



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

26 March 2021

## To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Dear Friends

I am writing as signs of Spring are filling my daily walks with the promise of new beginnings. How strange that the minutes, hours and days which seem to pass so slowly in our enforced social isolation can suddenly leap forward and it is nearly April. I give thanks for the steady rhythm of the cycle of life.

The cycle of Meeting for Sufferings rolls on too, and we will meet by Zoom on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> April.

It is now almost a year and half since you agreed to forward minutes from Staffordshire and North West London about Assisted Dying to all Area Meetings. You will be aware that at MfS Arrangements Group has planned an evening session to explore the matter on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> March, and I look forward to welcoming as many as are able to take part in this preparation. Full details are in the covering email.

As for the Saturday itself, our routine business covers:

- appointments (including terms of reference for a group to review the appointment of members and attenders to central committees)
- Prison and Court Register
- a new Quaker Recognised Body
- the annual MfS report to YM
- our letter of greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting.

Trustees will report on their latest meeting and we will receive minutes from an Area Meeting, a Central Committee and news of YM 2021.

The principal item for consideration in April is, as noted above, the issue of Assisted Dying. We have decided to divide the time for this matter between late morning and early afternoon to allow as much space for reflection as possible in a busy day.

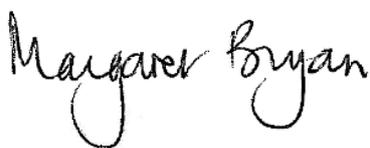
There will be breakout rooms over lunch and we hope that Friends will feel that they are just as welcome to attend as to go and eat, to pop in or out, with or without food, as suits them. Whatever you choose to do we hope you will enjoy an opportunity to socialise with Friends you may or may not already know.

When we have brought our consideration of Assisted Dying to a close, we will return to the theme of simplification. In this era of change brought about by the pandemic there are opportunities both expected and unexpected to explore and this will mark the beginning of a journey together.

Finally, at our last meeting Friends enjoyed Paul Parker's presentation on the Tabular Statement and asked for it to be circulated. Simply circulating a Power Point presentation does not capture the delivery – you had to be there – but Penny Elliott (Communication & Services Support Officer) has written a [blog](#) which has already appeared in *Quake!*

I look forward to seeing you all in April

In peace and friendship,



Margaret Bryan  
Clerk

### **Papers enclosed with this mailing**

#### Agenda

MfS Arrangements Group February and March 2021 meeting minutes  
MfS 2021 04 05 Prison and Court Register  
MfS 2021 04 06 Quaker Recognised Bodies  
MfS 2021 04 08 Letter of greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting  
MfS 2021 04 09 BYM Trustees February 2021 meeting minutes  
MfS 2021 04 10 Relationship between area meeting charities and BYM charity  
MfS 2021 04 11 Assisted dying  
MfS 2021 04 14 Minute from Quaker Life Central Committee: use of 'overseer'  
MfS 2021 04 15 Minute from Area Meeting: plight of Uighur communities  
MfS 2021 04 17 Arrangements Group revised terms of reference  
MfS 2021 04 18 Review of appointments to central committees terms of reference  
MfS 2021 04 19 Simplification of central governance structures

### **A reminder of how you can prepare for the meeting**

- Register
- Register for the optional informal session on 30 March
- Read the agenda and papers in good time
- Contact the other representative/alternate from your area meeting or body
- Send any comments or questions to the clerks ([sufferings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sufferings@quaker.org.uk)), before the meeting to be received by **8 April**



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## Agenda

### Meeting for Sufferings – 10 April 2021

By video conference, open for arrivals from 9.30am for 10am start

	Item	Paper Number
<b>10am</b>	<b>Session 1</b>	
1	<b>Opening worship</b>	
2	<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	
3	<b>Membership</b>	<b>MfS 2021 04 03</b>
4	<b>Agenda</b> Adoption and acceptance of the agenda	
5	<b>Prison and Court Register</b>	<b>MfS 2021 04 05</b> For decision
6	<b>Quaker Recognised Bodies</b> To approve and register applications to be Quaker Recognised Bodies	<b>MfS 2021 04 06</b> For approval
7	<b>Meeting for Sufferings annual report</b> To approve Meeting for Suffering's annual report for 2020 to send to Yearly Meeting	<b>MfS 2021 04 07</b> For approval
8	<b>Letter of greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting</b> To approve a Letter of Greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting in 2021	<b>MfS 2021 04 08</b> For approval
9	<b>BYM Trustees</b> To hear from Clerk of BYM Trustees	<b>MfS 2021 04 09</b> For information
10	<b>The relationship between area meeting charities and BYM charity</b> To hear an update from BYM trustees	<b>MfS 2021 04 10</b> For information
	Shuffle break	
11	<b>Assisted dying: part 1</b> To reflect on where our faith leads us	<b>MfS 2021 04 11</b> For reflection
<b>12.30pm</b>	<b>End of Session 1</b>	

12:30pm Lunch break  
 Optional breakout rooms will be available for Friends to meet in small groups over lunch or for fellowship

1.45pm	<b>Session 2</b>	
12	<b>Assisted dying: part 2</b>	
13	<b>Appointments</b>	<b>MfS 2021 04 13</b> For approval
14	<b>Minutes from Central Committees: use of the term 'overseer' and 'elder'</b> To receive a minute from Quaker Life Central Committee	<b>MfS 2021 04 14</b> For decision
	Shuffle break	
15	<b>Minutes from area meetings</b> To receive a minute from Manchester & Warrington AM on the plight of Uighur Communities in China	<b>MfS 2021 04 15</b> For information
16	<b>Yearly Meeting agenda</b> To hear from the Clerk of Yearly Meeting	
17	<b>Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group</b> To consider revised terms of reference	<b>MfS 2021 04 17</b> For approval
18	<b>Group to review appointment to central committees</b> To consider terms of reference for a review group	<b>MfS 2021 04 18</b> For approval
19	<b>Simplification of central governance structures</b> To receive a paper from BYM Trustees	<b>MfS 2021 04 19</b> For consideration
	<b>Closing worship</b>	
4pm	<b>End of Meeting</b>	



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At a meeting of

## **Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group**

Held online from 19:00 – 20:30 on 23 February 2021

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Margaret Bryan, Robert Card, Gill Greenfield, Mark Lilley

**In attendance:** Neil Jarvis, Juliet Prager

**Prevented:** Karen Draycott

### **1. Review of Meeting for Sufferings held 6<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

We have reviewed the session of Meeting for Sufferings held 6<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

We have noted that the preparatory session helped to improve the quality of discernment in the main session by providing Friends with an opportunity to thresh the issues.

We have noted that there was a common theme across several items of members feeling left out of communication.

We feel that the structure of the meeting worked well, with the morning being longer than the afternoon and starting with routine business and the trustees report.

We have not identified any “gold” minutes.

### **2. Report of the Support Group**

We have noted that the Support Group has requested some additional members, bringing in Friends before the start of the next Triennium, and we agree that this should be referred to Standing Nominations Group. This may lead to some changes to the terms of reference for the Support Group.

### **3. Results of the feedback survey**

From the feedback survey, we have noted the possibility of Zoom meetings for induction, sessions following Trustees meetings, varying the times of additional

Zoom sessions and limiting the number of sessions in a week. We are pleased to note that most comments are positive.

We have noted the need for appropriate oversight of the discipline of the meeting.

#### **4. Meetings attended by the clerks and others**

We note that the clerks have been invited to the Clerks' away day.

#### **5. Forward agenda**

We have considered how to further our consideration of the topic of assisted dying. We have planned a threshing session on the topic prior to the next session of Meeting for Sufferings. We have identified some Friends who might be able to lead discussions in breakout groups to explore the issue. We would like to embed the session in a review of responses to the consultation. We hope that this would enable MfS in session to address the question originally raised of whether we have a corporate position on the matter.

We note that the following topics are also expected to come before us: a report from Trustees on the simplification of structures and committees considering the questions and principles that have been identified; a minute from QLCC on the use of the term overseers suggesting that meetings should be encouraged to find alternative terminology and giving permission for meetings to experiment with roles.

#### **6. Dates of future sessions of Meeting for Sufferings**

We agree that in future we should fix and publicise the dates of online preparatory sessions for the year.

#### **7. Communicating the activity of Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group**

We agree to produce a paper summarising the process by which MfSAG agrees business for Meeting for Sufferings, which could be made public and specifically sent to representatives and Area Meeting Clerks. We ask Margaret to draft such a paper for our next meeting.

#### **8. Date of next meeting**

We look to meet again on 8<sup>th</sup> March at 17:00, nothing occurring to prevent.

Signed on behalf of the meeting,

Robert Card, Clerk



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At a meeting of

## **Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group**

Held online from 17.00 – 18:30 on 8 Mar. 2021

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Margaret Bryan, Robert Card, Gill Greenfield, Mark Lilley

**In attendance:** Neil Jarvis, Juliet Prager

**Prevented:** Karen Draycott

#### **1. Meetings attended by the clerks and others**

There are no further meetings to record.

#### **2. Forward agenda**

We have considered our forward agenda, which informs our planning.

We note that we should anticipate a report from the Book of Discipline Revision Committee, perhaps in the autumn; and, the report on the first phase of the review of Yearly Meeting towards the end of the year.

We note that we will need to consider the possibility of online induction in the autumn; and, planning for the young people's participation day either in December or February. We anticipate that, rather than a residential gathering at Woodbrooke, we might hold a December meeting at Friends House, possibly over two days.

We also note the various possibilities for blended meetings about which we are learning.

#### **3. Agenda planning for April meeting**

We have discussed the agenda for the session of Meeting for Sufferings scheduled for 10 April 2021 (MfSAG 2021 03 03a refers). This will be preceded by a threshing session on 30 March on assisted dying.

#### **4. Communicating the activity of Arrangements Group**

We have considered a draft paper prepared by Margaret Bryan outlining the activities of Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group and how Friends can involve themselves in that work. We agree that this should be sent to representatives and subsequently incorporated into the induction handbook.

#### **5. Presentation at Meeting for Sufferings**

We agree that we should host a session at Yearly Meeting conjunctly with trustees.

#### **6. Any other matters**

There being no other business to conduct, we part looking to meet again on 19 April 2021 at 17:00.

Signed on behalf of the meeting,

Robert Card, Clerk

## Record of minutes received by Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group in 2021

This is a record of all minutes received by Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group since the last Meeting for Sufferings with information about any decisions that have been taken. It also includes minutes received in the past where there are updates. If representatives wish to see a copy of a minute, or wish to contact the Clerks, please email [sufferings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sufferings@quaker.org.uk).

### *Minutes received since last Meeting for Sufferings*

<b>Body sending minute</b>	<b>Minute</b>	<b>Initial steps and decisions</b>	<b>Subsequent steps (if any)</b>	<b>Status</b>
Manchester and Warrington AM	MWAM2021.02.04.15. The Plight of the Uighur Communities in China	<b>8/2/21 Minute received</b>  <b>8/3/21 Tabled at MfSAG</b> MfSAG agreed to take this to Meeting for Sufferings for information in April		To MfS in April 2021
Quaker Life Central Committee	QLCC 21.06 Use of the terms 'overseer' and 'elder'	<b>8/2/21 Minute received</b>  <b>8/3/21 Minute tabled at MfSAG</b> MfSAG agreed to take this to Meeting for Sufferings in April		To MfS in April 2021

### *Progress on previously received minutes*

<b>Body sending minute</b>	<b>Minute</b>	<b>Initial steps and decisions</b>	<b>Subsequent steps (if any)</b>	<b>Status</b>
Southern Marches AM	AM20/34 Israeli Annexation in Occupied West Bank	<b>18/6/20 Minute received</b>  <b>29/6/20 and 20/8/20 Tabled at MfSAG</b>	<b>14/1/21</b> Response received from AM noting under the constraints caused by the pandemic, there is insufficient capacity for MfS to start a campaign for sanctions or	Complete

Body sending minute	Minute	Initial steps and decisions	Subsequent steps (if any)	Status
		MfSAG asked QPSW staff for information and responded to AM asking queries.	to review BYM's policy and the AM is therefore not taking this forward at this time.	
Central Nominations Committee	2019/11/28 Membership question: attenders serving on central committees	<b>01/12/20 Minute received</b>  <b>11/01/21 Tabled at MfSAG</b> MfSAG agreed to include this in the February meeting.	<b>6/2/21</b> MfS determined to set up a review group. Terms of reference will return to future meeting  <b>4/21</b> Terms of reference drafted for consideration	To MfS in April 2021



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## **Membership of Meeting for Sufferings**

Since our last meeting we have received the following nominations and requests for release for Meeting for Sufferings until the rise of Yearly Meeting 2021:

### **Release requests received:**

Ann Banks – Brighthouse West Yorkshire AM alternate

Silas Price – Norfolk & Waveney AM alternate

### **Nominated:**

Richard Ashwell – Staffordshire AM representative

Caroline Kibblewhite – Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee representative

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

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

Nim Njuguna – Quaker World Relations Committee visitor

### **Other visitors:**

Michael S Booth – BYM staff, Recording Clerk's Office

Neil Jarvis – BYM staff, Recording Clerk's Office

Anne van Staveren – BYM staff, Media Relations Officer



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## Prison and Court Register

### Introduction

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

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 prison and court register doesn't imply that MfS itself has tested the Friend's concern and necessarily agrees with or condones their action.

