

Follow up letter



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

8 October 2021

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings 2 October 2021

Dear Friends

Our meeting last Saturday, the first of our new triennium, was yet another in a succession of experiments. On a personal level I was delighted to be back at Friends House, but my concern was for the meeting as a whole – how would blending up to 70 online with 30-40 in person feel for all of us worshipping together? Arrangements Group meets on Tuesday next week to review the meeting and if you have any comments or suggestions to make we need to hear them. Please contact sufferings@quaker.org.uk

Communication was an underlying theme in much of the business of the meeting:

- **Trustees** reflected on the value of their pre-MfS session with us and reaffirmed their wish to have our feedback (please send via neilj@quaker.org.uk). Further sessions with trustees are being planned.
- The **BYM weekly online publication Quake!** is a valuable channel of communication reaching all Friends – not just those who attend area meetings. Information about the Autumn series of Simplification workshops being organised by Trustees is found in the edition of 30 September. The workshops run from 15 October to 15 December – please sign up [here](#).
- The role of reps and alternates in **reporting back** to their area meetings is set out in *Quaker faith & practice* [4.17](#) and part of [7.02](#)

Our **business** was a mixture of the straightforward – membership, nominations, Quaker Recognised Bodies, amendments to *Quaker faith & practice* – and the more complex:

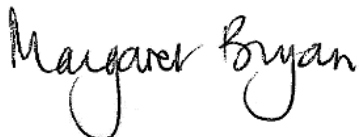
- Information about action being taken to improve our safeguarding practice following the [IICSA report](#) on policies and practice in faith organisations. **Safeguarding** is everyone's business, and we should not only be concerned for children and young people. BYM's Safeguarding Officer Mark Mitchell is available to respond to any of your concerns or queries safe@quaker.org.uk

- Surrey and Hampshire Border AM's minute concerning the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill led to an important consideration of the issues, and a greater understanding of the work BYM staff are doing in the coalition of campaigners opposing the Bill. There is a [briefing for Quakers](#) and we are encouraged to take part in Amnesty UK's '[Stop the rights raid](#)' week of action
- **COP26.** The Meeting for Sufferings papers gave a wonderful overview of all the witness being undertaken. The papers are in the [public domain](#) so all Friends and attenders can read about this. We considered the issuing of a public statement on the Climate Emergency, and it was good to be reminded of the guidance in *Quaker faith & practice* [3.27](#) and our '[Speaking Out](#)' policy about the issuing of such statements.
- **Quaker Concern for the Abolition of Torture (Q-CAT)** reported to us, and gave a heartfelt plea for support. Please share this widely in your meetings.

Finally we received minutes from **Yearly Meeting 2021**, and MfS Arrangements Group will be looking at the ways in which we will continue the Yearly Meeting's consideration of the themes of climate justice, gender diversity and anti-racism. They will also work with the Recording Clerk on how a potential review of the role of Meeting for Sufferings might be done and bring suggestions back to us at a future meeting for further consideration.

I hope you found the meeting as I did – interesting, challenging, uplifting – and I look forward to the next opportunity in December to 'see one another's faces and open our hearts to one another'

In Friendship



Margaret Bryan
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

The following papers are included in this mailing:

- Functions checklist
- MfS minutes October 2021



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings

Held at Friends House and online by video conference from 10.00am to 4.00pm
on 2 October 2021

Minutes

MfS/21/10/01 Opening Worship

During opening worship *Quaker faith & practice* 3.05 was read.

MfS/21/10/02 Membership of Meeting for Sufferings

It is with sadness that we hear that Neil MacDonald, last triennium's alternate and this triennium's nominated representative from Sussex West Area Meeting died on 13 July 2021.

Since our last meeting and Yearly Meeting we have received the following nominations and requests for release for Meeting for Sufferings until the rise of Yearly Meeting 2024:

Release requests received:

David Coutts – Ipswich and Diss AM alternate
Howard Gordon – Sheffield and Balby AM alternate
Robert Thompson – East Scotland AM representative
Jennifer Wilson – South East Scotland AM representative

Nominated since Yearly Meeting 2021:

Angela Arnold – Meeting of Friends in Wales alternate
Ann Bettys – QPSWCC alternate
Alexandra Boliver-Brown - Young Friends General Meeting representative
Rachael Booth – Young Friends General Meeting alternate
Danny Chesterman – East Kent AM representative
Barbara Davey – East Scotland AM alternate
Mary Dower – North Scotland AM alternate
Anthony Gimpel – Leicester AM alternate
Christopher Greenfield – Mid-Somerset AM alternate
Andy Hall – Mid-Somerset AM representative
Fran Hicks – Central Nominations Committee representative

