

Follow up letter



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

11 October 2024

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings 5 October 2024

Dear Friends,

It was a pleasure to meet you all, whether at Friends House or online, at the start of this final term of Meeting for Sufferings. I hope you found our session as rewarding as we did at the table.

We agreed in principle with Quaker Life Central Committee's recommendations for non-geographical membership options to be developed within Britain Yearly meeting's existing structures and asked them to develop concrete proposals to bring to Yearly Meeting. We also asked Quaker Life Central Committee to take responsibility for a working group to bring proposals for a revised text of the Quaker marriage declaration, to which we expect to return when that work has been done.

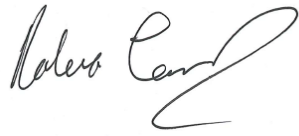
Outside the Quaker community, we considered the language that we use to describe the situation in Palestine and Israel. We were reminded of the importance of naming the situation as we see it, and agreed to align ourselves with the terminology of the International Court of Justice in describing the situation in occupied Palestine as one of apartheid and recognising the plausible risk of genocide in Gaza.

Also in relation to the world beyond Quakerism, we heard a report on the work of the Reparations Working Group. The Group provides a significant opportunity for Friends to find out more of the legacy of structural injustice in which our own Society is not innocent and would recommend that Friends throughout the yearly meeting engage with the Group's work. The Group may be contacted at equity@quaker.org.uk

In the light of our business, I regret that we did not have time to hear the powerful call from the Friends' World Plenary Meeting expressed in their epistle, whose message that "with radical hope, we trust in our collective ability to 'recognise, repent, redeem and restore' and to work together in beautiful and transformative ways" speaks to me of the work we are called to do.

I look forward to meeting you again in December for our next session.

In Truth,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Card". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

Robert Card
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

The following papers are included in this mailing:

- MfS minutes October 2024
- Functions checklist



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings

Held at Friends House and by video conference 5 October 2024

Minutes

MfS/24/10/01 Opening Worship and welcome

We have begun our Meeting in worship during which we have heard read a statement to be released on the anniversary of the 7 October 2023 attacks, which have led to renewed hostilities in the Middle East, expressing our grief at the pain of the conflict around occupied Palestine, and part of passage 24.06 of *Quaker faith & practice*, which reminds us of our absolute commitment to the realisation of that peace that characterises the Gospel Order to which we witness.

MfS/24/10/02 Agenda

The Assistant Clerk has introduced the draft agenda, and we have agreed to this.

MfS/24/10/03 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 2026:

Release requests received:

Kim Boyd – Kingston & Wandsworth AM Alternate
David Heathfield – Hampshire & Islands AM Alternate
Caroline Howden – East Kent AM Representative
Chris Myers – Leicester AM Representative
Tim Rouse – Young Friends General Meeting Representative

Nominated:

Carinne Allinson, North Somerset Alternate
Norman Alm – East Scotland AM Alternate
Jenny Amery – Manchester & Warrington AM Alternate
Jan Arriens – Southern Marches AM / CCR y Gororau Deheuol Alternate
Dorothy Ball – Cambridgeshire AM Representative
Janet Baker – Staffordshire AM Representative
Jennifer Barraclough – Oxford & Swindon AM Representative
John Bourton – York AM Representative
Kim Boyd – Kingston & Wandsworth AM Representative
David Bunney – Central Yorkshire AM Representative
Frankie Carpenter – Mid-Essex AM Alternate
Jill Clarke – West Kent AM Representative
David Cook – Central Yorkshire AM Alternate

