GYM has been the future of the Bad Pyrmont Meeting House. The only purpose-built, historical Meeting House in the country, it is deeply connected with German Quaker history and for large numbers of Friends holds fond memories and associations. At the same time, the house has meant a considerable drain on physical and financial resources. This year a new approach was sought to move forward on this pressing topic using different methods dotted throughout the Yearly Meeting (YM). After an early summary presentation of previous steps taken, a later Business Meeting used a threshing to explore more personal aspects for individuals.

Also, one of the workshops on Saturday was a fishbowl on the topic. Furthermore, the house seemed to speak up for itself, as a severely blocked drain in the kitchen led to health and safety issues, which significantly affected the running of the final evening festivities.

The general feel of this YM was for me more akin to a gathering, though, of course, smaller and more intimate than Yearly Meeting Gathering in Britain, it presented itself as a strong community grown over years. It stood out how much children, young people and young Friends featured prominently in the weekend. Special effort had been made to encourage more all-age exchange and mixing, by, for instance, inviting all younger friends to the front of the hall on the first evening and by featuring their reports as a major part on the general programme. The year-round cycle of regular trips for different ages (young people, families, Europe & Middle East Young Friends etc) has also clearly helped to build this community.

Worship on the other hand felt less mixed, with morning Meeting for Worship (MfW) and epilogue not attended by children or young people. There was no all-age worship as such. Every morning there is a walking MfW, which is predominantly attended by younger friends and only few adults. All walking MfW I saw this and last year, had the same format.

Another aspect that stood out, was how epistles from other YMs were dealt with.

They were not read, but instead an overview was given drawing out themes and differences across the world which provided interesting insights and gave a rich and colourful picture. The full epistles were available.

Although I didn't personally need it, I was particularly impressed that an interpreting service was provided (by volunteers) for all the major sessions and to see how competently the intercultural and interlingual aspects of the translation situation were dealt with. This should make it an easy Yearly Meeting to attend by future non-German speaking Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) delegates.

This was my second of two visits to GYM as I was a delegate in October 2018 as well. I feel the approach to ask delegates to attend two consecutive Yearly Meetings in the same country is beneficial. It certainly gave me a much deeper understanding of GYM. This time I was able to build on and deepen acquaintances from the previous visit. I am now more likely to pick up on these and am certainly intending to visit in future. There are also many procedures and issues you do not fully understand or take in the first time, which become clearer on the second visit. For GYM in particular the juxtaposition of the two venues is an additional aspect.

I thank BYM for asking me to be a delegate. I greatly value this experience.

Annette Duensing

Ireland Yearly Meeting report

Dublin, 25-28 April 2019

On behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) I attended Ireland Yearly Meeting (IYM) in Dublin from 25-28th April. This was my second time as a BYM representative and once again I found a nurturing and deeply spiritual event and I would like to thank BYM for this opportunity.

Ireland Yearly Meeting consists of Quakers from Eire and Northern Ireland and has 1,499 in membership. Numbers attending were lower than at IYM in Limerick last year with an average of 80 at each session apart from the Public Lecture, equivalent of our Swarthmore Lecture, when there were 150 Friends present. The presence of 26 overseas Friends and representative boosted numbers and contributed to the life and spirit of IYM.

The theme for the event was 'Education' in its broadest sense, about being a learning community, of exploring new ideas and seeking the truth together, of challenging ourselves and finding new ways to live. The need was not just to understand the world but to understand the heart and the imperative of love.

- We learnt of the concerns of other Yearly Meetings through a summary of their Epistles. European YMs concerns were for climate change; North America, New Zealand and Australia YMs for ingrained racism and the longstanding wrongs caused by white privilege; African YMs concerns covered conflict, domestic violence and refugees.
- We heard about Quaker schools in Beirut, Ramallah and in Ireland and how they provide spaces where bonds can be built between different communities and where Quaker education hopes to produce future leaders who will work for peace.
- We heard how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and 'Big Data' place unprecedented power in the hands of corporations and governments, power that can be abused, and that during World War 2 it was census data that allowed the Nazi regime to identify members of the Jewish community. In the light of this, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which limits how our data can be collected, stored and processed, is not a bureaucratic nuisance but goes to the heart of our testimonies.
- A significant period of IYM focused on their young people. Individual Irish Young Friends told of their time at Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) Summer School, undertaking a QUNO internship, of a group experience of volunteering in Greece, of their experience of Senior Youth Club and read their Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) Epistle. IYM's paid Youth Coordinator talked about the need for Meetings to be interested in and learn from the spiritual concerns of young people; parents and carers need to let young people know how important Quaker meeting and the spiritual life is to them and young people themselves need to take responsibility for their own

spiritual life as they do with other aspects of their lives. We heard how the children had chosen the focus for the Central Europe Gathering and that whilst there is a place for teaching Quaker values to young people it is equally important to learn from them leaving them free to develop as the Spirit of God may lead them.

- We heard of peace, sustainability and economic justice work being carried out under concern by Irish Friends. In the list of actions suggested by a workshop on sustainability I was drawn to the suggestion that we express a counter-cultural affirmation of content, clearly not with the state of the world but maybe with our place within in it. Exercising the virtue of 'enough' is how I saw it.
- We heard of resources produced by BYM being used in IYM; 'Becoming Friends' used by some 40 Friends in Dublin Monthly Meeting over the winter period and 'Mental health in our meetings' being used alongside the Irish booklet 'Stepping into the Light: An anthology of Irish Quakers' experience of depression'.

One of the highlights for me was the Public Lecture given by Noah Merrill of New England Yearly Meeting. Noah's lecture title was 'Education, Ministry and Renewal'. 'How can we reclaim the kindling fire that animated the first Quakers? How can we speak more openly from a deep place with words of love, hope and the Spirit, to bring forth that which lies within?' he asked. Power, he said, is in the stories we tell and then he told us the story of Moses Brown, an American Quaker, war tax resister and anti-slavery campaigner, who felt led to travel to Ireland, and was supported in this ministry by Friends in both countries. In Ireland he died. In exploring Moses's life Noah thought he was looking for a teacher but what he discovered was a community.

The life of a man ends in the grave he said but our story as a community is only beginning. He talked about George Fox rejecting that which doesn't give life so as to be able to say yes to the transformative encounter with God. For Quakers saying yes to transforming love is a shared experience and one within which we can find a deep source of hope. Whilst suffering, death and the destruction of our planet are real we are called to be communities of deep hope and may provide a refuge for those experiencing loneliness, one of the maladies of our age. Our story said Noah doesn't end in the grave and added 'It begins in an open tomb'. I've been puzzling over that open tomb since returning from Ireland.

The flavour of IYM is more religious and Christian than I experience BYM. We had a fabulous talk on the parables, suggesting we think of them as queries and that we see in them the boundless love and generosity of Jesus and the need to live a radical rather than rule bound faith; the Youth Worker asked whether through example and training we encourage our young people to recognise the voice of God in their lives and whether we support their learning and interest in the Bible; and the mode of being and expression of the Public Lecturer spoke of a man deeply led by the Spirit in a way I seldom see communicated by British Quakers.

One thing I loved about IYM is that the minutes produced by the Clerks were in general accepted without challenge. I think, in part, this was due to the quality of the drafts and that they were, in the main, minutes of record but I also think in part it was part of the discipline, the acceptance by the meeting that they were good enough.

I have really valued my two years as a BYM representative to Ireland yearly Meeting and hope to attend next year's IYM in Belfast independently.

Marie McCusker

Ireland Yearly Meeting Epistle

30th April 2019

To Friends Everywhere,

We send warm greetings from Ireland Yearly Meeting, held from 25th - 28th April 2019 at the High School, Rathgar, Dublin.

The theme of our Yearly Meeting has been "Education", a theme well suited to our venue and to the enrichment we have received from over 20 international Friends. But the worship, talks, discussions and lectures remind us above all that we must be a learning community of Friends. We must explore new ideas and seek the truth together, challenging ourselves and finding new ways to live. We must understand not just the world, but we must understand the heart and the imperative of love.

In this our discussions have reminded us that Jesus is the great teacher, throwing out challenging questions while guiding us through the parable stories to a radical new life. He teaches us the need to go beyond rule-based morality to a deeper, unconditional love. We were reminded by Noah Merrill in our Public Lecture that "teaching is about bringing forth what lies within". What must keep us going is our need to understand and be connected to the infinite love of God.

This need for us to educate and to transform ourselves has also been clear as we have explored how we hold our vision of a world at peace, not just globally but in the life of our island. We are being educated in particular by our young people as they challenge us, in new and imaginative ways, to face the ecological crisis which requires us to act now. At the same time we have been reminded by our Junior Yearly Meeting of the importance of forgiveness as a way of resolving conflict.

We have also considered the educational role of our schools, in Ireland and overseas, and the opportunities they provide to spread our experience and change lives. But we also must ensure that our Meetings and family life support our young people to grow spiritually. We have been excited by the diverse and challenging opportunity that our young people have taken up during the year to work and develop together, including their work with refugees in Greece. So too we have

reflected on our own formation as Friends through discussion and training courses, deepening our understanding of the roots of our Quaker faith.

In all this we have had a real sense of faith, hope and of joy. The power of committed individuals and small groups, challenging injustice and deprivation, caring for the sick and the lonely has been repeatedly demonstrated. We have been privileged to hear about the work of our services at Bloomfield, caring for those experiencing mental illness, just as we have learnt of the transformation of the lives of young girls saved from prostitution by the vision and work of two Indian Friends. The regular sharing of meals with asylum seekers by Friends in Killarney reminds us of the importance of simple actions, teaching and transforming us as they help transform the world.

We go from our Meeting knowing that now is the time for each of us to educate ourselves, commit ourselves to our faith and to act.

E Heather Bewley – Clerk

William A Haire – Assistant Clerk

Anne Goggin – Assistant Clerk

Pauline Goggin – Epistle Assistant

Netherlands Yearly Meeting report

Bennekom, 10-12 May 2019

This was my second time attending Netherlands Yearly Meeting (NYM) as the BYM representative. As it was held in the same venue in a beautiful forest it was with much excitement that I made my way there by train, ferry and foot. I can't think of a nicer way to begin or end a weekend meeting than with a walk through tranquil, lush, mixed woodland.

The welcome was warm and sincere and it felt nice to be back amongst familiar faces and surroundings. Once again I was genuinely impressed by the effort made by our Dutch Friends to provide headsets and a running translation for the English speakers throughout the weekend.

The agenda was deliberately lighter this year in an attempt to allow Friends more time to relax and get to know each other. Questions explored during the weekend were:

- How are we Quaker in our everyday lives?
- How do we teach newcomers what it means to be a Quaker, or do they naturally grow into it?
- How can we modernize our Quaker terminology?
- How do you imagine a vibrant or lively meeting?

A highlight of the weekend was a Quaker themed game that we played on Friday evening. This consisted of rolling a dice to decide which question you were given. The questions all explored aspects of Quakerism and our individual experiences - topics such as Quaker roles, reasons for Membership, likes and dislikes, Quaker terminology and so on. It led to interesting conversations and was an enjoyable way to get to know each other better. A really good start to the weekend.

On Saturday morning the meeting welcomed some Friends into membership, which proved to be quite moving as stories of personal journeys were shared. This was followed by a Treasurer's report stating that financial contributions were lower and urging Friends to consider giving more.

The main presentation of the weekend explored the burden of complicated administrative structures. NYM, being a relatively small YM, still has a structure that mirrors the much larger BYM. The hope is to reduce the burden and pressure that Dutch Friends feel by simplifying the structure and in turn increase the vibrancy within Meetings. The speaker urged Friends to support each other in their spiritual journeys and to look after the community, rather than spend time and energy on keeping a vast bureaucratic structure in place - to accept that they can't do everything and to not feel guilty about it. This was met with enthusiasm by the Meeting.

On Sunday there was a very moving piece of ministry as one Friend, in tears, asked everyone to hold Friends in Britain in the light during the Brexit process. The Clerk asked me to take this message of prayerful support back to BYM. I'm sure we are all grateful for this loving support.

The meeting on Sunday explored the ongoing development of the Book of Discipline. This has, understandably, taken many years to progress and Friends felt the time was approaching to accept it as a finished book. They were reminded that constantly attempting to improve the book was leading to "the perfect becoming the enemy of the good" - many spoke about how good the book already was and that it was time to publish it. A solution has been found by calling the printed version a "time bound" document and the online edition will become the living version, being regularly updated with the corrections and suggestions that are sent in by Friends to the

Editing Committee

I have really enjoyed these two years as a BYM representative. It has been informative, invigorating and at times challenging. I have reflected on my own journey and learned about the journeys of others as well as about Quakerism and Friends in other YMs.

I thoroughly recommend this to Friends and would like to take this opportunity to encourage as many as possible to fill in the Quaker Service Information form, available on the BYM website, and see what adventures the Spirit takes you on.

Silas Price

Netherlands Yearly Meeting Epistle

Held at Natuurvriendenhuis De Bosbeek, Bennekom 10-12 May 2019

Dear Friends all over the world,

Warm greetings from the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Dutch Quakers, gathered in Bennekom. We met in a wooded area and with much courage discussed the following theme: Being Quaker NOW.

