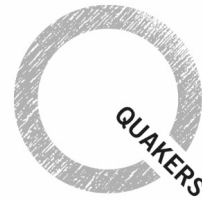


## Follow up letter



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

12 February 2021

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

### Meeting for Sufferings 6 February 2021

Dear Friends

Thank you for your participation in our meeting last Saturday. I am, as ever, thankful that Friends are willing to keep their representative eye on the work of our Yearly Meeting with such faithfulness.

In preparing for every meeting of Sufferings the Arrangements Group works hard to plan a balanced agenda. A key item in our morning's business was the report of a group set up to review the work of MfS Arrangements Group, and as you know, the meeting accepted their recommendations. The review group also reported their sense that Friends are eager to know more about the group's preparatory work and we will come back to this at a future meeting. In the meantime, please feel free to contact the Arrangements Group via [sufferings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sufferings@quaker.org.uk).

The channels of communication are always open to any representative who wishes to make comments or suggestions, or to ask questions. Feedback on this meeting would be appreciated in time for our review meeting on 23 February.

By the time you see this letter Trustees will be meeting to consider progress towards a simple church supported by a simple charity, and the best way to engage and involve Friends in BYM's work. If you wish to contribute to the conversation the address to use there is [clerkoftrustees@quaker.org.uk](mailto:clerkoftrustees@quaker.org.uk).

Before clerking any meeting I always remind myself to expect the unexpected, and I am not often disappointed. The joy of Quaker meetings for business is that no matter what you plan anything can happen. The Tabular Statement for 2019 may seem something of a dry document relying on numbers but not easily revealing the story behind them. The Recording Clerk's presentation on what we can learn from our annual 'census' brought the statistics delightfully to life, and judging by comments received already was – dare I say it? – something of a surprise hit. We asked for the

presentation to be shared and Paul is thinking about the best way to do this. Slides and speaking notes on their own do not convey the flavour of the presentation – you had to be there – so please be patient!

In the afternoon session we received a minute from Central Nominations Committee bringing a request to review the principle of appointing only members to Central Committee service. We agreed to setting up a small review group, and as our minute records: 'We recognise that this request raises wider questions of commitment and the meaning of membership, as well as linking with our moves towards simplification. There are implications for the future of the society'.

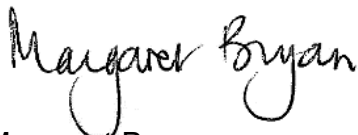
We also received the new strategy for QPSW and this will shortly be available on the website. It incorporates a slight update following some helpful contributions made at our meeting.

I hope that the 40 or so Friends who attended the preparatory session held the Tuesday before MfS found it helpful. The Support Group is keen to know what you thought about it and the other two sessions held in 2020. Staff have set up a short online survey – follow [this link](#).

Please respond as this will help us plan any future sessions.

I look forward to seeing you all again in April.

In Friendship



Margaret Bryan  
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

The following papers are included in this mailing:

- Functions checklist
- MfS minutes February 2021

### Meeting for Sufferings: Functions Checklist (*Quaker faith & practice* Chapter 7.02)

	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Feb 21</b>	<b>Comments</b>
A	To set the priorities for the centrally managed work	13	
B	To issue public statements in the name of BYM		
C	To receive regular interim reports from BYM trustees	11	
D	To receive the BYM trustees' annual report & accounts for information		
E	To make a report on its own activities to YM		
F	To determine the dates of YM		
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	6, 14	
H	To keep under review and to test as appropriate the existing and new concerns referred to it by AMs and others		
I	To foster communication throughout the yearly meeting	5, 8	
J	To receive minutes from area meetings	8	
K	To make appropriate entries in the prison and court register		
L	To appoint representatives to attend other Yearly Meetings	4, 7	
M	To receive information about changes in the composition or status of general meetings and gatherings		
N	To make changes in the composition of area meetings		
O	To give assistance to area meetings in the amicable settlement of disputes		
P	To hear appeals against area meeting decisions		
Q	To give guidance on policy matters referred to it by the BYM trustees from time to time	11	
R	To authorise action and minute as required under other sections of Quaker Faith and Practice		
S	To set up an arrangements group and support and working groups to assist its own work as it sees fit	5	



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

At a meeting of

## **Meeting for Sufferings**

Held online from 06 February 2021 by video conference

## **Minutes**

### **MfS/21/02/01 Opening Worship**

During opening worship 11.08 was read.

