

Follow up Letter



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

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

6 October 2018

Meeting for Sufferings 6 October 2018

Thank you all for your hard work on Saturday – your focus, concern and prayer for all of the issues which we addressed enabled us to cope with a large amount of business. We hope we can be more generous with time at our next meeting.

The minutes are with this letter and I think there may be 6 key topics for you to report to your area meetings: 3 items of information about which we can enthuse and 3 items over which we struggled to find the way forward.

The report from Edwina Peart about the findings so far, from friends across the country, on issues of diversity and inclusion in our meetings, was thought –provoking and inspiring (minute 11) and we will find out more in April next year. Similarly the report on the work of the Vibrancy Project was exciting to hear (minute 9) and thirdly, we rejoiced throughout the day in the presence of about 30 young people (13-18) meeting with us and alongside us. We also have decided to experiment for the rest of the triennium by allocating four extra places on Meeting for Sufferings to young adult Quakers (minute 21).

The matters before us for decision were as follows:

Sustainability: minute 20 describes where we have got to on this matter. We have made some progress and we have more thinking to do next time.

Investment policy: minute 19 records our commitment to avoid investment in occupied Palestine

Priorities for Centrally- managed work: we were unable to complete our consideration about this on Saturday: please do not discard my paper – we will return to this matter again. We received full information from BYM trustees about their work and we welcomed the

strategic priorities that they have developed. We have the minutes from their meeting and representatives are reminded that we are encouraged to invite one or two trustees to visit our Area Meeting, and to talk and answer questions about their work.

Please do not discard my paper on priority-setting for CMW – we will return to this matter again.

Our meeting on Saturday began with a reflection on the nature of suffering in the world today and I am challenged by the question quoted by Beth Allen in 'God, words and us': How do Quakers show people who are in despair that there can be hope? Surely our focus has to be on the spirit of love in the world, and the practice of loving-kindness. We were reminded again, on Saturday, that:

Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand. (Qf&p 10.01)

Peace be with you,



Anne Ullathorne
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

The following papers are included in this mailing:

- Minutes of the Meeting held 6 October 2018
- Meeting for Sufferings: functions list (October 2018)



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

At a meeting of Meeting for Sufferings

Held at Friends House, London on Saturday 6 October 2018

MfS/18/10/01 Opening Worship

During opening worship we have heard *Quaker faith & practice* 3.05 read.

MfS/18/10/02 Young People's Participation Day

We are meeting today with and alongside the Young People's Participation Day. Young Friends have joined us in our opening worship, and we have spent time considering questions:

- *What is your most significant Quaker memory?*
- *What helps you feel like you belong to your Quaker community?*
- *What do you treasure about Meeting for Worship?*
- *How has Quakerism made a difference to your life?*

as a way of building connections between generations. They will spend some of the day in their own programme, sharing lunch with members of Meeting for Sufferings, and joining us again for part of our afternoon session.

MfS/18/10/03 Apologies

We receive apologies from North London and Surrey & Hampshire Border Area Meetings, which have not been able to send a representative on this occasion.

MfS/18/10/04 Membership

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

Nominated:

Peter Aviss – Sussex East AM alternate
Mary Dower – North Scotland AM alternate
Rosemary Elias – West Weald AM alternate
Janet Ferguson – West Kent AM alternate
Mariu Hurriaga – West Weald AM representative

We appoint the Friends named.

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

Dori Miller – Wirral & Chester AM

Minutes

Other visitors:

Ellie Harding – Young Friends General Meeting
Suzanne Ismail – BYM staff, Head of Networking & Engagement
James Johnson – BYM Staff, Recording Clerk's Office
Jonathan King – Mid Essex AM
Naomi Major – BYM staff, Engaging Young Friends Project Officer
Rachel Matthews – BYM staff, Vibrancy in Meetings Programme Co-ordinator
Edwina Peart – BYM staff, Inclusion and Diversity Co-ordinator
Chloe Scaling – BYM staff, RCO Intern
Anne van Staveren – BYM staff, Media Relations Officer
Keith Walton – Kingston & Wandsworth AM