Sue Horne – North Scotland AM representative
Caroline Howden – East Kent AM alternate
Jo Impey – Kingston and Wandsworth AM alternate
Ann Kurra – Southern East Anglia AM alternate
Mark Lallemand – Sheffield and Balby AM alternate
Ann le Mare – Kendal and Sedbergh AM representative
Jon Martin – Lancashire Central and North AM representative
Chris Myers – Leicester AM representative
Veronica O'Mara – Leeds AM representative
Ruth Owens – South East London AM alternate
Lucy Parker – Central Nominations Committee alternate
Robert Parkes – Southern East Anglia AM representative
Robert Pritchard – Cumberland AM representative
Helen Rhodes – Lancashire Central and North AM alternate
Deborah Rowlands – Meeting of Friends in Wales representative
Cherry Simpkin – South East London AM representative
Ester Sloggett – Kendal and Sedbergh AM alternate
Cathy Urqhart – Brighouse West Yorkshire AM alternate

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

We note that two area meetings (East Scotland and South East Scotland) have not nominated representatives, five (Cornwall, Cumberland, Leeds, North East Thames and Teesdale & Cleveland) have not nominated alternates and two (Hardshaw and Mann and West Kent) have nominated neither representatives nor alternates.

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

Sandy Horsfall – Central Nominations Committee
John Spencer – West Kent AM
Henry Thompson – South East Scotland AM
Robin Waterston – East Scotland AM

Apologies:

Hardshaw and Mann AM; London West AM.

Other visitors:

Michael S Booth – BYM staff, Recording Clerk's Office
Olivia Hanks – BYM staff, Quaker Peace & Social Witness
Neil Jarvis – BYM staff, Recording Clerk's Office
Anne van Staveren – BYM staff, Media Relations Officer

MfS/21/10/03 Agenda

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

MfS/21/10/04 Quaker Recognised Bodies

We receive paper MfS 2021 10 05. We approve the registration of:

- Bamford Quaker Community
- Quakers in the World

as Quaker Recognised Bodies under the terms outlined in the paper.

Registration of Quaker Recognised Bodies is periodically reviewed. Accordingly we agree to renew registration of Friends with Jewish Connections as an Emergent Group for a further two years, to 2023.

MfS/21/10/05 Report from BYM Trustees

Caroline Nursey, Clerk of BYM Trustees, and Linda Batten, Yearly Meeting Treasurer, have provided us with a report on the work of Trustees and we receive minutes from their meeting in September.

MfS/21/10/06 Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)

In 2019 Meeting for Sufferings heard from the Recording Clerk about an investigation, by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), into policies and practices in faith organisations. This did not concern individual cases.

IICSA has been set up to learn from the past, and particularly from the experience of survivors, in order to make sure children are safer in future. At the time Meeting for Sufferings minuted: “we see this as important work and we uphold everyone involved”.

The Recording Clerk provided a written witness statement to IICSA on behalf of Quakers in Britain in 2019.

The IICSA report was published on 2 September. Today we receive background paper MfS 2021 10 07, introduced to us by the Deputy Recording Clerk, and she has answered our questions.

The final report from the Inquiry, and its recommendations, are expected in 2022, but we note there are matters we can act on now to make sure our communities are welcoming, inclusive and safe for everyone. Our new model safeguarding policy and its requirements on area meetings is a helpful step. We welcome the work underway in several areas outlined in the report – for example improvements in record keeping – and recognise the importance of communication between area meetings and with BYM to ensure national records are maintained.

We have been reminded that safeguarding is not just about children and young people.

Friends were glad to hear that Quaker Life has taken on responsibility for asking area meetings to report annually on their safeguarding policies and practice. It is

unfortunate that only 44 out of 70 area meetings have responded to Quaker Life with information, despite reminders.

MfS/21/10/07 Changes to *Quaker faith & practice*

While a new Book of Discipline is being prepared, Yearly Meeting delegated responsibility for factual amendments to *Quaker faith & practice* to Meeting for Sufferings (minutes YM 2019/21 and MfS/2019/07/05 refer).

We receive a paper from Church Government Advisory Group (MfS 2021 10 08). Church Government Advisory Group was asked to provide draft changes to *Quaker faith & practice* following Yearly Meeting's decision in 2020 to lay down Committee on Clerks and accept new terms of reference for Central Nominations Committee.

We accept the changes outlined in the paper and ask that the online version of *Quaker faith & practice* is updated accordingly. Meeting for Sufferings will report these changes to Yearly Meeting in 2022.

MfS/21/10/08 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (PCSCB)

We receive a minute from Surrey and Hampshire Border Area Meeting and a paper from BYM's Public Affairs and Advocacy Manager on the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (paper MfS 2021 10 09).

