

Calling letter



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

17th January 2020

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Dear Friends,

Our first meeting of 2020 is on Saturday 1st February in the Sarah Fell Room at Friends House.

You will see from the attached agenda that the morning's business begins with the triennial report of the Quaker Council for European Affairs. QCEA has been a Quaker presence in Brussels for 40 years, working to bring a vision of peace, justice and equality to Europe and its institutions. Their programmes of work focus on peace – promoting nonviolent conflict resolution and the concept of 'shared security', and human rights – seeking to advance a more humane approach to migration and asylum in Europe. It will be particularly interesting to hear about this work now, as we enter another phase of political uncertainty.

Trustees have not met since they reported to us in December, but Caroline Nursey, their clerk, will share with us the agenda and key business for their next meeting. This is the beginning of a process of dialogue which we hope will help representatives engage better with the work trustees do on our behalf. We also plan a short session about speaking out, and the importance of being clear about what is distinctively Quaker about what we do.

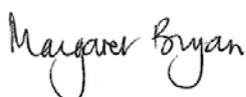
As in December, there will be a sandwich lunch provided for us in the Hilda Clark Suite. You are welcome to bring your own lunch if you prefer.

In the afternoon, we expect to hear the reflections of our representatives who will have attended the Diversity and Inclusion Gathering at Woodbrooke on 17th -19th January. There will be an opportunity to explore the topic in small groups.

Throughout the day we will take regular items of business such as membership, prison and court register, Quaker recognised bodies, the MfS report to YM and we conclude with a brief introduction to the agenda and themes of our Yearly Meeting Gathering in Bath.

I look forward to seeing you at our meeting.

In peace and friendship,



Margaret Bryan
Clerk

Papers enclosed with this mailing

Agenda

MfS Arrangements Group December 2019 meeting minutes

MfS 2020 02 Forward Agenda

MfS 2020 02 05 Prison & Court Register

MfS 2020 02 06 Quaker Council for European Affairs Triennial report

MfS 2020 02 07 BYM Trustees

MfS 2020 02 08 Speaking out

MfS 2020 02 12 Quaker Recognised Bodies

MfS 2020 02 13 Yearly Meeting

A reminder of how you can prepare for the meeting

- Register (to help staff prepare rooms and refreshments)
- Go through the 'Essential Information'
- Read the agenda papers in good time
- Contact the other representative/alternate from your area meeting or body
- Send any comments or questions to the clerks, to be received before 5pm on Thursday leading up to Meeting for Sufferings



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

Agenda

Meeting for Sufferings – 1 February 2020

Sarah Fell room, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ

Time / item #	Item	Paper Number
09:00	Arrivals	
10:00	Session 1 starts	
1	Opening worship	
2	Welcome and introductions	
3	Membership (Tabled Paper)	MfS 2020 02 03 To note
4	Agenda Adoption and acceptance of the agenda	
5	Prison and Court Register	MfS 2020 02 05 For decision
6	Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) Triennial Report to MfS Introduced by Josh Habgood-Coote, a BYM representative on QCEA	MfS 2020 02 06 To receive
	Short break Please hold the silence in the meeting room	
7	BYM Trustees The clerk of BYM Trustees will speak about upcoming agenda items	MfS 2020 02 07 To note
8	Speaking out – being distinctively Quaker To reflect and offer guidance to BYM Trustees and staff about how BYM speaks out with a distinctively Quaker voice	MfS 2020 02 08 For reflection
12.30	Lunch in Hilda Clark suite	
	Informal lunchtime gatherings Opportunities for meetings over lunch with Friends, including some of today's speakers	

Time / item #	Item	Paper Number
13:30	Session 2 starts	
9	Appointments (Tabled Paper)	MfS 2020 02 09 For approval
10	Diversity and inclusion We will hear reflections from Friends present at a recent Diversity and Inclusion gathering: Sam McNair and Sophie Bevan; and then break into small groups for further discussion	(no paper: oral report) For reflection
	Short break please hold the silence in the meeting room	
11	Diversity and inclusion Reflections in plenary	
12	Quaker Recognised Bodies To approve and register Quaker recognised bodies	MfS 2020 02 12 For approval
13	Yearly Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To hear from the Yearly Meeting clerk about the agenda planned for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2020 • To receive an updated draft of the MfS Annual Report to Yearly Meeting 	MfS 2020 02 13 To note To agree
	Closing worship	
16.00	Close. Tea, coffee and departures	



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At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held 16 December 2019 at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ

Minutes

Present: Margaret Bryan, (online), Robert Card (online), Gill Greenfield, Neil Jarvis, Mark Lilley (online), Sherry-Ann Mitchell, Juliet Prager.