MfS/18/10/05 Agenda

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

MfS/18/10/06 Court and Prison Register

We have heard that on 28 March 2017, Lyndsay Burtonshaw, an attender at Brighton Meeting, along with 14 others, entered the perimeter of Stansted Airport and stopped a deportation charter flight. They have been charged, and the trial in Chelmsford Crown Court which began on 1 October is expected to last 7 weeks. The group is being supported by Chelmsford Quaker Meeting, Quaker Asylum-Seeker and Refugee Network (QARN) and BYM's Sanctuary Everywhere Programme.

We ask for this information to be included in the Court and Prison Register. We hold Lyndsay Burtonshaw in the Light.

MfS/18/10/07 BYM Trustees

Ingrid Greenhow, clerk of BYM Trustees, has spoken to us of their work, and we have received the minutes of Trustees' meeting held on 7-8 September 2018.

We have heard that:

- 1) following a review of the procedure for legacy-funded projects, trustees wish to appoint three of their number to consider all project proposals
- 2) trustees received a progress report on the mid-term operational plan and reviewed work to date. There is much to celebrate (including the fact that the holding of YM was greatly improved, and there is a wealth of peace education work, advocacy on climate change, and engagement with sanctuary meetings)
- 3) trustees are simplifying their subcommittee structure so that committees are smaller and more effective
- 4) they also worked further on the strategic priorities for the CMW under the goal of Our Faith In the Future (the vision set by Meeting for Sufferings). Trustees are prioritising 3 main areas of work: thriving Quaker communities, a sustainable peaceful world and simple structure and practice. They have also established working criteria to enable clearer judgment so that the question is not just *what* is done but also *how* it is done: is the work distinctly Quaker, is it integrated throughout the YM and is it well-governed? We are pleased to see this paper and encourage trustees to take it forward.

We are reminded today that we need to trust each other and to trust in the workings of the Spirit in all that we do.

We thank the Trustees for their report.

MfS/18/10/08 Prioritising Centrally-managed work

Further to minute MfS/17/06/17, we have returned to consideration of questions about central decision-making processes in Britain Yearly Meeting, raised by Kingston and Wandsworth Area Meeting.

Our clerk has prepared a paper that tries to describe how our current bodies work together today, in setting priorities.

We are pleased to hear from trustees about their plans for a more simple church as this, in turn, should enable MfS to be clearer about the development of the life of a simple church.

We do not wish the complexity of the whole process to stop us doing what we can to understand it and to move in the direction of greater clarity. It is like beginning to untie a knot in a tangled ball of wool.

This is one part of the role of MfS and we appreciate that we have opportunities to review and comment on the work of BYM trustees at our meetings.

We expect to return to these issues again.

MfS/18/10/09 Vibrancy in Meetings

We have received a paper providing an update about the Vibrancy in Meetings pilot project. Rachel Matthews (National Co-ordinator) and Suzanne Ismail (Head of Networking and Engagement) have spoken to it.

The work of the vibrancy team focusses on 'nurturing and nourishing the spirit, helping to ground practice and process in worship and enable leadings to spring up.' It has been iterative and has involved 18 area meetings. It has focussed on the aspirations of *Our Faith in the Future* – strengthening the everyday of our Quaker lives. The team have met with over 100 local meetings, covering various topics.

We have heard how much is being done in some areas to help local meetings. What is blocking the Spirit? What do you need to become what you can be?

The pilot project is expected to finish in December 2019 – BYM and Woodbrooke trustees are intending to make decisions about its future in June 2019.

We hope to hear more about this in April, once Woodbrooke and BYM Trustees have considered the main evaluation report.

We thank Rachel and Suzanne for their report to us today.

MfS/18/10/10 Nominations and Appointments

a) Yearly Meeting Committee on Clerks

Committee on Clerks brings forward the following names for service from January to December 2019:

Anne Ullathorne, Central England AM	Meeting for Sufferings Clerk
Margaret Bryan, York AM	Meeting for Sufferings Assistant Clerk

These Friends are appointed accordingly.

b) Meeting for Sufferings Standing Nominations Group

We agree to set up a Standing Nominations Group.