### **MfS/21/02/02 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 2021:

#### **Release requests received:**

Rosemary Barnett – Staffordshire AM alternate  
Trevor Evans– Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee representative  
Kathy Gollin – West Somerset AM alternate  
Ann Floyd – Quaker World Relations Committee alternate  
Alan Pearmain – Quaker Life Central Committee alternate  
Liz Scurfield – Quaker World Relations Committee representative  
Ruth Tod – Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee alternate

#### **Nominated:**

Harry Albright– Quaker Life Central Committee alternate  
Valda Dagnell – West Somerset AM alternate  
Janet Veitch– South London AM representative

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

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

Tracey Martin – Quaker World Relations Committee visitor

#### **Other visitors:**

Alistair Fuller – BYM staff, Quaker Life  
Neil Jarvis – BYM staff, Recording Clerk's Office  
Sophie Smith – BYM staff, Quaker Life  
Anne van Staveren – BYM staff, Media Relations Officer

### **MfS/21/02/03 Agenda**

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

### **MfS/21/02/04 Appointments**

Central Nominations Committee brings forward to following names for service or release as indicated:

### **Central Nominations Committee**

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

### **Book of Discipline Revision Committee**

Nominate to serve as soon as possible until 31 December 2023:

Marcie Winstanley                      Northumbria AM  
Pearl Johns                                Bristol AM

### **Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees**

Nominate to serve as soon as possible until 31 December 2023:

Silas Price                                Norfolk & Waveney AM

### **BYM Representatives to European Yearly Meetings**

- *Ireland Yearly Meeting*

Renominate to serve at Ireland Yearly Meeting (8-11 April 2021):

Tina Cunningham                      West Scotland AM

- *France Yearly Meeting*

Renominate to serve at France Yearly Meeting (29 October-1 November 2021):

Joyce Taylor                              East Scotland AM

- *German Yearly Meeting*

Renominate to serve at German Yearly Meeting (14-17 October 2021):

Jessica Bishop                          North London AM

- *Sweden Yearly Meeting*

Nominate to serve at Sweden Yearly Meeting (13-16 May 2021):

Gordon Benson                         Pendle Hill AM

- *Switzerland Yearly Meeting*

Nominate to serve at Switzerland Yearly Meeting (21-24 May 2021):

Jonathan Lingham                      London West AM

### **Friends Trusts Limited**

Nominate to serve from 1 June 2021 to 31 May 2024:

Graham Prescott                        Brighouse West Yorkshire AM

Renominate to serve for a one-year extension of term as clerk:

Paul Whitehouse                        Bristol AM

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

### **MfS/21/02/05 Review of Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group**

Jane Mace and Helen Rowlands have introduced a report from the group appointed in June 2020 to review the working of Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group and its terms of reference (paper MfS 2021 02 06).

The Review Group sees Arrangements Group continuing to have a key role in Meeting for Suffering's spirit-led discernment and they recommend the following amendments to the terms of reference:

1. That the membership should be increased to 4 and no more than 5 Friends drawn from the body of Meeting for Sufferings
2. That the appointments should move to a rolling pattern
3. That there should be explicit mention of electronic means of meeting
4. That 4.7 be deleted

We accept these recommendations and ask staff to bring revised terms of reference to our next meeting.

We welcome the observations made in the report concerning induction and communication and have heard that Friends would like the opportunity to know more about the process of planning our business. We note that all members of Meeting for Sufferings may already contact Arrangements Group to raise issues. We ask Arrangements Group to consider how this might soon be brought back to a future agenda.

We thank the members of the review group for their service and, having received their report, now lay the group down

### **MfS/21/02/06 Trends in membership**

We have heard a presentation from the Recording Clerk on trends in membership, based on data up to the end of 2019 and published as 'Patterns of Membership' by Yearly Meeting, November 2020.