We considered the following questions:

- How are we Quaker in our everyday lives?
- How do we teach newcomers what it means to be a Quaker, or do they naturally grow into it?
- How can we modernize our Quaker terminology?
- How do you imagine a vibrant or lively meeting?

Our Friend Jan de Winter spoke about how our organizational process can be a barrier or a stimulus. One of the answers to the above questions could be, according to Paul, "the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life". Or, to our former Prince Claus, who said: "Throw off your tie when it pinches."

On one of the evenings we played a creative game with penetrating questions. The game can be used in meetings to raise issues in a relaxed manner, such as slow decision making and using newer terminology (for example “Silent Meeting” instead of “Meeting for Worship” and “Conversation from the Silence” instead of “Worship Sharing”).

This epistle was co-written by Emiel Westra, 10 years old. Together with the other children present, he enjoyed playing with clay, jumping on the trampoline and playing chess. Being occasionally in the presence of adults informs the children of the customs and insights of Quakers. During the evening the children provided the refreshments and built the campfire. The proceeds from the sales table this year go to the support of refugees in Calais, France (with whom some Quakers from the Netherlands are very involved) and to the Am'ary Play Center at Ramallah.

The ongoing work on our Quaker Faith and Practice has sometimes had difficult periods. But now, after the work is almost done, and as we are working towards our first publication, we realize that "the perfect is sometimes the enemy of good". As a solution we call the printed version a “time-bound” document, and there will be a website version that will be a living document which we will continue to enrich.

Through our EMES representative we heard the report about the Am'ary Play Center at Ramallah, which is now going through a difficult time. This has been a concern of the Dutch Annual General Meeting for many years, which we continue to support.

Another long-standing concern of ours is QCEA (Quaker Center for European Affairs) which has been offering its services, including silent diplomacy and peace education, to the institutions of the European community for 40 years.

In this way, together with the Dutch Quaker Aid Fund, our small Annual Meeting is involved with the world around us.

We have noticed how important it is to deal with our conflicts in a Quaker way and how we can support each other in the emotions that those conflicts can evoke. We have felt very connected with each other in this.

We send our loving greetings to all Friends around the world.

In Friendship,

Marlies Tjallingii,
Clerk Netherlands Yearly Meeting

Sweden Yearly Meeting report

Svartbäcken Quaker Retreat Centre, 30 May – 2 June 2019

Theme: Worship

Representative: Matt Alton, Brighton Local Meeting, Sussex West Area Meeting

What struck me about the ways in which things were done?

What struck me about Sweden Yearly Meeting was the deeply lived simplicity of the whole gathering. Numbering 120 members, with 40 present, enabled the gathering to flow with an atmosphere of ease. At no time did events run consecutively, shuffle breaks were taken when Friends deemed them necessary, and the business agenda allowed for items to be switched with each other and even added.

One key point of discernment and discussion was the re-forming, appointment, and direction of a Peace Committee. Swedish Quakers face similar challenges to do with filling roles, however it was discerned that it was the right thing to do to form a Peace Committee, and names were found to serve. During Friday and Saturday lunchtimes, a long table was set up for a single discussion of the direction of the peace committee. The effectiveness of this was that 20 or so Friends sat and ate together, having a single conversation, their contributions grounded in personal experience and expertise. It was decided that the Peace Committee was to be re-formed, with the aims of: deepening understanding of the peace testimony; providing information and guidance on peace related issues; encouraging people to act on their convictions. At present the committee has three members and two attenders have expressed interest in becoming involved.

There was not a separate children's programme for the 6 children who attended Sweden Yearly Meeting. While there were adults responsible for their well-being, engagement with spirituality and entertainment, the children were allowed to do their own thing most of the time. When adults needed a change from stillness (physical and spiritual), they could spend time with the children singing, swimming in the lake, making kites and playing games, a joy I took full advantage of. This intermingling of children and adults enriched the experience for all.

What aspects of the programme stood out for me?

The theme of Sweden Yearly Meeting was Worship. This meant that lots of space was set aside for worship and discussion of our interpretations of it. A particular consideration was how to involve children and young people in worship, so on the Saturday, we had an All Age Meeting for Worship. It was said that children's natural state is movement (rather than physical stillness), so the worship consisted of Friends going outside and bringing in a piece of the outside world that spoke to them, then placing it in the centre of the circle to form a collaborative picture. Friends were then encouraged to share their perspective on the experience. I was struck by the simplicity, inclusivity and beauty of this worship.

Another stand out programme item was the Saturday night entertainments. The Swedish Quaker Service Committee (otherwise known as Quaker Service Sweden) gives significant financial support to a project in Bangladesh which provides medical care to all, and runs youth club like services. Three Friends had recently been to Bangladesh to check up on the work of the project – a legal requirement by the Swedish government as they direct foreign aid money through the Swedish Quaker Service Committee. These Friends ran a quiz, which taught us about the work being done in Bangladesh and provided us with a lot of fun.

Due to the lightness and spaciousness of the programme, it was possible to add items when deemed necessary. When Friends learned of my 2018 Eva Koch Scholarship work, looking at Young Adults and the Future of Quakerism, they asked me to present my findings to the Yearly Meeting. I enjoyed presenting my findings and discussing the key issues from it with Friends who have a different experience of Quakerism.

Have I had follow up contact?

Since Sweden Yearly Meeting I have had some email contact with the Friends I connected with there. I was spiritually supported in a time of employment turbulence, have received offers to stay in Friends' spare rooms if I fancy a break from Britain, and hope to be able to show the same hospitality I received if Swedish Friends find themselves in Britain. While Swedish Friends were at their annual summer camp at Svartbäcken Quaker Retreat Centre (also the venue of Sweden Yearly Meeting), we exchanged pictures of ourselves (including one of my drastic haircut!). I have also posted a copy of Living Our Beliefs to a 14 year old Friend who hopes to attend some young Friends events in Britain.

My overall experience as a BYM representative

While at Sweden Yearly Meeting I experienced a deep feeling of love, care and acceptance from the Friends hosting me. I believe that we are an expression of God, and that I was deeply experiencing God's love while I was there. The gathering was conducted in a spirit of simplicity, which led to relaxed Friends and the opportunity for what was there to arise naturally. Attending Sweden Yearly Meeting was gift that I will never forget, and I hope I will be able to share it widely with Britain Yearly Meeting.

Sweden Yearly Meeting Epistle

May 30 – June 2

To Friends everywhere

The 85th Swedish Yearly Meeting gathered at Svartbäcken, Rimbo. We were very happy to have guests with us from Norway, Finland, Great Britain, Ireland, Germany and the EMES.

The theme for this Yearly Meeting was worship.

As part of their invitation, the Yearly Meeting Committee had asked the participants to reflect over some quotations from the 2018 yearbook called “Experiences”. Those quotations were suggested as starting points for worship sharing in small groups. Part of the theme was the question of how children and young adults could be involved in Meetings for Worship.

After the participants had shared their thoughts in small groups about how to involve children in the worship meetings, an “All Age Worship” was held. Children, by their very nature, want to move. To create physical activity, chairs were arranged in one inner and one outer circle. The children and some adults sat in the inner circle. The other adults sat in the outer circle. After the worship started, the participants in the inner circle left the room and went out in nature to each find an object that spoke to them. Meanwhile the rest of the participants continued sitting in worship. When the participants came back from their nature walk, they put their found objects on a blanket in the middle of the circle, thus creating a mandala. The art work aroused many feelings and thoughts about nature and humans’ relationship to nature among the participants. This form of worship, which included an activity, was very much appreciated by both children and adults.

On Friday evening we entertained each other. Each person was asked for a contribution according the person’s interest and ability. On Saturday we participated in a fun and educational quiz about Bangladesh, a quiz that the Swedish Quaker Service Committee had arranged.

In parallel with the Yearly Meeting theme, we also worked with the newly created Peace Committee – how it should be organized and what its focus should be. We appreciated the interest and engagement that our international guests showed in this context.

At this Yearly Meeting there was a sense of urgency for us as a religious society to go to action with peace work.

Solveig-Karin Erdal
Clerk

Gottfried Novak
Recording clerk

Switzerland Yearly Meeting report

Herzberg, 7-10 June 2019

A total of 40 Friends gathered during the weekend of 7-10 June at Herzberg in the mountains near Aarau for Switzerland Yearly Meeting (SYM).

The theme of the meeting was “Peace Building Today and QCEA”. Two members of QCEA (Quaker Council for European Affairs) staff were invited to attend but only Olivia Caeymaex was able to be with us, so she was supported by Rorie Nazareth, a Swiss Friend who is on the QCEA Council. Together they offered presentations and workshops on QCEA’s work.

The meeting began after supper on Friday evening with worship-sharing on the theme.

After a meeting for worship on Saturday morning, Olivia gave a presentation on the work of QCEA, focusing on its two main areas of activity, peace and human rights. QCEA published the manual Building Peace Together last year. It is a resource book that provides methods and forms of peacebuilding in many sectors and levels of society and is aimed at peace practitioners, policymakers, and citizens with a commitment to a more peaceful society. Among many others, Olivia highlighted the “Choose Respect” initiative that QCEA has launched in an attempt to counter anti-migrant hate speech. This was particularly relevant during the recent EU elections. QCEA has set up a website, chooserespect.eu, with many resources. After lunch, Olivia offered a workshop to explore QCEA’s work more fully. Other workshops were also held on topics around the theme.

The first business session did not happen until 4.30pm on the Saturday. Sessions are conducted in English, German and French, and Friends volunteer to help with written translation and/or simultaneous interpretation, including for the workshops. At this session, visiting Friends were warmly welcomed and I was pleased to be able to offer greetings from British Friends in all three of the working languages. The business at SYM business sessions tends to be quite routine – receiving reports and looking ahead. In-depth discussions on the theme and other issues of particular interest to Friends are reserved for less formal sessions and workshops. Swiss Friends have begun a practice of having an Elder sit near the table facing the meeting during business meeting. On a couple of occasions, the meeting did need eldering!

In the evening, we heard reports from various Swiss Friends who had attended other YMs and gatherings, including Theresa Douglas who had been our guest at BYM only two weeks before. She reported warmly about her experience. While it was by far the largest Quaker gathering that she had ever attended, she was very moved by the discussions on privilege and she enjoyed making contact with individual British Friends between sessions, which she said helped to mitigate the overwhelming sensation she felt being in a room with 1,000 other Quakers.

Sunday began with Meeting for Worship and another business meeting. After lunch, Olivia conducted a role-play exercise in which Friends represented various EU governments and civil society organisations. The issue was the migrant crisis in Europe, and the idea was to emulate a “quiet diplomacy” scenario, where the various participants had some level of conflict with some of the others. An attempt was made to find common ground away from the spotlight of media and other attention, where participants could be open and begin to find compromises. The participants threw themselves wholeheartedly into the roleplay, especially those who were articulating positions that couldn’t have been more at odds to Quaker values.

After dinner there was a social evening where Friends celebrated with song, music, dance and other activities and entertainments.

On Monday morning there was a final business meeting where the Epistle was read and approved, and final bits of business were tidied up. A last meeting for worship followed, with departures after lunch.

It was a real pleasure to represent British Friends for a second time at SYM this year, and Swiss Friends were happy to have the continuity of the same representative two years in a row. I have found the links between the two YMs to be very strong, particularly in supporting the work of Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) and QCEA.

Harry Albright

Switzerland Yearly Meeting Epistle

Herzberg near Aarau. 7th June 2019 to 10th June 2019.

Greetings to Friends Everywhere!

Once again familiar friends gathered from meetings across Switzerland, and we were blessed to receive guests from France, UK, Germany, a Friend from Friends World Committee for Consultation-Europe and Middle East Section from the Netherlands, and from Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA)-Brussels. About 40 of us met in the idyllic green surroundings of the Herzberg, in Canton Aarau. We endured every kind of weather from blustering winds, to hot sunshine then rain and cool cloud. Our encounters with each other were as varied as the weather itself. We celebrate this time together to experience the Spirit in learning and fellowship.

At the very outset we acknowledged the death of our faithful friend Connie Arnosti. As we looked at our individual name badges, which she created and looked after each year, we smiled, and were aware that Connie is still with us.

Our theme for the weekend was “Peace Building Today and QCEA.” As we focused on coming together and setting the foundations for our gathering we were given two citations.

“I have heard some Friends deny their anger in a silent ‘peace’ where there is no understanding of each other. Such Friends are angry but by their silence the progress of world peace has stood still. If we are angry we know how wars develop. It does not matter who’s wrong. What matters is that we care enough to talk to each other.”

Sue Norris. 1982. Qf&p. 20.68

“If you want peace, you don’t talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies.”

Desmond Tutu

These ideas brought our attention to the light within, and how we can support each other in extending that light in the world.

Olivia Caeymaex, Peace Program Lead from QCEA, delivered a keynote presentation highlighting QCEA’s approach to peacebuilding among EU representatives in Brussels. Then she invited us into a simulation of “quiet diplomacy” in which we were assigned various roles in civil society and diplomatic representations. The role-playing exercise illuminated the challenges of finding unity across diverse agendas.