We ask staff to prepare draft Terms of Reference. We ask the following Friends to serve on the Group:

Ann Banks (Brighouse West Yorkshire AM)

Jeff Beatty (Southern Marches AM)

Jill Clarke (West Kent AM)

Kathy Gollin (West Somerset AM)

Mike Shilson (South West Scotland AM)

c) Other appointments

Central Nominations Committee brings forwards the following names for service or release:

a) Central Nominations Committee

BYM Trustees

Request for release from 31 December 2018:

Roy Love York AM

Quaker Housing Trust

Request for immediate release from:

Annie Bellinger Wirral & Chester AM

Quaker Life Central Committee

To serve from appointment to 31 December 2020:

Max Kirk York AM

Representatives to other European Meetings

France YM – 27-30 October (invitation confirmed)

Lesley Grahame Norfolk & Waveney AM

b) Yearly Meeting Nominating Group

Central Nominations Committee

Request for immediate release from:

Heather Lister Bristol AM

Strawberry Roth Dorset and South Wiltshire AM

These names being acceptable, we appoint the Friends named accordingly and release those who have requested release, thanking them for their service.

MfS/18/10/11 Diversity and Inclusion

In 2017, Yearly Meeting 'heard the call to examine our own diversity, particularly in our committee and organisational structure, locally and nationally'. Yearly Meeting asked MfS 'to look at how we can remove barriers and actively seek wider participation in the full life of our meetings...' Last October, we sent three questions to Area Meetings and committees, as a way of starting this consideration (MfS/17/10/22).

BYM has employed an Inclusion and Diversity Co-ordinator, to help us with this consideration. The Co-ordinator, Edwina Peart, has spoken to paper MfS/18/10/12 and told us more about how Friends are responding.

We have heard that we are diverse and inclusive in terms of sexual orientation, age and gender, but not always in terms of race, socio-economic status and younger people.

We recognise a proactive approach and a greater warmth of welcome are needed.

Edwina has told us of her initial plans for the next phase of work. She will continue to gather feedback and scope the current situation, pilot a baseline audit, and work with meetings to address their particular issues building on their strengths. There will be training and opportunities for dialogue. There will be a diversity and inclusion National Gathering 18-20 January 2019 at Woodbrooke.

We will return to this again in April 2019. Meetings and committees are strongly encouraged to start or continue how we can remove barriers and seek wider participation, and to send any further minutes before the end of February next year.

We thank Edwina for her report to us today.

MfS/18/10/12 Quaker local meetings' website framework

We receive minute 18/58 of Kingston and Wandsworth AM held on 8 July 2018. The AM has adopted a concern to create a website framework that will enable all local meetings to have an online presence, aiming in particular at newcomers, existing Friends, and potential Meeting House hirers.

We wish to draw this to the attention of members of our local and area meetings and hope that they will engage with it.

MfS/18/10/13 Chaplaincy

We receive part of minute 18:07:05 of South Wales AM held on 14 July 2018 regarding Police Chaplains. The minute has been sent for information.

Meetings and individual Friends may wish to consider the potential value of offering chaplaincy to the police and other 'blue-light' services, and whether this is something they wish to explore further.

We forward this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee.

MfS/18/10/14 Nominations processes

We receive minute 18/63 of Southern Marches AM held on 14 July 2018. The AM has noted that during Yearly Meeting 2018 Friends were invited to put forward names for service on the Book of Discipline Revision Group. This generated a large number of possible names; the AM wonders whether the same process might be worth considering for other appointments.

We have been reminded that when Central Nominations Committee (CNC) was reviewed in 2015, several changes in practice were recommended, including different ways of encouraging Friends to offer to serve on committees. CNC is already experimenting with different ways of doing things, including advertisements in The Friend and elsewhere.

We forward this minute to Central Nominations Committee.

