

Calling letter



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

22 January 2021

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Dear Friends,

I write to invite you to the first Meeting for Sufferings of 2021 will be held on Saturday 6th February by Zoom. As in 2020 we are continuing to experiment with ways to engage and support representatives, and this time the MfS Support Group is hosting an evening for those attending the meeting to talk informally about the business in advance. Full details are in the covering email.

As for the Saturday itself, there is as usual some routine business, including appointments, a possible new date for your diaries and a brief update from Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees in advance of their February meeting. We will receive the reports (for information only) of Friends who have represented us at other European Yearly Meetings, a minute from an Area Meeting and one item delegated to us by Yearly Meeting.

The principal items for consideration in the morning are the report from the small group set up to review the terms of reference of Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group and a presentation from the Recording Clerk about trends in Quaker membership.

Following the impromptu innovation in December of breakout rooms before lunch, which seemed to be well received, Arrangements Group has allowed time for this again. We hope you will enjoy an opportunity to socialise with Friends you may or may not already know.

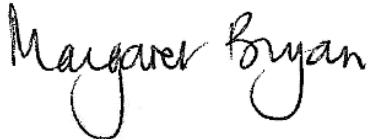
After lunch the session is in two parts. Central Nominations Committee has sent us their minute about membership and appointments on which we seek guidance about the way forward.

We will conclude the meeting with an extended period of open worship in which to share the ways in which the Truth is prospering in our meetings. Your agenda papers have some questions to prompt your thoughts.

Finally, I am asked to draw your attention to Luton and Leighton Area Meeting's online webinar about assisted dying – a link is at the foot of this letter. As you know, minutes on this issue were sent to Area Meetings at the end of 2019 and we expect to return to it. Further information about our plans will follow in a separate email.

As we settle into a new year of uncertainty I cannot help remembering George Fox's ocean of darkness and death, which will be countered by '... an infinite ocean of light and love'. Let us look, as Fox did, for great openings.

In peace and friendship,



Margaret Bryan
Clerk

Papers enclosed with this mailing

Agenda

MfS Arrangements Group December 2020 and January 2021 meeting minutes

MfS 2021 02 06 MfS Arrangements Group review

MfS 2021 02 07 Trends in membership

MfS 2021 02 08 Reports from other European Yearly Meetings

MfS 2021 02 09 Minutes from Area Meetings

MfS 2021 02 10 Delegated business from Yearly Meeting

MfS 2021 02 11 MfS dates for 2021

MfS 2021 02 13 Minutes from Central Committees

MfS 2021 02 14 How truth prospers

A reminder of how you can prepare for the meeting

- Register
- Register for the optional informal session on 2 February
- Read the agenda and papers in good time
- Contact the other representative/alternate from your area meeting or body
- Send any comments or questions to the clerks, before the meeting

'Compassion in dying' webinar

Luton & Leighton Area Meeting facilitate a webinar 'Compassion in dying' in November last year and it is now available to view online. Luton & Leighton Friends commend this Webinar to Meeting for Sufferings and hope that as many Friends as possible will watch it online at <https://youtu.be/sv5fbGFQFqw>



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

Agenda

Meeting for Sufferings – 6 February 2021

By video conference, open for arrivals from 9.30am

	Item	Paper Number
10am	Session 1	
1	Opening worship	
2	Welcome and introductions	
3	Membership	MfS 2021 02 03 To note
4	Agenda Adoption and acceptance of the agenda	
5	Appointments	MfS 2021 02 05 For approval
6	Review of Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group To consider a report from the group reviewing the Arrangements Group's terms of reference	MfS 2021 02 06 For consideration
	Shuffle break	
7	Trends in membership A report on the tabular statement and the implications of trends in membership	MfS 2021 02 07 For consideration
8	Other European Yearly Meetings Reports from BYM representatives	MfS 2021 02 08 For information
9	Minutes from Area Meetings Minute from South Wales Area Meeting regarding support for Woodbrooke	MfS 2021 02 09 For information
12.15pm	End of Session 1	

12.15pm Opportunity for representatives to meet in small groups

12:45pm Lunch break

1.45pm	Session 2	
10	Delegated business from Yearly Meeting To receive a report from Friends Trusts Ltd.	MfS 2021 02 10 For approval
11	Dates for Meeting for Sufferings in 2021 To consider a proposal from the Arrangements Group for an additional meeting in this triennium	MfS 2021 02 11 For consideration
12	BYM Trustees To hear from the Clerk of BYM Trustees ahead of trustees meeting in February	
13	Minutes from Central Committees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider a minute from Central Nominations Committee concerning the service of attenders on central committees • To receive a minute from Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee 	MfS 2021 02 13 For consideration and for information
	Shuffle break	
14	How the truth prospers in our meetings The impact of the pandemic on our communities, how we have changed and how we might be different in the future	MfS 2021 02 14 For consideration
	Closing worship	
4pm	End of Meeting	



Yearly Meeting of the
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At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held online from 14:00 – 15:30 on 14 December 2020

Minutes

Present: Margaret Bryan, Robert Card, Gill Greenfield, Mark Lilley

In attendance: Neil Jarvis, Juliet Prager

Prevented: Karen Draycott

1. Review of Meeting for Sufferings held 05 December 2020

We have reviewed the session of Meeting for Sufferings held 5th December 2020.

We have identified MfS 20/12/12 Action on racism, as a gold minute. We also recognise that minute MfS 20/12/07 represents continuing business that should return to a later agenda.

We have considered the holding of the Young People's Participation Day. We have been favourably impressed by the integration and enthusiasm of the programmes. We have noted that we might usefully have taken the contributions from the young people's session at greater length before finalising our minute.

We have been reminded that we may be able to take creative decisions about our timings.

2. Possible optional meeting in January

We have considered whether to hold an optional session of Meeting for Sufferings in January. We ask for an unclerked Zoom session as an opportunity to discuss items on agenda to be set up for the week prior to the Meeting for Sufferings session to be facilitated by staff in consultation with the Support Group.

3. New shoots

We have spent time discussing some possible topics for our next session of Meeting for Sufferings, particularly looking at growth points coming out of our experience this year. We will return to this at our next meeting.

Signed on behalf of the meeting,

Robert Card, Clerk



Yearly Meeting of the
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At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held online from 16.30 – 18:10 on 11 Jan. 2021

Minutes

Present: Margaret Bryan, Robert Card, Gill Greenfield,

In attendance: Jane Mace, Helen Rowlands, Neil Jarvis, Juliet Prager

Prevented: Karen Draycott, Mark Lilley

1. Draft report from the MfSAG Review Group

Further to minute 1 of our meeting on 9th November 2020, we have been joined by members of the Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group Review Group to consider a draft report of that group (MfSAG 2021 01 01). We have shared our thoughts and will make time on our agenda for receipt of the report at the February meeting for Sufferings.

2. Meetings attended by the clerks and others

We have heard of meetings attended: Margaret Bryan has met with the clerks of BYM trustees and Yearly Meeting together with the Recording Clerk and Deputy Recording Clerk. There are also ongoing simplification meetings that Margaret has been attending.

3. Forward agenda

We have considered our forward agenda (MfSAG 2021 01 02), which informs our planning.

We agree to schedule a meeting in late June or early July, the duration to be determined. We will bring this proposal to Meeting for Sufferings.

4. Agenda planning for February meeting

We have discussed the agenda for our February meeting. [MfSAG 2021 01 03 refers]

5. Any other matters

There being no other business to conduct, we part looking to meet again following the session of meeting for Sufferings scheduled for 6th February 2021.

Signed on behalf of the meeting,

Robert Card, Clerk

Record of minutes received by Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group in 2021

This is a record of all minutes received by Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group in 2021 with information about decisions that have been taken. If representatives wish to see a copy of a minute, or wish to contact the Clerks, please email sufferings@quaker.org.uk.

Body sending minute	Minute	Initial steps and decisions	Subsequent steps (if any)	Status
Surrey and Hampshire Border AM	20/10/02 Assisted dying	26/10/20 Minute received 11/01/21 Tabled at MfSAG In October 2019 MfS considered assisted dying and asked AMs to explore this issue further.		Minute on hold for future meeting
South Wales AM	2020:11:11 (b) Nominations Business [Woodbrooke and financial difficulties]	18/11/20 Minute received 11/01/21 Tabled at MfSAG MfSAG agreed to take to MfS in February for information.		To MfS in February
Luton & Leighton AM	20.11.13 AM events that have recently taken place [Webinar on Compassion in Dying]	23/11/20 Minute received 11/01/21 Tabled at MfSAG MfSAG agreed to share the link to the webinar in the February papers.		Information to be shared to MfS in February
Kingston & Wandsworth AM	20/76 Consideration of governance	26/11/20 Minute received 11/01/21 Tabled at MfSAG MfSAG noted this minute was not explicitly sent to MfS. It related to		No further action required on this minute (topic ongoing)

Body sending minute	Minute	Initial steps and decisions	Subsequent steps (if any)	Status
		the consideration of governance at December 2020 MfS and asked for MfS and Area Meetings to be fully involved in future work from an early stage.		
Central Nominations Committee	2019/11/28 Membership question	01/12/20 Minute received 11/01/21 Tabled at MfSAG MfSAG agreed to include this in the February meeting.		To MfS in February
Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee	QPSWCC 20/52 Adoption of QPSW Strategy for 2020-2025	2/12/20 Minute received 11/01/21 Tabled at MfSAG MfSAG agreed to share the minute and final strategy with representatives		To be shared with MfS in February
Mid Thames AM	20/12/10 Assisted Dying	16/12/20 Minute received 11/01/21 Tabled at MfSAG In October 2019 MfS considered assisted dying and asked AMs to explore this issue further.		Minute on hold for future meeting



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Review of Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Meeting for Sufferings initiated a routine review of Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group and in 2020 appointed Friends to complete this task. The report of the review group is attached for Meeting for Sufferings to consider.

Some of the group's recommendations (set out in section 5 of its report) would result in changes to the Arrangements Group's terms of reference. If Meeting for Sufferings wishes to adopt any of these recommendations, revised terms of reference reflecting these changes will be brought to Meeting for Sufferings for approval.

Report of the group appointed to review Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

1 Introduction

1.1 Composition and remit

The review group was set up and appointed by Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) under minutes MfS/19/07/11 and MfS/20/06/05. Its members were Jane Mace (Gloucester & Nailsworth AM, member of MfS) (Convenor), Helen Rowlands (Central England AM), and Eiko Elize Sakamoto (North West London AM), supported by Neil Jarvis (BYM Governance Manager). Its remit was to conduct a scheduled review of the terms of reference of the Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group (MfSAG) and to consider the continuation of the group (the task brief for the review is included at Appendix 1).

1.2 Summary of findings

- 1.2.1 MfSAG fulfils a useful function supporting the MfS Clerks in planning agendas and the conduct of meetings, and should continue to exist.
- 1.2.2 MfSAG's Terms of Reference require updating to account for changes elsewhere in the organisation and in light of our recommendations set out in this report.
- 1.2.3 MfSAG needs to maintain constant awareness of the need for good communication with Friends.