As in previous years, we invited friends to offer talks and workshops on the theme, and received so many offers that many workshops happened simultaneously. Topics included: conflict resolution within groups, confronting intolerance, peacebuilding with nature, transforming internal anger, and advices and queries on sustainability, among others.

Also in tradition, Young Friends embarked on a special trip and Parker reported the following:

“On Saturday we went to the Umwelt arena. It’s a combination of a museum exhibition but it’s also interactive. I think it was really interesting because I had fun but at the same time I learned new ways to become more environment friendly. My favourite part was definitely getting to try out electric bikes, scooters and Segway’s. And the best part is that we got in for free. If you bring an old phone you get a free entrance. The phone will then be repaired or recycled.”

Thank you to Ann Fowler and to Jennifer Kaddur for coming up with the idea and for bringing their children. We really enjoyed meeting Thomas, Timothy and Nadja, Anissa and Hafiz.

Our Meetings for Worship reminded us to be open to new light, from whatever source it may come. At a time of political uncertainty in Europe, when European institutions are under threat, we found some strength and inspiration in Sue Norris’s second paragraph:

“How do we become reconciled to each other if we are asunder? All I can say is to

go up to that person and say what is in your heart; that their ways are hurting but you still love them.

But this takes time and not many people like to look in a person's face and find out who they are. So we miss the reconciliation and do not have the experience - that we cared. Given that, then we will know who we are and find relief in tears we all should share. This is where peace starts."

We enjoyed reading Epistles from Friends around the world, and send you warmest greetings, peace and light.

Until next year.

In Friendship,

Switzerland Yearly Meeting



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

Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations Annual Report to Meeting for Sufferings

The Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) is appointed by Meeting for Sufferings and is accountable to Britain Yearly Meeting through Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees. At least one member is appointed from General Meeting for Scotland and at least one from the Meeting of Friends in Wales. Ireland Yearly Meeting is invited to nominate a representative through Britain Yearly Meeting's Central Nominations Committee. Additional members may be co-opted to assist with particular issues.

QCCIR is responsible for keeping Britain Yearly Meeting informed of relevant issues and movements which emerge from the interchurch and interfaith life of Britain, and of opportunities for dialogue and co-operation between churches, between faiths, and between faiths and churches. It liaises with other churches and communities of faith, keeping them informed of developments in the life of the yearly meeting and responding on behalf of the yearly meeting so that Friends' views on issues of faith and order are represented. QCCIR supports members of Britain Yearly Meeting, both nationally and locally, in raising awareness and understanding of the interchurch and interfaith dimension of religious and spiritual life.

Quaker faith and practice 9.13

2019 has been a busy and largely positive year for QCCIR. We have interacted extensively with interchurch and interfaith groups as well as with Friends locally, nationally and in neighbouring countries. We have been listening, sharing and working with Friends and others in a variety of ways. In terms of our vision statement to be visible, to be engaged and communicate, we have made good progress. Some of the issues that arise are difficult and relationships with some groups can be tense, but we are clear that we need to stick firmly with Quaker insights.

Limerick

The main event for QCCIR this year was our extended meeting in Limerick, Ireland.

This was the first time that QCCIR had met in Ireland, although we have a long-established tradition of meeting in England, Scotland and Wales. Ireland Yearly Meeting has always appointed a Friend to sit on QCCIR, representing a long-term joint commitment to ecumenical and interfaith relations. We felt that it was a blessing that this meeting was possible because of the interconnected nature of ecumenical and interfaith relations in Ireland. Churches in Ireland are full members of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). QCCIR appoints a Quaker representative to CTBI.

We wanted to learn from Irish Friends and their ecumenical partners, with Irish Friends including those from both sides of the border. We were blessed to be hosted so generously by Limerick Friends. Our final Meeting for Worship with Limerick Friends in a full Meeting House was a rich meeting, full of inspiring ministry both spoken and sung, and followed by a joyful lunch. We were conscious of the North/South dimension, the different experiences of development and conflict, rapid and recent social change, very different from the British context. We wanted this to be a reflective and learning process for our committee, with the opportunity to learn from each other. We learnt much from Irish Friends and ecumenical partners both in free-flowing plenary sessions and in small break-out groups, which were powerful learning experiences for us all.

Discussions were well structured but open ended. Topics considered included the balance between talking together and working together in ecumenical endeavours; responses to climate change; the impact of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel; improving communication with Friends elsewhere in Europe engaged in similar work; what we can learn from the Jewish experience of festivals and holy days; the challenges of living in an increasingly multi-religious and multi-cultural Ireland.

Interactions with and between the visitors; time spent sharing in small groups; the enthusiasm of our visitors about being present and engaging both with QCCIR and with one another all contributed to a valuable meeting that generated lots of interesting, thought-provoking discussion and listening. Its impact went way beyond expectations and we hope that the fruits will continue to emerge in the future. In meeting face to face in a trusting, confidential setting we were able to consider sensitive matters more deeply than would otherwise have been possible.

We had been challenged in advance to think quite deeply about the possible impact measures of such a large event bringing together such a very wide range of people from different churches and faiths and cultures. The evidence of the impact of this extended meeting of QCCIR over a period of five days can only be measured over a period of some years.

Possible impact measures that we had proposed:

- a) a more systematic and sustainable relationship between Britain Yearly Meeting and Ireland Yearly Meeting Quakers involved in ecumenical work, resulting in regular exchange of information and advice
- b) ecumenically involved British Friends who are more knowledgeable and flexible about different ways of representing Friends to other churches and faiths
- c) the nucleus of a network of ecumenically involved Quakers across European Yearly Meetings.

The committee feels that considerable progress was made in all these areas, and even more in the area of encouraging a growth in interfaith work. All present at the main interfaith session felt considerably energised and encouraged. Obviously ongoing work is needed from QCCIR and other participants to ensure that progress continues. The meeting in Limerick established relationships with key Friends involved in ecumenical and interfaith work, which will be of considerable help going forward.

Woodbrooke Conference – Inspiration and Practice: the spiritual grounding of our ecumenical and interfaith work 8th-10th March 2019

This year's joint QCCIR/Woodbrooke conference continued last year's conference topic of the Changing Face of Faith in Britain project. This year's focus was on Part 3 of the project - the work carried out at Area and Local Meeting level. The conference was well attended with 78 participants. The evaluation forms were extremely positive with some suggestions to note for future events.

Three main speakers, Inderjit Bhogal, Gretchen Castle and Deborah Rowlands all gave valuable and different perspectives on the topics of spiritual grounding and those moments of connection and moments of difficulty in their engagement with people of other faiths and denominations. Two other speakers, Claire Bowman and Chris Martin related the topic specifically to working in one's own local area.

Yearly Meeting 2019

The QCCIR ecumenical visitors were welcomed by the Yearly Meeting (YM) clerks and spoke briefly to the full session. Both Andrew Copson, Chief-Executive of Humanists UK on Saturday, and Joey Williams President Europe Church Mission Center of the Community of Christ on Sunday, spoke to a full room in the special interest groups. Andrew spoke on the history of Humanists UK. Joey related the history of the Community of Christ and its roots in the Reformed Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Churches Together in England

Churches Together in England has a six President structure. Quakers in Britain are part of the Fourth Presidency Group along with the Lutheran Council of Great Britain,

Evangelical Lutherans, German-Speaking Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain, and the Church of Scotland (Presbytery of England). The position of President rotates among the membership of that group, and a Quaker, Hannah Brock Womack has been appointed to serve. However, some churches in CTE have rejected the appointee because she is in a same sex-marriage, and we have been asked to show restraint by not exercising the office of this Presidential appointment. This will mean that the Fourth Presidency Group will not be represented when the CTE Presidents gather, so the fourth chair will be left empty as a symbol of the work still to be done to find unity.

We will continue to seek ways of working that recognise the profound differences in relation to the meaning of 'unity', and how this is expressed. The positions of the member churches of CTE are currently in very different places, and we are working with CTE and the other churches to move to a place where unity and diversity are in a balance that reflects a Quaker understanding of interchurch relations as both wide and deep.

This will be an extended and complex process; the work so far has been challenging and at times personally painful for those involved. However, these difficulties have deepened some of the informal relationships Quakers have with other church members, and there have been genuine expressions of care and concern about the pain we as Friends are experiencing.

The basis for the continuing relationship with CTE is exceptionally strong and QCCIR will fulfil its service to BYM by reflecting Quaker positions to other churches and keeping Friends informed about developments. QCCIR has produced a special edition of CIRcular to help Friends engage with the issues (included as an appendix to this paper along with a news release from BYM). The committee asks for your prayerful upholding of all Friends involved in this work.

Sustainability

We have reviewed the broad theme of sustainability as we encounter this in the ecumenical instruments, and in our own local interchurch and interfaith work.

It has become clear in our discernment that the missing element in work on sustainability is spirituality. The particular contribution this committee will make in its work is on spirituality; there is a danger that the approach of BYM remains mechanistic and that there is a thirst among Friends for a spiritual and theological approach.

Another area we have identified is the language that is being used - it is now crucial to speak of a climate emergency and climate justice. We need to underline the humanity of climate issues and thus encourage, share, explore and pray. We need also to be mindful of the importance of building 'community' because it is in community that change occurs.

We do not currently discern any specific pieces of work QCCIR can undertake in relation to sustainability, but we feel that we can articulate and embed the commitment into our agendas, reporting, witness and planning.

Future plans

We are not planning a conference in 2020 because of the extra work likely to be involved in YMG.

How (and whether) to take forward part 4 of 'The Changing Face of Faith in Britain' (about other groups we might usefully engage with) is still under consideration. There was some useful feedback in this area from the Woodbrooke Conference this year.

Stephanie Grant
Mark James Lilley

Members of QCCIR (as at October 2019)

Kate Arnot - South East Scotland AM - 1/5/14 – 30/4/20
Kim Ashcroft - Sussex East AM - 2/7/16 - 30/4/20
Sue Beardon - Sheffield & Balby AM - 3/6/17 - 30/4/20
Freya Blyth - YFGM rep - Kendal & Sedbergh AM - 1/10/17 - 1/10/20
Claire Bowman - Central England AM - 7/7/18 - 30/4/19
Catherine Brewer - Northumbria AM
Douglas Butterfield - Chilterns AM - 7/6/14 - 30/4/20
Gethin Evans - Mid-Wales AM / CCR Canolbarth Cymru - 5/9/15 - 30/4/21
Stephanie Grant - Luton & Leighton AM - 1/5/15 - 30/4/21
Nicola Hoskin-Stone - Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire AM - 5/10/13 – 30/4/20
Marisa Johnson - FWCC EMES Executive Secretary - Ex officio
Mark Lilley - Lincolnshire AM - 1/5/15 - 30/4/21
Judith Mason - Banbury & Evesham AM - 1/5/19 - 30/4/22
Rachel Muers - Leeds AM - Co-opted
Janet Scott - Cambridgeshire AM - 1/5/19 - 30/4/22
Evelyn Shire - Craven & Keighley AM - 1/4/17 – 30/4/19
Eoin Stephenson - Ireland YM / Surrey & Hampshire Border AM - 23/5/15 - 30/4/21
Lynda Williams - York AM - 3/6/17 - 30/4/20

Stephanie Grant
November 2019

CIRcular

For Friends involved in inter-church and interfaith work



Special edition for Meeting for Sufferings

December 2019



Walking together with difficulty

Quakers' relationship with Churches Together in England

The warm relationship between Britain Yearly Meeting and Churches Together in England is under strain. The Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) has prepared this special *CIRcular* to give background and help Friends engage with the issues. We ask for your discretion and prayerful upholding as we engage on your behalf with the wider Christian family in England.

The Quaker peace church in a divided world

What are our gifts as Quakers in the polarised and confrontational world we inhabit? Given our radical views and progressive history, how do we sit alongside those with whom we disagree? What strengths can we draw on when we have to say we do not agree on an issue such as same-sex marriage? The conversations we have with churches across England, Scotland and Wales can be seen as mirror images of the conversations we have with

other forms of Quakerism within the world family of Friends. Around the world, not all Quakers accept equal marriage, and for many it is a source of considerable internal tension and religious mistrust.

We should never question the integrity or values of other churches when we are at the ecumenical table. To sit with other churches is to be with those who are different but to have a common bond. We can have creative and constructive conversations. It can be painful and profoundly challenging. It can also be an opportunity for deep insight. Everyone can gain.

Not being in unity with other churches or faiths on an issue is not a failure, and this 'messiness' is a characteristic of ecumenical life. We need to be brave and also humble when we see differences and continue in fellowship without feeling victorious or defeated when compromises are necessary.

Words of explanation and guidance can be found in *Quaker faith & practice* 9.01, and Friends are encouraged to read that chapter.

The presenting issue

Quakers in Britain agreed to join the interchurch structures across these islands in 1989, when the then British Council of Churches was laid down. Since that time, through QCCIR, we have maintained those ecumenical relationships along with Ireland Yearly Meeting. The four “ecumenical instruments” – namely Churches Together in England (CTE), Action by Churches Together in Scotland, Cytûn in Wales, and the Irish Council of Churches – have different internal structures and all relate to Churches Together in Britain & Ireland.