Prevented: Karen Draycott

1. Reflections on the last MfS

We have received comments from the Support Group, which were generally positive. Friends were disciplined in their contributions to what was a very full agenda. It was interesting to receive the table comparing planned agenda time with actual time taken.

2. Meetings attended by the clerks

Margaret (in person) and Anne (remotely) attended a meeting of the clerks of MfS, BYM and Trustees on 1st November.

We note that Sophie Bevan, Joseph Fuller and Sam McNair will attend the Diversity and Inclusion conference at Woodbrooke on 17 January 2020.

Also, Sarah Coote and Robert Parkes are attending the Quaker World Relations Committee Forum at Friends House on 8 February 2020.

3. Forward agenda

We have reviewed our forward agenda which informs our planning.

4. Agenda planning: February 2020

We have planned the agenda for our February meeting.

5. Report to Yearly Meeting 2020

We received a draft of the MfS report to Yearly Meeting.

6. Looking further ahead: planning for 2020

We received a draft of business expected to come to MfS in 2020 which provided a welcome overview. We wish to share this with reps and AM clerks so that they can

plan any engagement they wish to have with issues we have sent to them for consideration.

7. Gold minutes

Gill Greenfield (MfSAG) and Neil Jarvis (BYM Governance Manager) have conducted a review of MfSAG and MfS minutes 2014-Oct 2019. MfSAG welcomed this detailed work. We agree to identify the listed minutes and papers as 'Gold' and accept the suggestions made about storage, availability and maintenance of the list.

We close, planning to meet again on Friday 21st February 2020 at Friends House.

Margaret Bryan
Clerk



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Meeting for Sufferings Forward Agenda – February 2020

Currently proposed or being considered - items and/or dates might change

2020	
April 2020	<p>Letter of greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting</p> <p>Review Group of Quaker Stewardship Committee (QSC) and Terms of Reference of BYM Trustees – update</p>
June 2020	<p>Book of Discipline Revision Committee report (the group's first meeting was in May 2019 so a report from its April 2020 meeting would allow for it to report on its first year, and let MfS know more before Yearly Meeting).</p> <p>Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) strategy</p> <p>Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) strategy</p> <p>Quaker Housing Trust triennial report (or possibly April)</p>
Oct 2020 (residential)	<p>Yearly Meeting – reflections</p> <p>Sustainability</p> <p>Reports from/dialogue with central and standing committees</p>
Dec 2020	Young People's Participation Day

Matters expected to return in due course

Matter	Sent to	Date sent	Notes
Pastoral and spiritual support to people not able to regularly attend local meetings	QLCC, for advice	Feb 2015	QLCC reported (Feb 2018): working group laid down but work continues
Concern about the poverty of the public services in the UK	QPSWCC	Dec 2017	Addressed by QPSW; will be reported later this year.
Payment of taxes for terrorism and war	QPSWCC	Dec 2017	Addressed by QPSW; will be reported later this year.
Young adult Quakers and Meeting for Sufferings		MfS/18/10/21	4 reserved places for young adult Friends for remainder of triennium (to YM21) followed by a review.
Report from Review Group of Quaker Stewardship Committee	Review Group	Appointed April 2019	Review Group would like to update April 2020 with final report likely late 2020.
Conflict in meetings	QLCC	Apr 2019	
MfSAG review: continuation and terms of reference	CNC	Jul 2019	Sent to CNC for names to appoint a group.
Gender diversity	AMs/LMs	Jul 2019	MfSAG liaising with QLCC about the best timing to return to this.
Book of Discipline Revision Committee updates			Committee may wish to report in June 2020.
Assisted dying	AMs	Oct 2019	Awaiting responses from AMs – late 2020 or early 2021.
Use of the term 'overseer'	QLCC	Dec 2019	To be brought back when ready.



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Prison and Court Register

Introduction

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) was established in 1676, to consider the sufferings experienced by Quakers for their faith. Gradually the practice of recording Friends' names in the 'Great book of Sufferings' lapsed; but in 1997 MfS decided to maintain a register of Friends before the courts or imprisoned for matters of conscience. This enables us to record events, as well as to uphold the Friends concerned and to share information about their witness.