2 How we set about our work

We followed a 3 step process.

Discovery and consultation. The review group surveyed a large number of bodies and Friends (MfSAG, representatives and alternates of Meeting for Sufferings, area meeting clerks, clerk of Yearly Meeting, clerks of central committees and standing committees, BYM trustees, Recording Clerk, Deputy Recording Clerk and staff supporting Meeting for Sufferings and Arrangements Group). The group received 22 written responses to its questionnaire. We also had individual conversations with a number of these Friends. In addition to this consultation, we reviewed a selection of MfSAG meeting papers.

Initial proposals and testing. In response of what we heard, we brought together the points raised and collected them into common areas. This helped us identify some of the main themes and allowed the group to meet with MfSAG to test our initial thinking.

Final proposals. The review group has reflected on all the contributions and made its own assessment of the role of MfSAG, its effectiveness and whether changes to the terms of reference needed to be revised. This report is the result of that discernment.

3 What we learned

From the conversations and written submissions detailed above, we heard that:

- 3.1 Current and previous clerks of MfS value having a wider group with which to review the way meetings have gone and to help shape forthcoming agendas.
- 3.2 Historically, MfSAG has met in person once between each Meeting for Sufferings, using the same occasion to review the previous Meeting for Sufferings and to plan for the next. This tended to result in busy meetings with little opportunity to do more than respond to incoming minutes.
- 3.3 During 2020 MfSAG has mainly met by video conference, having more frequent, shorter meetings and separating the process of review from that of planning. Members of the Group found this change of rhythm and focus helpful.
- 3.4 Members of MfS who responded were largely appreciative of the work done by MfSAG to plan agendas, smooth the flow of business and provide for changes of rhythm and format (e.g. opportunities to meet in smaller groups). They recognised the difficult task the Group often has, yet for some people agendas were still too full and complex.
- 3.5 Area Meeting Clerks who responded tended only to be aware of the Group if they had had direct dealings with it over submission of minutes. To some the Group's work was invisible (which we did not think was necessarily a bad thing).
- 3.6 We heard responses from two Area Meetings which had concerns about how MfSAG had worked in the past. Issues raised have been picked up in section 4 below.
- 3.7 Neither the clerks of General Meeting for Scotland nor those of Meeting of Friends in Wales had had any interaction with MfSAG as those bodies have not submitted minutes to MfS in recent years.
- 3.8 We did not receive any direct response from our approaches to Young Friends' representatives.

4 Our considerations

Matters of principle

4.1 Handling of minutes sent by AMs to MfS

(Terms of Reference (ToR) 1, 4, 4.1, 4.4)

We reflected on questions raised about the authority MfSAG has in relation to minutes sent to MfS by other bodies, for instance:

- Are there (or should there be?) limits to its power to sift material and choose not to present it (or not to present it immediately) to MfS?
- Should all minutes received automatically be relayed in full to MfS?

- Is the new practice of listing minutes received and what has been done with them sufficient to provide transparency and accountability, or should MfS receive the full text of every minute received?

We found that this is more of an issue for Area Meetings (and potentially General Meeting for Scotland and Meeting of Friends in Wales) than it is for BYM Trustees, Central and Standing Committees, who recognised that their regular reporting cycles give them a 'right' of access and an obvious time to raise concerns.

We heard that members of MfS have welcomed the new list of minutes received and logging of what has happened to them. We do not think the full text of every minute needs to be included in this, as it could become cumbersome and repetitive. It might be possible for the text of minutes to be made available elsewhere for reference, but we think the new practice should be given longer to bed in before deciding on the need for this.

We noted the constant need for work with meetings at all levels to increase understanding of what it means to fully test a leading or concern before sending a minute to another body, particularly MfS. MfSAG, and particularly the staff who serve it, often have to invest time and energy to clarify what was really intended by sending a minute. They may need to work out where to direct a minute, which is made more complex when the minute is unclear. The Group is soon aware when similar issues are being raised by multiple meetings, indicating a depth and breadth of concern among Friends, and may have to decide which minutes or aspects of the issue to prioritise.

4.2 Power to initiate (ToR 4.2)

MfS itself is changed with undertaking big-picture/strategic thinking on behalf of Yearly Meeting (the church). Some Friends feel this is not being given sufficient time and space.

We found uncertainties as to AG's role and how it should balance its responsibility to respond to minutes arriving with MfS along with the possibility of leading and initiating included in its Terms of Reference (Is the Group, as one person said, 'good at filtering but less good at leading'?) The pressure on agendas may be such that AG can only respond to what comes to it, and not initiate.

We wondered how much the Group could set out to identify gaps in what is coming through from AMs and committees and help MfS to ensure that its stated vision (currently *Our Faith in the Future*) gets translated into strategic plans – becoming more of a proactive 'Agenda Group' (cf YM Agenda Committee) than an 'Arrangements Group'.

AG works with its own rolling calendar and forward plan for agenda items, but this is not generally shared with MfS. We wondered whether it would be helpful to make it available to MfS at large so that there is greater awareness and the opportunity to accept or adapt it as wanted.

4.3 Communications (ToR 4.4, 4.5)

We found that communication of the Group's work is generally well carried out, although there have been a few issues. Members of MfS receive the Group's minutes and can see how agendas have been arrived at. Staff play a vital role in communicating with meetings and committees. We acknowledge that it is easy for things to slip under pressure, and were impressed at how infrequently this seems to happen. Nevertheless we feel there is a general need to keep good practice in the front of everyone's mind.

We noted the question of who is responsible for induction and continuing learning and development of members of MfS and felt there is a gap in terms of reference. Members of MfS are appointed by their Area Meetings for varying reasons and with varying amounts of relevant prior experience, and there is a real ongoing need for development. There is nothing in the current Terms of Reference about this. After discussion with MfSAG, we have concluded that the responsibility should rest primarily with MfS Support Group. We also hope that Area Meetings and MfS Representatives themselves could be encouraged to be proactive in ensuring that good handover and induction processes are in place.

Administrative matters

4.4 Membership and appointments to the group (ToR 2.1)

MfSAG has a triangular make-up, holding the balance and creative tension between the insights and roles of the MfS clerks, the members at large of MfS, and the staff who serve the group.

It is in the nature of things that the clerks and staff members will often have longer experience, greater immersion and/or more detailed knowledge of matters coming to them. We heard that the MfS Reps are more likely to be under-represented if 1 or 2 can't be at a particular meeting. We saw that there is therefore a risk that the insights and experience of the 'ordinary' members is less prominent in meetings. We think there is a case for increasing the number of MfS Reps to a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 5 people.

We also felt that thought should be given to how and when appointments to MfSAG are made, aiming for a rolling basis among members who are not role-holders (see Appendix 3). This would aid continuity of experience as well as making it easier to include members in their first triennium on MfS.

4.5 Frequency of meetings, use of technology (ToR 3.1)

We felt the terms of reference should be enhanced to take account of possibilities opened up by video-conferencing or other technologies. Without the time and cost pressures of meeting in person every time, more frequent but shorter meetings may be desirable, e.g. separating out the processes of reviewing one meeting and planning the next.

4.6 Link with Committee on Clerks (ToR 4.7)

This needs amending since the Committee on Clerks has been laid down.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group should continue to operate.

5.2 Its Terms of Reference should be amended:

ToR 2.1: Increase MfS members to a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 5

ToR 2.1: Move to a rolling pattern of appointments

ToR 3.1: Include use of video conference or other electronic means of meeting

ToR 4.7: Delete

5.3 MfSAG should continue its current practice of listing minutes received and what has been done with them, and review in 12 months.

5.4 MfSAG is asked to consider sharing its forward thinking more widely.

5.5 We encourage MfSAG to use ToR 4.2 creatively.

5.6 MfS should make clear provision for induction of new members of MfS (at the start of each triennium and for interim appointees), as well as ongoing learning and development. We think the overview should rest primarily with MfS Support Group, but MfSAG needs to be prepared to allow for elements of it to be included in any agenda as appropriate.

5.7 Whilst it may go somewhat beyond our remit, we recommend that MfS itself could take time to explore its understandings of Concern, the nature of corporate spiritual leadings, and how these can best be tested at various levels, so as to help shape the yearly meeting's work.

We see the AG continuing to have a key role to play in this quest for spirit-led discernment, good communication and the flourishing of our worship and witness.

Appendix 1: Review Group's Task Brief

Appendix 2: MfSAG's current Terms of Reference

Appendix 3: Possible model of a rolling pattern of appointments to MfSAG

Appendix 1: MfSAG Review Group Task Brief

1 Background to review

- 1.1 The role of the Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group (MSAG) is to facilitate and simplify the work of Meeting for Sufferings. It is accountable to Meeting for Sufferings.
- 1.2 In 2014, Meeting for Sufferings approved MSAG's current terms of reference (minute MfS 2014 04 06) which require the terms of reference, and the continuation of the group, to be reviewed after five years. In July 2019, Meeting for Sufferings initiated this review (minute MfS/19/07/11).

2 Membership

- 2.1 Members of the Group are to be appointed by Meeting for Sufferings on the nomination of Central Nominations Committee.
- 2.2 The Group will consist of three members and it may appoint a convener from among this number.
- 2.3 Members will be appointed to serve until completion of the task.
- 2.4 The clerk of Meeting for Sufferings and the Recording Clerk may attend meetings of the Group ex officio.
- 2.5 The Recording Clerk will designate a member of staff to support the Group with their task if required.

3 Scope

- 3.1 To review the MSAG and its current terms of reference.
- 3.2 The review group will determine how best to complete this task. It is likely the steps will include:
 - a) assessment of how MSAG currently fulfils its duties (set out in its terms of reference)
 - b) consultation with others on how MSAG fulfils its duties, and likely to include:
 - current and recent members of MSAG and Meeting for Sufferings representatives/alternates
 - clerks of bodies which have recently sent minutes to MfS
 - Recording Clerk, Deputy Recording Clerk and other staff members serving Meeting for Sufferings and MSAG as appropriate
 - any others the review group determines as appropriate to their task.
 - c) consideration of the requirement of an arrangements group and review of the current terms of reference of MSAG in relation to the functions and constitution of Meeting for Sufferings (set out in Quaker Faith and Practice chapter 7).

3.3 The functions and constitution of Meeting for Sufferings are not in scope of this review.

4 Mode of working

4.1 The Group should meet as frequently as necessary to complete its task. The Group is encouraged to use virtual means for its meetings wherever possible.

4.2 The Recording Clerk will ensure sufficient budget is available for the expenses for Group meetings and to support the Group's activities. The Group may not incur costs outside this budget without permission of the Recording Clerk.

4.3 The Group may communicate by minute with Meeting for Sufferings. The Group should raise with the clerk of Meeting for Sufferings any matters which it feels need consideration which would take it beyond its remit.

4.4 The Group reports to Meeting for Sufferings. The Group is asked to take initial proposals to MSAG by the end of 2020 and to prepare a final report with recommendations by spring 2021 for discernment by Meeting for Sufferings. If further time is required to prepare a final report, the Group should raise this with the clerk of Meeting for Sufferings.