CTE has a six-President structure. We are part of the Fourth Presidency Group along with the Lutheran Council of Great Britain, Evangelical Lutheran Church of England, German-Speaking Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain, and the Church of Scotland (Presbytery of England). The position of President – a four-year term – rotates among the membership of the group. Quaker Rowena Loverance served as a previous President, and in 2018 it became the turn of a Friend to be appointed. A nominations sub-group was created, which nominated Hannah Brock Womack. The appointee was agreed by the other members of the Fourth Presidency Group. However, the Churches in CTE have rejected the appointee because she is in a same-sex marriage. Same-sex marriage is not accepted by most church members of CTE, although other CTE Member Churches do, including the United Reformed Church. The Methodist Church is in internal discussion about its position.

The CTE Enabling Group, representing all 49 Member Churches, considered the situation and in September 2019 came to “a clear mind, by a substantial majority”. This is what it has asked of us:

“For the sake of our ecumenical unity at present, we request that the Fourth Presidency Group show restraint by not exercising the office of their Presidential appointment. We suggest that this be represented by an empty Presidential chair for the current term of office. We acknowledge the pain and sadness that this

will provoke and recognise the vacant chair as a continuing reminder of our divergence on this issue. We as an Enabling Group commit ourselves to the continuing journey of consultation, study and deep listening to God and to one another in all areas of our pilgrimage together.”

Many individual church members have expressed their concern about the situation, and all are working out carefully how an “empty chair” for the Fourth President can be used as an opportunity for discussion and learning. Over the years, space has been found to accommodate the diverse religious teachings of churches, and we seek now to find space for diverging views on human sexuality.

QCCIR’s discernment

In October QCCIR minuted: “We have identified that the announcement will raise both issues and emotions. There will be anger, pain and frustration that a Quaker has been prevented from exercising an important ecumenical role because of the attitudes of other churches to human sexuality. However, it is crucial that as Quakers we do not reflect the attitudes of the world in our responses – a world that is polarised, and in which issues are seen as being binary. Complex and difficult issues require continuing engagement with differences that we may find frustrating.”

QCCIR is committed to supporting and promoting diversity work among churches and faiths that brings in new gifts and perspectives – of women, of ethnic minorities, of young people – so that ecumenical bodies reflect the reality of diversity in churches in England. We acknowledge as Friends that we make most progress by working with those who disagree with us, as that is where change takes place. We are not being asked to change our discerned position on equal marriage, and we cannot ask other churches to change their views. What we are seeking are ways to bear witness to our truth in peace, love and respect.

Mark Lilley, Clerk, QCCIR
Marigold Bentley, Secretary, QCCIR

The Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations (QCCIR; *Quaker faith & practice* 9.13) keeps Quakers informed of movements towards cooperation within the Christian Church and opportunities for interfaith dialogue, and it responds on their behalf to other Churches and faith communities.

The Secretary is Marigold Bentley: marigoldb@quaker.org.uk, 020 7663 1060.

Circular is produced and edited by QCCIR, with assistance from the Communication & Services Department, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ.

Quakers in Britain News Release

19 November 2019

For operational use. Embargoed until 10.00am Friday 22 November 2019

Churches' plan for new President falters because of equal marriage

Plans to appoint a further President for Churches Together in England (CTE) have faltered because not all denominations in membership of CTE would accept a nominated President, who is a Quaker in a same-sex marriage.

The Churches have rejected the Quakers' appointee Hannah Brock Womack, because she is married to a woman. An active Quaker, she is a young, radical peace activist, who campaigns against the arms trade and works in the voluntary sector.

The CTE Member Churches bring together a richness of traditions and understanding. Some Churches agree with Quakers' strong stand for same-sex marriage.

CTE, which offers an ecumenical space for sharing between the Churches, on a range of religious issues, has a recognised process for appointing Presidents.

Generally, CTE has six Presidents, representing various church groupings. Each grouping appoints Presidents. The churches in the Fourth Presidency Group appoint a President every four years, in turn. Quaker Rowena Loverance served as a CTE President from 1998 to 2001. This time, Hannah Brock Womack was nominated by Quakers in Britain, to represent members of the Fourth Presidency Group which includes Lutheran Council of Great Britain, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England, German-Speaking Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain, Church of Scotland (Presbytery of England) and Quakers in Britain.

After the Fourth Presidency Group appointed Hannah Brock Womack, the Member Churches of CTE's Enabling Group gave this further thought and came to "a clear mind, by a substantial majority". A statement said, "For the sake of our ecumenical unity at present, we request that the Fourth Presidency Group show restraint by not exercising the office of their Presidential appointment. We acknowledge the pain and sadness that this will provoke."

Hannah Brock Womack remains the fourth President but will not be able to take her place alongside the other CTE Presidents when they gather. The fourth chair will be left empty as a symbol of the work still to be done to find unity.

Quakers are an active and accepted part of the church family. Quakers in Britain faithfully engage with the ecumenical instruments and continue to honour the commitments made to be full members of the ecumenical architecture.

Mark Lilley, Quaker representative to CTE Enabling Group and clerk of Quaker Committee on Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) said, "The grief this situation is causing Friends (known as Quakers) cannot be underestimated by other churches. Work must be done to heal the pain through creative conversations about

our differences. We are confident that the ecumenical movement will continue to serve as a model of cooperation and mutual understanding that recognises the unique gifts of each member.”

Paul Parker, Recording Clerk for Quakers in Britain said, “This is a deeply sad decision. Quakers in Britain value the fact that CTE seeks to encompass the wide diversity among Christians in England. It is important to us that the Quaker voice is heard in discussions between Churches.

“As Quakers, we are called to answer that of God in everyone. We recognise the inherent worth of each person. That leads us to welcome all committed same-sex relationships as equally as committed opposite-sex relationships. We value equally all people, regardless of sexuality or other defining characteristics. These characteristics are not the right way to decide if someone is right to serve as our CTE President.”

In statements released today, the Revd Dr Paul Goodliff, General Secretary of CTE and Paul Parker, Recording Clerk for Quakers in Britain said they were committed to continuing in conversation together, “knowing that God will hold us together in gracious love”.

The Religious Society of Friends, as Quakers are known formally, is a member of three national bodies, namely ACTS: Action of Churches Together in Scotland, CTE: Churches Together in England and Cytûn: *Eglywsi ynghyd yng Nghymru*, Churches Together in Wales and of Churches Together in Britain & Ireland (CTBI).

In Quakers’ book of discipline and guidance, *Quaker faith & practice* 27.12 records Thomas Story writing this in 1737: “*The unity of Christians never did nor ever will or can stand in uniformity of thought and opinion, but in Christian love only.*”

A statement from CTE is available on request from Lucy.olofinjana@cte.org.uk

Ends

Notes to editors

- Quakers are known formally as the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain.
- Around 21,575 people attend 475 Quaker meetings in Britain. Their commitment to equality, justice, peace, simplicity and truth challenges them to seek positive social and legislative change.
- Following Quakers’ participation in a challenging five-year preparatory process known as ‘Not strangers but pilgrims’, the Yearly Meeting in 1989 decided to apply for full membership of the then Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland (now Churches Together in Britain & Ireland) and the national bodies. Yearly Meeting in 1997 confirmed this decision. Each of the four bodies accepted Quakers into membership.
- CTE in numbers: 49 Member Churches in England, 6 Presidents, 2000 local Churches Together groups, more than 900 Local Ecumenical Partnerships

- From Friday 22 November statements from Quakers in Britain and Churches Together in England will be on www.quaker.org.uk/news and cte.org.uk/latestnews

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

Minutes sent by Area Meetings

Central Yorkshire AM has sent Meeting for Sufferings a minute regarding the suitability of the term 'overseer' to describe those in our meetings who hold responsibilities for oversight. A briefing note and local meeting responses from Central Yorkshire are also included. As the briefing note sets out, this matter has also been under consideration in other area meetings and has recently been debated in the letters pages of The Friend.

The arrangements group is not expecting MfS to make a decision on this in December and a next step could be to seek advice from Quaker Life Central Committee.

The revision to the book of discipline presents an opportunity to capture any changes that might be made, so it may be helpful to alert the Book of Discipline Revision Committee about this.

Central Yorkshire AM held 10 September 2019 Minute 11 Quaker terminology – overseers

Jonathan Doering has presented a concern about the present-day suitability of the term 'overseer' to describe those in our meetings appointed to provide particular pastoral oversight, support and care of Friends and attenders. A briefing document is attached, together with minutes received from local meetings.

We recognise this concern, but there are differing views on the issue. We feel that that the continuing use of the term Overseer, and others, should be considered and discerned at a national level so that the use of such terms is consistent and accepted by all rather than adopted only at local level.

We ask the clerk to send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Ruth McTighe
Clerk

Briefing Notes provided by Barnsley LM to Central Yorkshire AM: Quaker terminology – overseers

As Central Yorkshire AM (CYAM) Friends are no doubt aware, there has been a lively and ongoing discussion about the continuing suitability of the term 'overseer' to designate the role accepted by some Friends to provide particular pastoral oversight, support and care for the Members and Attenders at our Meetings.

In various quarters there has been a growing sense that perhaps the term 'overseer' carries unfortunate connotations for people who might potentially visit our Meetings with a view to attending and worshipping regularly.

Some arguments for change:

- For Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) worshippers, there is the historical association with slavery, where overseers literally oversaw the work of slaves in the fields and elsewhere, often employing threats and actual physical and sexual violence against them;
- For worshippers with working class backgrounds, or left-wing views, there may also be unfortunate connotations of factory and work overseers, many of whom again employed abusive behaviour in order to ensure maximum output by workers, particularly during the Industrial Revolution;
- It may well also be that the term 'Overseer' may feel overly-traditional and perhaps unclear in terms of what it means. Furthermore, many people in a modern context may not welcome the notion of someone 'watching over' or 'overseeing' them in their lives, almost in terms of an adult-child relationship, but may very well welcome the sense that there is someone who can offer support, advice, guidance and practical help should they feel in need of it;
- We do have a precedent for certain, thoughtful changes in terminology, for instance as part of RECAST the terms 'Preparative Meeting' and 'Monthly Meeting' were changed to 'Local Meeting' and 'Area Meeting'. Indeed, *Quaker faith & practice* is currently undergoing a revision of its content.

In view of our espoused hope that Friends can be an outward-looking, welcoming faith community, it may feel right to many of us to consider a change to the name for this vital role. It must be stressed that should a change be made, no one is in any way wishing to change or diminish any of the content of the role, or the trust vested in those exercising pastoral oversight. The role itself will remain the same alongside - and interacting with - that of Elders.

Some arguments against change:

- The term 'overseer' is an old one, employed for an extremely long time within the Society, with specific, supportive meanings to Friends, which can be glossed for newcomers;

- There is a ‘slippery slope’ argument, whereby if we begin to change some terms, we may find ourselves unreasonably pressured into changing more and more, until we find the tone of our Society entirely changed;
- It could lay Friends open to charges of making superficial changes to appeal to a wider constituency of people.

National discussion

This has been played out in the Letters page of *The Friend* over several months, initiated by Eric Walker’s letter on 2nd February, questioning the use of the term, which then led to various opinions and arguments on both sides of the question. For instance on 2nd March Ruth Corry stated that her view was that the term had had its day and that with the impending revision of *Quaker faith & practice* Friends should consider an alternative: ‘The words we use are not set in stone, and apparently only the most conservative Friends Meetings in US still use the word ‘overseer’. In Australia overseers are sometimes known as ‘carers’.’ These sentiments sat alongside a contribution from Martin Drummond, where he told of an Attender who stopped going to a Meeting after being told that they had been assigned an Overseer: ‘I wonder whether the attender in question was feeling patronised or imposed upon, rather than reacting to those negative connotations of the word ‘overseer’ which have concerned subsequent correspondents.’

Other Meetings have been considering whether it would be appropriate to update/change certain terms, including those of Elder and Overseer.

Lewes Meeting offered a discussion document entitled ‘What’s in a name?’ in 2018, where it was remarked, ‘...these terms constitute ‘Quaker-speak’ that is not well understood by many in our Meeting, while some Friends are uncomfortable with the connotations of the word ‘Overseer’ which in its Quaker usage significantly deviates from its other usages.’ The alternative name for the team is Spiritual and Pastoral Resource and Information Group (SPRIG). Whilst acknowledging that this new term has not been officially adopted by Lewes Meeting or by its AM, it asks if ‘maybe reverting to traditional language would cause misunderstanding of its real role and linguistic discomfort, and hence a fresh start with ‘SPRIG’ is better.’ Through contact with Lewes Meeting, I now understand that they have an Eldership and Oversight Resource Group (EORG), partly as a result of the use of the term ‘SPRIG’ leading to some confusion, and EORG has been a clearer term. This concern grew from the experience of Exeter Meeting.

I have had a conversation with Nancy Wall of Lewes Meeting, who has explained that their change of terminology was born from the necessity to explore new models of pastoral oversight. This led their Meeting to experiment with a model of ‘Circles’ of support, with Convenors being nominated as the providers of pastoral oversight within each. There are, therefore, a variety of different responses to this discussion, as we are clear that in CYAM the traditional pastoral oversight model works well for us, and it is purely the term that we are considering in terms of changing.