The clerk of Sussex East Area Meetings has sent information about relevant prison and court proceedings. The information is set out in this draft minute

#### MfS 2021/04/XX Prison and Court Register

John Lynes, a member of Sussex East Area Meeting, received a summons to appear at the City of London Magistrates' Court for breaching Section 14 of the Public Order Act 1986 in the course of an Extinction Rebellion event last September. A solicitor from Extinction Rebellion was permitted to submit a plea of not guilty in February and a trial has been set for 15 June 2021.

We agree to include this information in the Prison and Court Register. We hold John Lynes in the Light.



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## Organisation applying to become Quaker Recognised Bodies

### Introduction

This paper gives details of an application for registration as a Quaker recognised body (QRB). Staff have looked at the documentation provided by each of the organisations and consider that the criteria for listing them as QRBs have been met.

### Background

In 2015, Meeting for Sufferings agreed a way for BYM to relate to other Quaker bodies (paper MfS 2018/07/15 and minute MfS 2015/12/17).

A 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. There are [guidelines](#) for groups that would like to be a QRB.

This strengthens links between centrally-managed work and the wide range of exciting Quaker work done by other groups, helping build a vibrant Society of Friends. The process helps clarify benefits and responsibilities for QRBs and BYM.

So far, Meeting for Sufferings has registered 73 QRBs.

### Request for registration

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

Escaping Victimhood

### Action required

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to approve this organisation as a QRB.

## **Name: Escaping Victimhood**

**Aims:** Escaping Victimhood aims to help people whose lives have been fragmented by the trauma of serious crime move from being a victim to a more positive future. After the justice process concludes many victims remain stuck in traumatic grief.

**Governance:** A registered charity 1121708 and a company 6356205

**Constitution:** A formal memorandum and articles of association.

**Type of Group:** External

**Foundation:** 2005

**Publications and activities:** Escaping Victimhood provides unique, supportive residential workshops for people whose lives have been disrupted by the trauma of serious crime. Through this work we hope to inform other groups and agencies working with victims of serious crime (such as homicide) about the potential to meet the unmet needs. Research carried out into this work has been published on the Escaping Victimhood website. There have been over 300 beneficiary families in the past 15 years.

**Membership:** A small trustee body.

**Quaker links:** The charity has always had strong Quaker roots with its founding in Old Jordans, as part of the charitable purpose of the building and charity. It's now based in Woodbrooke, and developing partnerships with Woodbrooke.

Two of the four trustees are Quakers and the organisation has support from Meetings and Quaker charities. The effectiveness of the work is enhanced by being delivered in a Quaker environment.

**Finance:** Accounts are prepared and independently examined, and submitted to the charity commission.

**Winding up:** If the organisation is closed, any surplus funds will be passed to an appropriate organisation working with victims of crime.

### **Current general contact details:**

Escaping Victimhood

c/o Woodbrooke, 1046 Bristol Road, Birmingham, B29 6LJ

Phone: 07715 209 415

**Staff link:** Teresa Parker

Crime, Community and Justice Programme Manager

Quaker Peace and Social Witness



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## Meeting for Sufferings report to Yearly Meeting 2021

Every year, Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) reports to Yearly Meeting on its work in the preceding year. The spoken introduction to the 2019 report, given last November, covered some of the developments in 2020, so the report before you is modest in scope.

For YM 2021 the report needs to be ready by the end of May, to be included in documents in advance. The Assistant Clerk has prepared the following:

If you want to suggest amendments to the draft, please email them to [sufferings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sufferings@quaker.org.uk) to reach Clerks **by the end of Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> April**.

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## Meeting for Sufferings Annual Report [DRAFT]

The period covered by this report, April 2020 to February 2021, has been dominated by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our April 2020 meeting was cancelled, and members of Meeting for Sufferings received the papers intended for the meeting but had no opportunity at that time to consider them corporately. In June, Meeting for Sufferings experimented with an online meeting for worship for church affairs. This had a significantly pared back agenda, concentrating on some formal reports and procedural decisions, but was generally felt to be positive. On the strength of that experience, Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group felt encouraged to experiment with the format of online meetings, with breakout rooms for social as well as business interaction. This has enriched the life of our community. Meeting for Sufferings as a whole has continued to meet online, growing in confidence throughout the period, and has also found value in pre-meeting threshing sessions to explore topics prior to formal discernment.

In October, which had originally been planned as a residential weekend, Meeting for Sufferings was held in a number of online sessions over the course of the three days. We heard about the development of the Quaker Peace and Social Witness strategy and offered a special interest session on the work of Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations.

At each meeting we hear from BYM Trustees. Our Trustees have had to face some pressing challenges resulting from the pandemic and Meeting for Sufferings has

upheld them and the staff who deliver work in our name. Trustees brought to us at our meeting in October, their concern about racism in the Religious Society of Friends, and, specifically, about the suitability of rooms in Friends' House being named in commemoration of Quakers with links to slavery. This initiated a process of discernment in Meeting for Sufferings, which continued over several meetings. We also received a report on the process of the Book of Discipline review, which was warmly received.

In December, we heard about the work of Quaker World Relations Committee, again preceded by an optional meeting where Friends could engage more closely with the Committee members. Young people from around the country joined us for the Young People's Participation Day, and in parallel sessions the meeting reflected widely on racism in the Society of Friends and, in particular, on the way in which history is recounted by subsequent generations. Meeting for Sufferings recorded that "we are called to commit to becoming an actively anti-racist church" and encouraged individual Friends and Area Meetings to join in the process of overcoming our own racism.

In February 2021, the group set up to review the work of Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group brought us their recommendations. We also heard from trustees on progress towards developing "a simple church supported by a simple charity" and an engaging presentation from the Recording Clerk explaining what is revealed by the data collected by the tabular statement over the years. We also received the completed strategy for the work of Quaker Peace and Social Witness, focussing on climate justice. The Meeting approved a review of the principle that only Friends in formal membership of the Society may be appointed to central and standing committees.

Throughout the year we have had sessions in Meeting for Sufferings where Friends have been encouraged to reflect together on "how the truth prospers", sometimes in small groups and sometimes in plenary session. This has been valuable in offering the meeting a chance to take a more reflective stance rather than being dominated by formal receipt and approval of reports and strategy documents. It has been a strange and stressful year in many ways but, for Meeting for Sufferings, also a richly rewarding one.



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## Draft Letter of Greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting

### Introduction

Each year, representatives of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) attend Yearly Meetings in other parts of Europe. BYM also sends a letter of greetings, drafted by Quaker World Relations Committee and signed by the clerk of Meeting for Sufferings (MfS).

In recent years, recognising that BYM and Ireland Yearly Meeting (IYM) have a particular relationship, MfS has approved the letter to IYM.

This year, [Ireland Yearly Meeting](#) will be held online from 8 Apr to 11 Apr 2021 with the topic *A Time to Act Together in Faith and Hope*.

[Europe and Middle East Section](#) (EMES) of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) has a website gives information about Quakers in other parts of Europe.

If you want to suggest amendments to the draft letter, please email them to [sufferings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sufferings@quaker.org.uk) to reach us **by the end of Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> April**.

A draft minute might read:

*MfS 21/04/XX Letter of greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting*

*We receive from Quaker World Relations Committee a draft for our letter of greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting to be held online from 8 -11 April (paper MfS 21/04/XX).*

*We ask the clerk to sign the letter on our behalf.*

## **Draft letter of greeting**

April 2021

Greetings Friends,

On behalf of Friends in Britain Yearly Meeting, we write with gratitude for all that we have shared in 2020. For much of the year Friends have been unable to meet in person to worship; Friends House in London as well as other Quaker buildings around the UK have had to close; and we have learnt how to work at home often with our children around us. The physical separation of social distancing and the wearing of face masks hide our smiles and make clear communication hard, but we have rejoiced to hear from Friends from different YMs in different ways at different times. All these contacts are enriching.

Technology has enabled Friends across the world to worship online, in places close to and far from their own Local Meeting. The Woodbrooke Studies Centre has expanded its programme of activities, and relationships across national boundaries have thrived. The light of our spiritual relationships has continued to burn brightly despite, or perhaps because of, everything we have experienced this last year.

We have missed the joyful presence of children and young people in some online meetings but the Young Friends participating in an Europe and Middle East Section (EMES) Summer Gathering in July, told us that “The special connection between us was there, even with this very different way of being together.”

We have heard that the joy of being able to see and hear one another, on screen, has been an unexpected benefit to Yearly Meetings especially with those with Friends living at great distances one from another. At the same time, we recognise that not all Friends have easy or consistent access to online resources and thus have even greater challenges to overcome.

Friends in Britain were sad not to be able to hold their residential Gathering as planned in the summer. At the online Meeting we were able to complete all necessary business and welcome Friends from across the world to share those discussions. Some Friends from BYM have been able to join annual gatherings, including Yearly Meetings, in Europe and beyond. So, despite the Covid19 pandemic and an awareness of the impact on the lives of so many people, we celebrate the strong spirit of our international Quaker community.

We recognise particular tensions that have arisen throughout and following the Brexit process and we prayerfully uphold all those who are working towards a peaceful resolution.

BYM will be meeting again online from 31 July to 8 August 2021, with a programme of extra events in the weeks before. Many will be open to all and we hope to meet some of you at one or more of those events. As we all become more skilled at using

online resources, more creative ways to meet as Friends are becoming more apparent and this may be an unexpected positive outcome of our current situation.

We hold in our prayers all who have been and are distressed by COVID-19 and its impact on our lives. In particular, we hold in the light all who have been bereaved in the last year; may the love of God bring you comfort.

We look forward to the opportunities this year will bring. Worshipping together is the key to getting to know one another in the things that are eternal, and the process of upholding one another in the light is the foundation from which we may confront long-entrenched patterns of inequality as we strive always to build a more just and peaceful future.

You are in our minds and our hearts.

Margaret Bryan  
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings



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## **BYM Trustees Minutes**

### **Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees**

Saturday 13 February 2021, by video conference

**Present:** Georgina Bailey, Linda Batten (Treasurer), Alison Breadon, Jenny Brierley, Nick Eyre, Kit Fotheringham, Kate Gulliver, Ellie Harding, Carolyn Hayman, Caroline Nursey (Clerk), Silas Price, Graham Torr (Assistant Clerk), Frances Voelcker, Danielle Walker Palmour, Chris Willmore.

**In attendance:** Paul Henderson-Grey, Head of Operations; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk; Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk; Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship, Maureen Sebanakitta, Head of Finance and Resources.

**Visitors:** Libby Adams, Head of Library and Archives, and Suze Lidbury, Head of Events and Committee Services (minute BYMT-2021-02-11); and David Loxton, Head of Communications and Fundraising (minute BYMT-2021-02-15).

### **BYMT-2021-02-01 Decision to hold a virtual meeting, welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest check**

We record our decision to hold this meeting by video conference. We follow Charity Commission guidance on running charities during the Covid-19 outbreak published on 19 March 2020 that allows video conferencing where there is no such clause in a charity's governing document. The Charity Commission asks us to record this decision.

During our opening worship, we have heard paragraph 23.48, from *Quaker faith & practice*.

We welcome Silas Price (Norfolk and Waveney Area Meeting) as a trustee. Silas was appointed by Meeting for Sufferings on 6 February to serve until 31 December 2023.

