



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

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

9 June 2017

Meeting for Sufferings 3 June 2017

Dear Friends,

The minutes of our meeting on Saturday 3rd June are attached and I think you will agree that it was a full day and there are several items to report to your Area meetings.

1. Minute 6 – the current work of [QCCIR](#) – you may also have kept a note of some of the interfaith/ecumenical activities taking place around the country which I felt were quite inspiring.
2. Minute 8 – how meetings may find they can use [Our Faith in the Future](#) as a framework for decision-making.
3. Minute 10 – we were reminded to be sure to support our Friends serving on [Central Nominations Committee](#) (and indeed in nominations work more generally).
4. Minute 11 – does your Area meeting support [YFGM](#) and appoint young adults to attend their gatherings

We also spent time on the whole issue of ‘setting, reviewing and reporting on overall priorities’ for centrally managed work and for Britain Yearly Meeting, as prompted by Kingston and Wandsworth Area Meeting. This is for us to consider further. Is what we do in Sufferings sufficient, particularly for an organisation that is guided by the Spirit? If not, what may we do differently? How do we move forward? Your Arrangements group will be pleased to receive your prayerful comments about this.

After the meeting we received a letter from New York Yearly Meeting about the recent terrorist attacks in Manchester and London, which I feel is right to share with you at this time.

Thank you for all your work for Sufferings. I hope many of you will be able to be at [Yearly Meeting Gathering](#) in Warwick – your support of your clerking team is always valued. And our next meeting will be in Manchester in October - you may already register for this [here](#).

Grace and peace be with you



Anne Ullathorne
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

The following papers are included in this mailing:

- Minutes of the Meeting held 3 June 2017
- New York Yearly Meeting letter to Friends in Britain Yearly Meeting
- Annual Trustees Report ([web link](#))

Meeting for Sufferings: are we addressing our functions?

Quaker faith and practice section 7.02 sets out 19 functions of Meeting for Sufferings (a-s). Arrangements Group hopes it will be helpful to monitor how the agenda items enable us to address these functions. Business at this meeting related to 7 of the functions. (We also hope that function i) *to foster communication throughout the yearly meeting* is addressed by representatives before and after every meeting.)

a) To set the priorities for the centrally managed work

- MfS 17/06/06, Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations
- MfS 17/06/08, Our Faith in the Future
- MfS 17/06/17, Central decision-making processes in Britain Yearly Meeting

c) To receive regular interim reports from BYM trustees

- MfS 17/06/07, BYM Trustees' report

d) To receive the BYM trustees' annual report & accounts for information

- MfS 17/06/07, BYM Trustees' report

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 17/06/06, Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations
- MfS 17/06/10, Central Nominations Committee
- MfS 17/06/11, Young Friends General Meeting
- MfS 17/06/17, Central decision-making processes in Britain Yearly Meeting

i) To foster communication throughout the Yearly Meeting

- MfS 17/06/06, Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations
- MfS 17/06/08, Our Faith in the Future
- MfS 17/06/11, Young Friends General Meeting
- MfS 17/06/14, QCEA General Assembly Epistle 2017
- MfS 17/06/18, BYM & IYM joint meeting

j) To receive minutes from area meetings

- MfS 17/06/15, Quaker Response to the International Situation
- MfS 17/06/16, Fracking
- MfS 17/06/17, Central decision-making processes in Britain Yearly Meeting

r) To authorise action and minutes as required under other sections of Quaker Faith and Practice

- MfS 17/06/19, Quaker Recognised Bodies

Receiving reports from central committees adds to our understanding and decisions regarding both A priorities and G supporting the spiritual life of the YM



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings

George Fox room, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ
Saturday 3 June 2017

Minutes

MfS/17/06/01 Opening worship

During opening worship we have heard read section 27.20 of *Quaker faith & practice*. We have also remembered former members of this meeting who have recently died.

MfS/17/06/02 Minutes

The minutes of our meeting held on 1 April 2017 have been signed.

MfS/17/06/03 Apologies

We receive apologies from Teesdale & Cleveland and West Kent Area Meetings, and Quaker Life Central Committee, which have not been able to send a representative on this occasion.

MfS/17/06/04 Membership

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:

Danny Chesterman – East Kent AM alternate
Bryony Elias – West Weald AM alternate

Release requests received:

Peter Atherall – East Kent AM alternate

We appoint the Friends named. We release the Friend named accordingly, and thank him for his service.

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

Tim Rouse – Young Friends General Meeting

Other visitors:

Jude Acton – Leeds AM
Marigold Bentley – BYM Staff: Quaker Peace & Social Witness Assistant General Secretary

Helen Cherry – BYM Staff: Yearly Meeting Gathering Accessibility Officer
Jane Dawson – BYM Staff: Head of External Communications

MfS/17/06/05 Agenda

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

MfS/17/06/06 Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations annual report

Stephanie Grant, member of QCCIR and QCCIR's representative to Meeting for Sufferings, has spoken to the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) annual report (MfS 2017 06 05).