Oxford Meeting has renamed its Overseers as the 'Pastoral Care Team' without renaming overseers officially (although the f(F)riend who passed this information to me remarked that she thought '[the term] Pastoral Elder sounds good'. However, I do believe that I have seen the term 'pastoral elder' used on posters at Oxford Meeting House.

Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM) has for some years referred to its Eldership and Oversight team as 'Quintessential', and I understand that they are currently engaged in a process of discernment over how to change/ update the terms Elder and Overseer.

Barnsley LM's Discernment Process

This issue was first raised last year at Barnsley LM for discussion by myself; there were various positions on it, and it was brought to Meeting for Worship for Business on at least three occasions, across six months, before Barnsley Friends united behind the idea of a change. Various alternative titles were mooted:

- Pastoral elder
- Pastoral carer
- Member of the Pastoral Care Committee/ Team
- Member of the Pastoral Oversight Committee/ Team
- Member of the (Eldership and) Oversight Committee/ Team
- Member of the (Ministry and) Oversight Committee/ Team
- Member of the Care and Counsel Committee/ Team

The term 'Pastoral elder' was settled on as being sufficiently clear, and signalling the equal status of this role with that of Elders, which in itself could be argued to offer a clearer sense of what the role constitutes.

Conclusion

There have been eloquent arguments on both sides of this issue, and certainly anyone wishing to consider changing the term should not do so lightly, or as part of any wholesale changing of terms.

Nevertheless, ultimately the general feeling amongst Barnsley Friends has been that although the term 'Overseer' was clear and useful previously, unfortunate connotations for certain people, plus relative in clarity over its meaning these days, would recommend a new term being employed. At a time when Yearly Meeting has discussed the various issues around privilege with the Religious Society of Friends as well as wider British and world society, this may be one small way in which can bring privilege into consciousness.

We place the matter before Friends.

Jonathan Doering
Co-clerk, Barnsley LM

Barnsley PM 3.3.2019 minute 9 sent to Elders and Overseers

Over the past months, in response to an ongoing national debate around appropriate language, Barnsley LM has considered the issue of modifying the term 'Overseer' to 'pastoral elder'. We have felt overall that this is the appropriate way forward, in view of the fact that changing social, cultural and linguistic conditions have rendered the older term, although applied perfectly legitimately in its own time, potentially hurtful and exclusive to new Members and Attenders who might be uncomfortable with overtones of power and exploitation – especially those of BME, working class or politically left-wing backgrounds and/ or persuasions. We therefore requested our E&Os to consider this issue, and it has been recommended that this change be effected, which is one that has occurred at other LMs, including for instance Oxford LM. We have therefore agreed to change the term from 'overseer' to 'pastoral elder'. The role of overseer/pastoral elder is an extremely valuable one, and will continue in the very successful and beneficial form that we all know and appreciate. We forward this minute to you, notifying you of our decision. Please do let us know your thoughts if you have any.

Minutes received from other local meetings:

Ackworth PM September 2019 Minute 3

Given the use of the term "overseer" in the context of slavery, we have been asked, by Area Meeting, to consider whether we feel the term is an appropriate one for those having pastoral responsibilities in our meetings. We have discussed this matter and feel no great strength of feeling about the inappropriateness of the term "overseer". We do, however, feel strongly that our vocabulary should be determined by the guidance set out in *Quaker faith & practice*. If the term is to be changed then we should wait until we have some clear guidance from BYM.

High Flatts PM 25.8.2019 minute 12

We have been asked by CYAM from a minute from Barnsley Meeting to consider the implications of the continuing use of the term Overseer, given its connection to slavery. We ask CYAM to send a minute to Meeting for Sufferings that the continuing use of the term Overseer, and others, should be considered and discerned at a national level so that the use of such terms is accepted by all rather than adopted only at local level.

Wakefield PM 8.9.2019 minute 5

We have not had a formal discussion about the use of the terminology "overseers" but we are aware that there are differing views on this within our meeting. We do agree that any change of terminology needs to be agreed nationally so that it can be used consistently throughout Britain Yearly Meeting.

Wooldale PM 30.6.19 minute 7

Following initiatives by Oxford and Barnsley Meetings to rename their Overseers as Pastoral Elders, Central Yorkshire Area Elders and Overseers enquired whether

other meetings wanted to follow. We feel it needs to be a society-wide decision rather than one taken at a local level. We agree to forward this minute to Area Meeting.



Yearly Meeting of the
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Nominations processes

Last year Meeting for Sufferings asked Central Nominations Committee to review its terms of reference and bring back any recommendations for change. Meeting for Sufferings also considered a review of the YM Committee on Clerks, agreeing a number of recommendations, and deferring consideration of others. This paper updates Meeting for Sufferings on progress and recommends a way forward.

Background

The terms of reference of Central Nominations Committee (written in 2016) are due to be reviewed. In November 2018, Meeting for Sufferings (by minute MfS/18/11/17) asked Central Nominations Committee to review their terms of reference, particularly in reference to the review of Committee on Clerks and the suggestion that Central Nominations Committee could take on some of its work.

In November 2018, Meeting for Sufferings also received a review of the YM Committee on Clerks. Four recommendations relating to the appointment of the clerks of BYM Trustees and the YM Treasurer were accepted, and will be forwarded to Yearly Meeting in 2021. BYM Trustees considered this at their recent meeting, and are ready to work in the new arrangement, under which they would take responsibility for bringing forward names for the appointment of their clerk and the YM Treasurer for appointment by Yearly Meeting, and would make arrangements to appoint an assistant clerk from among their own membership.

Four further recommendations relating to the appointment of the clerks of Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings were not agreed at that time, pending further discussions between YM Committee on Clerks and Central Nominations Committee, and the review of Central Nominations Committee's terms of reference.

The clerks of Central Nominations Committee and the Committee on Clerks have been working together to consider whether Central Nominations Committee might be able to pick up the work of nominating these clerks. Central Nominations Committee also spent time reviewing their terms of reference, identifying aspects which needed clarification, simplification or other barriers removing, and a new draft has been prepared.

The way forward

It is now proposed that a single committee could take on the work of both Central Nominations Committee and the YM Committee on Clerks. This would be a committee called Gifts for Service Committee, recognising the Spirit-led work of seeing the gifts of Friends and matching those gifts to service across Britain Yearly Meeting.

Minute MfS/18/11/17 noted:

“... that the review found that specific strengths of the current system were in the care and attention given by Committee on Clerks and the benefits of giving time and space to specific nominations work.”

The clerks of both committees have worked hard to ensure that this is not lost in the transference of duties between the committees. Gifts for Service Committee will have standing search groups, with additional Friends brought in to serve on those Search Groups as needed, providing expertise and the space to nurture Friends “before and during” service.

The experience of both committee’s members have been invaluable to this work, and we thank them for their work on the terms of reference for the Gifts for Service Committee. Both committees have indicated their acceptance of the proposed changes.

The terms of reference for the new Gifts for Service Committee is a briefer document than its predecessor. As David Beale, one of the clerks of Central Nominations Committee puts it:

“Much of the detail of how we currently work has been taken out to allow the committee more freedom to be led by the spirit. Instead we expect the committee to have its own document describing the way it works so that present and new members will know.”

What happens now

Meeting for Sufferings is invited to consider whether it is now happy to recommend to Yearly Meeting that the work currently done by Central Nominations Committee and YM Committee on Clerks should be undertaken by a single Gifts for Service Committee.

If so, Meeting for Sufferings is asked to approve the attached terms of reference as an adequate description and framework for the work laid upon the new committee.

Paul Parker
Recording Clerk

Zoe Prosser
Secretary, Central Nominations Committee

20 November 2019

Related Minutes

Central Nominations Committee

2019 09 30 Integrating the work of Committee on Clerks and Central Nominations Committee – a possible way forward

Further to minute 2019 07 07, we have discussed paper 2019 09 30, and heard from the clerks about their meeting with the clerks of Committee on Clerks. We feel positive about the way forward that has been proposed.

We are excited about the opportunities that standing search groups will afford us to build relationships with a pool of Friends who might be interested in a particular service, and to acknowledge and nurture their interest. A name for the committee that includes 'gifts' or 'service' might be appropriate.

We welcome the increase in membership proposed in the paper, and recognise that staff support will be important to resource this new committee.

We want to build on the good practice of both Committee on Clerks and Central Nominations Committee, and will return to this matter at our next meeting.

Committee on Clerks

COC 2019 09 02b The future of the Committee on Clerks

The Clerk and Assistant Clerk have updated us on meetings which have taken place over the summer to consider ways to move forward with the recommendations of the review report. We have received a paper suggesting a way forward for central nominations work of BYM (paper CoC 2019 9 11 04B), which was developed following a meeting between the Clerk and Assistant Clerk of CoC and the co-Clerks of Central Nominations Committee supported by the recording Clerk. The work of nominating clerks to Trustees and the YM Treasurer will pass to the Nominations Committee of BYM Trustees after YMG 2020. This paper therefore sets out a possible way of incorporating the nominations of the clerks of Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting, currently done by the Committee on Clerks into Central Nomination Committee, which might be renamed Gifts and Service Committee.

We welcome this proposal and ask our Clerks to revise this paper to include the issues which have been raised in our consideration today and circulate the revised paper to the committee in the hope that a joint paper with Central Nominations Committee could be ready for the meeting of Meeting for Sufferings in December.

BYM Trustees

BYMT-2019-11-04 Nominations and appointments

(b) Committee on Clerks changes: process for nomination of BYMT clerk and YM treasurer

We receive paper BYMT-201911-04b. The 2018 review of the Yearly Meeting Committee on Clerks (ConC) recommended changing the process by which clerks of BYM trustees and the YM treasurer are nominated and appointed. The recommendations relevant to BYM Trustees are:

Recommendation 2: BYM Trustees should nominate their own clerk and the BYM treasurer, for appointment by Yearly Meeting.

Recommendation 3: Friends should be appointed to serve for three years in each of these roles.

Recommendation 4: BYM Trustees are empowered to appoint an assistant clerk directly if they so wish.

These recommendations were accepted by Meeting for Sufferings in November 2018 and are expected to be considered by Yearly Meeting in August 2020. We note that the recommendations are in line with our strategic priorities.

If Yearly Meeting adopts the recommendations, then we are confident that we can make them work successfully. We expect to appoint an assistant clerk.

We send this Minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Gifts for Service Nominations Committee (provisional name)

“It is the responsibility of a Christian community to enable its members to discover what their gifts are and to develop and exercise them to the glory of God.”

Qf&p 3.22

Terms of Reference

1. Summary of Purpose

1.1. Gifts for Service Nominations Committee uses a corporate discernment process to recognise people’s gifts and enable them to use these in the service of the Society of Friends. By its work, Gifts for Service Nominations Committee aims to help create a community that is spiritually resourced, empowered and joyful.

1.2. Gifts for Service Nominations Committee is responsible for finding names for most of the appointments made by Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings and for overseeing and developing nominations procedures within its purview. (See also *Quaker faith & practice* 6.21).

2. Authority, Delegation and Relationships

2.1. Gifts for Service Nominations Committee (the Committee) is appointed by Yearly Meeting on the nominations of Yearly Meeting Nominating Group.

2.2. The Committee should report annually to Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings on the progress of its work and on any other nominations matter.

2.3. The Committee may communicate by minute with Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Nominating Group, Meeting for Sufferings, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, and other Central and Standing Committees of Britain Yearly Meeting.

2.4. The Committee may establish subgroups and search groups as required, provided there is at least one serving member of the Committee on such groups.

3. Duties

3.1. The Committee shall bring forward to Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings, names of Friends to serve in central roles and on central committees as directed by Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings. A schedule of nominations required is maintained by the Recording Clerk. Where no suitable name can be found this should be reported to the appointing body in a timely manner.

3.2. The Committee shall bring forward the names of clerks for Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings, having due regard to the need for long term planning for these nominations.

3.3. The Committee shall maintain an ongoing relationship with the officers of the Committees and other bodies for which it is seeking names, to ensure that the needs of that body are understood.

3.4. The Committee shall seek names for nomination with due regard for equality, diversity and inclusion, balancing the predetermined criteria for each appointment with the gifts of Friends who could serve. Wherever possible the Committee shall seek to remove barriers to participation by underrepresented groups.

3.5. The Committee shall advise Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings (as appropriate) if it feels that an adjustment or review of the purpose or operating terms for any appointment are necessary to allow service from the widest possible range of Friends. If the Committee becomes aware that the working practices of any committee or body to which the Committee nominates is restricting the diversity of that committee or body, this should be brought to the notice of the clerks of that committee or body.

3.6. The Committee should endeavour to take a long term view of nominations, especially for key appointments, to allow nominees to be well prepared and nurtured for the role.

3.7. The committee shall nominate only members of the Society for appointments to standing committees of Meeting for Sufferings or Britain Yearly Meeting, or as representatives to other Quaker bodies or to the outside world. Exceptions to this general rule shall be clearly indicated and supported by reasons for nomination.