The purposes of recording an entry in the register are:

1. To enter the details of the matter into the permanent records of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), acknowledging Friends' witness and their willingness to face its consequences;
2. To remind ourselves that being a Quaker does not come without cost;
3. To record the Society's prayerful upholding of Friends who are suffering for their faith;
4. To serve as a record of the actions of the State in restricting our freedom to worship and witness.

Normally, area meetings are responsible for establishing the facts, and that Friends are or were acting under concern and wish the matter to be recorded. Including information in the prison and court register doesn't imply that MfS itself has tested the Friend's concern and necessarily agrees with or condones their action.

The clerks of **Sheffield & Balby** and **Sussex East Area Meetings** have sent information about relevant prison and court proceedings. The information is set out in this draft minute:

MfS 2020/02/XX Prison and Court Register

Heather Rostron, an attender at Sheffield Central local meeting, was arrested during Extinction Rebellion actions on 22 April 2019, 8 October 2019 and 10 October 2019 and for each arrest has been charged and appeared in court. On 1 November 2019, in the City of London Magistrates Court, she was found guilty of wilful obstruction of the highway and failing to comply with a condition imposed by a senior police officer under section 14 of the Public Order Act 1986. She was given 6 months' conditional discharge, and court costs and victim surcharge amounting to £105. On 22 October 2019, in Westminster Magistrates Court, she was found guilty of failing to comply with a condition imposed by a senior police officer under section 14 of the Public Order Act 1986. She was given 6 months' conditional discharge. On this occasion, the Crown Prosecution Service has subsequently said the proceedings may be re-opened, following a judgement in the High Court on 9 November 2019 that the police condition was imposed unlawfully. On 7 November 2019, at Westminster Magistrates Court, she was found guilty of aggravated trespass and given 12 months' conditional discharge, and court costs and victim surcharge of £106.

John Lynes, a member of Sussex East Area Meeting, was found guilty at Folkestone Magistrates' Court on 5 December 2019 of breaching Section 14 of the Public Order Act on 21 September, in the course of an Extinction Rebellion event. He was given a conditional discharge for 18 months and ordered to pay court costs.

We agree to include this information in the Prison and Court Register. We hold Heather Rostron and John Lynes in the Light.



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Quaker Council for European Affairs Triennial Report

The Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) works to bring a vision based on the Quaker commitment to peace, justice and equality to Europe and its institutions. We have been based in Brussels since 1979, where we advocate for peace and human rights among policymakers, civil society representatives, academics and members of the public. We are registered as an international non-profit organisation (AISBL) under Belgian law. Over half of our income consists of donations from Quakers across Europe, and it is this engaged community of individuals and Meetings which guides our work.

Britain Yearly Meeting's (BYM) relationship to QCEA has a number of aspects. BYM is a sponsoring Yearly Meeting, and is represented by two representatives on the General Assembly of QCEA. It is also a partner agency. Quaker Peace and Social Witness is working with QCEA in several areas, especially around peace education. BYM owns and runs Quaker House Brussels which is the base for QCEA's work, and is one of the principal funders of QCEA.

QCEA is a project of Quakers across Europe, and is supported by yearly meetings from both EU member states and non-member states (Norway and Switzerland). QCEA's work is also not confined to the EU; it works with various European institutions, including the council of Europe, NATO, and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Working on peacebuilding with European institutions is a key opportunity for Quakers around Europe.

Over the last three years, QCEA has continued an ambitious process of organisational change which seeks to bring our work and output in line with our ambitions. Today, we can say with confidence that our efforts have borne fruit, and QCEA has successfully positioned itself as a distinctive and respected peace and human rights advocate.

Our work remains essential: Europe's policymakers continue to frame migration in terms of 'crisis' and 'threat', and remain beholden to the received wisdom that security and militarism go hand in hand. Fundamentally, we seek to challenge those narratives, providing evidence for sustainable and humane policy alternatives, and creating opportunities for new approaches to emerge.

Our work

Peace Programme

Our Peace Programme aims to promote a process of 'rethinking security' among European policymakers. It challenges the dominant narrative that conflict and instability are best resolved by military means, when all the evidence demonstrates that dialogue, reconciliation and inclusive peacebuilding are, in fact, the most viable routes to sustainable peace. The Peace Programme collates evidence of nonviolent alternatives and advocates for their mainstreaming at the European level.