### **BYMT-2021-02-02 Minutes received**

We receive the following minutes:

- Quaker Stewardship Committee separated minute QSC-2020-09-05(a) (BYMT-2021-02-03a)
- Quaker Life Central Committee 26 September and 6-8 November 2020 (BYMT-2021-02-03b and c)

- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee 23 October and 6 November 2020 (BYMT-2021-02-03d and e)
- Quaker Peace & Social Witness separated minute QPSWCC 20/52 (BYMT-2021-02-03f)
- Quaker World Relations Committee 14 November 2020 (BYMT-2021-02-03g)
- Quiet Company 19 November and 15 December 2020 (BYMT-2021-02-03h and i)
- Audit Committee 9 December 2020 (BYMT-2021-02-03j)
- Property Development Steering Group 18 November 2020 (BYMT-2021-02-03k)

### **BYMT-2021-02-03 Recording Clerk's report**

We receive a report from the Recording Clerk (paper BYMT-2021-02-04) reporting on key changes and developments in delivering our three strategic priorities: thriving Quaker communities, a sustainable and peaceful world, and simplifying structures and practices. We note the sections on supporting Quaker communities; safeguarding; simplifying the committee structure; review of Yearly Meeting; support for structural change in the wider church; Quaker Stewardship Committee; civil society voice; governance; communications; fundraising; impact; finance processes and systems; Friends Trusts Ltd; people, diversity and inclusion; operations; premises; and health and safety.

We are pleased that, despite the pandemic, staff are now able to concentrate on the needs of the work, and the longer-term development of BYM's programmes. No areas of work have been laid down and we are grateful to staff for continuing to deliver despite the constraints of sickness and furlough.

We note that Quaker Life will become the primary department focused on delivering the trustees' priority of thriving Quaker communities, bringing together various areas of support previously scattered across a range of teams. This will mean changes to the structure of teams drawing on the Integrated Strategy for Supporting Quaker Communities and the new Quaker Peace & Social Witness strategy. In future, our support for Quaker communities will be more responsive to the actual, expressed needs of Friends, and more locally delivered with diversity and all-age 'watermarks' as part of everything we do.

We uphold the Quiet Company – and all staff on furlough – at this time when conferencing, retail, and self-catering services remain closed.

### **BYMT-2021-02-04 Whistleblowing annual report**

We receive the annual report on whistleblowing from the Recording Clerk (paper BYMT-2021-02-05). We endorse the commitment placed on whistleblowing as a positive act and in line with our values. We note that there were no whistleblowing cases in 2020.

### **BYMT-2021-02-05 Safeguarding**

We note the update on safeguarding from the Deputy Recording Clerk (paper BYMT-2021-02-06).

All trustees participated in safeguarding training delivered by thirty-one:eight on 21 November 2020. The training covered the principles of safeguarding and the responsibilities of charity trustees.

On 20 January, 13 trustees joined a follow-up discussion with Sarah Donaldson, the outgoing Lead Safeguarding Trustee, along with Mark Mitchell (BYM's Safeguarding Officer) and the Deputy Recording Clerk. This was an opportunity to learn more about safeguarding practice within BYM, recent activities and improvements, and to reflect on BYM's role in supporting safeguarding in area meetings.

We have updated our serious incident report to the Charity Commission relating to a review of archived cases. We wait to hear if the Commission now consider the serious incident to be closed.

We agree to consider at our meeting in June whether BYM trustees should be DBS-checked. At the same meeting, we also expect to consider a revised draft safeguarding policy for BYM.

### **BYMT-2021-02-06 Employment committee**

We receive from the trustees' Employment Committee its annual report for 2020 (paper BYMT-2021-02-07b) and minutes from its meeting on 2 December 2020 (paper BYMT-2021-02-07a).

We note Management Meeting and the union have agreed that, because of the financial difficulties facing BYM, there will be no cost of living increase in 2021 and that the position will be reviewed this summer before making a decision for 2022.

We are grateful for the work underway on policies to support ways of working that are less centred on Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall.

We value the Committee's work to make our commitment to become an anti-racist employer a reality.

We recognise the additional work that has fallen to our Employment Committee and the HR staff at BYM over the past 12 months as a consequence of the health pandemic and the resulting changes the organisation has made. We thank them for their service.

### **BYMT-2021-02-07 Insurance report**

We receive and note a summary of principal general insurances as at 1 January 2021 (BYMT-2021-02-07c).

### **BYMT-2021-02-08 Data protection annual report**

We receive a report on data protection compliance and developments for 2020 (BYMT-2021-02-07f). We note the work to support meetings; the external review of

BYM's compliance; and the formation of an Information Governance Group at operational manager level and an associated information governance plan.

### **BYMT-2021-02-09 Report from the Grants Group**

We receive minute GG 20/27 from the Grants Group (paper BYMT-2021-02-07g) setting out an overview of the grants awarded in 2020.

### **BYMT-2021-02-10 Finance reports**

We receive minutes from meetings of Finance and Property Committee held on 7 December 2020 and 25 January 2021 (paper BYMT-2021-02-07d and e), a paper on the estate of the late Catherine Marsh (paper BYMT-2021-02-07h) and the quarterly finance report to 31 December 2020 (paper-BYMT-2021-02-07i).

#### **(a) 2020 Quarter 4 management accounts**

The management accounts for 2020 show expenditure 37% lower than in 2019 and 19% below budget because of considerable savings on staff and committee travel, some work that has not been possible during the pandemic, and active efforts to keep costs under control.

We are very grateful that donations from Friends have been higher than expected – and than in recent years – and hope that this will continue to enable us to do as much work as possible. It has partly compensated for the income from the Quiet Company being much lower than budget and than normal.

The surplus for the year is welcome but misleading: without the exceptional £6m Marsh legacy which is designated as below, we would have had an operating deficit of £1.7m.

#### **(b) Marsh Legacy**

In 2020 we received a large legacy of around £6m from the estate of Catharine Anne Maeve Marsh.

We note the legal advice regarding this legacy that it is not restricted, and the recommendations presented to us by the Finance and Property Committee. Although the gift is not restricted, we are aware of the wishes of the donor 'to create an educational fund... to be used for the granting and awarding of scholarships and bursaries for gifted children (with particular emphasis on girls) attending Friends schools' and we hope to follow the spirit of the gift.

We agree to apportion 25% of the legacy to our general reserves, and designate 75% to foster the gifts of children (particularly of girls) including overseas. We agree that this should be spent as needed over the coming period. In making this decision we are conscious of the value of girls' education in taking forward our commitments to sustainability, equality and peace building, as well as the origin of the funds.

We agree to commission a scoping study on the options for achieving this purpose. The costs of this and for administering the fund should be covered from the legacy.

We hope that the undesignated 25% of the legacy will be used to support existing programmes being carried out within BYM in the area of education in the widest sense – including work with young people.

### **BYMT-2021-02-11 Approach to support for Governance**

We have been joined by Libby Adams, Head of Library and Archives, and Suze Lidbury, Head of Events and Committee Services.

We have discussed the draft approach (paper BYMT-2021-02-08) setting out high-level objectives for support to governance across the Yearly Meeting in four areas:

- statutory governance of BYM (the charity) – where we want to ensure that it continues to be well governed;
- support for committees exercising governance of our Yearly Meeting (the national church, and centrally-managed work) – where we want to sustain and standardise how the work is done;
- developing governance structures fit for the 21st century – seeking to simplify, innovate and be inclusive;
- and support for statutory governance in area meetings – clarifying and consolidating how they perform their function.

We welcome the clarity that the paper provides about how staff can best support governance. We see it as an important step towards the aim we agreed with Meeting for Sufferings of “a simple church, supported by a simple charity, to reinvigorate Quakerism”. The central role that governance plays in achieving this aim is reflected in these priorities in two ways:

- the criterion that all work should be “well-governed: resourced, impactful and communicated effectively”; and
- the priority strand of work on “simple structures and practices in our local and national organisation”.

We are pleased that the principles set out in the approach are both rooted in Quaker faith and values, and also draw heavily on the Charity Governance Code. We also welcome the practical steps set out as priorities for action and the work to be carried out by staff and trustees.

We agree the overall approach subject to suggestions that we have made. We will return to this frequently over the next three years.

We note that trustees are working on aspects of governance in other ways and we will return to work on developing governance structures fit for the 21st century in our next item.

## **BYMT-2021-02-12 Simplification of national church and charity governance structures and practices**

Trustees and Meeting for Sufferings have agreed that we must simplify our structures and practices, and we are in the process of discerning together how that can be done.

We receive a paper from Ellie Harding, Carolyn Hayman and Paul Parker that considers simplifying our national church and charity governance structures and practices (BYMT-2021-02-09). A paper produced by the Simplification Working Group – comprising two trustees, the Clerk of MfS, representatives from each of our central and standing committees, Central Nominations Committee, and the Engaging Young Adult Quakers steering group – is included as an annex. We thank the Simplification Working Group for their work and Neil Jarvis for all that he has done.

*Our vision is of a Religious Society of Friends whose discernment, work and witness are all invigorated by the joyful participation of many Friends according to their time, interests and talents.*

Whilst the current structures have many strengths, the pandemic has shown us that there are new ways of working that may enable a wider range of Friends to be involved in different aspects of governance in ways that match their time, interests and talents. We also see opportunities to create a system of governance that is clear for those engaged with it, for staff, and for the wider community of Friends. We also see the possibility of structures that are proportionate in time, money and carbon.

We recognise that we as trustees have wide responsibilities for governance and will need to take a lead in shepherding this simplification process. We will engage with Friends across the yearly meeting in discerning how essential governance tasks can best be done:

1. Setting the spiritual direction and ways of working of the church – (Church)
2. Establishing strategic priorities and allocating resources for centrally-managed work, to support the spiritual direction and ways of working of the church – (Church and charity)
3. Ensuring that the work that is prioritised and resourced is carried out effectively – (Charity).

We ask our Clerk and the Recording Clerk to work with Ellie Harding and Carolyn Hayman to prepare a simple presentation for the April MfS that raises with them the questions that we have been considering and the risks and benefits of change.

We hope to invite many Friends to take part in online discussions about these questions in the coming months, perhaps including special-interest sessions at the online Yearly Meeting Gathering.

There is more work to do on ideas from the Simplification Working Group before we are ready to start a wider conversation about potential different models and we ourselves will spend time on this at our next meeting.

Further to minute BYMT-2020-09-06, we agree to reopen the process of reviewing terms of reference of QCCIR and QWRC with a view to completing this work by the end of 2021. Our Assistant Clerk has agreed to work with the appointed Friends (Ellie Harding and Nick Eyre) on this matter.

### **BYMT-2021-02-13 Nominations and appointments**

We receive a report from our Nominations Group (paper BYMT-2021-02-10).

**(a) Audit Committee.** At the meeting in November 2020, trustees appointed a new member of the Audit Committee. The Friend's name was misspelt in paper BYMT-2020-11-12 and in minute BYMT-2020-11-15. The correct details are: John Ashcroft (Sussex East AM) to serve 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2023.

**(b) Anti-Racism Champion.** We note a between-meetings decision of the clerks to appoint Georgina Bailey to serve in this trustee position from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021.

We have heard from the Nominations Committee how they intend to carry out their work this year, noting that their responsibilities have increased.

### **BYMT-2021-02-14 Responding to racism**

We receive a progress report from the Recording Clerk on our commitment to anti-racism (paper BYMT-2021-02-11). Our commitment is three-fold: to be an anti-racist employer; to build anti-racism into the design of our programmes; and to support Quaker meetings and communities on anti-racism work. We note the work and plans in each of these areas.

We ask that measures are developed to track our progress on anti-racism and to work out how committees should report on it.

We note that, as our work on anti-racism develops, we are likely to need to increase the amount of resource allocated to support it.

We will decide later in the agenda whether to have our anti-racism training at our June meeting. We are aware that training is only one step that we must take, and encourage each other to continue to read and think in coming months so that we can work on racism within ourselves and the Society of Friends.

We have returned to the question of the name of the William Penn Room and William Penn's place in our history. We agree that the name should be removed at a point where this is practical. We ask also that a paper is prepared on how we might properly recognise our complex relationship with slavery including William Penn.

### **BYMT-2021-02-15 Communications strategy**

We have been joined by David Loxton, Head of Communications and Fundraising, who has introduced his paper (paper BYMT-2021-02-12).

Last year we agreed six objectives for BYM communications:

- to help Quaker communities to thrive;

- to engage Quakers in BYM work;
- to secure BYM funding;
- to bring Quaker values to the world;
- to show Quakers are active and relevant; and,
- to increase the number of Quakers.