MfS/18/10/15 Treasurers Handbook

Quaker Stewardship Committee (QSC) has sent us its minute 2018/06/08, noting lessons learned in the course of revising the treasurers' handbook. QSC notes that handbooks need to be

reviewed on a regular basis and some resources are needed for updating. QSC advises that MfS and the Book of Discipline Revision Committee will need to ensure there are mechanisms for the sustainability of handbooks.

We forward this minute to the Book of Discipline Revision Committee, for it to consider in due course.

MfS/18/10/16 Gender identity

Further to minute MfS/17/04/15, we receive Quaker Life Central Committee minute 18.37, updating us about the Committee's consideration of transgender and non-binary inclusion. We note that QLCC's learning and exploration continues, and we can expect to hear more at a later date.

MfS/18/10/17 Vulnerable adults

Further to minute MfS/17/04/14, we receive Quaker Life Central Committee minute 18.49. Legal guidance regarding vulnerable adults in England has now been prepared and sent to Meetings, and is available online.

MfS/18/10/18 Circles of Support and Accountability

In July we heard from Central England AM that the National Probation Service was withdrawing funding for Circles of Support and Accountability. In Britain, BYM worked to establish this volunteer-based means of supporting registered sex offenders, which aims to minimise re-offending; 'Circles UK' became an independent organisation in 2008. The Recording Clerk, and several concerned Friends, had written to the Minister of State for the Ministry of Justice, making the case for continued funding.

BYM staff have informed us that Circles UK met with the Minister and officials in July. As a result of this, and follow-up discussions, there is now cautious optimism that some progress is being made.

MfS/18/10/19 BYM investments in Israel/Palestine

Last December, MfS received minutes asking BYM to consider adding companies profiting from the occupation of Palestine to BYM's list of exclusions for investment purposes. At that time, we heard that BYM does not hold such investments. We have also heard that the investment policy is to be reviewed shortly. Our minute MfS/17/12/09 was forwarded to BYM Trustees, Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC), and Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR).

We now receive QCCIR's minute 18/07c; QPSWCC's minute 18/15 (part); and BYM Trustees' minute 2018/09/09c. We also receive a paper from QPSW staff, setting out the issues.

We have been reminded today that Quakers have been called to take a stand against a wide range of practices in the past including the slave trade, the arms trade and apartheid South Africa.

We do not want to cause difficulties in our relations with parts of the Jewish and Christian communities but we feel the need to affirm our stance against unethical behaviour, wherever and whenever it arises.

We reaffirm our decision made in 2011 to boycott settlement goods, until such time as the Israeli occupation of Palestine is ended.

We are glad to hear from BYM Trustees that there are currently no investments in any company profiting from the occupation of Palestine and we would encourage them to amend their investment policy to ensure that this remains the case.

However we realise this may be difficult and hope that the database currently being drawn up by United Nations Human Rights Council will be used.

As we minuted in 2011, we continually pray for both Israelis and Palestinians, keeping them together in our hearts, and looking forward to a future of loving and generous co-operation.

MfS/18/07/20 Sustainability: living up to our commitment

Britain Yearly Meeting Sustainability Group (BYMSG) is a working group of Meeting for Sufferings (MfS); it works to oversee and encourage progress in relation to the commitment, made at Yearly Meeting in 2011, to become a low-carbon, sustainable community. For some time, BYMSG has been considering how best to encourage and support local and area meetings in monitoring carbon use. (Our minutes 2017/02/06 and 2017/04/07 refer.) Following our discernment in April, a meeting was held in July to consider how our focus on sustainability has been integrated into all of our centrally-managed work so far. We have received the minute from that meeting and also a report, from our clerk and the recording clerk, mapping the current position and asking us further questions.

We receive minute 2 of the meeting of BYMSG held on 6 September; minute 18.72 of Quaker Life Central Committee held 14-16 September; and minute 18/67 of Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee held 21-23 September, each of which responds to the minute of the July meeting.