In February 2018 the Peace Programme published a flagship resource, *Building Peace Together*. This resource assembled eighty real-world case studies of civilian peacebuilding initiatives from around the world, providing body of evidence in favour of non-violent conflict resolution and a source of inspiration for grassroots peacebuilders. Since its publication, *Building Peace Together* has reached thousands of key stakeholders, from NATO strategists to military personnel on mission with the EU; from conflict resolution academics to security think tanks. It has been used as a resource for diplomatic training in Germany, and sits in the collections of several major university libraries. It has been more successful than we could have hoped. This report has been translated into 7 languages.

The process of developing the *Building Peace Together* resource made us aware of how much potential for peacebuilding initiatives exists in certain sectors. This led us to pursue further thematic research into how conflict resolution can overlap with certain fields, beginning with education. This led to our *Peace Education* report, published in January 2019. This report makes the case for Quaker-inspired education as a foundation for sustainable peace. This initial foray into thematic peacebuilding advocacy was well-received and we are now pursuing a programme of work on how gender inclusiveness can serve as a pillar of successful conflict resolution.

Our aim has not solely been to demonstrate that workable alternatives to military intervention exist, but also that these alternatives generally have better socio-political outcomes for the societies in question. Our conviction is that "peacebuilding is everyone's business", underlining the need for inclusive conflict resolution efforts which bind communities together in a sustainable way.

We have advocated not just for different policies, but for an entirely different approach, in which sustainable peace is the foundation for societal development. We are proud of this holistic message, which we feel demonstrates an understanding of the complex root causes of conflict.

Human Rights Programme

Our Human Rights Programme began with the goal of ‘humanising Europe’, with a view to shedding light on less-widely recognised challenges faced by migrants and refugees arriving in Europe.

For two years running, we have published *Child Immigration Detention*, a report which collates the most comprehensive and up-to-date statistics on the policy of detaining migrant children in Europe, as well as proposed workable, humane alternatives to the practice.

Our work on child immigration detention revealed a lack of awareness among policymakers concerning the extent of the phenomenon – a shortcoming in existing processes which meant that detained children were often excluded from statistics. Our efforts were a direct response to structural issues which made human rights abuses possible. For two years running, our research provided policymakers with the most complete statistics available on child migrant detention, collected painstakingly through correspondence with civil servants. The report also included alternatives to the practice as a base for advocacy on the issue. This work was subsequently taken up by our partners at the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM).

Our early research into anti-migrant narratives – and their real-world consequences – raised our awareness of the problem of online hate speech, which eventually led to a pilot project called #ChooseRespect during the 2019 European Parliament elections. Over one month, we reached out to European voters on Twitter with messages which addressed myths about migration and encouraged social media users to have a conversation about migration in more positive terms. These messages were targeted to users living in areas with high support for far-right parties, and who themselves followed far-right politicians on Twitter. When we engaged directly with a cross-section of this audience, we saw tangible evidence that reaching out and having conversations about migrants and refugees changes the tone of online discussion and defuses some of the anger which often characterises such interactions. Our findings have enjoyed significant interest from major internet companies and we were invited to present the project at the Council of Europe's World Forum for Democracy in November 2019.

Our methodology

Across our programmes, our work is a complementary combination of high-quality policy research and advocacy which builds on our strong network of peace and human rights stakeholders. In addition to public outreach events, we pursue our goals via ‘quiet diplomacy’ processes. These bring together decision-makers and other stakeholders – including unusual actors and groups not frequently heard from in Brussels – to allow civil society and the otherwise voiceless to engage in collective problem-solving with policymakers and build common ground with them in an informal, off-the-record setting. QCEA is rare in its capacity to perform this role. As Quakers, our reputation for trustworthiness and integrity has proven vital in helping us to bring the right people together, meaning we can facilitate the discreet discussions which lead to real change.

While the specific content of these meetings must remain confidential, we see their value reflected in the high profile of attendees, as well as in concrete outcomes that this work contributes to. There is a type of conversation that people can have at Quaker House which they cannot get elsewhere, and these exchanges are a key element of both our peace and human rights work. A Deputy Head of Unit at the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe commented that a recent quiet diplomacy process on political narratives was “the most useful workshop I’ve been to in my thirty-year diplomatic career”. Such feedback is not uncommon, and suggests that QCEA makes a unique contribution to policy discussions on peace and human rights. Indeed, we find many participants actively enquiring about future meetings, demonstrating that our approach is attractive to key stakeholders as they develop their thinking on policy.