The strategy sets out the ways for doing this under the headings of:

- More effective messages,
- Cutting confusion,
- Digital communications,
- Effective staff communications,
- Removing bottlenecks and silos,
- Becoming a fundraising organisation.

We are grateful to David and his team for this strategy, which we see as very important in helping Quakers engage with the wider world – as well as being clearer for Friends and staff. We approve the strategy (subject to minor tweaks) and recognise that we as trustees have a role to play in using and encouraging clear language.

### **BYMT-2021-02-16 Preparing for Meeting for Sufferings**

We have discussed our participation at Meeting for Sufferings to be held on 10 April 2021.

### **BYMT-2021-02-17 Trustees' news**

We receive a report of the recent activities of trustees (BYMT-2021-02-14). We have heard from Chris Willmore on work in scoping our work with AM trustees. We have also heard from Alison Breadon about engagement with Woodbrooke.

### **BYMT-2021-02-18 Training for trustees in 2021**

We agree to carry out our anti-racism training during the meeting in June and on two additional occasions.

### **BYMT-2021-02-19 Communicating trustees' work**

We have considered how to communicate our work to others.

### **BYMT-2021-02-20 Reviewing the meeting**

We have reviewed our meeting.

### **BYMT-2021-02-21 Time with Recording Clerk**

We have spent time with the Recording Clerk.

### **BYMT-2021-02-22 Time without staff**

We have spent time without staff.

Caroline Nursey, Clerk



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

## **The relationship between Area Meeting charities and BYM charity**

### **Introduction**

Last December, BYM Trustees asked for the advice of Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) about whether or not it would be useful to have a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between BYM trustees and AM trustees. MfS welcomed the idea, and asked trustees to keep them informed of progress (BYM Trustees' minute 20/11/11 and MfS minute 20/12/06).

At this (April) meeting, Chris Willmore and Kate Gulliver, the trustees who are working with staff to take this forward, will share progress.

### **Dialogue with AM trustees**

We have started a process of talking with AM clerks, to establish what sort of relationship they are drawn towards. After some initial listening, we are clear that we should not simply ask whether to establish a formal MoU. Different arrangements may be more helpful. We hope a conversation will lead to ideas and suggestions we haven't thought of yet.

We are planning a process of talking with and listening to Friends around Britain. We will invite trustees, and others, from different AMs, to initial online discussions. We will liaise with the committees which work with Area Meeting trustees – Quaker Life Central Committee, Quaker Stewardship Committee and Friends Trusts Limited. We will also welcome feedback from AMs or individuals in writing.

We want to start building an understanding of the challenges and opportunities, before reflecting on possible ways forward. We will begin by asking how AM trustees see their relationship with BYM trustees, and asking:

- How does it work for you?
- What problems do we share?
- Where could we support or help each other?

We want this to be a process of listening, testing, sharing and testing again. We will:

- a) Invite AM trustees to an open (zoom) conversation in early May, to gather initial responses and ideas
- b) Invite any Friends to send comments in writing
- c) Convene a smaller reference group of Friends who are particularly keen to be involved in testing and shaping proposals, and who are willing to join two or three online meetings

- d) Hold another open conversation in the autumn
- e) Consider whether we need further conversations, or whether there's a clear way forward

We will keep Meeting for Sufferings informed. Our hope is to complete this work by the end of 2021.

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*Text for invitation to Area Meetings:*

### **Clarifying the relationship between BYM trustees and AM trustees – an invitation**

*Stewardship involves prayer, and it involves thought, and it involves applying what emerges from the two. As individuals our particular talents may lead us to greater emphasis on one of those elements, but they can never be wholly divided within any of us, and as a community we need to be faithful to all three: prayer, thought and application. Christine Davis – Qfp 15.01*

Most people think of Quakers as one body. But in Britain, our Quaker church is organised into a set of connected charities: 70 AMs, three general meetings (Scotland, Wales and Young Friends); and the BYM national charity. All these bodies share the same objective: 'the furtherance of the general religious and charitable purposes of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain and beyond'.

The relationship between the national BYM charity and the other charities isn't always clear. Generally, it's a good relationship; but sometimes there are tensions. Is it time to clarify what we expect of each other?

Here are some examples of questions that have arisen recently:

- Safeguarding – should AMs inform BYM that a registered offender is attending Meeting for Worship? If the ex-offender moves, who is responsible for transferring data?
- Finance – if a financial offence takes place in a local meeting, the AM will have to make a Serious Incident Report to the Charity Commission - does BYM have a duty to make a Serious Incident Report at the same time?
- Reputation – should there be any guidance for AMs and BYM regarding making comments about each other in public, for example on social media?

We want to listen to AM Trustees' experiences, learn about what would help, and consider possible options. We're interested to know:

- How does it work for you?
- What problems do we share?
- Where could we support or help each other?

We invite Friends to join us to start this conversation. We're keen to involve those currently or recently serving as AM trustees, and other Friends who have an understanding of charity trusteeship.

[Dates and joining details will be added.]



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

## Assisted dying

### Introduction

MfS in October 2019 received minutes from two area meetings (AMs) seeking the discernment of Friends on the question of support for legislation to enable assisted dying in the UK.

Both these minutes were sent to all AMs with the request that Friends consider the matter of Assisted Dying, and we are returning to it today.

This introductory paper includes the original minutes, and a summary of the written responses from other AMs. There are also appendices:

- Appendix 1 – additional papers from North West London AM
- Appendix 2 – Unitarians resolution
- Appendix 3 – all the responses from Area Meetings

### The original minutes

**North West London AM** sent the following, along with papers relating to their consideration, which are in Appendix 1:

#### **Minute 19.05.06 A Concern – Care for the Dying**

We have heard a concern that a minority of dying people suffer unbearably and are beyond the reach of palliative care. If they are mentally competent and have a prognosis of death within six months, they should have a right to medical help to bring their own lives painlessly to an end. North West London AM finds this concern genuine and asks the Clerk to forward it to Meeting for Sufferings to reflect & discern whether Quakers might truly support a change in the law to allow assisted dying.

Tim Heath, clerk

**Staffordshire AM** said:

#### **Minute 9 Assisted Dying**

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

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

*‘Friends in Wolverhampton Meeting have spent time in consideration of the issues around assisted dying and how this practice relates to our Quaker faith. We are*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Berry Dicker  
Clerk

## Other responses – overview

**Eighteen** AMs have sent minutes, and **two** AMs sent notes of discussions. The responses (given in full in Appendix 3) are summarised below:

- Surrey & Hampshire Border supports a change in the law, within specific parameters
- Luton & Leighton asks for a public statement expressing moral and ethical support for legally assisted death - incorporating clear safeguards - and allowing people to follow their own consciences. The AM is leading a process of learning.
- Ipswich and Diss supports debate and clearer legislation, and believes we can unite in supporting respectful discussion, although Quakers hold different views.
- York, Lancashire Central & North and Mid Somerset found the exploration helpful, but concluded Friends could or should not seek to reach a fixed position.
- Several AMs which spent time on the issue did not reach a conclusion
  - Cumberland is positive, but asks for further consideration
  - Notts & Derbys notes this is a complicated topic: Friends present at a workshop agreed the law should be changed, but there are other views.
  - Sheffield & Balby will continue the consideration
  - Cornwall will continue consideration when lockdown restrictions are lifted
  - East Scotland's consideration was inconclusive
  - Wensleydale & Swaledale plans to continue consideration
- Two AMs concluded this is not the right time to consider the question. Thaxted felt face-to-face discussion would be better; Leicester thought the suffering caused by the pandemic makes this the wrong time to consider new laws.
- NE Thames wants a process of looking at how we plan for death, as well as the right to assisted dying; at this stage the AM does not support a change in the law.
- Sussex West suggests Quakers should focus on care and compassion rather than assisted dying.

**24 other** AMs let us know about their process (most in the autumn of 2020):

- 2 AMs hoped to send minutes last year, but did not
- 9 AMs said they would not be able to consider before MfS in December, but may be able to in 2021
- 13 AMs do not expect to consider the matter

**26** AMs haven't let us know whether they are considering the matter.

## What does this tell us?

Four AMs – Staffordshire, North West London, Luton & Leighton, and Surrey & Hampshire Border – have adopted this as their own concern, although in slightly different ways and with slightly different priorities. Some acknowledge reservations, a need for further learning and exploration of the issues. It seems these AMs are concentrating on discussion and learning within the Quaker community; the minutes don't refer to the AMs 'speaking out' (e.g. by writing corporately to their MPs).

There's a small network of individual Quakers who are knowledgeable about the subject. They're actively involved with organisations campaigning for a change in the law, and one attender who is a member of the House of Lords is campaigning for legislative change. At least one Friend has direct personal experience. These Friends don't share a united view about the details of possible legislation.

There is an appetite for looking at end-of-life issues more broadly; Friends who have spent time doing so have found it's been helpful. Some feel this is particularly hard at the moment: it's difficult on zoom, and during a pandemic.

Several meetings recognise the principle that Quakers as a faith group should be willing to have conversation with, or indeed openly support, individuals following their own conscience. The idea also seems important to Friends generally. There doesn't at present seem to be a strong appetite across the whole Yearly Meeting for working towards a corporate advocacy position.

## **Quaker resources**

Many Friends and meetings have found these resources helpful:

The most recent edition of [Friends Quarterly](#) (2021 issue 1) is dedicated to Death and Dying and, as well as articles from different viewpoints, includes discussion questions for meetings.

Luton & Leighton Area Meeting facilitated a webinar 'Compassion in dying' in November last year which is available to view online <https://youtu.be/sv5fbGFQFqw>

[Assisted Dying: A Quaker Exploration](#) published by Leeds Area Meeting, 2016 (out of stock in the [Quaker Bookshop](#), but copies were sent to every meeting, and Leeds AM may have some available).

## **April Meeting for Sufferings**

In preparing for our consideration today, Friends are asked:

- What can we say **as Quakers** about this issue?
- Where does this sit in our testimonies to truth, peace, equality; or in our view of life itself?
- Can we unite with and/or work with others (e.g. Unitarians – see Appendix 2) in supporting those for whom this is a matter of deepest concern?

## **Appendix 1: Additional papers from North West London**

### **Towards a Good Death: The need for legislation to allow assisted dying with clearly defined safeguards**

Our concern arises from a powerful sense of compassion for those terminally ill people who are beyond the reach of palliative care, who suffer intolerably and long for the relief of death but are unable to attain it under current UK legislation. They are a relatively small number, but we feel compassion for each one, especially when we hear his or her personal story.

Annexe 1 sets out our process in reaching our concern. Annexe 2 explains the background which leads us to believe the issue should be of active concern to Quakers nationally at this time.

While the great majority of dying patients can be helped to avoid unbearable suffering, through the withdrawal of treatment or palliative sedation, these are not options for some of those who have an illness like Motor Neurone Disease. A dying person may lose the ability to move, to swallow, to eat or drink, to speak or to breathe unaided.

Those with physical capacity can, if they so choose, take their own lives without help. But if the patient is physically incapacitated, though mentally capacitous, they may need help to obtain and/or be handed a lethal dose of medicine, even though they perform the final act of taking it themselves. This help, including help by a doctor, is unlawful under the Suicide Act 1961

At present, about one patient every eight days goes to Switzerland from Britain for help to die. These patients must be fit enough to make the journey and therefore might choose to die before they would otherwise wish. This is contrary to the best interests of the patients and their families. We are also concerned that most people cannot afford to go to Switzerland with their families for an assisted death. This is against our testimony to equality. Also, many people want to go to Switzerland but their doctors refuse to give them the required medical report. This is also an example of inequality – some doctors help, others don't.

A Populus Poll, published on their website in March 2019, showed that: 84% of the UK population support assisted dying; 86% of disabled people do so; and 82% of Christians do so, too. However, some people are concerned that if assisted dying were legalised, unscrupulous relatives could take advantage and encourage a dying relative to end his or her life earlier than would happen naturally. In reality, under the current law, such relatives could encourage their elderly relative to starve themselves to death, or to refuse treatment, or indeed to seek an assisted death in Switzerland.

We are proposing a strongly safeguarded system which would protect dying people far better than now. The patient could apply for the right to an assisted death only when he or she has no more than six months to live; has consulted two doctors individually, who would confirm the diagnosis, prognosis and wishes of the patient; and ensure the patient has the capacity to make this decision. There would be

mandatory waiting periods to ensure the person had time to reflect on the decision at each stage.