Appendix 2: Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group current Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference

1. Summary of reference

The role of the Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group (MSAG) is one of service to the Meeting. It works to facilitate and simplify the work of Meeting for Sufferings.

MSAG comprises the Meeting for Sufferings clerks and three additional Friends, with the Recording Clerk/Deputy Recording Clerk and others as invited, in attendance. The group's decisions will be discerned by the whole group.

2. Membership

2.1. MSAG, appointed by Meeting for Sufferings in session, shall be composed of five members, as follows:

a) The clerk and assistant clerk of Meeting for Sufferings.

b) Three members of Meeting for Sufferings (representatives or alternates).

These members of MfSAG will be appointed by Meeting for Sufferings, on the nomination of Central Nominations Committee, to serve for three years from the second Meeting for Sufferings of the triennium (to give Nominations Committee time to approach appointed members of Meeting for Sufferings) until and including the

first Meeting for Sufferings of the next triennium or until a replacement has been appointed.

2.2. Also in attendance may be:

a) The Recording Clerk and/or Deputy Recording Clerk ex officio and, by invitation, any other member of staff with designated responsibility within the Recording Clerk's Office for Meeting for Sufferings;

b) Other members of staff asked to attend by invitation of the Clerk(s) for agenda items which include their area(s) of responsibility;

c) Other Friends or specialists asked to attend by invitation of the Clerk(s) for particular sessions or particular items.

2.3. The MSAG Clerk shall normally be the Meeting for Sufferings Assistant Clerk.

3. Frequency of meetings

3.1. MSAG shall meet as frequently as necessary for discernment, accountability and completion of its tasks. It is expected that normally one meeting will be held between meetings of Meeting for Sufferings.

3.2. The between meetings decision making process shall be consultation between the MSAG Clerk and the Meeting for Sufferings Clerk, consulting other MSAG members as appropriate.

4. Duties

The role of the Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group (MSAG) is one of service to the Meeting. It works to facilitate and simplify the work of Meeting for Sufferings.

MfSAG 2019 05 07

4.1. MSAG's main duty is the discernment of recommendations for the annual calendar and agenda for Meeting for Sufferings, and oversight of the implementation of all the arrangements for Meeting for Sufferings undertaken either by groups of the Meeting for Sufferings or by staff.

4.2. MSAG shall be able to initiate items for the Meeting for Sufferings agenda.

4.3. Decisions on the final content of the agenda to be offered to Meeting for Sufferings shall be for the Meeting for Sufferings Clerks, and decisions on its acceptance shall be for Meeting for Sufferings itself.

4.4. MSAG shall:

a) Keep under review the ways in which information is presented to Meeting for Sufferings and recommend any changes to the guidelines which would improve clarity of presentation,

b) monitor progress in implementing Meeting for Sufferings' decisions,

c) co-ordinate the timing of formal consultations with meetings.

4.5. In relation to Meeting for Sufferings' business, MSAG shall facilitate communication with and between committees, working groups, other bodies of Britain Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings.

4.6. MSAG shall:

a) ensure the provision of necessary and appropriate advice and guidance for those who undertake work in preparing sessions or papers,

b) collaborate with the Meeting for Sufferings Support Group to ensure the smooth running of the meeting,

c) liaise with Quaker Life to identify needs and opportunities for creation of an inclusive Meeting for Sufferings,

d) liaise with Quaker Communication and Services to identify needs and opportunities for external publicity and communications.

4.7. MSAG, apart from the Meeting for Sufferings Clerks, shall constitute a standing link with the Committee on Clerks, which has the responsibility for the nomination of the Meeting for Sufferings Clerks.

5. Powers and responsibilities

5.1. MSAG may delegate appropriate tasks to working groups, individuals or other committees and groups, subject to available resources and budget approval, and may advise Meeting for Sufferings on setting up other working groups on matters outside MSAG's terms of reference.

5.2. MSAG may liaise and consult as appropriate (acting through the Recording Clerk/Deputy Recording Clerk) with the clerks of BYM Trustees, General, Area and Local Meetings; other standing committees and departments; partner and associated organisations such as FWCC and Woodbrooke.

5.3. MSAG may recommend and take appropriate action between Meetings for Sufferings when minutes are received from Area Meetings, and may meet such other needs as the clerks may identify.

5.4. The Recording Clerk's Office shall be the department responsible for provision of the main staff support for MSAG and for necessary liaison between Friends House departments in administrative provision.

5.5. MSAG shall have a budget allocated from within that agreed for Meeting for Sufferings. The budget will be managed through the Recording Clerk's Office.

5.6. MSAG shall agree on the fee for any specialist external contributor or speaker for Meeting for Sufferings, subject to budget approval.

6. Authority and accountability

6.1. MSAG is accountable to Meeting for Sufferings.

6.2. MSAG shall work within these Terms of Reference, under the authority of minute MfS 2014 04 06 of Meeting for Sufferings. These terms of reference, and the continuation of the group, shall be reviewed after five years.

Approved by Meeting for Sufferings held 05/04/2014

Appendix 3: Possible model for a rolling pattern of appointments

Possible model of a rolling pattern of 4 appointments over 2 triennia. (Transitional arrangements would be needed in year 1 of the new arrangements following the current arrangements. The triennium illustrated as years 4, 5 and 6 would become the established pattern of the new arrangements). The model is conditional on members appointed during their first triennium knowing whether they will be re-nominated by their AM.

Year	Position A	Position B	Position C	Position D
Triennium 1 (following current arrangements)				
1	Person 1 (2nd term on MfS)	Person 2 (2nd term on MfS)	(transitional arrangements required so more than 2 positions filled)	
2	Person 1	Person 2	Person 3 (1st term on MfS)	
3	Person 1	Person 2	Person 3	Person 4 (1st term on MfS)
Triennium 2 (this becomes the established cycle)				
4	Person 5 (1st or 2nd term)	Person 6 (1st or 2nd term)	Person 3 (2nd term on MfS)	Person 4 (2nd term on MfS)
5	Person 5	Person 6	Person 7	Person 4
6	Person 5	Person 6	Person 7	Person 8

And so on.



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

Trends in membership

The Recording Clerk will present a report on trends in membership.

The latest published tabular statement is available on the website, [following this link](#).



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

Reports from Britain Yearly Meeting representatives attending other European Yearly Meetings in 2020

Our representatives to other European Yearly Meetings have sent written reports, which are followed, below, by the epistle from each Yearly Meeting if available.

Finland Yearly Meeting – Mary Woodward
France Yearly Meeting – Joyce Taylor
German Yearly Meeting – Jessica Bishop
Switzerland Yearly Meeting – Rachel Malloch

Also included, epistles from:

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting (BYM's representative was prevented)
Europe and Middle East Young Friends Special Gathering
Netherlands Yearly Meeting
All Poland Gathering
Sweden Yearly Meeting.

Nordic Yearly Meeting was cancelled.

Finland Yearly Meeting

I was happily planning to join Finnish Friends for their yearly meeting gathering at Ilkko Lutheran Centre near Tampere when COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdowns meant the cancellation of the event.

Finnish Friends gather together twice each year, and they managed to have a face-to-face gathering at Ilkko in the autumn. I and two other visitors not resident in Finland received an email regretting that we would not be able to join them, but assuring us that we were eagerly awaited whenever it became possible to travel again. I sent them a loving greeting, and was delighted to receive a card from those who had been able to gather at Ilkko.

I have had contact with various Finnish Friends by email, and was sent a copy of their latest newsletter. They had been gathering silently in worship – non-

electronically – at 9pm their time every evening, and I tried to join them in spirit. Recently I learned that they are now meeting for worship by zoom on the first Sunday of each month, at 13.00 Finnish time, which is, most conveniently, 11.00 GMT. I joined them this month, and was delighted to see and worship with good Friends. I intend to join them as often as I can: Finnish Friends are scattered so widely around the country that I am hoping they will continue with zoom meetings even when the world situation improves.

An unexpected bonus of being given money from local Quaker funds to purchase a laptop to make zoom meetings (and especially BDRC work) easier is that I have begun learning Finnish via Duolingo – I hope to be able to surprise my Finnish Friends with my progress when next we meet.

It is a continuing joy to have this connection with Finland, and I can't begin to say how much I appreciate having been appointed to make that first contact in 2019.

France Yearly Meeting, 29 November 2020, online

Report of attendance at the Assemblée Annuelle 2020 of Quakers in France
Sunday 29th November 2020

This yearly meeting was scheduled to be in Paris but it took place by Zoom because of the travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 virus. Instead of an event spread over a weekend we had a much curtailed meeting from 2pm until 6pm followed by a time to socialise.

This report begins with a confession. Because of restrictions I was in Scotland instead of being at my house in France and completely forgot about France being an hour ahead so I logged on late and therefore missed opening worship which was deeply embarrassing, a real loss and not a good start.

From then on however, participation in this meeting was a great pleasure listening to the experiences of Friends in France, and finding connections.

The theme of the assembly was “What would we hope to see in a post Covid world?”

The fifty five participants were split into eleven breakout rooms and spent an hour in worship-sharing groups before coming back together with someone from each group reporting back in a few sentences.

Hope is a vision of how we can be.

This underpinned much of what was said. Contributions spoke about changes observed at a local and personal level with the hope these would continue—communities coming together, helping each other, living more simply, travelling less, changing habits. Hopes for change at the societal, and global levels was also shared. Can Covid be the catalyst for a more just economy? Can ideas like a

Universal Basic Income be adopted? Hope was a feeling of social progress and not a return to what was “normal”. Friends also spoke about our role as Quakers in making change happen and were urged to take responsibility - be the change we want to be; live our testimonies; listen; seek inspiration; be a bridge; turn anger into love; be positive believing in the inner light. I was struck by how much of what was shared would likely be said in a Britain Yearly Meeting gathering. But of course in this European setting there was no mention of Brexit.

The rest of the time was spent on Quaker business: the annual report, the finances and nominations. There is a hole in the budget caused by unexpected expenses in connection with the Quaker Centre, Maison De Congenies which is owned by the Assemblée. A special appeal will be put out in the New Year.

Those who wished to, stayed on after final worship and met in breakout rooms and it was a delight to speak to someone who used to attend our meeting in St Andrews and now lives in France. I also discovered someone who crossed my life in Glasgow in the late 60s though I never met him then but we found we had shared friends and hope to meet up in France one day.

The Assemblée in 2021 is scheduled to take place next October in Nouvelle Aquitaine near Bordeaux. I hope we will be able to assemble in person and enjoy a few days together of worship, ministry, Quaker business and friendship.

Joyce Taylor

German Yearly Meeting, 23–25 October 2020, online

Theme: Verbunden im Licht (Connected in Light)

This was my first time at German Yearly Meeting, which this year was of course held on line. Many of us have become accustomed to online worship these last seven months, along with all the challenges that involves; it was going to be interesting to see how upsizing a Meeting managed those challenges.