We can also see the tangible results of quiet diplomacy in institutional behaviour. A recent example pertains to Croatia, the EU’s newest member state which now seeks to join the Schengen free movement area. Croatia has pursued harsh border control and asylum policies which has led to serious and systemic violations of the human rights of migrants and refugees on Croatian territory, often at the hands of police. At a quiet diplomacy meeting which we recently hosted, much of this information was presented to representatives of EU member states for the first time. An official announcement on Croatia’s accession to Schengen was subsequently delayed. Two sources have told us that the meeting we facilitated contributed to this outcome. QCEA created a situation where human rights abuses in Europe were reported to policymakers, and shown to have consequences for the state in question.

Josh Habgood-Coote
Stephen Clement
BYM Representatives to General Assembly of QCEA
January 2020



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BYM Trustees

BYM Trustees last reported to us in December, and have not met again since then.

However, MfS Arrangements Group and the clerks of Trustees feel it would be helpful to hear about issues that trustees expect to consider in the coming months. We hope this will help develop more of a two-way dialogue between MfS and BYM Trustees.

When they meet in mid-February, Trustees will be considering an operational report on our communications and fundraising functions, and on how committees and staff are working to ensure all the work makes a difference. Questions about this are explored in the paper for the next item, Speaking Out.

In February, Trustees also expect to consider:

- Decentralising – progress towards supporting Quaker communities through local development workers and Quaker offices
- Simplifying structures and practices
- Safeguarding (staff report)

Caroline Nursey, clerk of BYM Trustees, will give a brief introduction.



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Speaking Out

‘Speaking out in the world is an essential part of our religious and social witness.’
Quaker faith and practice 3.27 follows this bold sentence by encouraging Friends to express faith and values in public, and to use the media confidently.

Last October, Meeting for Sufferings heard from members of staff about ways that BYM staff work to ensure Quaker concerns are communicated.

In this session, we hope MfS will look at the principles guiding our witness, or speaking out. This is evolving work; we may or may not reach clear conclusions at this session. BYM trustees will be considering communications, fundraising and impact at their next meeting; they, and staff, will be glad to hear Friends’ views.

We hope the meeting will help us address two sets of questions:

- a) About the parameters
 - What is distinctive about our Quaker witness?
 - Is there a balance between acting to make a difference, and acting because we know it is right and we can do no other?
- b) About navigating complexity
 - Should we speak out on all Quaker concerns, or prioritise?
 - How can we make sure our messages are heard?
 - What can we leave to others (or partner with others to achieve)?

Background

In 2014, Meeting for Sufferings adopted procedures for speaking out by the yearly meeting, area and local meetings, General Meeting for Scotland, Meeting of Friends in Wales, and other Quaker groups (see Quaker faith and practice sections 3.27 and 3.28). The guidelines describe three groups of public statements:

- Yearly Meeting statements issued on behalf of Friends in Britain – these require the full discernment of Meeting for Sufferings or Yearly Meeting in session and are recognised as carrying the full authority of the yearly meeting;

- Other public statements or comments may be called for at short notice in response to current events using the full range of media. The Recording Clerk, in consultation with appropriate clerks of Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings or Trustees, is authorised to issue such a message, as long as it is in line with an established and discerned Quaker position;
- Press releases publicising the yearly meeting's core work are authorised by the Recording Clerk.

'Speaking out' is done in different ways – for example, correspondence with elected representatives; letters to the press; TV interviews; banners, posters and leaflets; comment on social media or websites; participation in vigils or demonstrations.

Individually, and in our local and area meetings, we're expected to be clear whether we're speaking for ourselves, our local Quaker community or all Quakers in Britain.

Speaking out, nationally and locally

BYM staff can only speak out on the basis of discernment by Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings or committees.

BYM employs staff with specialist skills who can help our national bodies, programme staff, and local Quaker groups, to speak out. The three key 'speaking out' members of staff are:

- Public Affairs and Advocacy Manager
- Media Relations Manager
- Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer

We also employ staff with social media expertise; a website manager; and, a small team which produces printed publications. (Of course, these people also work on other parts of BYM's work including support for Quaker communities, Quaker role-holders, chaplaincy, outreach, children and young people, and events.)