The above process has worked well in Oregon for more than 20 years and will, we hope, be replicated in legislation in the UK. The hospice movement in Oregon, which was hostile to the proposed law before it was introduced, now supports it. Oregon also has one of the best palliative care systems in the US.

Some people with particular religious beliefs say that the time of our death is a matter for God. There is also an argument that there can be a spiritual value in suffering. But we accept the use of modern medicine to mitigate suffering and to keep us alive for many years beyond the date when we would die without medical intervention. This is not regarded as “playing God”. We feel that the ethical issues should be a matter of individual conscience, for both patient and doctor

The Unitarian and Free Christian Churches have passed a resolution in favour of assisted dying, but with a broader remit than the one we propose. The Liberal and Reform Jews worked with us on same sex marriage and are interested in working with us on this issue too.

To conclude, as Quakers we feel that everyone in the UK who meets the criteria outlined above and who wants an assisted death should have access to it. We hope other Quakers will support our concern for a change in the law.

The Scottish Parliament is due to carry out a consultation in 2020. If successful, Westminster will be under pressure to introduce a bill. Our hope is that BYM might reach a position in time to influence these developments. We are therefore asking Sufferings to start a process of discernment which would enable BYM to consider the issue next summer. This would mean that Sufferings would need to consider the concern in October, giving six months to consult Area Meetings and receive a response for Sufferings to consider at their spring meeting. We realise this might mean delaying other matters, but this is a unique opportunity to influence Westminster and Scotland, should BYM decide to do so.

### **Annexe 1. Our Process**

A concern about assisted dying was brought to a small group of Friends at Hampstead Meeting by a long-term attender, Molly Meacher. Molly is chair of Dignity in Dying and, as a member of the House of Lords, is party to debates on this issue. Hampstead Meeting recently held three sessions open to all on Death and Dying. Two of the four of us facilitated these sessions.

We met together several times as a group to explore the issue of assisted dying, including with the clerk to our meeting on one occasion. One of us is currently clerk to elders and took the concern about assisted dying twice to elders’ meetings. The paper expressing our concern was sent to MfWfB in June 2019 with the support of elders.

There was an informed and deep debate, and it was agreed to send the matter to AM with the hope that it would be sent to Meeting for Sufferings. We presented our paper at AM in July, when it was agreed that the Minute supporting this concern would be sent to Sufferings for further discernment.

As part of our preparation as a group of four, we considered a forthcoming report from Dignity in Dying, contacted Woodbrooke staff, including a tutor who had been part of the Leeds working group on assisted dying, read the Leeds book, spoke to Oliver Waterhouse from Quaker Life about a forthcoming Woodbrooke event on end of life matters and networked with other Friends, locally and nationally, known to have similar concerns.

One of us is a member of the London Quakers steering group who are organising a day conference in November on assisted dying at which speakers include the former Archbishop George Carey and Tom Shakespeare, one of the contributors to the Leeds volume.

The fact that a number of AMs have brought this matter to the attention of Sufferings over the last few years surely reflects the growing concern in the Society of Friends, and more widely, that the law on assisted dying needs to change.

## **Annexe 2. Background to our concern**

Since 2016 we have seen the spread of assisted dying internationally. Canada, seven US States, including California, as well as Victoria, Australia, have legalised assisted dying for terminally ill people who are suffering unbearably and are mentally competent - the model we hope to adopt in the UK.

Within the UK, we have seen important developments. There is a widespread debate in Scotland on the issue, and MSPs plan a formal consultation next year and legislation the year after. Jersey and the Isle of Man are also working towards an assisted dying law. In England and Wales, the medical profession are shifting their position. The Royal College of Physicians and the Faculty of Clinical Oncology of the Royal College of Radiographers have ceased to be opposed and have adopted a neutral position, having consulted their members. The Royal College of GPs and the BMA are planning a consultation with their members in the autumn with a view to adopting a neutral position. A number of charities supporting people with serious illnesses are planning to consult their members on the issue. And the Liberal Jewish community are shortly to consider a motion to support assisted dying. The Unitarian Church already support an assisted dying policy (though with a broader remit than the remit proposed here).

In the 2014-15 Parliamentary session the House of Lords considered a Bill to introduce assisted dying along the lines we propose. Parliament was dissolved before the Bill could complete its passage. However, it was well received in the House of Lords. A similar private member's bill was poorly presented in the House of Commons in September 2015 and was not approved.

A debate was held on assisted dying in the House of Commons on 4 July 2019, introduced by MP Nick Boles. Nearly three-quarters of the MPs who spoke were supportive of assisted dying, and some described moving cases of the cruel effects of the current law.

Eileen Aird, Terri Banks, Anne Charvet, Molly Meacher  
North West London Area Meeting  
31 July 2019

## **Appendix 2: The Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (UK) resolution**

### Assisted Dying (Resolution 1 2013)

That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, recognising the worth and dignity of all people and their freedom to believe as their consciences dictate, believes that:

- 1) Any individual who faces an intolerable existence because of a debilitating and/or incurable physical condition should have the right to seek support for the termination of their life in a painless and dignified manner; and
- 2) legislation should respect their choice and allow them compassionate assistance in achieving such a death without fear of the prosecution of anyone involved.

## **Appendix 3: Minutes from AMs**

### **Chilterns AM**

Some, but not all of our Local Meetings, have felt able to address this sensitive topic at this difficult time. Friends have clearly given it careful and compassionate thought, and felt able to express a range of views. We do not find ourselves in unity on the subject of a change in the law on assisted suicide.

Catriona Troth (Area Clerk, Chilterns Area Meeting)

### **Cornwall AM**

Held on 13 March 2021

Cornwall Area Meeting's Elders and Overseers are making plans to screen the film 'Loving and Dying' after Covid restrictions are lifted, followed by discussions.

We know that this is a challenging matter, and that there may not be unity among individual Friends. However, we accept that the process of consideration is an important one, and is part of enabling support for matters linked to death and dying which our Elders and Overseers endeavour to give us.

### **Cumberland AM**

#### **Minute 20/08**

At the request of Meeting for Sufferings we have considered the "Exploration, Assisted Dying" circulated previously. We find Minute 19.05.06 of North West London Area Meeting helpful although we are unhappy with the 6 month time limit and encourage Meeting for Sufferings to return to this issue at an appropriate time. We are aware that other countries have already framed legislation in this area which it may be helpful to consider. We ask the Clerk to send a copy of this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Glenn Tomkinson, Co Clerk

## **East Scotland AM**

### **Minute 19.11.10 Assisted Dying**

Meeting for Sufferings has been looking at end of life issues throughout the last decade.

Both Staffordshire and North West London Area Meetings have recently adopted a concern to work for a change in the law in relation to assisted dying in the UK. They request that Meeting for Sufferings support a process of discernment more widely among Quakers in Britain.

We have heard that Friends in Dundee are holding a discussion on matters of life and death. And we have heard moving testimony from Friends speaking from personal experience and heartfelt conviction.

We acknowledge that this is a question that raises strong emotions. Does anyone have the right to take a life? A failure to unite is not a failure.

Pam Apted, Clerk to ESAM

(the clerk added: Dundee has not, in fact, had further recent discussions on this subject.)

### **Hardshaw & Mann**

Held on xxx

### **Hardshaw and Mann Area Meeting minute 06/2021 – Assisted Dying**

Richard Melling our MfS rep spoke about the work of the AM group on Assisted Dying and presented a report to AM. [The report is attached to this minute.]

#### Report to Meeting for Sufferings on H&M Discussion on Assisted Dying

Notes on the discussion:

- Attention was drawn to the diversity of opinion within the Medical professions, including those involved in providing palliative care. It seems that some of the patients enrolled on the now infamous Liverpool Care Pathway were later found to have been misdiagnosed. Furthermore, pain management intervention continues to improve
- A possible conclusion is that we should not in any way help to open the door to agreement. Are we really in a position to reach valid conclusions or to advocate a particular moral perspective when those who work with the reality of terminal illness cannot reach a widely shared conclusion?
- The issue is clearly complex and can be looked at from a wide range of perspectives, including legal, medical, cultural and religious angles. As yet there is also no international consensus. Furthermore, individual views differ widely, and are often deeply held. This applies across the board, including views held within the Society of Friends
- For some present, the topic raises the more general issue of how little attention we give to the certainty that death will occur. This applies both to our own lives and to that of our significant others. It was noted that the level of preparation and assistance

provided for birth stands in marked contrast to our tendency to neglect the inevitability of death

- Others observed that probably most of us, to varying degrees, are affected by an increased awareness of our mortality as the years go by. This increasingly affects our decision making across the second half of our lives
- There was a considerable, though not unanimous consensus that as Quakers the question of Assisted Dying should be kept under ongoing discussion, but not with an expectation of reaching a conclusion. Furthermore, the discussion should be within a much broader context of the finite nature of our lives, and the positive implications of this for how we live

Richard Melling (Hardshaw and Mann Area MfS rep)

## **Ipswich & Diss AM**

### **64/20 End of Life matters**

We have received a request from Meeting for Sufferings for an AM response to our discernment on Assisted Dying. We note that our Clerk forwarded Local Meeting responses to the issue to MfS in March 2020.

Between October 2019 and March 2020 Local Meetings in our Area explored questions about dying and death and specific issues about assisted dying. It was recognised that this is a complex and sensitive subject emotionally and legally and we discovered that Friends have different views and experiences.

We recognise the need for further debate and clearer legislation and we hope that Meeting for Sufferings will continue to push for this to be debated in Parliament. Although Friends differ in their views we can surely as Quakers find unity in continuing to seek a way forward by promoting respectful discussion and dialogue at all levels of Quakers in Britain.

It may be that by Quakers corporately holding the balance of various positions on such a sensitive matter we might be instructive to others in developing policy in this area.

We agree that compassion and “what love requires of us” is most important in this matter.

We forward this minute to Meeting for Sufferings

Martin Pennock (Clerk Ipswich & Diss Area Meeting)

## **Lancashire Central & North AM**

### **19.11.11 Assisted Dying**

We sense that an exploration on the matter of assisted dying could usefully be undertaken within the Society with the aim of widening the discernment but not with the objective of arriving at a fixed position. This is not our Quaker way and does not address the question at a significant time in the life of an individual, their family and friends – What does love require of us?

Meetings may wish for guidance on how to support individual friends who seek to end their lives and those they have turned to but it is not clear that this requires a written or agreed process. Our process of discernment may be of help to both the individual and the meeting and carried out in the spirit of love and compassion and looking at how we are led may be the way forward.

Our sense is that any Quaker statement on this matter needs to allow for the fact that dying is always in the context of particular individuals and their particular circumstances.

Given our aging population and the advances in medical science that can prolong life it may be timely for us as a Society to reflect on the matter, remembering that in the equality aspect of our testimony we seek to respect, honour and value each individual.

We forward this minute to MfS.

### **Leicester AM**

Held on 14 March 2021

#### **Minute 21.32 Quaker views on changes to legislation on assisted dying**

We have heard that some AMs have adopted as a concern the need to change existing legislation on assisted dying. Meeting for Sufferings have been soliciting and collating views from other AMs and we understand that Meeting for Sufferings will return to this subject at the next meeting in April. We have considered approaching this subject in more detail, but have found that this is not an appropriate time to try to arrive at a considered view. There is too much raw suffering amongst some of us at present. We would hope to return to the subject at a later date.

### **Luton & Leighton AM**

AM held on 13 September 2020

#### **20.09.12 Concern for Compassionate Assistance to die**

Further to Minute 20.07.11 at July AM, Valerie Coast has come back to us with a detailed and costed proposal for a webinar on the subject of '*Compassion in Dying*'. She has written a paper to address the matters raised at the last meeting. Her report was circulated in advance.

Valerie has been in contact with Dr Stefanie Green, a Canadian doctor who is willing to participate in a webinar with us on either 31 October or 7 November 2020 and answer questions that Friends have on end of life and assisted death issues. If Friends agree to the proposal to facilitate a webinar, Valerie would wish to gather questions from Friends, and with a small group ensure that a range of issues are covered in the question and answer time which would follow Dr Green's introductory presentation.

Valerie contacted Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk and Oliver Waterhouse, Assistant Head of Ministry & Outreach. Neither Quaker Life nor Meeting for Sufferings has the capacity to be involved directly in this issue. Juliet was encouraging about our AM organising a webinar.

