



Yearly Meeting of
the Religious Society
of Friends in Britain

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

12 February 2016

Meeting for Sufferings 6 February 2016

Dear Friends,

As ever, there are a number of items we are asking you to take back to your meetings.

One or two friends asked me where they could find a copy of the FWCC epistle which was read in the opening worship – it is available on the FWCC website:

<http://fwcc.world/plenary-2016/epistle-from-2016-friends-world-committee-for-consultation-world-plenary-international-representatives-meeting>

Our continued consideration of the life of our Area Meetings wasn't specifically referred back but I know that some of you are intending to take back ideas, particularly from the home group discussions. The item on refugees is another one that, whilst it hasn't been referred back to meetings I'm sure Friends would be interested to know that QPSW central committee are going to be considering options for action – and I'm sure they would still be interested in receiving ideas for action.

Yearly Meeting: please encourage Friends to look out for and use the spiritual preparation material and also remind Friends that they need to register their intention to attend.

Sustainability: We have particularly asked you to ensure that your Area Meeting is sending a representative to the Sustainability Gathering in March. Linked to that, we also need to ensure Area Meetings to make time for their representatives to report back!

Preparation for April Sufferings: I promised I would include the (not necessarily exclusive) list of overarching issues that I read out:

- Criminal justice
- Economic justice
- Education
- Peace
- Refugees
- Sustainability

We will send you more information after Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements group meet in a couple of weeks, but as well as having a chance to look at the various minutes we have received over the last 2-3 years in a holistic way, we are also hoping to have the opportunity to share stories of what is happening locally – not just about the actual work, but also about the process of testing and discernment that the Area or Local Meeting went through either to take on the work or the testing to continue or lay down the work.

Yours in Friendship

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ethel Livermore". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Ethel Livermore,
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

The following papers are also included in this mailing:

- February 2016 MfS Minutes

Meeting for Sufferings held at Friends House, Saturday 6 February 2016

MfS/16/02/01 Opening worship

During our opening worship we have heard read parts of the epistle of the Friends World Committee for Consultation World Plenary meeting held in Pisac, Peru, 19-27 January 2016. We have also remembered former members of this meeting who have recently died.

MfS/16/02/02 Apologies

We receive apologies from Bournemouth Coastal AM, which has not been able to send a representative on this occasion.

MfS/16/02/03 Minutes

The minutes of our meeting held on 4-6 December 2015 have been signed.

MfS/16/02/04 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 2018:

Nominated:

Rachel Berger – Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee
John Capper – Thaxted AM alternate

Release requests received:

Janet May-Bowles – Chilterns AM Representative & MfS Support Group convenor
Richard Summers – Management Meeting
Jenny Hodgkin – QCCIR Representative
Linda Murgatroyd – QLCC alternate

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

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

Nicholas Sims – Chilterns AM
Caro Kelley – Lancashire Central & North AM
Jane Heydecker – West Kent AM
Sue Hannam – West Somerset AM
Ruth Serner – North London AM

Other visitors:

Tony Fitt – Committee on Clerks
Anne van Staveren – Media Relations Officer

MfS/16/02/05 Adoption of Agenda

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

MfS/16/02/06 Court and prison register

Sam Sender, London West Area Meeting, was one of thirteen members of Plane Stupid arrested and charged in July 2015 at Heathrow Airport, as part of a campaign against a third runway. On 25 January at Willesden Magistrates Court all the defendants were found guilty of aggravated trespass and being airside without lawful authority. Sentencing is expected on 24 February. We hold Sam Sender in the light.

MfS/16/02/07 Quaker faith & practice: BYM Budgeting process

Further to minute MfS 2014/12/05/a, we have received advice from Church Government Advisory Group (CGAG) in response to minute 11/09/14 of Northumbria AM (part of paper MfS/2016/02/03).

Northumbria AM had felt that the process of budget setting is not clearly documented in Quaker faith & practice, and that there is a lack of clarity about accountability.

CGAG has reviewed the broad information set out in Quaker faith & practice. The text states that Meeting for Sufferings can set priorities for the centrally managed work, which needs to take account of the advice of BYM Trustees and funds available (7.02a). It also states that BYM Trustees approve the budget each year (8.16), and that they are enabled to employ staff to carry out BYM's work effectively (8.19): this could include preparing budgets.

We have been reminded that the purpose of Quaker faith and practice is to express the general principles underlying how the Yearly Meeting is organised, rather than to set out details which may not stand the test of time.

For these reasons, CGAG advises that it is neither desirable nor necessary to include additional detail at this time.

We accept this advice.

MfS/16/02/08 Refugees and asylum seekers

Quaker Peace and Social Witness has consulted Meeting for Sufferings in advance of testing options for possible further work to address the refugee crisis.

QPSWCC seeks advice on possible Quaker involvement in a scheme to support the private sponsorship of refugees (part of paper MfS/2016/02/03). The Government has stated, in general terms, that it is willing to run a Private Sponsorship scheme for refugees, in which community groups and individuals would agree to provide full support for a refugee, or a refugee family, for their first 12 months in Britain. Some national or regional bodies are registering their serious interest in becoming umbrella bodies who would encourage and support their members to participate in the scheme. QPSWCC is considering whether Quakers in Britain should take an initial step towards involvement. QPSW's helpful paper sets out the background, some practical information and possible implications, as well as arguments in favour and against.

