

Minutes of Meeting for Sufferings 6 December 2014

MfS 2014 12 01 Opening Worship

During our opening worship we have been joined by members of the Young People's Participation Day taking place alongside Meeting for Sufferings.

We have remembered former members of this meeting who have recently died, and we have heard read part of section 19.12 of Quaker faith & practice.

MfS 2014 12 02 Minutes

The minutes of our meeting held on 4 October 2014 have been signed.

MfS 2014 12 03 Adoption of agenda

We have reflected on issues to be considered during our meeting and have agreed the agenda.

MfS 2014 12 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 2015:

Deceased

Alistair Milner – Representative - East Scotland AM

Nominated:

Dorset & South Wilts AM Alternate - Jane Fowles

Hertford & Hitchin AM Alternate - Kim Noy-Man Jackson

QCCIR Alternate - Douglas Butterfield

Wensleydale & Swaledale AM Alternate - Margaret Waterworth

YFGM Representative - Iwona Luszowicz

Release requests received:

Dorset & South Wilts AM Alternate - Charlotte Seymour-Smith

Hertford & Hitchin AM Alternate - Hilary Cooke

Pickering & Hull AM Alternate - Simon Newton

QCCIR Alternate - Matthew Biggs

Wensleydale & Swaledale AM Alternate - Janet Quilley

YFGM Representative - Rebecca Riddell

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:

Maggie Taylor-Sanders – Southern Marches AM

Michael Woolley – Sussex West AM

Other visitors:

Dan Anderson – The Retreat, Medical Director
Jocelyn Burnell – QLCC assistant clerk designate
Trish Carn – The Friend
Tara Craig – The Friend
Sarah Donaldson – BYM Trustee designate
Rowena Loverance – London West AM
Jessica Metheringham – Parliamentary Engagement Officer
Jenny McAleese – The Retreat, CEO
John Miles – The Retreat, Clerk to Members
Martin Pennock – QLCC clerk
Anne van Staveren – Media Relations Officer
Anne Wilkinson – Events & Committee Support Manager

MfS 2014 12 05 Minutes received**1 Britain Yearly Meeting budgeting process**

We receive minute 11/09/14 of Northumbria AM held on 14 September regarding the Britain Yearly Meeting budgeting process.

We forward this minute to Church Government Advisory Group, and ask for its advice.

2 End of Life Issues

We receive minute 2014/89 of Leeds AM held on 12 October, regarding end-of-life care. We also receive minutes QLCC14.59 and QLCC 14.68. We will return to these matters later in the day.

3 Tax Justice

We receive minute 14.10.88 of Cambridgeshire AM held on 20 October regarding tax justice.

We are encouraged to hear of the work that has already been done on this issue by Finance and Property Committee and also that Quaker Peace and Social Witness is considering signing up to a Christian Aid co-ordinated campaign on tax justice. We recognise the importance of this issue and that while some tax practice 'may be legal it is not necessarily right'. We support Finance and Property Committee and Quaker Peace and Social Witness in this work. We also encourage AMs to consider how they can get involved, possibly through the Christian Aid Campaign or with other groups as appropriate. We also need to question our own personal practices.

We forward this minute to BYM Trustees and to QPSW Central Committee.

4 Search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean

We receive minute 14/129 of Sussex West AM held on 8 November, regarding the announcement that the British Government will not support planned EU search and rescue operations to save migrants from drowning in the Mediterranean Sea as they try to reach Europe.

We note that the Deputy Recording Clerk has signed a letter to David Cameron, calling on the Government to work with the rest of Europe to ensure that no asylum seekers are left to drown in the Mediterranean and to organise safe routes for these people to find shelter and security.

We forward this minute to QPSW for advice.

5 Islamophobia

We receive minute 14/11/89 of Brighouse West Yorkshire AM held on 8 November, regarding Islamophobia.

We join with Brighouse West Yorkshire AM in urging Friends locally, regionally and nationally to strengthen the bonds of friendship with the Muslim community through the values we share.

We forward this minute to Quaker Committee on Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR), asking it for advice.

MfS 2014 12 06 Report from Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

We receive the minutes of the Trustees' meetings held October and November.

MfS 2014 12 07 Transparency of Lobbying Act

We receive BYM Trustees' minute 2014-10-04. Further to the Transparency of Lobbying, Non Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act, Trustees are considering registration with the Electoral Commission as a non-party campaigner. Trustees have asked Meeting for Sufferings to help explore the underlying matters of principle and their relative importance.

We welcome this request from the Trustees to help them find clearness.

We are called to respect the laws of the state unless our conscience demands that we do not. We engage in political activity because our faith impels us. Registering under the Lobbying Act will not stop us from speaking out. While we feel that the Act has many flaws we also recognise that a key aim is to reduce the ability of large organisations (worthy and ruthless alike) to hold disproportionate influence over the political system, and also to increase transparency.