At present the Meeting for Sufferings clerks are still planning for the matter of assisted dying to come back to Sufferings in December, but very few Area Meetings have sent minutes about this. They know that many AMs have not been meeting, so they are going to ask whether Friends feel more time would be helpful.

We agree the following:

- 1) That the webinar is a useful idea and could aid our understanding of the processes and procedures involved with assisted death.
- 2) That Luton & Leighton AM will facilitate the webinar on 'Compassion in Dying', cover the cost involved up to a total of £430 and make it available across BYM.
- 3) That neighbouring AMs and other Friends will be invited to join the webinar. Once the arrangements are finalised, Valerie Coast will contact the clerks of these Area Meetings and submit an advertisement to The Friend.
- 4) Our preferred date for the webinar is Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November at 4 pm.
- 5) We ask local meeting clerks to
  - (i) inform their meetings about the forthcoming webinar on 7 November 2020 on the topic of 'Compassion in Dying'
  - (ii) encourage Friends to provide Valerie with questions they would like Dr Green to respond to
  - (iii) contact Valerie if they are willing to assist her with collating and choosing of questions to present to Dr Green
  - (iv) encourage Friends to sign up for the webinar once the arrangements are finalised.

We thank Valerie for her continuing work on her concern that there will be *Compassion in Dying*.

We would like MfS Friends and Friends from across BYM to participate in the webinar. There is the capacity for many hundreds to attend the event.

Gloria Dobbin, Clerk

## **Mid Somerset AM**

Held on March 14th 2021

### **Minute 14.3.21**

Further to minute 6.1.21 we have now considered the concern on assisted dying in our Meetings. We recognise that assisted dying is a contentious issue and should be a question of individual conscience for both patient and doctor. Dying, like living, is a very personal matter, requiring thought and care. Often no choice is possible, but many of us know of good deaths, benefitting from preparation, acceptance beforehand and good palliative care, with close attention to the wishes and needs of the individual concerned. Care and compassion should be central in difficult end of life decisions. We should be mindful also of supporting friends and family. If we have not prepared ourselves in some measure for dying, what have we been doing? To face up to the fact of death gives a fuller awareness of God-given life. QFP21.57 We are reminded of the availability of advance directives to record our health care wishes. While we have not found unity in support for this concern it has been important to have an open, loving conversation about this complex question.

## **North East Thames AM**

Held on 23rd January 2021

### **Minute 21.09 Assisted Dying – North West London and Staffordshire AMs' concern for a change in the law**

Further to AM minute 20.104 when we asked LMs to consider the issues in regards to a change in the law about Assisted Dying, we have received minutes from Epping, Leigh-on-Sea and Wanstead LMs (circulated in advance).

Today we have considered if we would support this becoming a concern for Britain Yearly Meeting. We have heard that as a society we find it difficult to discuss dying. We feel we should approach death as part of life.

We recognise assisted dying can be an act of compassion; however, we have not discerned a clear desire to support a change in the law, at this time. Instead, we would like to support a process of looking more deeply at how we plan for our death, as well as the right to assisted dying with appropriate safeguards.

We forward this minute to Meeting for Sufferings

Jo Law, Clerk

## **Notts & Derbys AM**

### **Minute 2021/04 Assisted Dying (Report from Meeting held on 2 December 20)**

A workshop considering the topic of Compassionate Concern for Assisted Dying was facilitated by Maggie Lightowler-Cook and Jan Gentle on Wednesday 2nd December 2020 on Zoom. The Area Meeting has considered the feedback from this workshop. It has been expressed that this is not a simple topic and is highly complicated in its implications. It is noted that the report solely reflects views of Friends who attended this workshop (organized by Area Meeting) and that other Friends may have different views and wish to send these individual views directly to Meeting for Sufferings. We agree that the Co-Clerk for Correspondence will forward the report from the workshop to Meeting for Sufferings, together with details of the background to the workshop and the film, webinar and discussions which were also accessed prior to the discussion, and to make clear that some Friends from the Area Meeting were unable to unite fully behind the views expressed during the workshop and set out in the report.

(a separate note of the workshop is also available)

## **Sheffield & Balby AM**

Held on 14 March 2021

### **Minute 3. Death, dignity, and dying**

Further to minute 9 (Area Meeting, January 2021), we have returned to the question of assisted dying on which we have been invited to submit minutes to Meeting for Sufferings. We have received information in advance of the meeting from Friends who have particular views and experiences; and we have heard more questions and ideas within today's meeting.

Friends who are interested in this subject are welcome to attend a screening of the film *Love and Dying*, which makes the case for a change in the law to allow assisted suicide, on Wednesday 31st March 19.00 via Zoom. There will be a discussion with the film's directors afterwards, and Friends are asked to sign up in advance so we know who intends to come, and we can offer support afterwards. The URL is given in the minutes (<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/love-dying-a-film-which-asks-if-there-should-be-a-change-in-uk-law-tickets-141538630855>).

We recognise that this is an area that encourages different views, and where context and an understanding of individual cases are vitally important. We are not yet in unity about this matter, but will continue our discernment with further information (including through the February 2021 articles in *Friends' Quarterly*, on this topic). We have particular questions about the legal safeguards for vulnerable individuals, and how any legal right to assisted dying would fit with other complex social situations, such as social care.

We thank all Friends who have helped inform the meeting on this complex matter, and shared their experiences and questions. In particular, we thank Sue Clark, Chrissie Hinde, Fiona Lewin and Jayne Meadows for organising the workshop and film screening.

We send a copy of this minute to Meeting for Sufferings, and agree to return to this matter at a future Area Meeting.

## **Surrey and Hampshire Border AM**

### **20/10/02 Assisted Dying**

We have considered the question of assisted dying and changes to the UK law in relation to it.

The current situation, where only those with sufficient money and good enough health to travel, have access to an assisted death, does not seem very equal.

The suffering of those who in all likelihood are going to die in the next several months can be very difficult for them to endure. It is with love that assisted dying should be made available to them.

We heard that life should be well lived. Does this include months of suffering for the individual and those close or is a good life one where it can be ended when all quality has gone?

We feel that there should be more choice open to those suffering from a terminal illness, including assisted dying.

We have heard that some can make wonderful recoveries from their suffering and go on to live wonderful and full lives. But who are we to decide for them that they must continue suffering just in case this happens for them? What will have been on balance their quality of life in the end and what does this mean for the many that never make a recovery?

We believe therefore that we should respect the wishes of those terminally ill and of sound mind who make a considered decision that life has become intolerable for them through pain or other distress and want to terminate it.

We therefore support a change in the UK law to allow for assisted dying in such cases.

We accept that this should only apply in situations where there are less than six months to live.

We would wish to see strong safeguards in place to prevent unscrupulous coercion.

### **Sussex West AM**

*Sent the following notes - this is not a formal minute*

We had a wonderfully mutually supportive and moving discussion on this topic. We did not formalise our ideas to answer the set questions (is there a Quaker view? Do we want to work towards a change in the law? And, What would we like to say to Meeting for Sufferings) but there follows a list of comments from the group discussions.

Extract from notes - Message to Meeting for Sufferings

Quakers should be encouraged both to explore the possibility of encouraging, creating or supporting initiatives such as Compassionate Communities (<https://www.compassionate-communitiesuk.co.uk>) national, area and local level.

(NB The key issue is with people with long term chronic problems such as Motor Neurone Disease and Dementia). There may be learning from the social model of disability. This suggests that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. Barriers can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets, or they can be caused by people's attitudes to difference, like assuming disabled people can't do certain things. The struggles faced by people with disabilities have resulted in huge advances in the level of provision for people with disabilities – even though much more remains to be done.

While assisted dying may help those who are struggling the pain of long term, intractable conditions, it may also remove or reduce the attention that we, as a society, may wish to give to overcoming or easing those conditions for the longer term. Perhaps, therefore, the focus of Quakers should be more on care and compassion than assisted dying).

### **Thaxted AM**

#### **Minute 2021 03 10 Special topic for AM in 2021: Assisted Dying**

We thank Sue Moloney for her report on the screening of the film “Love and Dying” and for her work in making this event possible. This was a positive step to engage with this sensitive subject and to support members and attenders of Thaxted AM and other AMs in East Anglia to reflect on the issues involved.

We encourage Friends to consider the paper prepared by North West London Area Meeting (“Towards a Good Death: The need for legislation to allow assisted dying

with clearly defined safeguards”) which was circulated with the AM agenda. It was prepared for members of Meeting for Sufferings for when they consider this issue again in April.

We have previously informed Meeting for Sufferings that we intend to place the issue of assisted dying on a future AM agenda as it is an issue of concern for many Thaxted Friends. However, given the emotional content associated with such discussions, we remain of the view that it would be best to have a substantive discussion during a face to face AM rather than virtually.

Meeting for Sufferings has asked for feedback from Area Meetings. We agree to forward Sue Moloney’s report together with a copy of this minute.

### **Wensleydale and Swaledale AM**

*Sent the following notes - this is not a formal minute*

#### **Assisted Dying Worship Sharing – 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

Ten (?) Friends met virtually for an hour via Zoom to approach the topic of Assisted Dying. Friends had been encouraged to view the YouTube video, produced by Luton and Leighton Area Meeting, of a talk by Dr Stephanie Green as a prompt. This gave a clear account of how and why Assisted Dying in Canada works as it does, and the plans to change aspects.

We used ‘worshipping sharing’ to enable everyone to participate and be heard. Friends expressed their appreciation for the video and the opportunity to begin the discussion together, from a personal point of view without the expectation of a joint decision. We look forward to continuing the discussion and have contacted the Yorkshire campaign group Dignity in Dying, for those Friends who wish to be more actively involved.

We are continuing our discernment about Assisted Dying

### **York AM**

Held on 9th January 2021

#### **Minute 3 Assisted Dying**

This topic has been brought before Meeting for Sufferings (MFS) from time to time from 2010 to the present day. We have prepared for this meeting by informing ourselves via individual reading, study and discussion groups, following up online and other recommendations from our MFS representative and other Friends and by reading today’s preparation paper.

We thank Sarah Allen for her helpful introduction today. We have asked ourselves:

Are we sufficiently concerned about this question to ask MFS to return to and to test this concern? Do we want to encourage MFS to seek a change in legislation?

Is there a specific Quaker input we can contribute to this matter?

What does love require? Friends have given their hearts and minds to this matter, both in preparation and during this meeting. They have listened deeply to one another.

The clear variety of experience, feelings and views expressed is an indicator that we are not going to find within our meeting a specific Quaker view. It seems to us that trying to define a Quaker view for the whole Society of Friends at this time could lead to possibly unhelpful distress. We do not feel it right to ask MFS to consider this matter further at present. Perhaps the time may arrive when we can come to a clear Quaker view but, after a period of serious reflection together, we do not feel as an Area Meeting that we are anywhere near that stage.

In the course of our consideration we were reminded of the importance of ensuring that our own feelings are known to family, friends and our GPs. Individual Friends may feel drawn to continue working on the topic with other individuals, such as those who were part of the group which created the Leeds Area Meeting book.