The advantages of on-line Meetings are that there is no travel involved, meaning no financial costs, and good for our carbon footprints. However the disadvantages include technical issues and the absence of casual fellowship that naturally occurs when we eat and live together. And one of the purposes of Yearly Meetings is to meet together, yet we were going to be physically hundreds of kilometres apart, and seeing each other only on screens. In addition my German is very basic and there was to be no translation available, I was daunted before it started. A Friend introduced me to Annie Janssen, who was prepared to translate in real time over WhatsApp, so I was delighted to be able to attend but it would be with limited participation, I would be more of an observer.

Friday evening we gathered for the opening and welcome. After introductions of the Clerking team we had some technical tips about how things would be organised. When we should mute, when we should switch off our cameras. During Meetings, switching on one's camera would be the equivalent of standing up, microphone would be switched on only once asked to speak. And we were not to use the chat function during Meetings as that could be a distraction. Some Friends had joined others Friends and were socially distanced, but sitting in the same room, some were in their Meeting House.

Visiting Friends and delegates introduced themselves, and some were in the same position as I was, with worries about not understanding. Then new Friends were introduced, and an account given about how they came to Quakers, or Germany, their interests and a small biography. It was really good to hear their different stories, and so welcoming. German Yearly Meeting has 262 members.

The financial reports were interrupted by somebody using the Zoom account, we had to take a 15 minute break for this to be sorted, but this was the only technical issue over the weekend that I was aware of. Finances are dealt with slightly differently from the UK as German Quakers are not a "church" but an organisation. But the questions from Friends were similar. The Treasurers report, and the Audit were accepted.

The big issue for GYM, now and for some years has been the future of Quaker House in Bad Pyrmont. It has been an expense and doesn't fully answer Friends needs or wants. This discussion is familiar to all Friends who have worshiped in a building of age, or in an inconvenient location. QH Bad Pyrmont has been running at a deficit of Euro 25,000 per year, but the YM has come to the conclusion that it has a value that is greater than the income it generates. The working group has had open meetings with members over the last few years where they have discussed the issues, and have spent years looking into it, following up on all previous YM suggestions, their feeling now: that we need no more information than we have already and their recommendation is that we hold onto the MH. Even over the airwaves it was possible to see that there had been many years of talking and working on this issue, there was a feeling of liberation that a decision had been made. Though there was also an acceptance of more work to come.

Epilogue that evening was enhanced by photographs from the European Young Friends gathering earlier in 2020, their theme was Our Relationship with Nature, during their breaks Young Friends in their different places took pictures that answered their questions such as What Colour does our common sky have? These photographs were beautiful, and though we were sitting in front of screens we could see such wonderful places in some very beautiful parts of Europe.

We gathered for morning worship on Saturday, many of us have grown used to worshipping separately and yet together, I have certainly found it to be spiritual in a

way I hadn't thought possible before. And now we gathered in silence, along with technical and language barriers that didn't prevent a meaningful worship.

The Richard Cary Lecture was not so accessible for me, the translation tool I used, only did bite-sized pieces and I frequently missed the links between these sections, my German was inadequate. I understood some, enough to know that I am looking forward to reading the transcript. It is tiring having online meetings, more so in an alien language so I sadly did not join the discussion groups.

I rejoined the general meeting for the afternoon session. Much of what occupies BYM is also of concern to GYM, Conflicts in society, being a Peace Church, activists demonstrating against nuclear weapons, Stop Fuelling War, and climate change, FWCC-EMES and the normal business of running a YM, with the extra this year of COVID.

YFs also had an online Quaker Gathering, packages were sent out to each child with art and craft options. This worked very well, the children could talk to each other, they had music and even a dog visited.

A novel idea for me, the Epistle was agreed on Saturday afternoon so that there would be no need for a MfB on Sunday, just a MfW. And later we returned for Epilogue and Worship Sharing.

Sunday morning Worship was full of ministry, the theme of Light running like a thread through it.

There's no escaping that I felt a little bit like an outsider at this meeting, between sessions we were encouraged to stay on line and I listened some of the time to the chats between Friends, who were catching up with each other. We are all missing real life meetings, and I feel that we will all be so appreciative of these when they return. This was my first German YM, and I look forward to meeting German Friends in person next year. I thank Annie Janssen for her hard work. And I thank BYM for asking me to be a delegate, I greatly value this experience.

Jessica Bishop

German Yearly Meeting Epistle

Dear Friends everywhere,

We send loving greetings from our unusual meeting place for our 90th Yearly Meeting of German and Austrian Friends – for most of us, our own homes. Instead of meeting in Bonn, we logged in to web-meetings held between the 23rd and 25th October 2020. For the past few months we have been getting used to the fact that Meetings for Worship, Meetings for Worship for Business, and Creative Listening sessions are not possible “in person“. While we miss this personal contact, we find that technology can help us bridge this gap. We are sad to meet fewer people than in previous years, and we hold those in the light who cannot be with us. At the same

time, we are grateful that this technical support enables some Friends to take part who could not otherwise be present.

Our children and young people were almost completely out of the picture for many of us; however they too were participating in lively online sessions, which included a real live chicken!

The theme of our Yearly Meeting this year was also the theme of the Jochen Dudeck's Richard-Cary Lecture: "Connected in the Light".

Based on his own experience and his personal influences, he sees us all from birth onwards as connected; with our own selves, with our families and with the material and spiritual world. We live in symbiosis with innumerable bacteria and viruses and in constantly changing relationship to all of the world's living things.

Jochen understands the old Quakerly "inward Light" as the light of life, that streams into us when we open ourselves to it. In this process lies the nature of the "gathered meeting."

During the past three years, our Yearly Meeting has begun to grow. This year we welcomed six new members into the Meeting, as well as Friends who have transferred their membership to us from other Yearly Meetings.

After years of debating the future of our Quaker House in Bad Pyrmont, we found the confidence this year to write a far-reaching minute. We want to keep the house, meanwhile using the coming year to develop ideas for shaping the building in a way that is sustainable, both financially and otherwise.

Many of us are actively involved in demonstrations and direct action, including civil disobedience, calling for equality, peace and the integrity of creation. May all of our personal and joint efforts be connected to and with the Light, our trust contributing towards transformation for the good.

We give grateful thanks for your messages from all over the Quaker world. Let us continue to hold one another in the Light, that Light which both connects and moves us.

In Friendship

German Yearly Meeting

Switzerland Yearly Meeting, 31 May 2020, online

As the appointed representative of Britain Yearly Meeting I attended SYM from home in Lancaster, starting with Meeting for Worship in the morning of Sunday May 31st. 40 Friends attended, and Advice and Query 20 was read. As happens during Zoom

Meetings for Worship in Lancaster, an endearing feature of the home-based virtual connections was the involvement of pet cats!

The Meeting for Worship for Business was attended by 25 Friends and lasted for about 4 hours, with a short break. Following the opening silence, the death since the last gathering of two Friends was recorded, as was the transfer of one member between Meetings.

The Meeting then went on to hear from representatives of the constituent Meetings and Worship Groups, most of which had submitted written reports. Friends in Basel are eagerly awaiting the re-opening of borders as their constituency includes France and Germany as well as Switzerland. In the capital, Bern, they hope that their 2nd and 4th Sunday meetings will be held face to face from mid-June. A small group from the area around Neuchâtel and Biel has seen reduced numbers, so the most active member has joined Bern, until such time as this group might restart. Zürich has an active Meeting, currently meeting online weekly plus an evening meeting on weekdays – known as epilogue. Friends had taken part in a city-wide event – Stilles Zürich – which generated interest and new attenders. There have been regular meetings for learning including one on the practice of Meetings for Clearness, which they hope to share more widely among Swiss Friends. Following the closure of the Ramallah Play Centre, Zürich Friends are looking to support a local ecological project in line with Quaker values and FWCC goals. Zürich Friends are in touch with the few in Romanshorn, who are not able to join in virtual connections. By far the greatest number of Friends are attached to Geneva Meeting, which has the status of a Monthly Meeting. Among the members are people associated with the many international organisations based in Geneva, as well as members of the QUNO staff. They record an increase in their spiritual and social activity and have benefitted from meetings started 2 years ago addressing various topics on the theme of Spiritual Deepening. Friends in the Lausanne worship group are technically part of Geneva MM and are not active online.

The meeting then heard comments (further to the written report) on the activities of Actares, an association of critical shareholders who challenge some of Switzerland's big corporations on issues such as work safety, carbon emission, child labour, human rights abuse, waste management and air pollution. CO2 emission from the manufacture of cement is one issue in which Quakers are involved. Actares tend to decide on action (e.g. on climate) and require a rapid response from their delegates, which is difficult for Quakers, who prefer to put their name to something after due consultation and discernment. Geneva Friends are focussing on issues relating to Nestlé's.

The Clerking team reported on their continuing efforts to foster more communication between French and German speaking Swiss Quakers. (This annual meeting was held in English and German, with very able each way translation by the Clerk Anne Lotte Heyn-Cossalter). Don't take the Clerking team for granted was the plea!

The most time was spent on financial matters – the annual accounts for 2019 showed a deficit, and the treasurers will continue the process of trying to make the contributions more equitable, in line with group membership. The familiar question arose as to how much should Swiss Friends hold in reserves – currently 80K Sfrs – and whether these should be run down, in line with the Quaker tradition of not accumulating wealth. The arguments for and against were aired and noted.

The longer discussion concerned the sum of 2000 Sfrs budgeted in 2020 as the down-payment to Herzberg, where SYM would have been meeting that weekend, were it not for Covid-19. Most Friends agreed that this money should be sent to Herzberg, the dissenting voice being concerned that such institutions will inevitably need to review their business model following the disruption of Covid-19, and it is not helpful to prop up the status quo. The Meeting voiced a clear sense of respect for the ethos of the Herzberg management, including their policy of employing people who would otherwise find it difficult to enter the job market. These employees would have suffered loss of income, even though kept on by Herzberg. The money will be sent with a letter carefully worded by the Clerks referring to the appreciation of Quakers for management and employees, but avoiding dictating how the money should be used – it was clear that Friends did not want to appear to have superior wisdom or to occupy the moral high ground. A break was needed before this issue could be concluded.

There were then some more administrative matters – Nominations, some of which were modified in light of Covid-19. Names were sought for a naming group to find the (German section) Friend needed to replenish the Nominations Committee.

Notices included the information that the autumn gathering to be held in Geneva (Oct 31/Nov 1 2020) will feature one day for business and one day to reflect on 100 years of Quakers in Geneva – picking up what had been planned for this year's annual gathering. I have expressed interest in attending, and, if deemed appropriate, to contribute to the celebration some memories of mine and my parents' time in Geneva. It has further been announced that next year's annual gathering (21-24 May 2021) will focus on the work of QUNO. Planning for the annual retreat at Montmirail (February 2021) is progressing, with possible themes being Radical Spirituality (as in the Woodbrooke course) and/or Peace Work (what is Peace?). The German speaking Border Meeting is planned for April 2021. A request was made for a gathering venue closer to the French speaking part of Switzerland, and Friends who might propose one were reminded to keep in mind criteria such as cost and accessibility by public transport.