The feeling in this meeting is that it would be right to register under the Act, but also to make it clear that we won't modify our work to fit in with the limits, but will continue to be led by our conscience. We will also continue to speak out on our concerns over the Act.

We forward this minute to Trustees, and offer them our support in their discernment of the right way forward.

MfS 2014 12 08 Meeting for Sufferings Annual Report

We have received a draft report of Meeting for Sufferings' work in 2014, for Yearly Meeting 2015.

We ask our Arrangements Group to make minor amendments before forwarding the report to Yearly Meeting.

MfS 2014 12 09 Appointments

a) Central Nominations Committee

brings forward the names of the following Friends for service as indicated:

Friends Trusts Ltd

To serve from 1 June 2015 to 31 May 2018

Re-nominate:

Paul Whitehouse - Bristol AM

Nominate:

Rachel Ashton - Chilterns AM

Friends World Committee for Consultation

Following discussions with FWCC, Central Nominations Committee recommends that the terms of service for the following Friends be extended from 1 to 2 years, serving from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2016. This will enable them to prepare and attend the International Meeting of Representatives of FWCC in Peru in January 2016.

To serve from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2016

Alick Munro - Kingston & Wandsworth AM

Barbara Windle - York AM

We note that terms of service will be staggered in future.

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations

To serve from 1 May 2015 – 30 April 2018

Re-nominate:

Bessie White - London West AM

Nominate:

Stephanie Grant - Luton & Leighton AM

We note that Ireland YM has appointed Eoin Stephenson as its representative.

Quaker Housing Trust

To serve from 1 May 2015 – 30 April 2018

Re-nominate:

Jenny Brierley - York AM

Jeffrey Smith - Hampshire & Islands AM

These names being acceptable, we appoint the Friends named.

We note that, following the request for release and subsequent death of Alistair Milner, there is a vacancy on Central Nominations Committee.

We note the following appointments and releases made between meetings by our clerks.

Listed Informal Groups Review Group

To serve from October 2014 for the duration of the review which is expected to be for 1 year.

Appointed:

David Lewis - Hampshire & Islands AM

Revision of the Book of Discipline: Review Preparation Group

To serve from November 2014 to 31 December 2017

Appointed:

Craig Barnett - Sheffield & Balby AM

Quaker Life Central Committee

Released:

Gill Sewell - London West AM

Sue Tompkins - Swarthmoor (SW Cumbria) AM (from 31 December 2014)

MfS 2014 12 10 Transparency of Lobbying Act (part 2)

Further to our minute MfS 2014/12/07 we have received a minute from the Trustees meeting held during the lunch break. This minute is copied below.

We have met during the course of a Meeting for Sufferings to consider the matter of registration under the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014.

Our deliberations have been helped by the very careful attention given in session by Meeting for Sufferings to the underlying issues of principle, and we are grateful for this support.

We agree to register under the requirements of the Act. We ask our staff to arrange for this, and to put in place the necessary processes for monitoring expenditure as required.

We also ask our staff, working with our Clerk and Assistant Clerk, to prepare material on our behalf which can be used to make public our reservations and disquiet over the Act, and which can be circulated at once.

This material can then be considered in more depth at our next meeting, together with any other course of action we might wish to take.

Above all, our responsibility is to act and speak as we are guided by faith.

MfS 2014 12 11 The Retreat

John Miles, Clerk to Members, Jenny McAleese, Chief Executive Officer and Dan Anderson, Medical Director, have spoken to us about the work of The Retreat, and they answered questions.

We have received a comprehensive report of the work of The Retreat and the mental health service provided. We have appreciated seeing a short film.

We have been inspired and humbled by the breadth and range of service undertaken, and note the ways in which The Retreat is responding to challenges of the current situation. We applaud the members and directors' desire to keep the vision of the founder, William Tuke, alive.

We note that, as requested today, Meeting for Sufferings will recommence appointing new company members although the governance review is not yet complete.

We thank our Friends for coming and sharing their report with us today.

MfS 2014 12 12 Quaker Life Central Committee

a) The work of Quaker Life Central Committee

Martin Pennock, QLCC clerk, and Richard Summers, Quaker Life General Secretary, have spoken to us about the work of the committee. We thank the Committee and staff for their work in supporting and nurturing our worshipping communities.

b) End of Life Issues

Jocelyn Burnell, QLCC assistant clerk designate, has introduced Quaker Life Central Committee's consideration of end of life issues. We have heard of Friends' experiences of dealing with end of life issues in their Meetings and at work. It is a huge subject and it is important that Friends talk more about a range of end of life issues, including aging, preparing for death, and medically-assisted dying. We see today's consideration very much as a starting point. We support QLCC in their suggestion for Friends to share their stories.

c) Our understanding of Quaker concern

Jocelyn Burnell also shared Quaker Life Central Committee's sense that there is today a limited understanding amongst Quakers in Britain about the nature of Quaker Concern and the special way that Friends use the word. We expect to return to this at a future meeting.

Ethel Livermore
Clerk