We are reminded that QCCIR is responsible for keeping Britain Yearly Meeting informed of relevant issues and movements which emerge from the interchurch and interfaith life of Britain, and of opportunities for dialogue and co-operation between churches, between faiths, and between faiths and churches.....QCCIR supports members of Britain Yearly Meeting, both nationally and locally, in raising awareness and understanding of the interchurch and interfaith dimension of religious and spiritual life. (*Quaker faith and practice* 9.13)

We have heard about:

- a possible response to the World Council of Churches' statement on Religion and Violence
- the project on 'The changing face of faith in Britain' which is to address how Quakers may respond to a post-secular society, and we hope that this will link with other academic studies
- the four visitors coming to Yearly Meeting Gathering at the University of Warwick

Stephanie asked for guidance on the question of how to identify groups with whom QCCIR might connect. Being involved in our local Churches Together is a valuable way of being part of our wider community, which we must grasp with enthusiasm.

We have heard about ecumenical and interfaith activities of all kinds, our role in community and the possibility of meaningful encounters if we have the courage to step outside our own front door more often.

We re-affirm that in our communities there is more that unites us than divides us.

We thank QCCIR for the report and their work on our behalf, and Stephanie for speaking to us today.

MfS/17/06/07 BYM Trustees report

Ingrid Greenhow, clerk of BYM Trustees, introduced a new document called *Our faith in action – Quaker work in 2016*. It is distinct from the Trustees' Report and Financial Statements which set out the work and finances of BYM in detail to fulfil the requirements of our charitable status.

Our faith in action is set out under the headings of *Our faith in the future* and is designed to be an accessible, 'less is more' description of Quaker work. It has been very well received.

Peter Ullathorne, Yearly Meeting Treasurer, spoke to the summary review of financial activities for 2016 (MfS 2017 06 06a), and to the minutes of the Trustees meeting held on 31 March 2017. He reported a relatively comfortable position which has enabled us to carry out our planned work. As he has stressed before, Friends' support will need to increase in future to an average of £225 per member to sustain this level of activity.

The allocation of legacy funding to time-limited projects has been welcomed and encouraging reports demonstrates the value of this approach.

Friends House Hospitality Ltd. has been able to gift a surplus of £816,670 towards our charitable work, the highest figure achieved in the company's 10-year history. It is a beacon of good practice in business.

Working with QPSW staff and others, Trustees have engaged on the issue of tax justice with companies in which we invest. This work is ongoing.

Trustees consider that our reserves of £10.6 million are at a reasonable level for an organisation of this size.

We thank Peter for his report and all Trustees for their work on our behalf.

MfS/17/06/08 Our Faith in the Future

Meeting for Sufferings adopted *Our faith in the future*, our long-term framework document, in September 2015. It is based on contributions from Quakers throughout Britain, and provides a word picture of what Quakers in Britain today would like the Society to be like in the future. It is intentionally broad and not detailed, leaving each individual, meeting or committee free to discern where they are today and then decide on what actions they need to take to move their part of Yearly Meeting towards this vision.

We are now asking central committees to tell us how they are responding to the document, when they report to us. Today we have reflected on how Friends locally are using it.

Jude Acton has told us how Leeds Area Meeting has used *Our faith in the future* as a framework for exploring their shared ministry and how they use resources. When faced with a difficult decision, it became a useful tool and a day workshop led to new developments. Jude suggested that *Our faith in the future* was really useful if you can frame it around a real issue.

We have heard how other meetings have made use of the document. We thank Jude for her talk with us today.

MfS/17/06/09 Appointments

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

Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations

To serve from appointment to 30 April 2019

Lynda Williams Southern Marches AM

To serve from appointment to 30 April 2020

Sue Beardon Sheffield & Balby AM

Central Nominations Committee

Request for release from Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017

Peter Smith Norfolk & Waveney AM

Friends Trusts Limited

To serve from 1 June 2017 until 31 May 2020

Richard Anderson Oxford & Swindon AM (*second term*)

Janet Slade Manchester & Warrington AM (*second term*)

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

MfS/17/06/10 Central Nominations Committee

In 2014 Meeting for Sufferings set up a group to review the terms of reference of Central Nominations Committee (CNC). The group's recommendations were welcomed and forwarded to Yearly Meeting 2016, which approved new terms of reference.

When it approved the recommendations, Meeting for Sufferings asked CNC to bring an update on its new way of working after there had been a year of implementation of these terms of reference. (MfS 2015 12 10).

Christine Habgood-Coote and Terry Faull have spoken to the CNC's report (MfS 2017 06 09) on the new ways of working.

They have informed members of Sufferings about some of the key changes for Central Nominations Committee including for the committee itself, now much smaller; the changing way of working for the search groups, focussing discernment on gifts; and a consideration of methods of communication.

We have been told of key challenges which are:

1. Helping younger Friends, those with disabilities, those in paid employment or with other commitments to identify and use their gifts
2. Finding a balance between the need to serve local and area meetings whilst also using Friends gifts in BYM central work
3. Supporting Friends so that they do not become overburdened by the tasks we ask them to undertake

We hope that Area Meetings will support those Friends who are serving on CNC and we thank Christine and Terry for their report.