I was not on the mailing list for Documents in Advance but received them promptly when I asked. I was made to feel very welcome – as the only rep. of another YM.

Rachel Malloch

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting Epistle

Letting Our Lives Speak: Linking Quaker Theology, Spirituality and Social Action

To Friends everywhere,

We, Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting, held our 'residential' yearly meeting over the weekend of 10-11 October 2020, online via Zoom, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Our theme was 'Letting Our Lives Speak: Linking Quaker Theology, Spirituality and Social Action'.

Although Friends regretted that the current situation prevented us from meeting face to face and enjoying informal social interactions in person, gathering online enabled geographically distant Friends to join us, including representatives from yearly meetings in Britain, Switzerland, Ireland and the Netherlands. Some 45 members and attenders were present, from Belgium and Luxembourg, as well as Germany, France, the UK and the USA.

No children attended this year's online yearly meeting. Their joyful presence and participation were missed.

Our keynote speaker was Craig Barnett, member of Britain Yearly Meeting and author of *The Guided Life*. Craig reminded us to 'Take heed...to the promptings of love and truth in [our] hearts' (Advices and Queries 1). He used his own spiritual journey as an example of lived action from those promptings, reminding us that the teacher is within.

Testimonies are not externally imposed aspirations but rather are descriptions of where generations of Quakers have been led by the Spirit. There is no perfect Quaker. We each have our own unique purpose in the world and the Quaker Way leads us to discovering it. We bring our promptings to the Quaker community in our Meetings (Business, Threshing, Clearness, Experiment with Light, etc.) to help us discern what are true leadings.

A guided life is not necessarily a successful life. The life journey itself is more important than the goal, and along the way, weakness, failure and suffering can be powerful teachers. When faced with adversity, remain open and surrender. Vulnerability may open us to new leadings. For example, George Fox needed to feel despair himself so he could speak to the condition of others. Reflect on what you yourself have learned when led into areas of weakness.

Our second speaker was Anya Nanning Ramamurthy. Anya is a British Friend and climate justice activist who is engaged in the UK Student Climate Network. She has been inspired by historical Friends who acted on their beliefs. One in particular is the Quaker American civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, who encouraged 'angelic troublemakers' to use their bodies to 'disrupt business as usual'. Quakers have

upheld children and young people as leaders from our earliest days when children kept meetings going while adults were imprisoned.

Anya encourages Friends to recognise that we cannot work against climate breakdown without addressing inequalities and social injustices.

Friends from Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting shared testimonies on how they have been led by the Spirit to serve their communities in unexpected ways. In reaction to the mistreatment of Muslim students, Isfried Rodeyns was led to develop creative forms of inter-religious dialogue. Karen Lang's life 'master plan' was disrupted by a series of chance encounters which led to unexpected opportunities for service in multiple areas including human rights education.

We have considered how the Spirit can lead us either to social action close to home, to 'bloom where [we] are planted' and 'find [our] own Calcutta', as St Francis de Sales and Mother Teresa were quoted in testimony -- or how we may be led to venture wider into the world.

Margaret Fell wrote that the Light 'will rip you up, and lay you open'. We need to remain open, to seek discernment of our promptings and follow our leadings. The journeys on which we are led are their own rewards.

Acceptance of our limits and being gentle with ourselves can help us to find authenticity in our lives and avoid 'Quaker guilt' at not doing enough. We can see ourselves as 'well-oiled cogs' in a bigger machine. We do not move, spiritually or physically, in isolation, but rather in concert with others.

Our own movements affect and propel and perhaps inspire the movements of others. As a community of faith and searching we are all connected. Corona times have provided us with challenges and unexpected opportunities. The crisis woke us up to our collective vulnerability and connected us with people of other times and places. Like George Fox at the precipice of darkness, accepting our own feelings of confusion, disorientation, fear, anxiety and the heartbreak of separation from loved ones allows us to persevere and serve others.

The Quaker Way is an active, adaptable path, guided by the still, small voice, through fear to gratitude. Together with our neighbours we are slowly building the beloved community.

Europe and Middle East Young Friends Special Gathering 2020

Dear Friends everywhere...

... This year, we were not able to hold our Summer Gathering in Finland as we planned and looked forward to, due to the Covid19 outbreak. We still wanted to connect and meet and were therefore contemplating about what we need and how

we can answer these needs in a new way this year. Pretty quickly we realized that an online gathering was the best and the safest choice for us this time. Our impromptu planning committee was able to create a space with different rooms which made us connect how we needed it: creating togetherness, creating community and spending time together. While going online was a necessity, our priorities in the way we approached this were our choice.

We did not know how this event would turn out, as it had to be so different from our usual gatherings... and we were positively surprised! The special connection between us was there, even with this very different way of being together.

We started to feel like a community already after the opening session – not just like pixelated pictures on a screen. We came together after the experience of several months of reduced social contact, everyone wanting this to work, craving connection. The digital ‘venue’ with different rooms made it easy to be at a place and be present. We felt like the venue made the place ‘real’ even if at that point no other people were online in the room. We also realized how much care and attention is needed to enable community, especially when meeting online – it is amazing what technologies are available, but even more what community can do. The words “The spirit is in the detail” stayed with us over the week. And when one main session had to be postponed due to technical issues, we just stayed together and played the game someone suggested.

Meeting online was not without challenges, though. It was much harder to ‘see’ the people who were not present during the sessions than it would have been in an in-person community like Spring Gatherings, and at times it was hard to connect throughout the day, as we didn’t know who would be online at what time exactly. As the week progressed, we became more confident and started using the platform for conversation in between sessions as well. Implementing and planning these inspired moments was harder than planning the sessions themselves, so we were glad to see that over time and with trust, this happened.

The online gathering not only brought challenges but also came with advantages. For example, it enabled several people to attend who said they couldn’t have come to a gathering in Finland. Not only was the gathering easier to combine with the demands of daily life, but being able to attend it from your own home also lowered the threshold for several newcomers. This made us consider different ways of making future gatherings more accessible by using digital or hybrid forms of worship. Reflections on this were also shared when Michael Eccles visited and led a discussion about the ways meetings in the Europe and Middle East Section (EMES) are staying in contact, worshipping and coming together. Some Friends appreciated the freedom of attending just a few sessions and nonetheless being a part of the community. Throughout the week, we experienced a steady attendance, with all sessions or meetings being attended by at least a small group of Young Friends. In total, more than 25 Young Friends were a part of the gathering.

During the week, we had sessions in the evening and early morning activities like Yoga and Meeting for Worship, while spending the day in our workplaces, with our families and (non-EMEYF)-friends. Because the gathering took place in the midst of Friends' everyday lives, some everyday life impressions were blending into the gathering and vice versa. People from our everyday life did eventually notice that we were doing activities together and we were able to share interesting conversations about our gathering and our community with "outside people", which we otherwise maybe would not have had. Carrying the gathering with us and incorporating it in our daily lives also allowed us to see each other differently, as part of other communities and in our daily spaces, outside of the exceptional time and space of an in person gathering: We got to see each other's kitchens and living rooms, pets, partners, and housemates, which gave the gathering a very homey feel. 😊

The digital setup of the special gathering also allowed us to easily welcome external speakers, to share their stories and concerns with us. Edouard Dommen from Geneva challenged us to think non-anthropocentrically about the world, and we looked at this together, from different perspectives, growing in our understanding and awareness: How can we extend the community of neighbours that we think of when we intend to 'love our neighbours'? How is our view of the world and how are our actions for the environment changed when we stop thinking in terms of stewardship, but understand ourselves interwoven in human-nonhuman connections and networks? Some of us were inspired to start conversations about how we and our meetings are sometimes anthropocentric (maybe without being aware of it).

Matthias Schwerendt from Berlin shared his memories and reflections on being a Young Friend in the GDR and when the wall came down, asking what it means to be a (Young) Quaker in a Europe that is changing all around us. We heard about the close community of East German Young Friends, about the joys of international contacts and intervisitation, but also about the difficulties in growing together, as their experience differed from those of Western Young Friends. We spoke about what keeps us going and how conflicts within Quaker communities can be attended to, and Matthias reminded us of the importance of listening. This thought-provoking session created conversation and connection between the current and former generation of "Young" European Friends, then and now.

In other sessions and activities we enjoyed the opportunity to connect and catch up, such as when we were cooking a Mung Dal with Raita together, each in our own kitchen. While some of us were already eating, others were still cooking or in conversation. We appreciated the shared activities and the freedom that comes with a communal rhythm of the day, including variations, without the need to sync our activities too much.

These sessions, as well as our virtual Meeting for Worship, created a sense of "together togetherness": on Veertly, in a meeting room, looking at each other. Other activities that were offered to use the week as a retreat created a sense of "separate

togetherness”: We had daily challenges on the topic of “Nature and Spirituality”, which encouraged us to leave the house, searching for water and sitting with trees or harvesting fruits. Pictures of our adventures were shared in a messenger group. We sent each other postcards to create a ‘tangible’ memory of this online event. We looked after each other in homegroups. It felt special and important to take time out of our week for our community and our faith.

We hope that the connections between us will continue to strengthen and grow, virtually and in person.

Netherlands Yearly Meeting Epistle

Dear Friends all over the world

Friends from the Netherlands Yearly Meeting were gathered online on Saturday 3rd October 2020. Instead of a full weekend in the beginning of May, this year we had a one day gathering via Zoom. Therefore, we focussed on the most essential topics. Herewith, we send you two of our minutes which may give you an impression of the spirit in which we were together.

Our vision on the future

In the greetings we received from Michael Eccles, Secretary of FWCC- EMES, we read the text of the theme of the gathering in May 2020: ‘Heeding the Prophecy of our sons and daughters, daring to dream dreams and see visions’ (Joel 2 28). This is also a promise: we need the Spirit, and we can be open for new ways. We are also able to experience a gathered meeting on Zoom.

We heard about inspiration from several films:

- A life on our planet (David Attenborough)
- The social dilemma (Jeff Orlowski)
- A Message From the Future II: The Years of Repair (Avi Lewis)”

We can be aware of the situation in the world and at the same time retreat into reflection on what we can achieve now with small hands. And: our hands can reach all over the world via the internet.

In these times when there is a lot of fear, we can connect in silence, hope can bubble up and dreams can arise. Let the Spirit from the Silence inspire our courage and strengthen our dreams. Our challenge is to create visions and make them come alive together. Quakers have a vision of a peaceful world without nuclear weapons and we want to spread that vision. When we each are going our own way, let’s keep each other informed and let’s continue to exchange with each other what we are doing to make our visions become reality.

Today we have been together via digital means (Zoom). The most recent Corona restrictions limiting non-essential travel led us to decide not to meet physically in the Johanneskerk in Amersfoort.

A shortened Annual Meeting of just one day, in which we experienced how important it is to meet each other, even in this way. We have taken the necessary decisions that could not wait.