Specialist staff work together with programme staff, to ensure the Quaker voice is heard, and that our work makes a difference. We're trying to work on many issues:

- Conciliation
- Crime and community justice
- Economic justice (tax justice, building a new economy, social security, ethical finance)
- Ecumenical Accompaniment in Palestine and Israel
- Housing conditions
- Civil Society voice (Lobbying Act)
- Migrant and refugee rights
- Nonviolence in East Africa
- Peace and Disarmament (nuclear weapons, the arms trade, armed drones, conscientious objection, rethinking security)

- Peace Education (including challenging militarisation)
- Sustainability (climate justice, fracking, fossil fuel divestment)

As 'our faith in the future' says, *Quakers work collaboratively: we are well aware that we can't put the world to rights all by ourselves. We value the important work of others. By engaging with them we are already changing the world. We want to break down barriers; we refuse to prejudge who is or is not an ally.* Sometimes we organise events, jointly. Sometimes we add the Quaker name to a joint statement. We might encourage Friends to support another body. Locally and nationally, groups trying to change the world are often glad to have Quaker involvement.

Questions to explore

As noted above, authority in relation to speaking out is clear: Meeting for Sufferings has confirmed what can be said, and by whom. We are also clear about collaboration: Meeting for Sufferings has stated the principle that Quakers work collaboratively; committees and staff make operational decisions about which groups to collaborate with, on which topics, and when.

Corporately, we're less clear about the parameters. Should we speak out about anything Friends are concerned about, or focus on issues where we have a clear and distinctive Quaker voice? How do we balance Friends' sense of being called to speak out, with Friends' eagerness to make a difference?

We're also less clear about how to manage complexity. We have important things to say but Quakers in Britain is a relatively small faith group. It's a busy, noisy world: churches, charities, social movements and for-profit companies want to make their voice heard. Should we try to speak out on all Quaker concerns, or should we prioritise? Is it more effective to focus on fewer issues at any time? What strengthens our messages and what dilutes them? Should our advocacy be limited to issues where Friends have lived experience? Can we find ways to prioritise, without missing important opportunities?

Juliet Prager
Deputy Recording Clerk



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Organisations applying to become Quaker Recognised Bodies

Introduction

One organisation has applied to be a Quaker Recognised Body (QRB). Staff have looked at the documentation provided by the organisation, and consider that the criteria for listing it as a QRB have been met.

Background

Minute MfS 2015/12/17 sets out how BYM relates to other Quaker bodies. Paper MfS 2018/07/15 gives a full introduction. There are guidelines on the BYM Website www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups

A QRB is an independent group where concerned Friends explore a common interest, seek affirmation, or carry out witness. It wishes to be recognised as a Quaker body because its Quaker roots are an important part of its identity or constitution.

Registering QRBs aims to help them, and BYM, be clear about mutual benefits and responsibilities. It's also a way to strengthen links between centrally-managed work and the wide range of exciting Quaker work being done by other groups, helping build a vibrant Society of Friends. So far, Meeting for Sufferings has registered 68 QRBs.

Request for registration

The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust has applied.

Action required

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to approve this organisation as a QRB.

Charlotte McMenamin-Walshe
Recording Clerk's Office

Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust

Name of Quaker Recognised Body: Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust

Aims: Quaker trust which supports people addressing the root causes of conflict and injustice.

Governance: Charity with Quaker trustees (all the trustees are members of BYM).

Constitution: Trust Deed

Type of Group: External

Foundation: 1904

Publications and activities: main activity is the responsive grant making to charities and other not-for-profit organisations in the UK, and to lesser extent at pan-EU level.

Membership: Trust board of 12 to 14 members, plus a staff of 12 to 15. No wider membership.

Finance: Endowment of around £200 million managed on total returns basis. Makes grants up to £10 million annually.

Winding up: At trustees' discretion, including transfer of assets.

Archives: In house, plus some at Borthwick Archives, University of York.

Current contact details: Celia McKeon (or other staff)

Phone: 01904 627 810

Email: celia.mckeon@jrct.org.uk

Website: www.jrct.org.uk

Staff link: Paul Parker



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Yearly Meeting

Background

Meeting for Sufferings is accountable to Yearly Meeting, and has to report on its activities to Yearly Meeting every year (*Quaker faith and practice* 7.02.e).

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee (YMAC) is responsible for planning of the agenda for, and the use of the premises during, Yearly Meeting (see *Quaker faith and practice* 6.18). It is asked to work closely with other bodies, including Meeting for Sufferings (MfS), to promote the right holding of Yearly Meeting.

(Meeting for Sufferings formally determines the dates of Yearly Meeting and where it will be held, on YMAC's recommendation (*Quaker faith and practice* 7.02.f). YMAC will bring recommendations for dates of future meetings, later this year.)