3.8. The Committee shall keep its communications under review and raise awareness of opportunities for service.

3.9. The Committee is responsible for its own effectiveness. It shall keep its processes under review and ensure that its members receive appropriate training as required.

4. Membership and attendance

4.1. The Committee comprises 18 members, appointed for three years, and 2 clerks. Re-nomination for a second term of service is possible.

4.2. The Committee appoints two clerks from within its membership to serve for one or more years depending on their circumstances and the Committee's needs. Clerks can serve as such for an extra year on top of their ordinary term of service. The clerks serve ex-officio on Meeting for Sufferings. The clerks of the Committee should maintain effective communications with clerks of other nominating groups.

4.3. The Recording Clerk may attend ex-officio. The clerks of Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings may attend exceptionally with the agreement of the Committee or on the direction of Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings.

4.4. A member of staff, designated by the Recording Clerk, shall normally attend committee meetings to act as secretary to the committee. The secretary will help coordinate and pass information between nominations committees. Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, via the Recording Clerk, are responsible for ensuring there are sufficient staff resources to support the work of the Committee. Meeting without the secretary should only be with that person's or the Recording Clerk's agreement.

5. Frequency of Meeting

5.1. The Committee shall meet as frequently as needed to fulfil the duties placed upon it. Meetings should fit within the calendar agreed with the Recording Clerk.

5.2. The Committee shall ensure that an adequate number of its members shall be present during Britain Yearly Meeting in session, to make any ad-hoc nominations required.

6. Agreement of the Terms of Reference

6.1. The Committee shall work within these terms of reference under the authority of minute XX Britain Yearly Meeting held XXXXXX 2020.

6.2. The terms of reference shall be reviewed by the Committee at least triennially. The Committee may propose changes to Britain Yearly Meeting in session or to Meeting for Sufferings.

6.3. We are a spirit led community. We do not know and cannot predict where the wind of the spirit will blow us. If faithfully following our leadings would take the Committee outside its terms of reference, then it shall bring the matter before meeting for Sufferings.



Yearly Meeting of the
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BYM Trustees minutes

Introduction

As usual, the clerk of BYM Trustees will speak to Meeting for Sufferings about Trustees' work. The minutes of their most recent meeting follow. Two of the minutes have been specifically forwarded to MfS.

a) Committee on Clerks changes: process for nomination of BYMT clerk and YM treasurer

A separate paper is before Meeting for Sufferings at this meeting on this matter.

b) Strategic priorities

Agreement to a joint BYM and Woodbrooke proposal to help Friends spiritual and practical engagement with the climate crisis. This proposal responds, in part, to a decision taken by Meeting for Sufferings in 2018.

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Friday 15 November 2019 at Friends House

Minutes

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

Prevented: Danielle Walker Palmour

In attendance: Libby Adams, Head of Library and Archives (BYMT-2019-11-11); Paul Grey, Head of Operations, (except minutes BYMT-2019-11-19 to 20); Suzanne Ismail, Head of Networking & Engagement (minute BYMT-2019-11-10); Lisa Kiew, Head of Finance & Resources, (except minutes BYMT-2019-11-19 to 20); Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, (except minute BYMT-2019-11-20); Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk, (except minutes BYMT-2019-11-19 to 20).

Visitors: Jenny Brierley, Sam Challis, Kate Gulliver, trustees from 1 January 2019; Simon Best, Head of Learning, Woodbrooke (minute BYMT-2019-11-10); Maud Grainger, Faith in Action Programme Coordinator, Woodbrooke (minute BYMT-2019-11-10), Mark Lilley, Clerk, and Marigold Bentley, Secretary, Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations, Ann Floyd, Clerk, and Michael Booth, Secretary, Quaker World Relations Committee (minute BYMT-2019-11-13)

BYMT-2019-11-01 Welcome, agenda check, conflicts of interest check, minutes of last meeting

We welcome Jenny Brierley, Sam Challis, Kate Gulliver, who will be trustees from 1 January 2019.

We will also be welcoming later in the meeting Simon Best, Head of Learning, and Maude Grainger, Faith in Action Programme Coordinator, Woodbrooke, Mark Lilley, Clerk, and Marigold Bentley, Secretary, Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations, Ann Floyd, Clerk, and Michael Booth, Secretary, Quaker World Relations Committee.

The minutes of the meeting held 6 to 7 September have been signed by the Clerk.

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We confirm our agenda.

During our worship, we have heard paragraph 23.11 from Quaker faith & practice.

BYMT-2019-11-02 Minutes received

We have received the following minutes:

- Continued minutes (BYMT-2019-11-02a)
- Clerks Awayday 24vii17 (BYMT-2019-11-02b)
- Audit Committee 10ix19 (BYMT-2019-11-02c)
- Quiet Company 12ix19 (BYMT-019-1102d)
- Quaker Life Central Committee 13to15ix19 (BYMT-2019-11-02e)
- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee 13to15ix19 (BYMT-2019-11-02f)
- Quaker World Relations Committee 20to22ix19 (BYMT-2019-11-02g)
- Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee (discernment of agenda topics and separated minute 2019/09/07 27to29ix19) (BYMT-2019-11-02h)
- Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith relations 11to13x19 (BYMT-2019-11-02i)
- Property Development Steering Group 26ix19 (BYMT-2019-11-02j)

BYMT-2019-11-03 Items taken on draft minute

(a) Gold papers

We receive paper BYMT-2019-11-03a detailing the minutes and papers that should be added to our gold papers:

BYMT-2018-09-05 Legacy-funded projects procedure
BYMT-2018-09-14 Giving and Fundraising Strategy
BYMT-2018-09-16 Simplifying and diversifying BYMT committees
BYMT-2018-11-02(b) Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd: amended articles
BYMT-2018-11-02(c) Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd: trading name
BYMT-2018-11-05(c) Investment policy and BYM investments in Israel/Palestine
BYMT-2019-02-06 Scheme of Delegation
BYMT-2019-02-09 Support for Meetings Strategy
BYMT-2019-02-15 Strategic Priorities
BYMT-2019-06-04(i) Leslie Harris Trust
BYMT-2019-06-04(ii) Property: Swarthmoor Hall Farm
BYMT-2019-06-04(d) Young Adult Friends Funding
BYMT-2019-06-11 Support for meetings – a new meeting-centred approach
BYMT-2019-09-06(c) Property Upkeep Designated Fund

(b) Submission of annual return

We receive paper BYMT-2019-11-03b confirming receipt by the Charity Commission of our annual return and the Trustees Annual Report & Accounts for the financial period ended 31 December 2018.

(c) Register of interests check

We confirm that we have completed our annual conflict of interests check.

BYMT-2019-11-04 Nominations and appointments

(a) Appointments

Our Nominations Group brings forward the following names for appointment (paper BYMT-2019-11-04a:

Audit Committee

- Chris Willmore to continue to serve as the trustee member on Audit Committee to 31 December 2021.
- Paul Whitehouse (Bristol AM) to serve a second term on Audit Committee to 31 December 2022 and to continue as Clerk.
- David Bunney (Central Yorkshire AM) to serve a second term on Audit Committee for one year to 31 December 2020.
- Ian Cook (Manchester & Warrington AM) to serve a second term on Audit Committee for two years to 31 December 2021.

Employment Committee

- Sarah Donaldson to serve as Clerk of Employment Committee from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020.

- Jenny Brierley to serve on Employment Committee from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2022.

Finance & Property Committee

- Kate Gulliver to serve as a trustee member on Finance & Property Committee from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2022.

Board of Friends House (London) Hospitality Company

- Nick Eyre to serve a second term as a trustee Director of Friends House (London) Hospitality Company from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2022.
- Ellie Harding to serve as a trustee Director of Friends House (London) Hospitality Company from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021.
- Carol Rowntree Jones (Leicester AM) to serve as a non-trustee Director of Friends House (London) Hospitality Company from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2022.

Senior Staff Grievance & Disciplinary Group

- Nick Eyre to serve a second term on the Senior Staff Grievance & Disciplinary Group from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2022.

Elders

- Nick Eyre to serve a second year for 2020 and Georgina Bailey to serve for 2020 and 2021. This will provide for overlap and rotation.

Simplifying structure & practices

- Further to minute BYMT-2019-09-11, Ellie Harding and Carolyn Hayman to work with Management Meeting on the next steps in simplifying structure and practices.

Legacy Funded Project Group

We lay down the Legacy Funded Project Group.

(b) Committee on Clerks changes: process for nomination of BYMT clerk and YM treasurer

We receive paper BYMT-201911-04b. The 2018 review of the Yearly Meeting Committee on Clerks (ConC) recommended changing the process by which clerks of BYM trustees and the YM treasurer are nominated and appointed. The recommendations relevant to BYM Trustees are:

Recommendation 2: BYM Trustees should nominate their own clerk and the BYM treasurer, for appointment by Yearly Meeting.

Recommendation 3: Friends should be appointed to serve for three years in each of these roles.

Recommendation 4: BYM Trustees are empowered to appoint an assistant clerk directly if they so wish.

These recommendations were accepted by Meeting for Sufferings in November 2018 and are expected to be considered by Yearly Meeting in August 2020. We note that the recommendations are in line with our strategic priorities.

If Yearly Meeting adopts the recommendations, then we are confident that we can make them work successfully. We expect to appoint an assistant clerk.

We send this Minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

(c) Appointments to BYMT Nominations Group

We re-appoint Sarah Donaldson to serve on BYMT Nominations Group for 2020 and appoint Chris Willmore to serve on BYMT Nominations Group for 2020 and 2021.

(d) Nominations Group terms of reference

We receive revised terms of reference for the BYMT Nominations Group (BYMT-2019-11-04c). We approve these terms of reference.

(e) Schedule of appointments

We receive paper BYMT-2019-11-04d giving BYM Trustee appointments as at 7 September 2019.

(f) New Trustee mentors

We appoint mentors to the new trustees who start on 1 January 2020 as follows:

- Jenny Brierley: Frances Voelker
- Sam Challis: Nick Eyre
- Kate Gulliver: Chris Willmore

BYMT-2019-11-05 Compliance

(a) Risk register review

We receive paper BYMT-2019-11-05a setting out strategic-level risks for us to review. We note the addition of a risk associated with plans to adopt a new approach to meeting centred support. We ask that a risk be added on the consequences of the climate crisis.

We approve the risk register for 2019 and agree the need to communicate our risks.

(b) Health, Safety & Environmental Committee annual report

We receive paper BYMT-2019-11-05b, the annual report of the Health, Safety & Environmental Committee. We endorse the actions instigated to improve the culture of good health and safety in BYM and Quiet Company.

(c) Data Protection annual report

We receive the Data Protection Annual Report 2019 (BYMT-2019-11-05c) updating us on data protection compliance and developments. We thank the staff for the care with which they are implementing the BYM Data Policy, noting that more work is needed to improve data management.

(d) BYM Trustees data protection

We receive paper BYMT-2019-11-05d 'Care of data by committees' reminding us of our responsibilities for any personal data we have access to in our role as trustees.

BYMT-2019-11-06 Recording clerk's report

We receive the Recording Clerk's report (paper BYMT-2019-11-06).

(1) Change work reporting

We receive reports on Governance, New ways of working, Meeting-centred support and Engagement.

(2) Other reporting

Recording Clerk: Governance & BYM structures, External relations

Deputy Recording Clerk: Impact, Communications and fundraising, Safeguarding
Witness & Worship: Sustainability, All-age community, Witness work, Support for meetings, Library/collections

Finance & Resources: Data protection and management; employment, Finance, Procurement, Property management, Fundraising

Operations: Trading and managed services; Health & safety; Facilities, Committee Services & Events, Young Friends General Meeting,

The staff report was an appendix to the Recording Clerk's report.

We have received minutes of Management Meeting held on 10 September, 8 October and 12 November 2019.

BYMT-2019-11-07 Trustees' news

We have received a report of the activities of Trustees since our last meeting (BYMT-2019-11-07). This also includes 'Reflections on being a Trustee' by David Olver and Alastair Reid.

BYMT-2019-11-08 Finance & resources reports

(a) BYMT Finance & Property Committee minutes

We received the minutes of BYMT Finance & Property Committee minutes for the meeting held on 26 October (BYMT-2019-11-08a).

Grants

We note the regular annual grants given to Quaker organisations and that two of them asked for extra one-off funding which F&PC did not approve as further assessment is recommended.

We confirm that BYM does not wish to be the only source of funds and so applications need to demonstrate that they have sustainable funding plans.

Financial Regulations

We adopt the updated Financial Regulations with changes noted today, including the supplementary Anti-Fraud Policy. We ask that the BYM Scheme of Delegation is amended to include delegation of the implementation of the anti-fraud policy to Management Meeting.

Finance & Property Committee re-organisation

The paper on the simplification of the Committee referred to in minute FP19/62 has been made available to trustees on QGroups. The paper reflects on the journey of simplification the Committee has been on over the last five years. The main lessons include: concentrating on strategic decision-making and scrutiny rather than the detail; greater effectiveness and efficiency through setting clear guidelines and procedures to delegate routine work to staff, and reliance on professional expertise; use of virtual meetings enabling more diversity of committee members as well as saving travel and other costs; and use of Qgroups and Qsync to reduce use of paper and postage.