Listening to the values and inspiration of Friends has started a process of further reflection on our values and inspiration, to be continued both in person and in our Monthly Meetings throughout the coming months. We hold each other close and keep connected during this time through online and live meetings, and in phone conversations with Friends who couldn't be here.

We wish that we enkindle the Light in each other, so that we all can use our talents and gifts for new inspiration in the coming months. Hoping that next year it will be possible to organize a live Annual Meeting!

In Friendship

Marlies Tjallingii, clerk of the Netherlands Yearly Meeting
Marielke Nieuwerth-van den Akker, assistant clerk

All Poland Gathering

On the 14th November 2020 an All-Poland Gathering of Friends took place, in which participated 21 people from the south, north, east, west and central Poland. It was the first meeting online in the history of our group, on the Zoom platform.

During the worship with spiritual sharing we expressed our joy with being able to see and hear each other, and our hope in the possibility that our community might thrive despite the limitations caused by the pandemic. We have also articulated our need to stay in touch with each other by any means possible, including email, phone, personal meeting and meeting online.

The Kaszuby group, the Warsaw group and the isolated Friends from the South and the North also participated in the news sharing part of the gathering. We have listened to a presentation about the micro-practicing of peace, i.e. making peace every day in a micro scale. In the exchange that followed the presentation we shared our own experiences of peacefully solving everyday conflicts. We are hoping – and even planning – to organise further workshops in education for peace.

The need for regular, open-for-all meetings and worship was very visible and clearly expressed. In as much as we are challenged by the pandemic-related limitations, the situation also offers new opportunities. We are unable to meet in person but we can meet online instead, which for some of us means we can meet more often, and for

others – especially the isolated – that we can meet at all. We have agreed that we will utilise the already tested Zoom platform for our future group meetings (once they are scheduled). The first of such all-Poland, hour-long meetings for worship, followed by tea/coffee, we have scheduled for 28th November 2020 at 10:30 am.

To ensure that the work of Friends in Poland continues the Gathering has expressed its conviction that the official roles, which were due to expire with this All-Poland Gathering, are ‘frozen’ until the next in-person meeting is possible. The organisation of the next All-Poland Gathering remains an open question. We hope that more regular meetings and worship online will make it possible to address is again soon.

Sweden Yearly Meeting Epistle

To Friends everywhere 2020-11-07

Like many Yearly Meetings all over the world, the Swedish Quakers were forced to hold their Yearly Meeting on Zoom, without the lifegiving personal meetings, without common lodging, without a theme.

We have carried out the most necessary tasks, welcoming new members, taking farewell of the members we lost, taking part of the economics reports for 2019, adopting the auditor’s reports and the budget, and approving the assignment of members to committees for 2021.

In the harsh times of the pandemic, we have still benefitted from the use of technical devices, which have made it possible to “see” each other and to worship together. In that way, those who lost their usual way to worship have been able to stay in touch with Friends and attenders, even those far away. We have been enriched by such new meeting places, and will most likely keep some of them, when today’s restrictions end.

One day, when we are no longer in the pandemic’s grip, we might become aware of what we learned during this social desert time. Then we might realize what the Swedish poet Karin Boye wrote in her beloved poem:

“Nog finns det mål och mening med vår färd men det är vägen som är mödan värd.”

[Approximately: Sure, there are aims and meaning in life’s travels, but the road we travel, is what makes the effort worth it.]

Kerstin Backman, clerk



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

Minutes from Area Meetings

South Wales Area Meeting has sent the following minute to Meeting for Sufferings which is provided for information.

Woodbrooke

South Wales AM held on 14 November 2020

Minute 2020:11:11 Nominations Business (part)

(b) We have received minute 20-10-30-12 from our Nominations Committee regarding Woodbrooke's 'deep financial crisis' which is a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.

We recognise Woodbrooke's vital role as the main provider of courses and training for Friends. We have considered the options suggested by Nominations Committee.

We agree to donate the unspent money from our training and education budget for 2020 to Woodbrooke and ask our Treasurer to arrange this as appropriate and as soon as possible.

We encourage local meetings who haven't already done so, to identify a Woodbrooke Correspondent, who can raise the profile of Woodbrooke and encourage Friends to attend Woodbrooke courses and make donations.

We ask our Co-Clerks to send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings to encourage other Area Meetings to consider supporting Woodbrooke.

Carolyn Sansom, Frances Rutter, Co-clerks
South Wales Area Meeting



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

Delegated business from Yearly Meeting

Yearly Meeting 2020 (Minute 11) asked Meeting for Sufferings to act on behalf of Yearly Meeting on a number of matters. Most of this business was taken by Meeting for Sufferings in December 2020. At this Meeting, the final report to receive is from Friends Trusts Limited.

Friends Trusts Limited: report to Yearly Meeting In respect of 2019

Friends Trusts Limited is a company limited by guarantee. It acts as the custodian trustee or nominee for Meetings and other bodies within Britain Yearly Meeting. Over 450 properties are held in the company's name on behalf of more than 70 organisations and more than 120 investments on behalf of more than 50 beneficial owners.

The company provides a public benefit by managing a number of Quaker trusts and during the year more than £108,000 was distributed in accordance with the instructions of the original donors. A part of this role is management of the investments in which the capital of these trusts is held and at the end of the year there was more than £6,450,000 invested. The Directors aim to maximize total returns within a medium level of risk, whilst following an ethical investment policy.

An important function of Friends Trusts Limited is the use of the company as the named recipient of legacies that are to benefit some aspect of the Society or its work. This ensures a clear identity for receipt of the legacy and during the year more than £1,723,000 was passed on to various Quaker organisations.

The company also receives income and legacies into its unrestricted fund. If the gift or bequest includes an expressed wish of how it should be applied, the company will endeavour to follow it wherever possible. If there is no indication of how the funds should be applied, the policy is to pass them to Britain Yearly Meeting. During the year more than £3,628,000 was distributed from the unrestricted fund.

The Treasurer of Britain Yearly Meeting is a Director of Friends Trusts Limited ex officio; the other Directors are appointed by Meeting for Sufferings on a triennial basis. Staff in the Britain Yearly Meeting Finance Department carry out the administration. The Board met 4 times during the year. Its annual report and financial statements are produced in accordance with company and charity law and copies are available from the Secretary by emailing friendstrusts@quaker.org.uk

Paul Whitehouse
Chairman

Christopher Gregory
Secretary



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

Meetings of Meeting for Sufferings in 2021

The current triennium ends at Yearly Meeting in 2021. Yearly Meeting had originally been set for May in 2021 but will now take place in August. The Arrangements Group has considered the implication of this on the dates of Meeting for Sufferings in 2021.

Currently, the final meeting of Sufferings in this triennium is 10 April and the first meeting of the next triennium is 2 October. The Arrangements Group proposes to hold an additional meeting in this triennium as follows:

Meeting for Sufferings dates 2021

This triennium:	6 February 10 April 10 July	Proposed additional date
Next triennium:	2 October 3–5 December	

This proposal is brought to Meeting for Sufferings for its consideration.



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

Central Committee Minutes received

Two minutes are before Meeting for Sufferings: one from Central Nominations Committee and one from Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee.

1) Membership (appointees to central committees)

Central Nominations Committee held 23 November 2019 – minute CNC 2019 11 28 Membership Question

We have received CNC 2019 11 28 Paper for Meeting for Sufferings as a draft from our clerks.

Our ability to appoint attenders to serve on Central Committees and other roles we nominate for is restricted by Minute 8 of Meeting for Sufferings, 4 April 1992.

We feel that the position of attenders in the Society has changed since then. There is an increasing number who either do not wish to apply for membership, feel it is not necessary or find the current processes make it difficult for them. Some of these attenders have already given much to the Society and have much to offer. Many Younger Adult Friends are in this group and we are particularly anxious that they are properly represented in our central work.

The 4 April 1992 minute no longer reflects Central Nominations Committee's current practice nor, we feel, the needs of the Society. We request that Meeting for Sufferings considers the issue and reviews the minute, with a view to allowing the new nominating committee more freedom to nominate attenders in good standing to central committees and other roles.

We are fully aware that there are and will always be some roles, e.g. BYM Trustees, for which membership is a requirement. There are also others, including the Clerks of Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings, for which it would seem appropriate to restrict nominees to those in membership.

We therefore request that Meeting for Sufferings considers the issue and reviews minute 8 of Meeting for Sufferings, 4 April 1992.

We ask our clerks to forward this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Hannah Brock-Womack, Co-Clerk

Note and background information

Arrangements Group suggests that Meeting for Sufferings could establish a small time-limited working group, to consider CNC's question, consult Friends, and bring proposals to Meeting for Sufferings. If the meeting feels this is the right way forward,

we could ask the Recording Clerk to bring Terms of Reference for the group, to our next meeting, and meanwhile ask CNC to search for three nominees.

What happens now?

Meeting for Sufferings' minute 1992 (see below) is used by Central Nominations Committee. Currently the *general* rule is that only members of the Society of Friends should be appointed.

Some roles can only be filled by members:

- Anyone representing the Yearly Meeting to other bodies (representatives to other Yearly Meetings or Churches Together)
- Key decision-making bodies – central committees and Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee.

There can be exceptions for other committees. In 1992, the sort of exceptions anticipated were to do with making sure that committees benefitted from special expertise or experience. If attenders are nominated, Meeting for Sufferings should be provided with reasons.

Currently, members of Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM) are treated as if they are members (even though YFGM has no formal membership requirement). Other than that, CNC only considers members for nomination unless it is specifically instructed to look more widely.

Reasons for considering updating the guidance

- a) The committee structure has changed since 1992
- b) It would help to clarify which are the 'key decision-making bodies'
- c) Friends want committees to be more diverse, but Younger Friends are less likely to be in membership than older Friends
- d) The concept of membership is increasingly contested in wider society – some long-standing Friends who have gifts to offer have chosen not to become members
- e) Many Meetings are, in practice, appointing attenders to key roles (e.g. clerk, treasurer, elders and pastoral carers)
- f) Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings have appointed to Meeting for Sufferings some who are not in membership (representatives of YFGM and Young Adult Friends)

Meeting for Sufferings, Minute 8, April 1992, Appointment to Committees

Further to Minute 8 of 7 December 1991, a report dated 6 March 1992 has been received from the group set up to consider the matter. The report has been introduced by Rachel Brett.

We agree to the recommendations in the report.

Minute received at Meeting for Sufferings in April 1992 from the group set up by Meeting for Sufferings in 1991 to consider the question of appointing attenders.

Further to Minute 8 of Meeting for Sufferings held in London on 7 December 1991, the Group of Friends appointed to consider the question of Appointment to Committees met on 6 March 1992. The Group consists of Gill Bocock, Rachel Brett (clerk), Clare Scott Booth and Joan Southern.

The mandate of this Group is limited to the question of whether Meeting for Sufferings Nominations Committee should nominate attenders as well as members.