Whilst total adult membership has declined 15% over the last 10 years the picture across individual meetings is mixed. Almost all large meetings and some small ones have seen a decline, but we are heartened by the knowledge that nearly a quarter of meetings in BYM have seen some sort of growth.

The statistics tell us *what* is happening but they do not necessarily explain *why* and it is important for Area Meetings to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses in their constituent Local Meetings and to offer support accordingly. The burdens of property and other responsibilities can take us away from what needs to be done to enable a strong spiritual community.

We ask the Recording Clerk to share the content of his presentation after the meeting.

### **MfS/21/02/07 Reports from representatives attending other European Yearly Meetings**

Many Yearly Meetings in Europe were either cancelled or held online, like our own, because of the health pandemic. We have received reports from Friends appointed to attend Finland, France, German and Switzerland Yearly Meetings and epistles from Belgium & Luxembourg, Netherlands and Sweden YMs, Europe & Middle East Young Friends Special Gathering and the All Poland Gathering.

Nordic YM was cancelled.

We uphold all fellow members of the European and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation in our prayers.

### **MfS/21/02/08 Support for Woodbrooke**

Friends in South Wales Area Meeting have sent us their minute regarding the support they have given Woodbrooke which is facing financial difficulties (paper MfS 2021 02 10).

The Area Meeting urges all meetings to encourage Friends to attend courses and to support Woodbrooke through making donations.

### **MfS/21/02/09 Friends Trusts Ltd**

Yearly Meeting asked Meeting for Sufferings to act on its behalf for several items of business in November last year (Minute 11, Yearly Meeting 2020). Further to minute MfS/20/12/10, we now receive and accept a report from Friends Trusts Ltd in respect of 2019.

### **MfS/21/02/10 Additional meeting for Meeting for Sufferings**

The change of date for Yearly Meeting in 2021 from May to August has left a lengthy period between the final meeting of this triennium in April and the first meeting of the next triennium in October. We agree to hold an additional meeting for this triennium on Saturday 10 July.

### **MfS/21/02/11 BYM Trustees**

We have heard from Caroline Nursey, Clerk of BYM Trustees, reflecting on Britain Yearly Meeting in this time of the pandemic, and on the impressive range of ongoing Quaker work. Support for meetings is continuing, further local development worker recruitment is underway, and a total of 35 staff have now taken voluntary redundancy, the majority in the Quiet Company.

Trustees at their next meeting will spend time considering the progress towards a simple church supported by a simple charity, the overlap and inter-relationships between the two, and how to find the best way to engage and involve friends in BYM's work. They will be considering our minute 20/12/08, about coordinated review processes, and 20/12/13 on anti-racism.

Friends expressed their warm appreciation for all the work being done in their name in these challenging circumstances.

### **MfS/21/02/12 Appointments to central committees**

We have received minute CNC 2019 11 28, concerning the appointment of attenders to Central Committees.

This matter was last considered in 1992 (minute 1992-04-08) and much has changed since then.

We agree to CNC's suggestion of a review and ask them to bring forward names of five people to form a working group for this purpose. We ask the RC to bring ToR for the group to our next meeting

We recognise that this request raises wider questions of commitment and the meaning of membership, as well as linking with our moves towards simplification. There are implications for the future of the society

### **MfS/21/02/13 Quaker Peace & Social Witness Strategy 2020–2025**

Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee consulted Meeting for Sufferings on their draft strategy 2020-2025 in October last year. This has been adopted (minute QPSWCC 20/52) and we have received a copy of the final strategy. We look forward to hearing how the work develops.

### **MfS/21/02/14 How the truth prospers in our meetings**

We have spent time together reflecting on what we have learned in the past year from the circumstances of the global health pandemic. We asked ourselves: what has been the effect on Worship? on Community? on Outreach?; how might our Meetings be in the future?; and how can Friends support one another?

We realise that there are different experiences but also much in common. We are still in the process of coming to terms with the changes and we are aware that we have not yet discerned where the Truth may be leading us.

### **MfS/21/02/15 Closing worship**

We closed our time together with worship and look forward to meeting again in April.

Margaret Bryan  
Clerk