(b) Finance report - third quarter

We receive the quarterly finance report for the period to 30 September 2019 (BYMT-2019-11-08b).

BYMT-2019-11-09 2020 Budget and operational plan

(a) Budget 2020

We receive the budget for 2020 (BYMT-2019-11-09a), which has been introduced by Linda Batten (Yearly Meeting Treasurer).

We approve the 2020 operational budget, noting that the planned expenditure of £14.668 million aligns with Trustees' strategic priorities and the change process towards meeting-centred support. The expected deficit of £1.29 million will be funded from general reserves. The current level of our general reserves is adequate for this purpose and will be drawn down until they have a level equivalent to not less than 3-months expenditure.

We also approve the 2020 outline capital budget of £1.3 million.

(b) Legacy funded projects fund

We note the recommendation in minute FP/19/55 concerning the legacy-funded projects designated fund, and agree not to designate any additional amount to this fund at this time. To date, £344,000 of £500,000 allocated for this year to the fund remains uncommitted; there is one new project in development which is expected to require the remaining balance.

We record our appreciation of the success of most of the legacy-funded projects, and thank Management Meeting and staff for their conscientious oversight of the projects.

(c) Operational Plan 2020-22

We receive the draft Operational Plan for 2020-22 (BMT-2019-11-09b). We approve the Operational Plan.

BYMT-2020-11-10 Legacy-funded project: Climate crisis – spiritual nurture and learning

Simon Best, Head of Learning, and Maud Grainger, Faith in Action Programme Coordinator, Woodbrooke, and Suzanne Ismail, Head of Networking and Engagement, have joined us for this item.

We have received an application for legacy funding for a project on the climate crisis, spiritual nurture and learning (BYMT-2019-11-10), which has been forwarded to us by Management Meeting, who have been working on developing it with Woodbrooke.

In 2018 Meeting for Sufferings brought together representatives from various Quaker groups involved in this work to date to map the breadth of activity being undertaken within the Yearly Meeting and to identify gaps. This is set out in minute MfS/18/10/20 which reads, in part: “We suggest that Woodbrooke be approached to run national and regional face to face gatherings and events to nurture Friends ministry in the testimony of sustainability. Worship, reflection, gaining insight, inspiration and learning”

This process identified that two significant gaps were: firstly the need to strengthen and deepen our understanding of why and how we as Friends are led to live up to our corporate commitment to sustainability; and secondly to provide greater support for Friends looking for practical solutions to lower carbon use.

This project will fill the gaps identified in supporting and equipping Friends in relation to this. Specifically, it will focus on:

1. Supporting Friends to explore, understand and become more confident in articulating the spiritual underpinning of Quaker commitment to caring for the earth and creation.
2. Providing advice, guidance support and encouragement to enable Friends to make practical changes to individual lifestyles and to take community-level action, particularly around the use and management of property.
3. Building community to support and strengthen our individual and corporate response.

We can see that the visibility of the climate emergency means that Friends are more ready for initiatives than they may have been in the past. We are very conscious

that there are constraints for Friends at every stage of their lives. We welcome the adaptive approach.

We agree to this proposal on the basis that Management Meeting will work with Woodbrooke to firm up the outcomes, ensuring that impact measurement is in place and that communication and project management is carried out well.

We see the project as an effective way to help Friends spiritual and practical engagement with the climate crisis. We welcome this example of collaboration between Woodbrooke, QPSW, Local Development Workers and across the whole of BYM.

We ask that consideration of this project return to us regularly during its implementation.

We forward this minute to Meeting for Sufferings and Woodbrooke Trustees.

BYMT-2019-11-11 Collections Strategy Working Group report

We are joined by Libby Adams, Head of Library and Archives, for this item.

We receive paper BYMT-2019-11-11 with the report of the Collections Strategy Working Group and Quaker Life Central Committee minute 19.41.

We approve the principal governance recommendations relating to the Collections and the monitoring of its implementation. We ask that Library staff report to us annually on the development and management of Collections including risk management.

We note that Library staff will seek advice from individuals with specialist skills, as well as committees, where appropriate. We also agree that Library staff should seek to work with colleagues throughout the organisation to ensure that BYM manages its information well and that the Collections are used for the agreed purpose.

We send this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee.

BYMT-2019-11-12 Friends House vision and lettings policy

We receive a paper on Friends House vision and lettings policy (BYMT-2019-11-12).

We have made a few suggestions and expect to approve the vision and lettings policy at our next meeting.

BYMT-2019-11-13 Quaker Committee on Christian & Interfaith Relations and Quaker World Relations Committee

Mark Lilley, Clerk, and Marigold Bentley, Secretary, Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations Ann Floyd, Clerk, and Michael Booth, Secretary, Quaker World Relations Committee, are with us for this item.

We receive the annual report of the Quaker Committee on Christian & Interfaith Relations (BYMT-2019-11-13) and the annual report of Quaker World Relations Committee annual report (BYMT-2019-11-14).

The committees have explained how they are attempting to align with BYM's strategic priorities, which they are finding a useful framework.

We have heard from Mark Lilley about a complex matter of Christian unity that has taken much of QCCIR's time in the last 18 months. We uphold the Committee, and all those involved in this brave and difficult work. We know that Friends across the yearly meeting will be sad and angry when this becomes public. We are preparing practically and spiritually to communicate with Friends as well as we can, knowing that these matters are very difficult and that our ministry is to sit with them.

We thank the committees for their reports and work. Our discussion will be useful to the trustees reviewing the terms of reference of the two Committees.

We send this minute to the Quaker Committee on Christian & Interfaith Relations and Quaker World Relations Committee.

BYMT-2019-11-14 Safeguarding

We receive an update on paper BYMT-2019-09-08 received by us at our meeting in September (BYMT-2019-11-15). The update covers the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), review of archive folders, internal improvements, governance oversight.

Juliet Prager has told us that the IICSA second submission, informed by the information provided by six sample Area Meetings, is nearly ready to be submitted.

We have found that we do not have complete documentary records for some archived cases in order to show that all necessary actions were taken at the time. For this reason, a Serious Incident report has been submitted to the Charity Commission.

We are pleased that our new Safeguarding Officer is in place offering national expertise and support to AMs as well as coordinating the delivery of the improvement plan.

BYMT-2019-11-15 Review of link trustees

We receive a paper reviewing the link trustee system (BYMT-2019-11-16).

We agree to continue the link trustee system, modified as proposed in the paper. We ask the Assistant Clerk to play the lead role in ensuring that each trustee is enabled to engage as appropriate.

BYMT-2019-11-16 Trustees' training day 2020

We receive paper BYMT-2019-11-17 with suggestions for our training day on 3 April 2020.

We agree that a session on trustees and safeguarding is a priority. We also agree to hear from various staff about their work.

BYMT-2019-11-17 Meeting for Sufferings preparation

We have discussed our participation at Meeting for Sufferings to be held on 7 December 2019.

BYMT-2019-11-18 Reviewing the meeting and trustees' work this year

We have reviewed the meeting, hearing first impressions from in-coming trustees and reflections from outgoing trustees.

BYMT-2019-11-19 Time with Recording Clerk

We have spent some time with the Recording Clerk.

BYMT-2019-11-20 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

Caroline Nursey
Clerk



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

Organisation applying to become a Quaker Recognised Body

Introduction

This paper gives details of an application for registration as a Quaker recognised body (QRB). Staff have looked at the documentation provided by the organisation and consider that the criteria for listing it as a QRB 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**).

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.

Guidelines for groups that would like to be a QRB are on the BYM website. So far, Meeting for Sufferings has registered 67 Quaker recognised bodies.

www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups

Request for registration

The following organisation has applied to become a Quaker recognised body, and Meeting for Sufferings is asked to approve this.

- Quaker Women Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse

Name of Quaker Recognised Body: Quaker Women Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse

Aims: To create and provide the opportunity for mutual support in a safe and understanding environment. The group also seeks to increase awareness among Friends of the realities of sexual abuse and its effects on survivors; to suggest appropriate ways for Friends to engage with the subject: to influence child protection policies and related decision making; and to work towards the provision of appropriate support networks and oversight for survivors within local meetings in the earnest hope that our insight may contribute to a future reduction in the sexual abuse of children, within the Society, and beyond.

Governance and Constitution: No formal constitution.

Type of Group: Free Standing

Foundation: 2002

Publications and activities: Regular meetings are held at Friends House for women who wish to attend (A previous Recording Clerk agreed that a Friends House meeting room should be provided free of charge, because of the special nature of this group).

Membership: the group is only open to women. The size of the group is undisclosed for reasons of privacy and confidentiality.

Finance: An account for the group is held with The Cooperative Bank, two signatures are required for any payment.

Archives: Held in line with GDPR

Winding up: no formal provision agreed.

Current contact details: Marian

email: womensurvivors@quaker.org.uk

Staff link: Yvonne Brown, BYM Safeguarding Officer, yvonneb@quaker.org.uk



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

The review of Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gatherings

Summary

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to establish a group to review Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gatherings, and to set out the scope and process for the review in its terms of reference.

Why this is happening

It is many years since Yearly Meeting was last reviewed, and there has been a good deal of change to how the event is held. The introduction of Yearly Meeting Gatherings in 2009 has also affected how Yearly Meeting is held in London. The revision of Quaker faith & practice means a new, up-to-date description of Yearly Meeting will be needed for inclusion of the new book of discipline.

Yearly Meeting 2019 asked Meeting for Sufferings to carry out a review of Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gatherings and to bring any recommendations back to Yearly Meeting. The review is likely to take some time, so we expect this to be in 2022 or 2023.

What the review will cover

Meeting for Sufferings needs to agree a clear scope for the review. It is suggested that the review is carried out in two stages:

Stage one:

A review of how well Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering is meeting its purposes and whether this purpose needs to be changed or updated.

This stage would address the following questions:

- How well are Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering meeting the stated purposes of Yearly Meeting as set out in chapter 6 of Quaker faith & practice?
- Do Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering have an appropriate balance of agenda items (threshing, learning and exploration, discernment, decision, reporting) and other activities to meet these purposes?

- Are any of the purposes of Yearly Meeting or Yearly Meeting Gathering left unaddressed, or duplicated?
- Does this purpose need to be changed or updated to better address the needs of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain?
- Can Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering be simplified in line with BYM's aspiration so simplify Quaker structures and practices?
- How well are Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering relating to and holding accountable the other national bodies of Britain Yearly Meeting (Meeting for Sufferings, BYM Trustees, and various other committees)?

Stage two:

A review of the implementation of Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gatherings in the light of the findings from stage one.

This stage would address the following issues:

- What is the most appropriate process and timescale for the discernment of the agenda for Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering?
- What is the right frequency, location and timing for Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering?
- Are the financial and carbon costs to BYM and to individual Friends attending sustainable and how can they be minimised?
- Are changes required to maintain or increase the level of attendance and engagement with Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering by Friends and area meetings?
- How can we ensure participation of children, young people, young adults and families? Are there barriers to participation, diversity and inclusion of under-represented groups?
- What are the respective roles of committees and staff in making practical arrangements?
- Are changes required to Yearly Meeting's relationship with Meeting for Sufferings as the other senior body of the church, and the body which acts on its behalf between Yearly Meetings?
- How well do Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering fit in to the programme of other events organised by Britain Yearly Meeting?
- How well do we meet the needs of Quaker Recognised Bodies and other groups which hold events at the time of Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering?

How the review process will work

The review group will need to consult widely in both stages, including with BYM Trustees, Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee and other bodies which report to Yearly Meeting, as well as take soundings from Friends at large (both those who attend Yearly Meeting regularly, and those who don't, or can't).

At the end of stage one, the review group would report back to and consult Meeting for Sufferings on their findings about the purpose of Yearly Meeting and Yearly Meeting Gathering. This would likely be after around a year from the date of appointment, to allow time for Friends and committees to respond, and for consideration of their responses.

At the end of stage two, the review group would report back to Meeting for Sufferings, including bringing in clear recommendations for any changes required. Meeting for Sufferings would then decide what recommendations to forward to Yearly Meeting for decision. We expect this to be in 2022, in time for recommendations to be forwarded to the Yearly Meeting to be held at the 2023 Yearly Meeting Gathering.

The current pattern of Yearly Meetings & Yearly Meeting Gatherings would continue until at least 2024.

What Meeting for Sufferings needs to do now

At this meeting, Meeting for Sufferings is asked to confirm the scope of the review as set out above, or to propose any additional matters which should be considered.

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to approve terms of reference for the review group to do this work (a draft is appended to this paper), and to ask Central Nominations Committee to bring forward the names of suitable Friends to serve, for appointment by Meeting for Sufferings at a meeting in Spring 2020.

Paul Parker
Recording Clerk
19 November 2019

DRAFT

Group to Review Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gatherings

Terms of reference

We did conclude among ourselves to settle a meeting, to see one another's faces, and open our hearts one to another in the Truth of God once a year, as formerly it used to be.

Yearly Meeting in London, 1668 (Quaker faith & practice 6.02)

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The Review of Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gatherings is to examine the purpose and function of Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gatherings, and to make recommendations to Meeting for Sufferings of any changes required for Yearly Meeting to better meet the needs of Quakers in Britain.