Ann Davison – Southern Marches AM / CCR y Gororau Deheuol Representative
Lucy Faulkner Gawlinksy – Norfolk & Waveney AM Representative
Jenny Gordon – Mid-Thames AM Representative
Christopher Greenfield – Mid-Somerset AM Representative
Gill Greenfield – Central Nominations Committee Alternate
Cathy Eglington – Hampshire & Islands AM Alternate
Mary Elliott – Sussex East AM Alternate
Christine Habgood-Coote – Sussex West AM Representative
Andy Hall – Mid-Somerset AM Alternate
Debbie Hansen – Leicester AM Alternate
Anne Heywood – Thaxted AM Representative
Nicky Hoskin-Stone – Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire AM Representative
Jane Kelly – South East Scotland AM Representative
Ann Kerr – General Meeting for Scotland AM Alternate
Rosemary Kirk – Hampshire & Islands AM Representative
David Lewis – Central Nominations Committee Representative
Katrina McCrea – South East Scotland AM Alternate
Elaine Millar – General Meeting for Scotland AM Representative and West Scotland AM Representative
Anne Olding – Mid-Essex AM Representative
Helen Osborn – Luton & Leighton AM Alternate
Ruth Owens – South East London AM Alternate
Nicholas Paton-Philip – Central England AM Alternate
Charles Phillips – London West AM Representative
Chloe Scaling – Young Friends General Meeting Representative
Clare Scott Booth – London West AM Alternate
William Shaw – Swarthmoor (South West Cumbria) AM Representative
Hazel Shellens – Cambridgeshire AM Alternate
John Spencer – West Kent AM Alternate
Margaret Theaker – Leicester AM Representative
Robert Thompson – East Scotland AM Representative
Judy Thurgood – Devon AM Representative
Eleanor Tew – York AM Alternate
Janet Veitch – South London AM Representative
Jane Vicary – Lancashire Central & North AM Representative
Mark Waistell – Devon AM Alternate
Margot Williams – Central England AM Representative

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

Jacquie Poole – Devon AM

Apologies:

Bristol AM, Dorset & South Wiltshire AM, Kendal & Sedbergh AM, Kingston & Wandsworth AM, North London AM, North Scotland AM, Northumbria AM, Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire AM, South East Scotland AM

Other visitors:

Margaret Bryan – Group to Review Central Structures
Sarah Donaldson – BYM staff, Quaker Church Affairs consultant
Zélie Gross – Quaker Life Central Committee

Cato Pedder – BYM staff, Media Officer
Marghuerita Remi-Judah – Reparations Working Group

MfS/24/10/04 Appointments

a) Central Nominations Committee brings forward the following names for service or release as indicated:

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations

To serve for a triennium with immediate effect to May 2027:

Derek McLean, West Scotland AM

Roy Stephenson, Lancashire Central & North AM

To serve as the representative from Ireland Yearly Meeting to May 2027:

Will Haire, Ireland Yearly Meeting

Representatives to other European Yearly Meetings

To serve as the Britain Yearly Meeting Representative to France Yearly Meeting in 2024:

Joe Warren, Luton & Leighton AM

To serve as the Britain Yearly Meeting Representative to German Yearly Meeting in 2024:

Martin Harnor, Cambridgeshire AM

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee

Release from service with immediate effect:

Becky Riddell, South East Scotland AM

For information the following between-meeting appointments were discerned:

Church Government Advisory Group

To serve for a triennium with immediate effect:

Simon Best, Central England AM

b) Yearly Meeting Nominating Group brings forward the following requests for release:

Central Nominations Committee

Release from service with immediate effect:

Jennifer MacLennan, Lancashire Central & North AM

Elsie Whittington, Manchester & Warrington AM

c) Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group brings forward the following names:

Meeting for Sufferings Support Group

To serve with immediate effect until Yearly Meeting 2026:

Les Hereward (representative from Cornwall AM)

Emma Normington (representative from Sheffield and Balby AM)

Sarah Eilbeck (representative from Gloucestershire AM)

We agree to these appointments and request for release.

MfS/24/10/05 Quaker Recognised Bodies

We agree to register 'Discovering Quakers' as a Quaker Recognised Body for a period of five years (to be reviewed in 2029).

We agree to re-register two existing bodies: 'Quakers and Business Group', and 'The Retreat', for a period of five years.

MfS/24/10/06 New ways of belonging

We receive minute QLCC 24.38 from Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC), and a paper to accompany it. Harry Albright, co-clerk of QLCC, has introduced the matter to us referring to the report and recommendations of the QLCC working group tasked with exploring new ways of fully including Friends for whom BYM's traditional geographical membership structures don't work, for whatever reason.

We have considered this matter and we welcome QLCC's discernment on the proposal for non-geographical membership, which can be accomplished within BYM structures. We hope that this work will help us think about the relationship Friends have with other Quaker bodies. We appreciate there will be substantial work to be done in working out the details before the proposals are ready for Yearly Meeting.

We thank Harry for speaking to us today and answering our questions.

MfS/24/10/07 Report from BYM Trustees

We receive minutes from BYM Trustees' meetings in June, July and September. We have heard from Marisa Johnson, Clerk of Trustees and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

We note news on the developing relationship with Woodbrooke; reflection on the effective provision of support to area meetings; and learning from the experience of Friends engaged in developing new regional governance structures.