The Group is clear that

- i. The general rule should be that only members of the Society of Friends should be nominated in these capacities;
- ii. There should be no exception to that general rule
 - a) Where the person is representing London Yearly Meeting to other Quaker bodies or to the outside world, such as the representatives to CCBI and to other yearly meetings
 - b) For the key decision-making bodies of London Yearly Meeting such as the central committees and Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee;
- iii. There may be occasions on which it is right to make an exception in the case of other committees where an attender has special expertise or experience which is sought by the committee concerned. In these cases, the nomination to Meeting for Sufferings should indicate clearly that the person is not in membership and give the reasons for the nomination.

We have considered the position of Young Friends for whom there may be technical difficulties in applying for membership, such as the short duration of residence within any one monthly meeting area. It seems to us that this is a problem which needs sensitive consideration by monthly meetings, but is not a reason for making a special exception for Young Friends, though they may fall within the special expertise and experience category.

We are aware that there may be legal requirements about membership for some of the bodies to whom nominations are made.

Rachel Brett, Clerk

Relevant points from Central Nominations Committee's current terms of reference, recently adopted at Yearly Meeting in November 2020:

3.5. The Committee shall advise Yearly Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings (as appropriate) if it feels that an adjustment or review of the purpose or operating terms for any appointment are necessary to allow service from the widest possible range of Friends. If the Committee becomes aware that the working practices of any committee or body to which the Committee nominates is restricting the diversity of

that committee or body, this should be brought to the notice of the clerks of that committee or body.

3.7. The committee shall nominate only members of the Society for appointments to standing committees of Meeting for Sufferings or Britain Yearly Meeting, or as representatives to other Quaker bodies or to the outside world. Exceptions to this general rule shall be clearly indicated and supported by reasons for nomination.

2) QPSW strategy

Meeting for Sufferings considered the draft 2020–2025 QPSW Strategy at its meeting in October 2020. QPSWCC has now finalised the strategy and has sent Meeting for Sufferings the following minute. The final version of the strategy is provided for information.

Staff, with support from Central Committee and its sub-committees, are looking between now at April at how to implement the new strategy. Translating Quaker faith into action remains our underlying purpose. We expect there will be more focus on supporting Quakers across Britain in their witness: working with, rather than on behalf of, Friends. We will look at peacebuilding in Britain and what more we can do to heal divisions and create a more just society. We will keep doing much of what we are already working on, under the themes of peace & peacebuilding, and sustainability & climate justice. We want to make sure that QPSW is doing things that cannot be done elsewhere, so that we can make the greatest positive change in the world.

Minute of Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) held on 20-22 November 2020

QPSWCC 20/52: STRATEGY ADOPTION

We have spent the weekend reflecting on the draft 2020–2025 QPSW Strategy. Our time together has enabled us to make changes where appropriate in order to produce a final strategic paper. We hope this will enable Friends to express their spiritual insights into actions in the world.

We now adopt this strategy.

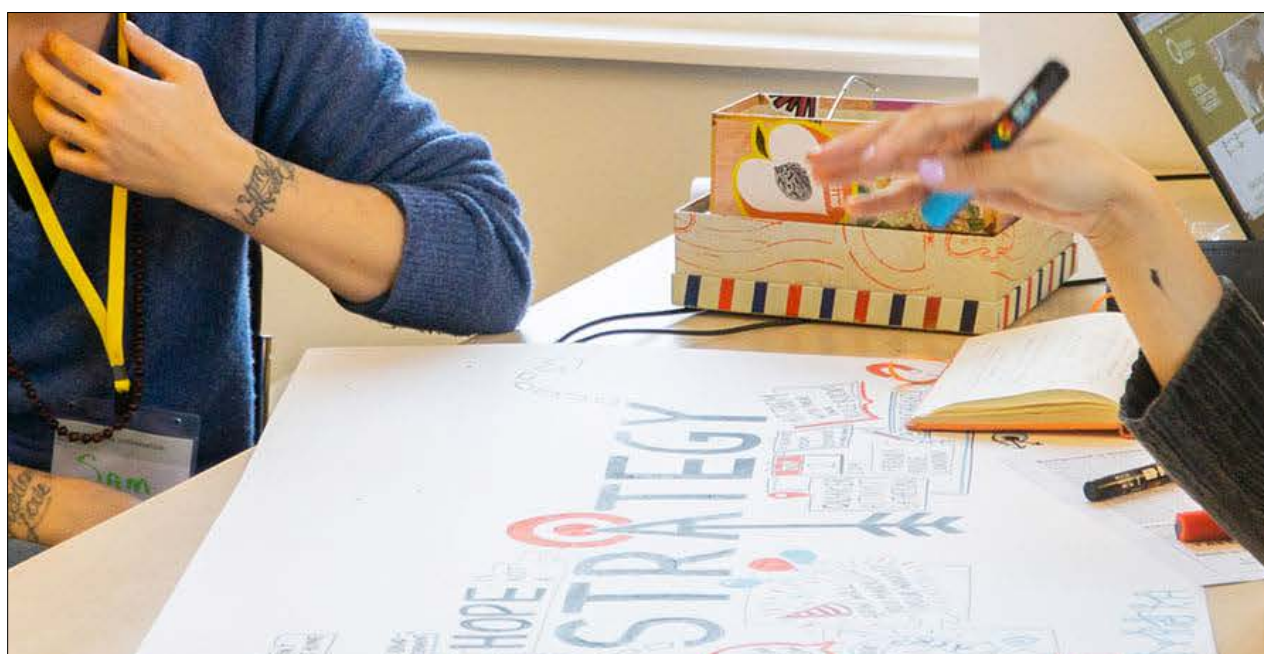
We ask staff to consider how to apply this strategy in their work and to bring an update to our next meeting.

We send this minute and the final document to Trustees, Sub-committees and groups and to MfS.

Robert Almond
Jeff Beatty
Co-Clerks



Quaker Peace & Social Witness strategy 2021-2025



1. Introduction

Quaker Peace & Social Witness's work draws from the deep spiritual experience of Quakers to build sustained action for peace and justice. For Quakers, this is the meaning of witness – it is living out our faith in the world.

Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) is a department of Britain Yearly Meeting, the central organisation of Quakers in Britain, and our work is guided by Quakers from across Wales, Scotland, England, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees have set out a vision for the work of the church and charity, with six priorities (thriving Quaker

communities, a sustainable and peaceful world, simple structures and practices, distinctively Quaker, integrated, well-governed). This strategy works to all of these, in particular the priority 'A sustainable and peaceful world'. This priority is key for QPSW's work and has guided the development of this strategy, as has the Our faith in the future priority that 'Quaker values are active in the world'.

Our new five-year strategy sets out how we will develop our work to respond to the challenges we face in Britain, and as a global society, as we work to build a more sustainable and peaceful world.

2. The world we are living in: our analysis

At the time of writing, in September 2020, we are living in a time of interconnected crises. We see extreme inequalities, reduction in biodiversity and environmental destruction caused by an economic system that exploits people, the Earth and its other inhabitants. This system is upheld by institutions and hierarchies which have historically benefitted from it, and which often discriminate on grounds such as but not limited to race, class and gender. As Britain leaves the EU, it remains unclear how efforts towards peace and climate justice will be impacted, with issues such as interstate relations, Britain's priorities in the world, and environmental standards all likely to change. The roots of violence between people often lie within the interconnected crises which we describe. Around the world, we have seen a rise in overt racism, nationalism and anti-migrant sentiment, fuelled by populist public figures. We see the 'weaponisation' of language, in social and mass media, becoming a potent force for narrowing the 'us' and dehumanising the 'other'. The effects of large-scale injustice are measured in generations, not years, and many of today's armed conflicts and imbalances of power and wealth are linked directly to the ongoing impact of colonialism.

The response to these insecurities has been a rise in militarism and state violence – enforced by armies, police, and through the criminal justice system, even though we know that violent responses do not bring a sustainable peace. Through its arms sales, the UK is directly complicit in armed conflicts that many are not even aware of. Large-scale military procurement and arms exports reinforce a militaristic approach to international problems. There is an erosion of respect and adherence to international laws and institutions, which play an important role in international cooperation, accountability and in promoting human rights. In Britain, the right to peaceful protest,

a key tenet of a democratic society, is under threat.

But against this bleak background, nonviolent movements are emerging worldwide. Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in Britain, particularly in its early stages, included many examples of individual kindness that help build community. Greater awareness of historical and current human rights violations and oppressions, and of the climate crisis has led to more people, especially younger generations, to become politicised, active and engaged. As public expression of racism and other bigotry is increasing in Britain, many are speaking out, demonstrating a growing understanding of power and privilege, and acting in support of others. A key challenge for campaigners is to engage more people from across the political and social spectrum.

A just and green economy is becoming part of mainstream discourse, while a decade ago it was considered a pipe dream, and a more sophisticated analysis links our economic system with our climate crisis, and with our human wellbeing. A changed economic system could both benefit the environment and address deep inequality in society.

Alongside all of this, the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is yet to become clear, but we know that almost everything has been impacted. As the pandemic has placed a huge mental, physical and financial burden on communities and nations, as well as on the finances of Quakers in Britain, it has also changed how we live and interact with each other, how we work and communicate, how we move around and travel. It threatens livelihoods and social progress, but there may also be opportunities to do things differently, which then places an urgency on all of our work for positive change.

3. How we work

3.1 Our Quaker experience

Quakers see peace as more than opposition to war and physical violence. It is a comprehensive approach to living in the world, which includes handling conflict in nonviolent ways and ensuring we avoid ways of living which damage the earth, and which might sow the seeds for future violence. We believe that violence and the injustices that often give rise to it are not inevitable but the consequences of human decisions and structures. This also means that human actions can change the world for the better.

This then leads us to work for a 'just peace', a peaceful world which is underpinned by principles of equality and justice. This means working for an end to oppression and

discrimination, and doing work that prioritises both structural (rules and cultures) and personal (hearts and minds) changes. Many of the ends we work towards, historically and currently, are long term and require patient, but creative, work over years or decades.

Our spiritual obligation to truth and integrity leads us to speak out in the world, but we also listen for the insights of others and recognise that we may be mistaken. And our understanding that there is 'that of God in everyone', leads us to take action in ways consistent with the ends we seek – without harm and with respect for all, including those with opposing views. This may involve learning to change ourselves too.

4. Principles

The work of QPSW is based on four key principles, which should be a feature of all our work:

4.1 Nonviolence

We recognise the physical and psychological damage perpetrated by violence of all kinds, from interpersonal to structural. We are convinced that violence generates violence and that nonviolent action is the only way to make changes that are just and long-lasting. Therefore, we pursue change in an exclusively nonviolent way.

4.2 Collaboration

We cannot create the change we want to see by ourselves. Therefore, we want to work with other groups and individuals, and to learn from them. We hope our goals will be shared, but do not demand complete agreement before we work with others, or have it as a necessary endpoint. We want to be imaginative and generous when thinking about potential partnerships. We want to assist Quaker communities and meetings in their work to call for change and to respond to the injustice and suffering they see in their communities. We want to support those who are marginalised to act for change.