2.0 Membership

2.1 Members of the Group are appointed by Meeting for Sufferings on the nomination of Central Nominations Committee.

2.2 The Group shall consist of up to eight members, including:

- One recent member of YM Agenda Committee
- One BYM Trustee serving at the time of appointment
- One serving or recent CYP volunteer
- One member of Meeting for Sufferings
- Four other Friends with a range of experience

2.3 Meeting for Sufferings shall appoint a convener from among this number.

2.4 Members will be appointed to serve for three years or until completion of the task, whichever is the sooner. In the event the task takes longer than three years, members may be asked to serve a second term.

2.4 The clerk of Meeting for Sufferings and the Recording Clerk may attend ex officio.

2.5 The Recording Clerk will designate a member of staff to act as Secretary to the Group. Meetings without the Secretary may only happen with that person's, or the Recording Clerk's consent.

2.6 The Group may invite other Friends and staff with relevant experience or expertise to attend its meetings for specific items.

2.7 The Group may establish subgroups to undertake specific pieces of work. At least two members of the Group shall serve on any such subgroup.

3.0 Scope

3.1 The Group shall conduct the review in two stages as follows:

3.1.1 Stage one: A review of how well Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering is meeting its purposes and whether this purpose needs to be changed or updated, including:

- a) How well Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering are meeting the stated purposes of Yearly Meeting as set out in chapter 6 of Quaker faith & practice
- b) Whether Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering have an appropriate balance of agenda items (threshing, learning and exploration, discernment, decision, reporting) and other activities to meet these purposes
- c) Whether any of the purposes of Yearly Meeting or Yearly Meeting Gathering is left unaddressed, or duplicated
- d) Whether the purpose needs to be changed or updated to better address the needs of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain
- e) Whether Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering can be simplified in line with BYM's aspiration so simplify Quaker structures and practices
- f) How well Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering are relating to and holding accountable the other national bodies of Britain Yearly Meeting (Meeting for Sufferings, BYM Trustees, and various other committees)?

3.1.2 Stage two: A review of the implementation of Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gatherings in the light of the findings from stage one, including:

- a) The most appropriate process and timescale for the discernment of the agenda for Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering
- b) The right frequency, location and timing for Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering
- c) The sustainability of the financial and carbon costs to BYM and to individual Friends attending and how they can be minimised
- d) Any changes required to maintain or increase the level of attendance and engagement with Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering by Friends and area meetings
- e) The participation of children, young people, young adults and families, and whether there are barriers to participation, diversity and inclusion of under-represented groups
- f) The respective roles of committees and staff in making practical arrangements?
- g) Any changes required to Yearly Meeting's relationship with Meeting for Sufferings as the other senior body of the church, and the body which acts on its behalf between Yearly Meetings

- h) How Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering fit in to the programme of other events organised by Britain Yearly Meeting
- i) How well the needs of Quaker Recognised Bodies and other groups which hold events at the time of Yearly Meeting & Yearly Meeting Gathering are met

4.0 Mode of working

4.1 The Group shall meet as frequently as necessary to complete its task, and not less than twice a year. The Group is encouraged to use virtual means for its meetings wherever possible.

4.2 The Recording Clerk will ensure sufficient budget is available to support the Group's activities. The Group may not incur costs outside this budget without permission of the Recording Clerk.

4.3 The Group may communicate by minute with

- Meeting for Sufferings
- YM Agenda Committee & YM Arrangements Committee
- BYM Trustees
- Other bodies which are accountable to Yearly Meeting

4.4 The Group shall consult widely among Friends and the bodies listed in 4.3 to inform its findings and recommendations.

4.5 The Group shall report to Meeting for Sufferings at the end of each stage and at least annually on progress.

4.6 The Group shall prepare a final report with recommendations to be submitted to Meeting for Sufferings for discernment.

4.7 The Group shall prepare supporting materials to enable Meeting for Sufferings to report and make recommendations to Yearly Meeting.

4.8 The Group shall raise with Meeting for Sufferings any matters which it feels need consideration which would take it beyond its remit.

4.9 The Group shall operate within these terms of reference which were agreed by minute **XXX** of Meeting for Sufferings held 7 December 2019. The terms of reference may only be amended by minute of Meeting for Sufferings.



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

Amendments to *Quaker faith & practice*: sections 4.05 and 4.39

While a new Book of Discipline is being prepared, Yearly Meeting delegated responsibility for agreeing minor factual amendments to current Church Government text to Meeting for Sufferings during the period of revision (Yearly Meeting 2019, minute 21). Meeting for Sufferings is required to inform Yearly Meeting in its annual report of the changes that have been made.

Church Government Advisory Group (CGAG) brings two recommendations to Meeting for Sufferings at this meeting. Both recommendations are based on decisions made previously by Meeting for Sufferings. CGAG considers both are minor factual changes that Meeting for Sufferings is able to make on behalf of Yearly Meeting.

1) Children and Young People's Work Advocates

Church Government Advisory Committee (CGAG) was asked by Meeting for Sufferings to propose wording to include in *Quaker faith & practice (Qf&p)* a recommendation that area meetings appoint CYP Work Advocates. Minute **MfS/18/11/07** refers.

Recommendation to Meeting for Sufferings

We recommend that Meeting for Sufferings changes *Qf&p* section 4.05 to read as follows:

4.05 Other appointments which may be found helpful to the area meeting include:
an additional assistant clerk to deal with membership matters;
an assistant treasurer or finance committee;
a children and young people's work advocate (guidance available from Quaker Life);
a children and young people's committee;
an outreach committee;
a warden(s) and premises committee, where the area meeting is the employing body (and see 13.39);
Friends to advise on funerals (see 17.07, 17.08, 17.14).

In addition appointments will be needed to other bodies with which the area meeting has a relationship (see in particular 4.16, 4.17).

Current text

The current text of 4.05 is:

4.05 Other appointments which may be found helpful are:
an additional assistant clerk to deal with membership matters;
an assistant treasurer or finance committee;
a children and young people's committee;
an outreach committee;
a warden(s) and premises committee, where the area meeting is the employing body (and see 13.39);
Friends to advise on funerals (see 17.07, 17.08, 17.14).

Other appointments may also be helpful to the area meeting. In addition appointments will be needed to other bodies with which the area meeting has a relationship (see in particular 4.16, 4.17).

Explanation of recommendation

Section 4.05 is not where Meeting for Sufferings asked for the new text to be added. We need to explain why CGAG has not precisely followed your request.

The end of minute MfS/18/11/07 reads:

QLCC recommends that area meetings appoint CYP Work Advocates, and that the role should be added to the list of recommended roles in *Quaker faith & practice* 4.04.

We agree to this recommendation. We send this minute to Yearly Meeting and to Church Government Advisory Group, asking it to draft appropriate text for *Quaker faith & practice*.

On looking at the request, Church Government Advisory Group (CGAG) realised that there was a conundrum. Section 4.04 currently starts:

“Each area meeting should appoint members to serve as:”

It would be easy to add the role of CYP Work Advocate to the list of appointments of members to serve in roles listed in 4.04, however, there appears to be no requirement that the role holder has to be a member.

In order to give carefully considered advice to Meeting for Sufferings, Church Government Advisory Group had to consider the request in the context of the whole Book of Discipline, and other information available to Friends.

We feel that 4.05 would be a better location than 4.04. This is because 4.04 lists roles that are essential in order for the AM to fulfil its basic and legal obligations. They are not just recommendations. The list of roles in 4.05 are certainly desirable, and, as such, are recommendations, but the work covered by them is also covered within the general description of roles within 4.04 (e.g. clerk, treasurer, elders, overseers). We do think that there could be more clarity in the words used in both 4.04 and 4.05, though this is probably a general matter for the Book of Discipline Revision Committee to consider in due course, rather than CGAG now.

What other changes are being suggested for section 4.05?

The preamble of the current text states "Other appointments which may be found helpful are:..." This is followed by a list of roles. Beneath the list, the paragraph states, "Other appointments may also be helpful to the area meeting." If the preamble were amended to read, "Other appointments which may be found helpful to the area meeting include:..." then the sentence following the list could be deleted, as it would be clear the list is not an exhaustive one.

The web address <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-roles/cyp-work-advocates> gives a link to the guidance notes created by Quaker Life.

Conclusion

We hope that Meeting for Sufferings will agree to the advice from its Church Government Advisory Group.

Church Government Advisory Group considers that this is a minor factual change that Meeting for Sufferings may make on behalf of our Yearly Meeting (as noted by Meeting for Sufferings in minute MfS/19/07/05).

2) The Library Committee

The Library Committee was laid down by Quaker Life Central Committee in June 2018. This was reported to Meeting for Sufferings in November 2018 within the Quaker Life annual report. There are various references to the Library Committee in *Quaker faith & practice*.

Recommendation to Meeting for Sufferings

The Church Government Advisory Group recommends to Meeting for Sufferings that the text of *Quaker faith & practice* is changed to reflect the decision made by Quaker Life Central Committee to lay down the Library Committee.

These proposed changes have already been shared with Library staff, to check that the proposals are correct.

In the proposed text below, deleted text is shown like ~~this~~, and new text like *this*.

Section 4.39

The current text:

Area and general meetings should appoint a Friend to act as a custodian of their records, or else appoint a committee for the purpose. Area meetings should take responsibility for the records of their constituent meetings, ensuring their timely transfer to the custodian of records. They are advised in particular to ensure that the records of any local meeting which has been laid down are collected together. The Library Committee of Quaker Life publishes guidance for clerks and custodians on the creation, care and custody of records (4.43), and see the BYM website (new window).

The new text proposed is:

Area and general meetings should appoint a Friend to act as a custodian of their records, or else appoint a committee for the purpose. Area meetings should take responsibility for the records of their constituent meetings, ensuring their timely transfer to the custodian of records. They are advised in particular to ensure that the records of any local meeting which has been laid down are collected together. The *Library of the Society of Friends Committee of Quaker Life* publishes guidance for clerks and custodians on the creation, care and custody of records ([4.43](#)), and see the [BYM website \(new window\)](#).

Section 4.43

The current text:

Meetings requiring advice or information on the handling of their records are encouraged to get in touch with the Library Committee through the Librarian at Friends House. The Library Committee maintains a central catalogue of local meeting records, and it should be notified of any change in the place where they are deposited.

The new text proposed is:

Meetings requiring advice or information on the handling of their records are encouraged to get in touch with the *Library of the Society of Friends Committee*

through the Librarian at Friends House. ~~The Library Committee maintains a central catalogue of local meeting records, and it should be notified of any change in the place where they are deposited.~~

Note

Library staff advise removing the second sentence about maintaining a central catalogue of local meeting records. Meetings rarely send this information, so they are not able to keep those records up to date. Most of the archive services holding local Quaker records have online catalogues now and this information is much more readily available than it used to be'. There are better ways now of gathering information about where Quaker records are held than maintaining paper catalogues here.

Section 4.44

The current text:

Meetings have sometimes been approached by an outside body and offered the opportunity to put old records on microfilm. This may be primarily for the benefit of those making the offer. The area meeting is responsible for deciding whether it would also be of benefit to the meeting and is strongly advised to seek guidance from the Library Committee (4.43). The Library Committee should be kept informed of decisions made so that the relevant experience may be shared with other area meetings.

The new text proposed is:

Meetings have sometimes been approached by an outside body and offered the opportunity to put old records on microfilm. This may be primarily for the benefit of those making the offer. The area meeting is responsible for deciding whether it would also be of benefit to the meeting and is strongly advised to seek guidance from the *Library of the Society of Friends Committee* (4.43). The ~~Library Committee~~ should be kept informed of decisions made so that the relevant experience may be shared with other area meetings.

Section 13.41

The current text:

Area meetings are required to keep under regular review the maintenance and use of libraries in local meetings (see 4.10.r); they should encourage any meetings which do not have their own library to establish one. The running of the library, however, remains the responsibility of the local meeting. Most local meetings appoint a librarian, who will need the support of the meeting and a budget for the purchase of books. In some meetings this task is shared by a number of Friends. Some area meetings draw their librarians together from time to time to share their experience. Help and advice are also available from the Library Committee of Quaker Life.

The new text proposed is:

Area meetings are required to keep under regular review the maintenance and use of libraries in local meetings (see [4.10.r](#)); they should encourage any meetings which do not have their own library to establish one. The running of the library, however, remains the responsibility of the local meeting. Most local meetings appoint a librarian, who will need the support of the meeting and a budget for the purchase of books. In some meetings this task is shared by a number of Friends. Some area

meetings draw their librarians together from time to time to share their experience. Help and advice are also available from the Library of the Society of Friends Committee of Quaker Life.

Conclusion

We hope that Meeting for Sufferings will agree to the advice from its Church Government Advisory Group.

As the Library Committee has already been laid down, Church Government Advisory Group considers that this is a minor factual change that Meeting for Sufferings may make on behalf of our Yearly Meeting (as noted by Meeting for Sufferings in minute MfS/19/07/05).

Mark Tod
Convener, Church Government Advisory Group