There are two parts to this item.

1. Yearly Meeting 2020 agenda

We will have the opportunity to hear from Clare Scott Booth, clerk of Yearly Meeting, about the planned agenda for Yearly Meeting 2020 (to be held 1–7 August in Bath).

This introduction to YM 2020 will be verbal, but there is more information, including about how to book, at: www.quaker.org.uk/ym

2. Meeting for Sufferings report to Yearly Meeting 2020

The clerk has prepared a draft report, which Meeting for Sufferings is asked to approve before it's sent to Yearly Meeting. Please send any comments or suggestions by email to sufferings@quaker.org.uk to reach the clerks by the morning of Friday 31 January.

Meeting for Sufferings *draft* Annual Report 2019

Meeting for Sufferings is the body which is entrusted with the general care of matters affecting the Yearly Meeting in its life and witness. It seeks to discern spiritual values and vision to guide Friends' corporate commitment and actions.

from Qf&p 6.28

Meeting for Sufferings is made up of about 100 or so members, drawn from the wide geographical and demographic spread of all 70 Area Meetings, Young Friends General Meeting, General Meeting for Scotland, and Meeting of Friends in Wales. Representatives of Quaker World Relations Committee, Quaker Life, Quaker Peace & Social Witness, Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations and Central Nominations Committee all attend our meetings. Britain Yearly Meeting trustees, senior staff and the Yearly Meeting clerk are ex officio members, and we regularly receive visitors.

We are now (at the time of writing) about half-way through the present triennium of appointments. We only meet 5 times a year, and a representative or an alternate may attend, so it takes time for Friends to get to know one another. Past experience has shown that the residential meeting is greatly valued and we decided in 2018 to plan for one weekend at Woodbrooke in each of the three years. There are pros and cons to this. On the one hand, reps appreciate the time and space for extended consideration of issues, but a full weekend away does mean the additional cost and the extra burden it places on staff – and reps. As we look at all our work through the lenses of 'sustainability' and 'simple church/simple charity' we expect to review this carefully when planning for the triennium that begins in 2021.

December saw the latest in the annual series of Young People's Participation Days. We were delighted to welcome around thirty 13-18 year olds, three of whom spent the whole day in meeting with us. After worship and introductions together, the Young People went off to their own programme, which was built on the theme of discernment. Their closing minute, shared with us at the end of the day, spoke of the value of engaging with Friends of all ages, and of what they learned about the process of discernment.

"... we thought about the differences between Witness and Discernment. We ended with a reflection on how discernment is used in our own lives and how can we access the support of Quaker communities in this process.

Reaching a decision through discernment was described as finding a place where we are settled as individuals and as a whole community. We explored where the promptings that lead to discernment come from, is it prompted by God within us or by an extension of our own beliefs?

The Young Quaker Participation day was a great opportunity to explore how discernment can bring together the community in decision making and can support our personal decision making. Participants felt that they were a part of the Quaker community and they were able to reflect on Quaker decision making process”.

Our work in 2019

In 2019 our Prison and Court register continued to record the witness of Friends, many of whom were involved in the actions of Extinction Rebellion. A minute came from York AM asking us to review the parameters of the register, which is such an important link with our Quaker ancestors and their witness to the truth. After seeking guidance from the Recording Clerk, MfS looked afresh at the purpose, parameters and processes of the Prison and Court Register.

Our consideration in October resulted in a statement of principles which form part of a Gold Minute that has been sent to all meetings. In it we emphasise the importance of witness being grounded in faith, and the need rigorously to test one’s concern. We do not act in our own strength alone.

Regular administrative business covers a range of work:

- Registration of Quaker recognised bodies
- Setting up of a group to review Quaker Stewardship Committee. This work has been added to the remit of the group appointed to review the Terms of Reference of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees
- Agreeing to a review of MfS Arrangements Group, and also Terms of Reference for our Sustainability Monitoring Group members of which were appointed in October
- Following the review of Committee on Clerks in 2018, which was partly accepted and for which further work was requested, we have recommended the new arrangements and new Terms of Reference for Central Nominations Committee (CNC) to Yearly Meeting.
- While a new Book of Discipline is being prepared, minute 21 of Yearly Meeting 2019 delegates responsibility for minor factual amendments in the current *Qf&p* to Meeting for Sufferings. Following decisions made in 2018 (concerning the Library Committee) and in 2019 (regarding Children & Young Peoples Work Advocates), Church Government Advisory Group (CGAG) returned to us in December with recommendations for changes to *Qf&p* 4.39, 4.43, 4.44 and 13.41 and 4.05. We agreed these, and report them to you accordingly. Full details are available in the online version of *Qf&p* at qfp.quaker.org.uk
- Finally, we also set the wheels in motion for the forming of a group to review Yearly Meeting and Yearly Meeting Gathering, as required by minute 6 of Yearly Meeting 2019.