4.3 Justice and equity

We need to act in ways that promote fairness and the right sharing of world resources. This is especially true in Britain, a country that has historically and currently taken more than its fair share. Injustice and the resentment it breeds carry the potential for war; we are committed to radical but peaceful change of unjust situations and structures. We recognise that colonial legacies, including racism, run deep within our society and seek to transform the longstanding structural injustices that harm so many today. We are committed to raising awareness in BYM that our own organisation

contains aspects of structural injustice, and actively working to rectify these. To do this, we need to hear uncomfortable truths shared by marginalised groups so that good intentions lead to deep change and true transformation.

4.4 Working where welcomed

We acknowledge the historic and current privileges held by Quakers in Britain and the reinforcement of power imbalances if we intervene in others' struggles for justice without mandate or invitation, however well-meaning. This is especially important in international settings where our programmes must only operate where welcomed and where the contribution we make cannot be better provided locally.

4.5 Faith-led

The entire QPSW framework is underpinned by our faith, which guides our lives and work, infusing what we do and how we do it. This is what we call spirit-led:

- We make major decisions about our work through a process of reflection and discernment
- We may undertake commitments that are not conventionally popular
- We start from a place of principle, seeking to build relationships of reciprocal respect
- We aim to see through privilege, prejudice and partiality to find our capacity for compassion towards everyone, and help others do the same
- We recognise there is often also a need to speak truth to power with love and to stand with those who are oppressed and whose voices are not heard by those in power
- We seek to remain flexible and open to the leadings of the Spirit.

5. Our approach to change

The problems in the world are interwoven and complex. We seek to highlight these connections when we speak out and act for change. The climate crisis, poverty, oppression, migration and violent conflict are deeply connected. Our current economic system, and the historical injustices it is based on, affect and exacerbate them all. The changes that are needed to tackle the climate crisis bring opportunities to restructure our economy, our relationships, our lives and our work to create more peaceful, equal and loving relationships and communities, rather than dividing people and exploiting the planet further.

We are learning that change is better, and deeper, when it draws on diverse voices, and includes those with lived experience of the injustices we want to end. We need to include and prioritise those voices in planning our work, and in our governance structures.

We recognise that there are many ways of bringing about social change, and we work knowing that there is no single solution. We don't have all the answers. Key to Quaker approaches to change is being a spiritual, nurturing community in which we accompany and support others to grow and develop, and in which we grow and develop ourselves. We are impelled to move forward in faith, expecting to learn and develop as we go: we need to remain agile, able to adapt our work and approach to changing circumstances.

Underlying all our work is an attempt to build a divine commonwealth, where peace, equality and truth flourish. Our long-term commitment and focus on building relationships, including with unlikely partners, helps us to listen and learn and to build on collective experience. Though we must act with urgency, we are in it for the long haul, and we will find ways to experience joy and to enhance human capacity for love and connection along the way.

Our work for peace over many years and our analysis of the current context leads us to prioritise these approaches:

5.1 Community-led peacebuilding

What:

We support local, community-led peacebuilding, in Britain and internationally. We accompany Quaker and other peacebuilders with training and other forms of support, by providing a physical protective presence to vulnerable communities living under conflict, through conciliation and quiet assistance in peace processes, and in our prayerful solidarity.

We have seen that slow, long-term support and accompaniment can build trust and new relationships in communities, which then serve as a strong foundation for further peace work.

Why:

Political and economic systems tend to serve the interests of the most powerful, at least until societal pressure reaches a tipping point, so we see communities with a strong political voice as a key driver of peaceful change. In accompanying communities striving for peace and justice, we are able to witness and learn from their successes, improving people's lives at a local level, supporting their having a say in matters that affect them, and serving as a model for other communities to replicate. In sharing this learning between different strands of Quaker work, we can increase our own understanding of the issues facing the world, their interlinked nature and how we can best respond.

When:

As this work is about supporting others, we do this work only when our involvement is wanted by at least some within the relevant communities, and only where we can add value to locally-led efforts.

5.2 Political and institutional change

What:

Quakers have long experience of engaging lovingly and truthfully with power. We advocate, research and campaign for policy change in Britain and internationally, looking to engage with all those involved in political and economic decision-making, not only

elected politicians. We may speak publicly, and we may use quiet diplomacy to privately bring together those who would not or could not otherwise meet. Where appropriate, we work differently in Britain's nations and regions, taking the lead from those with knowledge of each political system.

Beyond this, we work to change the attitudes of those in power, not only the policies they implement, because this leads to longer-term, more profound change. We seek to bring out the humanity in all those involved in public life, and recognise that even those in power can be damaged by the systems they run.

Why:

We see structural and political change as necessary to bring about the world we seek to build, and we believe a Quaker voice on key policy issues, especially when we can speak from experience, can help make compelling arguments for change.

When: We prioritise speaking out on issues where there are clear Quaker positions, where there is opportunity for change, or where we can bring new perspectives to the debate.

5.3 Partnership and movement-building

What:

We work alongside many partners and other Quaker bodies, in Britain and internationally. This includes joint projects or practical work, producing shared public statements and advocacy, and helping to strengthen wider networks and campaigns. We also support action by and with local Quaker communities seeking to bring about positive change.

Why:

We recognise that change will not come from our efforts alone. By working in partnership, and convening networks of organisations, we have more impact and can improve by learning from each other. The broad range of

issues that Quakers work on enable us to build connections between diverse movements.

Movements for social change can help to unsettle oppressive power relationships and build new ones, propose new ideas and experiment with new ways of living and organising. However, these are often fragile when not accompanied by the hard work of changing hearts and minds and tackling the barriers, such as poverty and other structural injustices.

When:

We expect and seek to work with others unless collaboration would mean compromising on key Quaker positions and principles.

5.4 Skills-building and education

What:

We train Quakers seeking to put their faith into action; volunteers and activists we work with; and children and teachers as part of our work on peace education. This can include training in any of the other approaches described in this section.

Why:

Our work is strengthened when those involved develop the skills, experience and knowledge to bring about effective change. Sharing learning across different pieces of work, and with partners and colleagues in the global South, improves the quality of what we do. For Quakers, learning how to put their faith into action can be part of their spiritual development.

When:

We will prioritise training on topics where we have skills and experience to bring, such as nonviolent social change and peace education. We will otherwise provide training when developing a cohort of skilled practitioners is particularly important to achieving a particular goal.

6. Our work: how we will respond

We are committed to doing everything we can to achieve the changes we know are needed. Therefore, we are prioritising two interconnected themes over the next five years:

Peace and peacebuilding:

At a time of heightened division, oppression and violence, and as peace and cooperation efforts are devalued while isolationist and militaristic responses are promoted, we are called to work for a peaceful resolution to all injustices.

To this end we will forge alliances and develop our recognised skills to build peaceful and equitable structures and cultures that are inclusive of everyone.

Sustainability and climate justice:

In the face of overwhelming evidence of rapidly increasing destruction of the Earth, we are called to work for a world that prioritises ecological repair and well-being.

To this end we will call for and work towards a just solution to the climate crisis; with national and worldwide economies operating within ecological limits and upholding the wellbeing, dignity and equality of all.

(The Quaker commitment to environmental sustainability includes the spiritual basis of our concern for the Earth and its inhabitants, personal actions around greening our lives, and campaigning for wider action on things we cannot do ourselves. Climate justice is the faith in action expression of our sustainability concern.)

Across all our work, we believe that a distinctive contribution we can make is in our methods and approaches, and how we work. Therefore, we want to retain and build our expertise in the methods described in 'Our approach to change'.

We set out below key objectives for these cross-cutting approaches, which will be combined with our thematic priorities in a series of detailed workplans.

6.1 Community-led peacebuilding

Objective:

Equip Quaker and other communities to challenge injustice and to resolve conflict nonviolently. Support and accompany communities in conflict, where we are welcomed.

We will:

Support Quakers to act as allies, accompaniers and as a protective presence for communities suffering from violence or oppression, both in Britain and parts of the world where we are invited.

Help develop responsive and creative peacebuilding strategies within communities currently suffering from physical or structural violence

Facilitate collaboration and listening between stakeholders, including both those who are marginalised and those with political power.

In the hope that:

Quaker work is responsive to the needs of communities – especially those with experience of structural violence and injustice

Communities, including Quakers, are able to challenge, inform and inspire those with power and resources to address root causes of violence and injustice

6.2 Political and institutional change

Objective:

Influence currently dominant economic, political and social systems to establish and maintain a more peaceful and sustainable world.

We will:

Engage with those in power and advocate for social systems, policies and structures that prioritise peaceful and sustainable communities.

Campaign against policies and values detrimental to peace and climate justice, including militarism, dehumanisation of particular groups, or restrictions on civil society.

Speak out nationally and locally from experience, and share the Yearly Meeting's discerned positions, even when there is no ongoing programme of QPSW work.

In the hope that:

Peace, human rights and climate justice become central to economic, political thinking and action throughout society.

Peace education is mainstreamed within the education systems of England, Scotland and Wales.

6.3 Partnership and movement building

Objective:

Generate wider and more effective participation in work towards a peaceful and sustainable world.

We will:

Strengthen a network of Quakers and Quaker organisations, including through our work in Britain and East Africa, to share learning and for collaborative action.

Prioritise network-building in our work with faith groups and civil society.

Engage in and learn from more diverse communities and movements (e.g. Black Lives Matter, climate emergency campaigns), and contribute nonviolence and conciliation experience to movements where appropriate.

In the hope that:

Peace, climate and social justice movements are more joined up, working together constructively and creating new ways to effect social change.

Quakers are supporting and contributing to progressive movements for change, including anti-racism and anti-oppression movements.

Local and national Quaker work is well understood, joined up and mutually supportive.

6.4 Skills-building and education

Objective:

Enable adults and children, inside and outside the Quaker community, to understand the causes of violence and injustice, and to develop the skills to work nonviolently for peace and climate justice.

We will:

Work within the education system to integrate peace education pedagogy and philosophy into the classroom and across whole schools.

Include decolonisation, anti-racism and anti-oppression analysis in all our work.

Equip more Quakers with the tools to analyse, name and challenge present injustices, and their root causes, so that they can be more effective in their witness.

In the hope that:

Children and their educators can develop skills and practice in nonviolent dispute resolution, increasing understanding of the root causes of violence and war and champion human rights and justice.

Groups and communities we work with are developing skills, knowledge and confidence in strategic nonviolent social change

Quaker work addresses the negative impact of colonialism and imperialism, in order to more effectively achieve nonviolent social change.

The way we work mirrors the changes we want to see in the world, so that we are far more effective, both as individuals and as an organisation.



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

How the truth prospers in our meetings

In June last year, Meeting for Sufferings reflected on the circumstances of the global health pandemic and how our communities were responding.

At this meeting, we will have an open worship session to share what we have learned over the past year. In preparation you may wish to consider the challenges you and your meeting have faced, and celebrate the opportunities that have arisen.

- What has been the effect on Worship? on Community? on Outreach?
- How might our Meetings be in the future?
- How can Friends support one another?