MfS/17/06/11 Young Friends General Meeting

We receive a tabled report from Young Friends General Meeting (MfS 2017 06 10), and Tim Rouse, a management officer and trustee of YFGM, has spoken to it.

We are pleased to know more about the gatherings and work of YFGM and to hear of the thriving spiritual community of young adult Friends which is flourishing and expanding.

Our Area Meetings are challenged to support YFGM, to appoint representatives to its gatherings, to publicise events and generally to support Quaker activities that are more inclusive of young adults.

We thank YFGM for their report and Tim for presenting it today.

MfS/17/06/12 The Retreat

Further to paper MfS 2017 06 12 we note the changes to the constitution of The Retreat. Accordingly, we release the Friends appointed as representatives to the Retreat General Meeting, thanking them for their service.

MfS/17/06/13 Appeals

Further to paper MfS 2017 06 14, we approve the request of the Group to Review Appeals Procedures for an extension of its terms of service to the end of May 2018.

MfS/17/06/14 QCEA General Assembly Epistle 2017

We receive and note the Epistle from the Quaker Council for European Affairs General Assembly meeting in held April 2017 (MfS 2017 06 15).

MfS/17/06/15 Quaker Response to the international situation

We receive minute 2017 03 06 of Thaxted Area Meeting held on 12 March 2017 regarding concern over sustainability and the Quaker response to the international situation (MfS 2017 06 11a). We note that the Area Meeting encourages MfS to be bold in making timely statements.

MfS/17/06/16 Fracking

We receive minute 17/34 of Bristol Area Meeting held on 25 March 2017 reporting on an Area Meeting conference on fracking and divestment from fossil fuels. Speakers at this conference were inspirational.

We forward this minute to QPSWCC for information.

MfS/17/06/17 Central decision-making processes in Britain Yearly Meeting

We receive minute 17/05 of Kingston and Wandsworth Area Meeting held on 22 January 2017, and minute 17/20 of Kingston & Wandsworth Area Meeting held on 19 March 2017, regarding concern about central decision-making processes in Britain Yearly Meeting. A minute of Kingston & Wandsworth Area Meeting held on 21 May 2017 has been tabled today and our clerk has explained the background to these minutes and the dialogue that has occurred between herself and the clerk of the Area Meeting.

In the most recent minute, the Area Meeting challenges Meeting for Sufferings to 'fulfil its governance responsibilities by re-establishing its proactive work in setting, reviewing and reporting on overall priorities'.

We have had a time of threshing this afternoon but have not reached clarity about the way forward.

We have heard of the limitations of words in *Quaker faith and practice* chapter 7.

Organisations develop over time and organically. We acknowledge that if some Friends feel marginalised and not involved, these feelings need to be addressed.

We ask Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group to consider this further and report back to us.

MfS/17/06/18 BYM & IYM joint meeting

We receive a minute of a meeting between representatives of Britain Yearly Meeting and Ireland Yearly Meeting held on 6 May 2017 at Quaker House, Dublin (MfS 2017 06 11b).

We are pleased that relationships with Irish friends are renewed in such meetings.

MfS/17/06/19 Quaker Recognised Bodies

Further to minute MfS/15/12/1, we receive paper MfS 2017/06/13 recommending 7 groups for registration as Quaker Recognised Bodies.

We agree to register the following groups for five years, with registration to be reviewed before June 2022:

External

The China Group

The Retreat

Northern Friends Peace Board

Free-standing

Friends Historical Society

Quaker Esperanto Society/Kvakera Esperantisto-Societo

Quaker Universalist Group (QUG)

We agree to register the following group for two years, with registration to be reviewed before June 2019:

Emergent

Friends with Jewish Connections

MfS/17/06/20 Close

We close, intending to meet again on 7 October, in Manchester.

Anne Ullathorne

Clerk

New York Yearly Meeting

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

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Dear Friends in Britain Yearly Meeting,

Our hearts and prayers go out to you in this time of repeated assaults on your nation, assaults consciously intended to turn the hearts of your land from love and tolerance to fear, alienation, and hatred. We are moved by the capacity of the British people to choose love over fear, and open hearts over a desire for vengeance. Your witness is a telling testimony to the world as to the possibility to live out Jesus' admonitions to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us.

We imagine that while we hear of British resolve to not lose your principles or your commitment to an open society despite these vicious attacks, that there are many advocating for draconian measures to try to ensure the safety of your citizens. We stand with you as you discern how to respond to the latter, and how to be a voice for the Inner Light residing in all hearts.

We grieve for those lost and for those injured. We pray for healing peace for the survivors and for the families and loved ones of all. We join you in unceasing openness to peace, and when we are led through the valley of the shadow of death we continue in trust to dwell in the house of the Lord.

In peace,

Christopher Sammond, General Secretary

Lucinda Antrim, Presiding Clerk