We have heard encouragement to support the yearly meeting financially as we are able.

We uphold trustees in their service.

MfS/24/10/08 Group to review central structures

We have heard that the Group is currently consulting Friends prior to submitting a formal proposal to Yearly Meeting in 2025. We encourage representatives to publicise this work amongst Friends and to engage with the consultation process.

MfS/24/10/09 Our work in Palestine and Israel

Further to minute MfS/24/06/09, we receive paper MfS 2024 10 11 which provides a report on discernment from Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) on the use of the terms genocide and apartheid in relation to the current conflict in Palestine and Israel.

Our twin roles as prophets and reconcilers may be difficult to balance. We reaffirm that ultimately our task is to engage in peace building focused on ending the illegal occupation and seeking justice for all who live there and the surrounding region, however we note that in this situation our primary role is to bear witness. "The first skill [in addressing conflict] is naming: being clear and honest about the problem as I

see it" (*Quaker faith & practice* 20.71). We note the recommendation that we should align with the International Court of Justice rulings that the term apartheid is an accurate description of the situation in occupied Palestine and that there is a plausible risk of genocide in Gaza. We accept this advice as honouring our commitment to speak truth in love. As George Fox said, "My allegiance lies in truth and faithfulness" (*Quaker faith & practice* 19.37)

We also note the increasing tensions in our own society, where some faith communities face significant hostility, and that we have significant work to do in supporting interfaith relationships here. "Let all things be done for building up", (1 Corinthians 14:26). We recognise that additional work may require the commitment of additional resources.

MfS/24/10/10 Reparations Working Group

We have heard from the Reparations Working Group and we are impressed by the progress it has made in its first year by approaching the task methodically, and when relevant working in conjunction with others, including area meetings and Woodbrooke.

Members of the group are keen to engage Friends with their work and are willing to talk to area meetings and share their findings so far about British Quaker involvement in transatlantic chattel slavery, colonialism, and economic exploitation. They can be contacted by email at equity@quaker.org.uk

We have heard that Christine Habgood-Coote, the Meeting for Sufferings representative on the working group, has asked to be released from service. We agree to this request, with immediate effect. We will take the appropriate steps to find a member of Meeting for Sufferings to fill this role.

We thank the group for its report and Rita Remi-Judah for presenting it and answering our questions.

MfS/24/10/11 Marriage declaration

Last December, Meeting for Sufferings received a paper from the Book of Discipline Revision Committee asking us to consider the wording of the marriage declaration (minute MfS/23/12/07). We receive over 50 minutes and contributions from area meetings, central committees and other bodies, and from individual Friends.

From the responses, it is clear that we are not yet of one mind on this matter, but that Friends have welcomed the opportunity to engage with it. We value the discernment so far.

We are not in a position to resolve this matter at this meeting, but it seems clear that there is a will take this forward.

We are clear that marriage, in Quaker understanding, is a commitment of the couple held in the Light witnessed by the supporting meeting.

We ask that a working group be formed under the auspices of QLCC to work further on the matter of wording and we will return to this matter at a later date.

We send this minute to QLCC.

MfS/24/10/12 Closing worship

We closed our time together in worship.

Robert Card
Clerk

Meeting for Sufferings: Functions Checklist (*Quaker faith & practice* Chapter 7.02)

	Requirement	October 24
A	To set the priorities for the centrally managed work	
B	To issue public statements in the name of BYM	
C	To receive regular interim reports from BYM trustees	7
D	To receive the BYM trustees' annual report & accounts for information	
E	To make a report on its own activities to YM	
F	To determine the dates of YM	
G	To deliberate on how best to support the spiritual life of the yearly meeting and to further the development of its visionary and prophetic role	9, 10
H	To keep under review and to test as appropriate the existing and new concerns referred to it by AMs and others	6, 11
I	To foster communication throughout the yearly meeting	8, 10
J	To receive minutes from area meetings	11
K	To make appropriate entries in the prison and court register	
I	To appoint representatives to attend other Yearly Meetings	4
M	To receive information about changes in the composition or status of general meetings and gatherings	
N	To make changes in the composition of area meetings	
O	To give assistance to area meetings in the amicable settlement of disputes	
P	To hear appeals against area meeting decisions	
Q	To give guidance on policy matters referred to it by the BYM trustees from time to time	
R	To authorise action and minute as required under other sections of <i>Quaker faith & practice</i>	
S	To set up an arrangements group and support and working groups to assist its own work as it sees fit	4