The PCSCB is very wide ranging in its scope, threatening the right to protest, imposing stringent conditions on assemblies and processions, increasing fines and the length of prison sentences, and extending the criminalising of trespass. It will have a disproportionate negative effect on groups who are already marginalised, such as Gipsy, Roma and Traveller communities and people of colour.

The Area Meeting minute acknowledges that Quakers across the Yearly Meeting are already active in opposing the PCSCB, which strikes at the heart of the rights we hold under common law and the European Convention on Human Rights.

One concern is about Part 2 of the bill, with its proposal to change how life sentences and whole life orders are managed, changes to automatic release procedures, and the introduction of what Friends consider to be disproportionate sentences for damage to memorials or creating a public nuisance. We have heard from the Recording Clerk that BYM is in touch with a group of criminal justice organisations which are challenging this part of the bill.

The report from BYM's Public Affairs and Advocacy Manager outlines what is already being done on the right to protest and freedom of assembly. Quakers are co-conveners of the Civil Society Voice network and thus at the heart of work on the PCSCB. BYM staff are on the steering group of this alliance of organisations campaigning on Part 3 (protest) and Part 4 (trespass) of the bill.

As Quakers we have a long history of speaking truth to power. For us this is a matter of faith. We resist the corrosive politics of division and are reminded to love our

neighbours as ourselves, to meet one another on kinder ground and to recognise and acknowledge that of God in each other.

Our *Advices and Queries* urge us to 'respect the laws of the state but let your first loyalty be to God's purposes'.

During our consideration today Friends have expressed their deep unease about the threats to our democracy and civil liberties. To some it is a clear abuse of political power.

We are united in supporting BYM's work on the PCSCB and affirm our church's commitment to upholding democracy, defending civil liberties and human rights, including the right to freedom of assembly. We stand alongside groups whose portrayal in the media and public discourse serves to marginalise them, and recognise that it is incumbent upon us to use our privilege to empower and support those who lack such privilege.

Faith groups, charities, civil society organisations and community groups have a right and a duty to speak out on matters about which they have expertise, and where they are impelled by conscience to campaign for change.

MfS/21/10/09 Appointments

We receive paper MfS 2021 10 11.

a) Central Nominations Committee brings forward the following names for service or release as indicated:

Meeting for Sufferings Clerks

Renominate to serve from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022:

Clerk: Margaret Bryan – York AM

Assistant Clerk: Robert Card – Dorset & South Wiltshire AM

Quaker Life Central Committee

Nominate to serve from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2024:

Klaus Huber – West Wiltshire & East Somerset AM

Martin Wall – West Somerset AM

Renominate to serve a second term from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2024:

Susannah (Susie) Tombs – Banbury & Evesham AM

Quaker United Nations Committee (Geneva)

Renominate to serve a second term from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2024:

Robert Gibson – Leeds AM

Quaker World Relations Committee

Release with immediate effect

Ian Marshall – Lancashire Central & North AM

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee

Release with immediate effect:

Robert Wilson – North Scotland AM

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Nominate to serve with immediate effect to August 2024:

Jane Mace – Gloucestershire AM

Ivan Hutnik – Surrey & Hampshire Border AM

Jean Scott-Barr – Mid Thames AM

Nominate to serve with immediate effect to August 2023:

Anthony Woolhouse – Bournemouth Coastal AM

Jane Wilde – Hampshire & Islands AM

For information, the following appointments were made as between meeting decisions in the interim period since the last Meeting for Sufferings:

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations

Appointed by between meetings decision to serve as the representative of Meeting of Friends in Wales:

Judith Hedges – North Wales AM

Quaker World Relations Committee

Appointed by between meetings decision:

To serve from August 2021 to 31 December 2022

Ruth Homer – Devon AM

b) Meeting for Sufferings Standing Nominations Group brings forward the following names for service as indicated:

Meeting for Sufferings Support Group

Nominate to serve Meeting for Sufferings Triennium 2021–2024:

Rosemary Daley – Brighouse West Yorkshire AM

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

MfS/21/10/10 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26)

The Epistle from Yearly Meeting this year reminded us:

Friends across the world have long held a concern for us to live in right relationship with creation. We grieve for the planet we love – our home – but we have no time to despair. We must act with urgency and imagination – the consequences of inaction are upon us.

The Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in November is a crucial opportunity for progress. We receive a report on involvement across our yearly meeting in the conference.

Recognising the urgency of these issues, we ask staff to prepare a statement based on our past discernment and from our further consideration here today as a focussed summary of our position for Friends and others. We expect such a statement to cover the themes of the interconnectedness of the crises we are facing and the links between climate, inequality and violent conflict; criticism of the failure of our Government to match its actions to its policies and a recognition that rich countries, through their history of colonialism, have precipitated this crisis and the need to recompense those people that have already been affected by loss and damage. We support our staff in preparing this statement and are grateful for their work on our behalf.