We have heard mixed reactions to the proposal. There has been a 'guarded' yes from a number of Friends and Meetings, though with the understanding that a lot more work is needed on the scheme and in clarifying the impact of working with Citizens UK.

There have also been serious reservations expressed both about the scheme itself and the impact this could have on existing work with and services for refugees.

We have also heard about the importance of our work as Quakers addressing the underlying issues, including removing the causes of war.

We forward this minute to QPSWCC and hold them in the light in their consideration. We look forward to hearing from them of their progress.

MfS/16/02/09 Yearly Meeting 2016

Deborah Rowlands, clerk designate of Yearly Meeting, has told us about the proposed agenda for Yearly Meeting 2016. Copies of the spiritual preparation leaflet are being sent to Meetings; and we ask representatives to encourage Friends and Meetings to use this material.

We receive and note minute YMAC/2015/10/15 regarding numbers attending Yearly Meeting, and ask representatives to encourage Friends to register for Yearly Meeting in advance.

MfS/16/02/10 Yearly Meeting 2018 and 2019

Minute MfS/11/02/8 agreed a three-yearly pattern for the dates of Yearly Meeting.

We receive minute YMAC 2015/11/14 proposing that Yearly Meeting should be held 4-7 May 2018 and 24 – 27 May 2019, both at Friends House London. We agree to this.

MfS15/02/11 Our faith in the future: mind the gap

At our meetings in September and December 2015, Meeting for Sufferings has grappled with some important issues. In September, we looked forward at our vision and we accepted Our Faith in the Future as our new framework document, 'as a guide for our future discernment and decision- making.' In December we looked at where we are now, in particular the 'nature and state of our area meetings in Britain' – hearing of both hope and struggle and emphasising the importance of communication and education within and amongst Friends.

Today we have considered how to address the gap between where we are now, and where we want to be.

We recognise that Meeting for worship is the bedrock of living as a Quaker. In looking at what we do together discernment, 'listening to the will of God' and following our leadings, are all key phrases that we use. We recognise that Quakerism is not learnt by osmosis and that newer Friends and attenders do not always understand what these mean. We need to be willing to explain, explore, test and practice our ways.

We need to be willing to speak with a confident voice, both to the outside world and within our own Meetings.

MfS/16/02/12 BYM Sustainability Group

Frances Voelcker, a member of the BYM Sustainability Group, has spoken to the Group's written report (paper MfS/2016/02/07).

We are encouraged to hear of the work that is already happening across the Yearly Meeting. We are disappointed to learn that currently only about half of AMs have appointed representatives to attend the Sustainability Gathering in March. We encourage all AMs and other invited bodies to try to appoint a representative. The conference is a valuable opportunity for sharing ideas and re-energising Friends.

We are also pleased to support the BYM Sustainability Group in developing the 'Nurturing our Sustainability Ministry' project and look forward to hearing more about this in the future.

We thank the Group for its ongoing work on our behalf.

MfS/16/02/13 Appointments

a) Yearly Meeting Nominating Group

Brings forward the following names for service or release:

Central Nominations Committee

To serve from Yearly Meeting 2016 until Yearly Meeting 2017 to fill a vacancy

Nominate:

Louise Rendle – North West London AM

We appoint our Friend accordingly.

b) Central Nominations Committee

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

Friends Trusts Ltd

To serve from 1 June 2016 to 31 May 2019

Nominate:

Peter Green – North East Thames AM

Tony Crofts – Bristol AM

Meeting for Sufferings Support Group

To serve until September 2018

Nominate:

Joan Bulmer – Kingston & Wandsworth AM

Pendle Hill Friends in Residence

To serve from September to December 2016

Nominate:

Carolyn Burch – Devon AM

Richard Raggett – Devon AM

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations

Release after Yearly Meeting 2016:

Mike Glover – Brighouse West Yorkshire AM

Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee

Release:

Daphne Glazer – Pickering & Hull AM

Representatives to European Yearly Meetings

To serve as representative to the following Yearly Meetings:

Nominated:

Belgium & Luxembourg YM

Huw Still – York AM

German YM

Tim Brown – Cambridgeshire AM

Ireland YM

Ann Floyd – Chilterns AM

Netherlands YM

Anne Bennett – Lincolnshire AM

Norway YM

Fred Ashmore – Kingston & Wandsworth AM

Switzerland YM

Jane Mace – Gloucestershire AM

Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group

Release:

Sally Nicholls – Oxford & Swindon AM

Meeting for Sufferings Support Group

Release:

Janet May-Bowles – Chilterns AM

We appoint and release these Friends accordingly, and thank them for their service.

MfS/16/02/14 Preparation for April 2016 Meeting for Sufferings

Our clerk has spoken about the proposed agenda for our next meeting, when we will have an opportunity to consider again Yearly Meeting 2015 minute 36, the 'call for equality', and to prepare for Yearly Meeting 2016. We hope to consider minutes from Area Meetings regarding our Quaker witness in the world. Friends are encouraged to prepare prayerfully, where possible to consider relevant issues with others, and also to use this process to prepare for Yearly Meeting.

MfS/16/02/15 Close

We close, hoping to meet again in London on 2 April 2016.

Ethel Livermore
Clerk