1. We are pleased to see the table mapping both existing and proposed work and are content with this. (Today we have heard of some of the advocacy work currently taking place.) We will need to consider how MfS is able to monitor this and compile an annual report to Yearly Meeting.
2. Experiments in holding meetings of representatives of BYM committees, like the one held in July, seem a good way forward and there are often unexpected benefits in gathering together for liaison and mutual encouragement. MfS would need to hold an overview, identifying gaps and pursuing new ideas but we ask for these to be held regularly.
3. We suggest that Woodbrooke be approached to run national and regional face to face gatherings and events to nurture Friends' ministry in the testimony of sustainability. Worship, reflection, gaining insight, inspiration and learning can help us identify where we are being led. MfS may need to hold oversight of these gatherings.
4. The idea of BYM considering a target of becoming carbon neutral or 'net zero' in carbon is a new one and today we feel daunted to go further with this. We have been encouraged to return to the guidance in our Advices 41: 'Try to live simply'. However it may be invaluable for us all to reflect and consider what it means for us to be zero carbon: for our meetings and for centrally managed work and we ask for further guidance and advice.

In April we adopted the recommendation of the BYMSG review group to hold a sustainability meeting. We hope to return to the two other recommendations of that report in November: namely that BYMSG be laid down and that MfS maintain oversight of progress on sustainability.

We send this minute to BYMSG.

MfS/18/10/21 Young Adult Quakers and Meeting for Sufferings

The Engaging Young Adult Quakers (EYAQ) project is working to increase the involvement and visibility of young adults amongst Quakers in Britain. The project employs a Project Officer, whose work is guided by a Steering Group (of young adult Friends). The Steering Group has asked MfS to create four reserved places for young adult Friends (under the age of 35). This would be on an experimental basis, for the remainder of the current triennium (until Yearly Meeting 2021) and would be followed by a review.

This request chimes with the call heard at Yearly Meeting 2017 to examine our own diversity, and the decision to look at how we can remove barriers and actively seek wider participation in the full life of our meetings. Quaker Life Central Committee supports the proposal and we may obtain some new insights about our ways of working.

We agree to this request with enthusiasm.

MfS/18/10/22 Closing minute

Young people and staff joined us at the end of the day and gave us a report of their activities, which focussed on issues of diversity and inclusion. Their minute is attached. Discussions covered the theme of 'belonging' and what might be barriers and opportunities to feeling that we belong in a Quaker community. Meeting for Worship is a central activity in which we are all equal.

We closed our meeting with worship together.

Anne Ullathorne
Clerk

Attachment: minute from the Young Quaker Participation Day 2018

At Young Quaker Participation Day 2018 we began with worship and an all age ice-breaker with Meeting for Sufferings. The ice-breaker made us feel more connected to one another and we enjoyed finding out about other Quaker experiences.

After leaving Meeting for Sufferings we talked about what diversity meant to us. Some of the responses included that diversity is having a "wide range of characteristics" and there is a difference between diversity of beliefs and diversity of physicality for example, some aspects of diversity can be a choice and some can't. We also acknowledged that Quakers are already diverse in some aspects, such as gender and sexuality, but not in others, such as race or class.

We drew pictures of stereotypical Quakers incorporating features such as being older, being an activist and wearing socks and sandals. We then had a discussion through the medium of a continuum where people could express whether they agreed, disagreed or somewhere in the middle regarding a series of statements.

When posed the question 'Do you feel like a stereotypical Young Quaker?' there was a variety of responses however when asked 'Do you feel similar to the stereotypical Quakers drawn?' there was a feeling that we were very different. We acknowledged that stereotypes aren't always representative however we also talked about how this image of Quakers made us feel separate from a large majority of Quakers.

This discussion was reinforced by looking at characters that represented the wide diversity of the UK, for example in age, gender and class. We put ourselves in these people's positions then considered if they would feel welcome in Quaker communities and scenarios. This made us think about if we sometimes might be inadvertently exclusive in our behaviour due to our apparent lack of diversity.