MfS/21/10/11 The work of Quaker Peace & Social Witness

In July we considered minutes from Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) about its strategy. We also received minutes from 10 area meetings. QPSWCC expects to report later this year or early next on how its work is developing to deliver its strategy. Chilterns AM has now sent a minute and we agree to forward this to QPSWCC to include with the others for their consideration.

MfS/21/10/12 Abolition of torture

Quaker Concern for the Abolition of Torture (Q-CAT), a Quaker Recognised Body, has provided Meeting for Sufferings with a report on its work.

On previous occasions Meeting for Sufferings minuted its support, and encouraged area meetings to appoint Q-CAT correspondents, suggesting that Friends take up the concern. However, few area meetings have felt able to join Q-CAT in addressing this issue.

The experience of their recent work with staff at BYM has convinced Q-CAT of the value of this mode of collaborative working – enthusiastic local Friends supported by the expertise of specialist staff – and they recommend it to others.

We recognise the personal cost borne by Q-CAT members in taking forward their concern. Their current need is for people who can help, who would be willing to work with them – in their own words – ‘to address this obscene use of power, to stem this corrosion of our human spirit. This is undiluted evil in action.’

We encourage Friends to consider whether they are able to uphold and actively support Q-CAT in its important work to address this concern.

MfS/21/10/13 Yearly Meeting 2021

We receive minutes 14, 27, 28 and 37 of Yearly Meeting 2021 which lay several tasks upon Meeting for Sufferings.

1. We ask Church Government Advisory Group to bring for our approval draft factual alterations to *Quaker faith & practice* to reflect the decision to lay down Quaker Stewardship Committee from Yearly Meeting 2022.

2. We lay down the group appointed to review Quaker Stewardship Committee (appointed by minutes MfS/19/02/11 and MfS/19/04/10) and thank Friends for their service with this work.
3. Meeting for Sufferings will take responsibility for oversight of area meeting compliance; we ask staff to bring an annual report to Meeting for Sufferings with necessary recommendations to enable us to do fulfil this duty.
4. Yearly Meeting asked four central committees to continue consideration of the three themes from Yearly Meeting, climate justice, gender diversity and anti-racism. We ask Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group to encourage Quaker Life and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committees to share with us examples of successful practice and look forward to hearing interim reports when appropriate
5. The role of Meeting for Sufferings

We receive and note Yearly Meeting minute 28 which asks us to consider the role of Meeting for Sufferings and whether this needs to be reviewed. Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group invited the Recording Clerk to set out for us how this might be achieved (paper MfS 2021 10 15b).

Meeting for Sufferings is already reviewing Yearly Meeting and Yearly Meeting Gathering and an interim report is due next year. Our minute of December 2020 said:

We have heard a call to take a more co-ordinated approach to our review process, considering the interrelationships between bodies and to take a radical approach to our structures not being constrained by the historical development of different bodies. We look forward to playing our part in achieving this change.

We wish to make time at a future meeting, possibly December 2021, for further discussion and ask Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group, working with the Recording Clerk, to plan for this.

MfS/2021/10/14 Closing worship

We have closed our meeting in worship, reflecting on our experiences of this year's Yearly Meeting Gathering.

Margaret Bryan
Clerk

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

	Requirement	October 21
A	To set the priorities for the centrally managed work	11
B	To issue public statements in the name of BYM	08, 10
C	To receive regular interim reports from BYM trustees	05
D	To receive the BYM trustees' annual report & accounts for information	
E	To make a report on its own activities to YM	
F	To determine the dates of YM	
G	To deliberate on how best to support the spiritual life of the yearly meeting and to further the development of its visionary and prophetic role	06, 10, 12
H	To keep under review and to test as appropriate the existing and new concerns referred to it by AMs and others	08, 11, 12, 13
I	To foster communication throughout the yearly meeting	12
J	To receive minutes from area meetings	08, 11
K	To make appropriate entries in the prison and court register	
I	To appoint representatives to attend other Yearly Meetings	
M	To receive information about changes in the composition or status of general meetings and gatherings	
N	To make changes in the composition of area meetings	
O	To give assistance to area meetings in the amicable settlement of disputes	
P	To hear appeals against area meeting decisions	
Q	To give guidance on policy matters referred to it by the BYM trustees from time to time	
R	To authorise action and minute as required under other sections of <i>Quaker faith & practice</i>	13
S	To set up an arrangements group and support and working groups to assist its own work as it sees fit	09, 13