We thank Friends for their contributions, whether in silence or spoken words, to a searching and helpful time together.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Minutes signed by Barbara Windle, clerk; Gilly Charters, assistant clerk



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

## Appointments

### a) Central Nominations Committee

Brings forward the following names for service or release as indicated:

#### **Book of Discipline Revision Committee**

To serve with immediate effect until 31 December 2023

Nominate: Juliette Chandler - Lancashire Central & North AM

Release from service:

Alice Southern - South Wales AM / CCR De Cymru

#### **BYM Representatives to European Yearly Meetings**

##### **Representative to Belgium & Luxembourg Yearly Meeting 2021**

Nominate: Jane Harries - South Wales AM / CCR De Cymru

##### **Representative to Finland Yearly Meeting 2021**

Renominate: Mary Woodward - South East Scotland AM

##### **Representative to Netherlands Yearly Meeting 2021**

Nominate: Edward Bruce - West Scotland AM

##### **Representative to Norway Yearly Meeting 2021**

Nominate: Laura Karadog - North Wales AM / CCR Gogledd Cymru

#### **Friends Trusts Limited**

To serve from 1 June 2021 to 31 May 2024

Nominate: Steven Burkeman - York AM

#### **Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations**

To serve from 1 May 2021 to 30 April 2024

Nominate: Will Haire - Ireland Yearly Meeting

#### **Quaker Housing Trust**

To serve from Annual Retirement Meeting (ARM) April 2021 to ARM 2022

Nominate: Morayo Fagborun-Bennett - South London AM

To serve from Annual Retirement Meeting (ARM) April 2021 to ARM 2024

Nominate: Peter Rice - Leeds AM

**Quaker World Relations Committee**

Release from service:

Annie Brock Womack - Sheffield & Balby AM

**Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee**

For information

Appointed by between meetings decision of the Meeting for Sufferings clerks to serve from as soon as possible until YM 2023:

Jessica Metheringham - Mid Thames AM

**Yearly Meeting Elders**

To serve for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2021 (including preparative arrangements before Yearly Meeting in session)

Renominate:

Jane Mace - Gloucestershire AM

Gloria Dobbin - Luton & Leighton AM

Tess James - Dorset & South Wiltshire AM

Nominate:

Caro Kelly - Lancashire Central & North AM

Ruth McTighe - Central Yorkshire AM

Wendy Sender - London West AM

Peter Squire - Devon AM

**b) Yearly Meeting Nominating Group**

Brings forward the following names for service or release as indicated:

**Central Nominations Committee**

Release from service:

Meg Forrest York AM



Yearly Meeting of the  
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## Minutes from Central Committees

### Quaker Life Central Committee, 29-30 January 2021

#### QLCC 21.06 Use of the terms 'overseer' and 'elder'

Meeting for Sufferings received a minute asking for discussion on changing the term 'overseer'. Meeting for Sufferings asked QLCC to look at the issue (minute MfS 19-12-14) and we were asked by Book of Discipline Revision Group to also consider whether the term 'elder' should be changed. We asked for a wider consultation (QLCC 20.44) and staff used Quake! to elicit input on the matter from Friends. We receive papers QLCC 2021 01 06 i-iii, on the input we have received from meetings and individuals. We thank those Quakers and meetings who have written on this.

The terms 'overseer' and 'elder' were adopted by Quakers because they were used by the early church, but Quakers have moved away from these terms in many parts of the world. There is general support for a change to the term 'overseer', partly because of the historical connotations dealing with hierarchy and oppression. This is the time for a change and we believe that meetings should be encouraged to use different terms as soon as possible. Meetings should be free to experiment with roles to enable the community to be loving, supportive, inclusive and all-age. From the responses the words 'pastoral care group' or similar were common, but in North America the term 'committee on ministry and counsel' is widely used. Another suggested from the survey is 'Quaker community support'. The terminology is not the most important thing.

We have not yet discussed the use of the term 'elder'. However, a number of meetings have merged the functions of eldership and oversight, which may address the terminology issue.

We forward this minute to Meeting for Sufferings and to the Book of Discipline Revision Committee.

Alan Pearmain, Clerk  
Lizzie Rosewood, Assistant Clerk



Yearly Meeting of the  
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## Minutes from Area Meetings

### Manchester and Warrington Area Meeting 4 February 2021

#### **MWAM2021.02.04.15. The Plight of the Uighur Communities in China**

Friends in Eccles Local Meeting have brought this to our attention and Elizabeth Coleman has spoken to it this evening.

It is a major human rights issue and impossible to cover in detail at this meeting.

Many of us are aware of the press reports of atrocities in the detention camps in China where the Uighur population is sent for "re-education". We ask our interfaith and Churches Together representatives to raise the plight of the Uighurs at the meetings they attend on our behalf and to bring to our attention any joint actions or protests with which we might join. We also urge all Friends to increase their awareness of the issues and to campaign through their connections with organizations involved in human rights, for China to be held accountable for their actions. We can urge politicians to challenge China and support sanctions over this and use all our resources to make sure the subject does not slide off the political agenda.

We are aware that Meeting for Sufferings is unlikely to adopt this as a stand-alone Quaker Concern because we do not have any Quaker contacts to bring first-hand information from the area. However, we ask the Clerk to send this minute forward to Meeting for Sufferings in the hope that Quakers nationally will be able to stand in solidarity with other faith groups in opposition to these human rights violations.

Lesley Thomson  
Clerk



Yearly Meeting of the  
Religious Society of Friends  
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## **Review of Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group**

The Friends appointed to review Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group reported to Meeting for Sufferings in February 2021.

Meeting for Sufferings accepted the following recommendations:

1. That the membership should be increased to 4 and no more than 5 Friends drawn from the body of Meeting for Sufferings
2. That the appointments should move to a rolling pattern
3. That there should be explicit mention of electronic means of meeting in the Group's terms of reference
4. That 4.7 in the Group's terms of reference should be deleted

Meeting for Sufferings asked for revised terms of reference to be brought to this meeting for consideration. In addition to addressing the points above, a change has been proposed to allow the Arrangements Group to meet more than once between meetings of Meeting for Sufferings. The Review Group recognised the Arrangements Group has recently been meeting twice between each Meeting for Sufferings – once to review the previous Sufferings and once to plan the following meeting.

### **Transitional arrangements**

The revisions in 2.1.(b) of the terms of reference outline how Friends will be appointed for three year terms on a rolling basis – two members are appointed in Year 1 of a triennium, one or two members in Year 2 and one or two in Year 3. The three current representative members will end their service at the end of this triennium and so a transitional arrangement will need to be put in place. It is proposed to appoint four or five members to start service at the beginning of the next Triennium; two to be appointed for three years and two or three to be appointed for four years (the Friends appointed for four years will need to be serving their first Triennium on MfS and their fourth year of service on the Arrangements Group will be conditional on their reappointment to MfS). The rolling pattern of appointments and the transitional arrangements are illustrated in the diagram below.

If you want to suggest amendments to the draft terms of reference, please email them to [sufferings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sufferings@quaker.org.uk) to reach Clerks **by the end of Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> April**.

A draft minute might read:

MfS 21/04/XX Revised terms of reference for Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

*We receive revisions to the Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group's terms of reference following a review of the Group and in response to our minute MfS 21/02/05. We approve the new terms of reference and note the next routine review will be in five years time.*

Rolling appointments and transitional arrangements (optional appointments in italic):

Year	Position A	Position B	Position C	Position D	<i>Position E</i>
<b>Triennium 2021-2024</b> (transitional arrangements)					
1	<b>Person 1</b>	<b>Person 2</b>	<b>Person 3</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> term MfS)	<b>Person 4</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> term MfS)	<b>Person 5</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> term MfS)
2	Person 1	Person 2	Person 3	Person 4	<i>Person 5</i>
3	Person 1	Person 2	Person 3	Person 4	<i>Person 5</i>
<b>Triennium 2024-2027</b> (this becomes the established cycle)					
1	<b>Person 6</b>	<b>Person 7</b>	Person 3 (2 <sup>nd</sup> term MfS)	Person 4 (2 <sup>nd</sup> term MfS)	<i>Person 5</i> (2 <sup>nd</sup> term MfS)
2	Person 6	Person 7	<b>Person 8</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> term MfS)	<b>Person 9</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> term MfS)	
3	Person 6	Person 7	Person 8	Person 9	<b>Person 10</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> term MfS)
<b>Triennium 2027-2030</b>					
1	<b>Person 11</b>	<b>Person 12</b>	Person 8 (2 <sup>nd</sup> term MfS)	Person 9 (2 <sup>nd</sup> term MfS)	<i>Person 10</i> (2 <sup>nd</sup> term MfS)
2	Person 11	Person 12	<b>Person 13</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> term MfS)	<b>Person 14</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> term MfS)	<i>Person 10</i>
3	Person 11	Person 12	Person 13	Person 14	<b>Person 15</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> term MfS)

**Key to revisions:** new wording is shown **bold and blocked in grey**, deleted wording is shown ~~struck through~~

## Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

### Terms of Reference

#### **1. Summary of reference**

The role of the Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group (MfSAG) is one of service to the Meeting. It works to facilitate and simplify the work of Meeting for Sufferings.

MfSAG comprises the Meeting for Sufferings clerks and ~~three~~ **four or five** additional Friends, with the Recording Clerk/Deputy Recording Clerk and others as invited, in attendance. The group's decisions will be discerned by the whole group.

#### **2. Membership**

**2.1.** MfSAG, appointed by Meeting for Sufferings in session, shall be composed of ~~five~~ **six to seven** members, as follows:

- a) The clerk and assistant clerk of Meeting for Sufferings.
- b) ~~Three~~ **Four or five** members of Meeting for Sufferings (representatives or alternates).

These members of MfSAG will be appointed by Meeting for Sufferings, on the nomination of Central Nominations Committee, to serve for three years.

**Two members will be appointed to serve** from the second Meeting for Sufferings of the triennium (to give Nominations Committee time to approach appointed members of Meeting for Sufferings) until and including the first Meeting for Sufferings of the next triennium ~~or until a replacement has been appointed.~~

**One or two members will be appointed to serve from the first Meeting for Sufferings of the second and third years of the triennium so that between four and five members are serving at one time. Normally, for appointments made in the second and third years of the triennium, Nominations Committee will bring names of members serving their first triennium in the expectation their service on MfSAG will continue into the following triennium (conditional on their reappointment to Meeting for Sufferings).**

**2.2.** Also in attendance may be:

- a) The Recording Clerk and/or Deputy Recording Clerk ex officio and, by invitation, any other member of staff with designated responsibility within the Recording Clerk's Office for Meeting for Sufferings;
- b) Other members of staff asked to attend by invitation of the Clerk(s) for agenda items which include their area(s) of responsibility;

c) Other Friends or specialists asked to attend by invitation of the Clerk(s) for particular sessions or particular items.

**2.3.** The MfSAG Clerk shall normally be the Meeting for Sufferings Assistant Clerk.

### **3. Frequency of meetings**

**3.1.** MfSAG shall meet as frequently as necessary for discernment, accountability and completion of its tasks. It is expected that normally **at least** one meeting **and no more than two meetings** will be held between meetings of Meeting for Sufferings.

**3.2. Meetings may take place electronically at the Group's discretion and following guidance from the Recording Clerk.**

**3.3.** The between meetings decision making process shall be consultation between the MfSAG Clerk and the Meeting for Sufferings Clerk, consulting other MfSAG members as appropriate.

### **4. Duties**

**4.1.** MfSAG's main duty is the discernment of recommendations for the annual calendar and agenda for Meeting for Sufferings, and oversight of the implementation of all the arrangements for Meeting for Sufferings undertaken either by groups of the Meeting for Sufferings or by staff.

**4.2.** MfSAG shall be able to initiate items for the Meeting for Sufferings agenda.

**4.3.** Decisions on the final content of the agenda to be offered to Meeting for Sufferings shall be for the Meeting for Sufferings Clerks, and decisions on its acceptance shall be for Meeting for Sufferings itself.

**4.4.** MfSAG shall:

a) Keep under review the ways in which information is presented to Meeting for Sufferings and recommend any changes to the guidelines which would improve clarity of presentation,

b) monitor progress in implementing Meeting for Sufferings' decisions,

c) co-ordinate the timing of formal consultations with meetings.

**4.5.** In relation to Meeting for Sufferings' business, MfSAG shall facilitate communication with and between committees, working groups, other bodies of Britain Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings.

**4.6.** MfSAG shall:

a) ensure the provision of necessary and appropriate advice and guidance for those who undertake work in preparing sessions or papers,

b) collaborate with the Meeting for Sufferings Support Group to ensure the smooth running of the meeting,

c) liaise with Quaker Life to identify needs and opportunities for creation of an inclusive Meeting for Sufferings,

d) liaise with Quaker Communication and Services to identify needs and opportunities for external publicity and communications.

~~4.7. MfSAG, apart from the Meeting for Sufferings Clerks, shall constitute a standing link with the Committee on Clerks, which has the responsibility for the nomination of the Meeting for Sufferings Clerks.~~

## **5. Powers and responsibilities**

**5.1.** MfSAG may delegate appropriate tasks to working groups, individuals or other committees and groups, subject to available resources and budget approval, and may advise Meeting for Sufferings on setting up other working groups on matters outside MfSAG's terms of reference.

**5.2.** MfSAG may liaise and consult as appropriate (acting through the Recording Clerk/Deputy Recording Clerk) with the clerks of BYM Trustees, General, Area and Local Meetings; other standing committees and departments; partner and associated organisations such as FWCC and Woodbrooke.

**5.3.** MfSAG may recommend and take appropriate action between Meetings for Sufferings when minutes are received from Area Meetings, and may meet such other needs as the clerks may identify.