We also heard from Paul Parker about his role and his experiences and how he developed from a Quaker our age to the Recording Clerk.

At lunch we ate with the representatives from our area meeting that allowed us to strengthen our relationship with older Quakers as well as gain an understanding of the work of the Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings.

Following lunch some participants attended meeting for sufferings. We felt it helpful to speak to Edwina Peart before attending, which helped us further our knowledge in what Meeting for Sufferings is doing regarding diversity and inclusion.

Other participants remained in the Young Quaker option and talked about the diversity of us as a group, and while we had many aspects of our lives that were diverse from one another, it's interesting to note that we as a group were predominantly white and middle class.

We then had some group discussions on three questions regarding barriers to belonging, opportunities for belonging and things we can change to create belonging both for ourselves and new people. We felt that a lack of awareness of opportunities, a lack of a Young Quaker voice in committees and a lack of confidence or initiative may contribute to a feeling of not belonging.

We said that all age events such as all age Business Meetings, Committee meetings and Summer Gatherings lead to people feeling like they belong. Also the setup of Quaker Worship was said to aid a sense of belonging as the equality of sitting in a circle and all participating together puts us on an even plane. We suggested that an increase in a varied outreach including, talks, meetings in familiar spaces like shopping centres, publicising all age events, and an increase interfaith outreach would help belonging.

Additionally, we talked about how we would like older Quakers to approach Young People not as extensions of our families but as individuals. Include us in committees both nationally and locally, but also recognise our varied experience and that for our inclusion elements of meetings may have to change, for example the language used and the times at which they're held. Meetings could also change by allowing people to quietly enter and exit throughout the meeting as historically was acceptable. We talked about how chats at the end of meetings allow new people to introduce themselves and holding more diverse all age getting to know you events may encourage belonging.

The Young Quaker Participation Day was an enlightening event that allowed us to feel like we had a voice in the goings on of Meeting for Sufferings and we hope that this continues.

Lucy Cox-Dodgson
Anya Nanning-Ramamurthy
Co-clerks

Meeting for Sufferings: are we addressing our functions?

Quaker faith & practice 7.02 sets out 19 functions of MfS (a-s). We're monitoring how the agenda items enable us to address these functions. Business at this meeting related to 11 of the functions. (Function i) *to foster communication throughout the yearly meeting* is also addressed by representatives before and after every meeting.)

- a) To set the priorities for the centrally managed work
 - MfS/18/10/07 BYM Trustees
 - MfS/18/10/08 Prioritising centrally-managed work

- c) To receive regular interim reports from BYM trustees
 - MfS/18/10/07 BYM Trustees

- 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
 - MfS/18/10/20 Sustainability: living up to our commitment
 - MfS/18/10/20 Young Adult Quakers and Meeting for Sufferings

- h) To keep under review and to test as appropriate the existing and new concerns to it by AMs and others
 - MfS/18/10/16 Gender identity
 - MfS/18/10/17 Vulnerable adults
 - MfS/18/10/18 Circles of support and accountability

- i) To foster communication throughout the Yearly Meeting
 - MfS/18/10/09 Vibrancy in meetings
 - MfS/18/10/11 Diversity and inclusion

- j) To receive minutes from area meetings
 - MfS/18/10/12 Quaker local meetings' website framework
 - MfS/18/10/13 Chaplaincy
 - MfS/18/10/14 Nominations processes

- k) To make appropriate entries in the prison and court register
 - MfS/18/10/06 Court and prison register

- l) To appoint representatives to attend other Yearly Meetings
 - MfS/18/10/06 Nominations and appointments: Representatives to other YMs

- q) To give guidance on policy matters referred to it by the BYM trustees from time to time
 - MfS/18/10/19 BYM investments in Israel/Palestine

- r) To authorise action and minute as required under other sections of Quaker Faith and Practice
 - MfS/18/10/15 Treasurers Handbook

- s) To set up an arrangements group and support and working groups to assist its own work as it sees fit
 - MfS/18/10/10 Nominations and appointments: MfS Standing nominations committee