Reports from Committees

We continued in 2019 with the experiment of taking all the central committees' reports at one meeting to offer representatives the chance to hear about the breadth of Britain Yearly Meeting's centrally-managed work on one occasion. Time was at a premium this year, with Central Committees giving very brief snapshots of their work and the issues most exercising them at this time.

Other matters

The work of BYM's legacy funded Diversity and Inclusion Officer was shared with MfS in April and also at Yearly Meeting last year. We have continued to engage with these issues. The theme of gender diversity has been important in 2019, with both Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM) and Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) reporting to us on the statements they have issued; we expect to return to this matter again in 2020. We will be sending representatives to the Diversity and Inclusion conference at Woodbrooke in January 2020, and hearing from them at our February meeting.

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, all of whom are members of MfS, report to us at Sufferings after all their meetings and ask for our discernment on matters of policy. We all benefit from this close relationship. In April they shared the initial findings of the independent review of the legacy-funded Vibrancy in Meetings pilot project and representatives responded with considerable enthusiasm. In conjunction with Woodbrooke trustees they returned in June with plans for a new programme of Local Development Workers to extend this work throughout the Yearly Meeting. This is a very exciting development.

Sustainability has been on our agenda at three meetings in 2019 and it underpins much of our discernment. MfS is responsible for overseeing our corporate witness and our recently appointed Sustainability Monitoring Group is tasked with checking progress towards becoming a low-carbon sustainable community. Sustainability was the central theme of the meeting of committee clerks which took place in July 2019, and at MfS in October we heard a full report on the work set out under the following headings and themes:

- Eldership: rooting the commitment in our Quaker faith
- Oversight: strengthening our community
- Living faithfully: changing our lifestyles
- Right ordering: Quaker core activities and property
- Witness: taking action and promoting systemic change

We were impressed by the range of work carried out and noted that there will be a major sustainability gathering at Woodbrooke in December this (i.e. 2020) year.

Concerns brought by Area Meetings and Central Committees

As always, the concerns of AMs are a crucially important aspect of our agendas.

- In April 2018 Southern Marches forwarded their minutes about the erosion of truth in society. After sending them on to all AMs for consideration, we returned to the subject in February. Disappointingly for some, we minuted as follows:
“We have no doubt about the importance of this concern but only about our capacity. Great courage is needed to engage with untruth, particularly on social media and we need to encourage and support each other”.
- Minutes sent to MfS from Staffordshire and North West London led to a special interest session at the residential Sufferings in October and a discussion exploring whether there is or should be a Quaker position on the subject of assisted dying. Area meetings across the country have been continuing to engage with this issue in 2020.
- Meeting of Friends in Wales shared their statement on the withdrawal from the EU.
- Some members of MfS are eager to know more about how BYM speaks out. At our October meeting both BYM's Media Relations Officer and our Public Affairs and Advocacy Manager gave us a flavour of their work, sharing examples of collaboration on issues such as climate change – the All Party Parliamentary Group on Climate Changes, hosting Greta Thunberg at Friends House, supporting global climate strikes and Roots of Resistance – and the DSEI arms fair, as well as joining with other voluntary organisations to warn of the dangers of prorogation.
- Relationship with Churches Together in England (CTE). Just before the last meeting in 2019 our ecumenical relations were in the spotlight following Churches Together in England's rejection of our nomination for the 4th presidency of their organisation. We continue to strive to keep the channels of dialogue between churches open despite this setback.

Over all the right balance between the spiritual basis of our lives and actions as Quakers – the church – and the governance responsibilities of trustees – the charity – is one for which we must continue to strive. We rely on the power of our gathered meeting for worship for business to guide our discernment.

The ground of our work lies in our waiting on and listening for the Spirit.....We are a small church with pretensions to change the world. But first we must let God change us – to empower us to be better Friends, and more active in our own work. We should not be creating structures to work for us, but empowering each other to do the work laid on each of us. However we plan...the Spirit is unchanging and will always lead us...All is connected, worship with action, wisdom with love
from Qf&p 29.02