**5.4.** The Recording Clerk's Office shall be the department responsible for provision of the main staff support for MfSAG and for necessary liaison between Friends House departments in administrative provision.

**5.5.** MfSAG shall have a budget allocated from within that agreed for Meeting for Sufferings. The budget will be managed through the Recording Clerk's Office.

**5.6.** MfSAG shall agree on the fee for any specialist external contributor or speaker for Meeting for Sufferings, subject to budget approval.

## **6. Authority and accountability**

**6.1.** MfSAG is accountable to Meeting for Sufferings.

**6.2.** MfSAG shall work within these Terms of Reference, under the authority of minute MfS 2014 04 06 of Meeting for Sufferings. These terms of reference, and the continuation of the group, shall be reviewed after five years.

Approved by Meeting for Sufferings held **10/04/2021**



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

## **Appointments to central committees**

Meeting for Sufferings agreed to form a group to review the current practice of appointing attenders to central committees only in exceptional circumstances. In February, Meeting for Sufferings asked CNC to bring forward names for the review and asked the Recording Clerk to bring terms of reference to this meeting (minute MfS/21/02/12).

Draft Terms of Reference are attached for consideration.

If you want to suggest amendments to the draft terms of reference, please email them to [sufferings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sufferings@quaker.org.uk) to reach Clerks **by the end of Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> April**.

# DRAFT

## Group to review the appointment of attenders to central committees

### Terms of reference

#### 1. Purpose

**1.1** The review is to consider whether to permit the nomination of attenders to serve on the central committees of Britain Yearly Meeting. An attender is 'one who, not being a member, frequently attends a specific meeting for worship' (*Quaker faith & practice*, 11.38). Nominating bodies are currently observing the arrangement agreed by Meeting for Sufferings in 1992 (see appendix).

#### 2. Membership and mode of working

**2.1** Members of the Group are appointed by Meeting for Sufferings on the nomination of Central Nominations Committee to serve until completion of the task.

**2.2** The Group shall consist of up to five members. In view of the Group's remit, it would be appropriate to appoint a proportion of attenders for this review so the perspective of attenders is fully considered. The group may wish to appoint a convener from among this number.

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

**2.4** The Recording Clerk may designate a member of staff to support the Group with its work.

**2.5** The Group shall meet as frequently as necessary to complete its task. The Group shall use virtual means for its meetings wherever possible.

#### 3 Scope

**3.1** The Group shall update the current agreement to reflect current committee names.

**3.2** The Group shall consider the current agreement for nominating attenders to central committees and whether to recommend changes. It is likely to consider the following factors in reaching its recommendations:

- a) The current context – the committee structure, the numbers of members and attenders, and the volume of offers of service – and how this has changed since 1992 and how it might change in the future
- b) The position of attenders in the Society and whether and how Friends' understanding of membership may have changed since 1992

- c) Which are the 'key decision-making bodies' (noted in the 1992 agreement) and roles and committees where different requirements for appointments might apply
- d) The legal, constitutional and regulatory aspects
- e) How committees can be representative of church participation and be more diverse
- f) Current practice of appointing attenders to central committees
- g) Current practice in area and local meetings in appointing attenders to key roles (e.g. clerk, treasurer, elders and pastoral carers).

**3.2** The scope of the review covers nominations discerned by Central Nominations Committee.

## **4 Reporting**

**4.1** The Group shall bring a report with any recommendations to Meeting for Sufferings for its discernment within six months of starting its work. If further time is required, the Group should ask the Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings to agree an extension for the review.

**4.2** The Group shall raise with the Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings any matters which it feels need consideration which would take it beyond its remit.

**4.3** The Group shall operate within these terms of reference which were agreed by minute **XXX** of Meeting for Sufferings held 10 April 2021.

## **Appendix: current arrangement for appointment to committees**

### **Meeting for Sufferings, Minute 8, April 1992, Appointment to Committees**

Further to Minute 8 of 7 December 1991, a report dated 6 March 1992 has been received from the group set up to consider the matter. The report has been introduced by Rachel Brett.

We agree to the recommendations in the report.

### **Minute received at Meeting for Sufferings in April 1992 from the group set up by Meeting for Sufferings in 1991 to consider the question of appointing attenders.**

Further to Minute 8 of Meeting for Sufferings held in London on 7 December 1991, the Group of Friends appointed to consider the question of Appointment to Committees met on 6 March 1992. The Group consists of Gill Boccock, Rachel Brett (clerk), Clare Scott Booth and Joan Southern.

The mandate of this Group is limited to the question of whether Meeting for Sufferings Nominations Committee should nominate attenders as well as members.

The Group is clear that

- i. The general rule should be that only members of the Society of Friends should be nominated in these capacities;
- ii. There should be no exception to that general rule
  - a) Where the person is representing London Yearly Meeting to other Quaker bodies or to the outside world, such as the representatives to CCBI and to other yearly meetings
  - b) For the key decision-making bodies of London Yearly Meeting such as the central committees and Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee;
- iii. There may be occasions on which it is right to make an exception in the case of other committees where an attender has special expertise or experience which is sought by the committee concerned. In these cases, the nomination to Meeting for Sufferings should indicate clearly that the person is not in membership and give the reasons for the nomination.

We have considered the position of Young Friends for whom there may be technical difficulties in applying for membership, such as the short duration of residence within any one monthly meeting area. It seems to us that this is a problem which needs sensitive consideration by monthly meetings, but is not a reason for making a special exception for Young Friends, though they may fall within the special expertise and experience category.

We are aware that there may be legal requirements about membership for some of the bodies to whom nominations are made.

Rachel Brett, Clerk



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

## **Simplification of central governance structures – a paper from BYM Trustees**

*“If spiritual life is allowed to be the controlling, directing, molding force in Quakerism I have no fear for our future. We shall put in the forefront of our Church work the things that belong to life, the gathering of disciples, the raising of leaders and prophets, the maintenance of warm fellowship, the encouragement of service, the fostering of growth. This means that our Church arrangements will be so made and modified as to promote and secure the expression through them of the living forces which we have at our command. Those living forces are the spiritual force of the individual, which we call individual responsibility, the living force of the group, which we call fellowship, and above all, the Divine vitality, the incoming of the life of Jesus Christ, which we call spiritual power and spiritual guidance. Church arrangements, important in themselves, must be regarded as simply machinery through which forces can work, and the more efficiently the machinery allows the forces to work, the richer will be the service of the Church.”*

(William Charles Braithwaite, *The Essentials of Quakerism*, 1912)

### **Summary**

Recent Meetings for Sufferings have heard a need for simplification of our central church and charity governance structures. This paper is offered by BYM Trustees to prompt discernment.

Meeting for Sufferings is invited to:

- Consider the working definition for ‘a simple structure’ (see box on p2) and offer any suggestions for how to improve it;
- Consider whether you share the vision described in the box on p3 or make suggestions for how to improve it;
- Agree to (and take part in) a series of workshops to explore these ideas further before your next meeting.

### **The story so far**

In 2018, Meeting for Sufferings supported a focus on three priorities (strands of work) by Britain Yearly Meeting, recording: “We are glad that the [BYM] Trustees

have developed such a clear set of priorities for the centrally managed work, taking into account the decisions and recommendations of Meeting for Sufferings and we enthusiastically endorse these priorities” (minute MfS/18/11/13). These priorities are: thriving Quaker communities, simple structures and practices, and a sustainable and peaceful world.

In December 2020, Meeting for Sufferings minuted its support for a radical approach to reviewing our structures. “We have heard a call to take a more coordinated approach to our review process, considering the interrelationships between bodies and to take a radical approach to our structures not being constrained by the historical development of different bodies. We look forward to playing our part in achieving this change” (MfS/20/12/08).

As part of taking simplification forward, BYM Trustees in August 2020 convened a Simplification Working Group with membership from Meeting for Sufferings, Quaker Life Central Committee, Quaker World Relations Committee, Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations, Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee, Central Nominations Committee and the Engaging Young Adult Quakers steering group. The group considered the core functions across the church and charity and explored the impact of different structural configurations in terms of simplicity, sustainability, inclusion and use of resources. The Group has now been laid down, and this paper comes from Trustees, gratefully reflecting the considerable thought and engagement of the Working Group members. This paper has been inspired by the thoughts of the Working Group and Trustees feel encouraged by December’s minute from Meeting for Sufferings to think radically.

The Simplification Working Group came up with a **working definition of simplification** “*the necessary minimum allocation of time and resources to enable Friends to discern how their church should provide spiritual nurture and impact on the world, and make that a reality. Each part of the governance system is understandable to any Friend and the responsibilities of different parts of the system connect but do not overlap.*”

This definition is open to further work. This paper starts to consider how the central governance structures could be made simpler, more inclusive, more sustainable and less demanding of staff time and resources.

## **The context for simplification**

There are both challenges and opportunities in the present context of our work and worship which we have started to map out below.

Quakers across the country have begun work to reduce their carbon footprint and bring their structures into balance with a membership in slow decline. It is important to look at how to echo this in our central structures, where many Friends have no connection with or understanding of the existing central machinery of their Society. At the same time, the Working Group was clear about the importance of offering

opportunities for joyful service to all Friends, including younger Friends and Friends not attached to Local Meetings, actively embracing diversity and practising inclusion, while nurturing the spiritual gifts, interests and experience of Friends.

The changes seen across the Society over the last year will greatly help to make the transition. These include:

- The leadership that Friends have shown, across Britain, in eagerly embracing new ways of working during the Covid crisis
- The skills many Friends have acquired in organising meetings, surveys and other uses of technology
- The new ways that technology offers for the exchange of information between Friends for peer support, and to and from those responsible for central work, as well as the ease of connection with Friends internationally.
- The introduction of Local Development Workers with a remit to help Local Meetings be the best they can. Local Development Workers collectively will be a new source of insight as to where Meetings need support, and will facilitate Meeting to Meeting support.

Quakers across the Yearly Meeting have welcomed the opportunities that Zoom has brought to worship. It has enabled Friends to share concerns and collaborate across geographies and to be more self-sufficient in creating and managing new groups. Future structures should broaden participation in central work and governance but not lose the in-depth experience that many Friends have built up through service on committees.

Reflecting on these large changes in the context in which we work and worship, **we propose a vision:** *A Religious Society of Friends whose discernment, work and witness are all invigorated by the joyful participation of many Friends according to their gifts, time, and interests.*

Trustees are emboldened to present this vision because we already see much participation:

- In self organising groups (e.g on refugees, prison chaplains, drugs) and in the long-standing QPSW Conciliation Group
- Local Meetings taking up challenges (e.g. the 90-plus Sanctuary Meetings)
- The interest in the QPSW Summer Series and the participation in online briefings for LM and AM Treasurers
- The threshing work around Assisted Dying done by different groups of Quakers
- The many Friends involved in local sustainability and peace education projects.

However, there are risks we need to acknowledge that might arise from changes in our governance structure:

- We fail to involve a more diverse group of Quakers involved in central work
- New ways of working shift Quaker principles of discernment
- Different ways of reporting attract too small an audience to offer true accountability
- Friends' commitment to the work and their expertise are not well used
- We lose the deep expertise in terms of both process and subject matter of former Committee members.
- There are so many parts of the old system which we are unable to lay down, that we don't achieve simplification
- Friends' interest in engaging with central work dies down.

## **What is next?**

Balancing these risks will be important as Friends look at different ways to fulfil core central governance functions. The Working Group considered the core functions from first principles, setting aside our understanding of existing structures. The fundamental governance functions of church and charity were seen as:

1. Setting the spiritual direction and ways of working of the church – (Church)
2. Establishing strategic priorities and allocating resources for centrally-managed work, to support the spiritual direction and ways of working of the church – (Church and charity)
3. Ensuring that the work that is prioritised and resourced is carried out effectively – (Charity)

To continue this journey Carolyn Hayman and Ellie Harding would like to explore different models for fulfilling these core functions with you all in a series of smaller workshops for members of Meeting for Sufferings. We would like to offer these in April and May. We hope Meeting for Sufferings members will want to sign up and join these.

If it is the wish of Meeting for Sufferings to hold these, the workshops are planned for 28 April at 1.30pm, 30 April at 6.30pm, 8 May at 11.00am, 14 May at 8.30am and 26 May at 6:30pm. They will each follow the same format.

Ellie Harding and Carolyn Hayman  
on behalf of BYM Trustees