

Follow up letter



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

10 March 2023

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings 4 March 2023

Dear Friends,

It was lovely, as always, to see you, both in person and online, at Meeting for Sufferings on Saturday 4 March 2023. I hope you found it a rewarding meeting.

We made some important decisions, including the setting up of a group to bring recommendations for improvements in our system of communication (minute 8) and the scheduling of an additional yearly meeting session to coincide with our next meeting on 1 July (minute 14). Arrangements Committee will be looking at how we might build on that opportunity.

Please contact the Arrangements Group at any time via sufferings@quaker.org.uk with your comments or feedback. This time, we'd particularly like to hear from Friends who feel they could contribute to the group to consider communications. If you would like your name to be considered for appointment, please get in touch.

With the opportunity for us to comment on draft text for selected topics in our new book of discipline, the work that has been developing for the last three years seems to have become excitingly real. The revision committee may be contacted by emailing gfp@quaker.org.uk and the webpage with the draft text and an online form for responses is available at www.quaker.org.uk/rqfp. Remember that Arrangements Committee was asked to consider how we might take forward concerns about the adequacy of our nominations practices and the articulation of our understanding of this (minute 9).

We heard rich ministry from Friends from Lancashire Central and North Area Meeting working on "Spirit-led employment practices" in Quaker workplaces. If you want to be put in touch with that group, please email sufferings@quaker.org.uk and we will pass on your details.

I also found it inspiring to hear the experiences of those Friends working in different types of chaplaincy. It provided an opportunity for Meeting for Sufferings to take the opportunity that can sometimes be lost under the pressure of necessary business to reflect on issues of ministry and witness. These occasions remind me of the hope

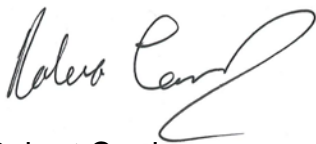
that Meeting for Sufferings might serve as a “crucible” for theological reflections amongst British Quakers.

Both Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee and Quaker Life Central Committee reported on the work they have been doing on crucial minutes of Yearly Meeting entrusted to them: work on climate justice and on becoming a truly inclusive community. There is much more work to be done in both areas and we were reminded that individual Friends and the various Meetings to which they belong will be at the forefront of making those aspirations a reality.

May the Light reveal our shortcomings and encourage our growth in faithfulness.

I look forward to seeing you again at our next meeting.

In Truth,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Card". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Robert Card
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

The following papers are included in this mailing:

- MfS minutes March 2023
- Functions checklist
- Loyal address written version



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings

Held at Friends House and by video conference on 4 March 2023

Minutes

MfS/23/03/01 Opening Worship

During opening worship we heard read words from speaking notes used by an Experiment with Light retreat based on George Fox's writings from the anthology *Truth of the heart*, by Rex Ambler:

“Do not look at the temptations, confusions, corruptions, but at the light that discovers them,
that makes them manifest,
and with that same light you will feel over them
For looking down at distraction, you are swallowed up in it;
but looking at the light that discovers them,
you will see over them and you will find grace and strength;
and there is the first step to peace.”

We remember our friend Jane Mace, representative from Gloucestershire Area Meeting, who died shortly after our last meeting. Her contribution to Friends was significant, exercising a valued ministry of thankfulness, and we hold her and those who miss her in the Light.

MfS/23/03/02 Agenda

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

MfS/23/03/03 Membership of Meeting for Sufferings

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

It is with sadness that we hear that Jane Mace, the representative for Gloucestershire AM and member of Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group died on 27 December 2022.

Release requests received:

Barbara Davey – East Scotland AM representative
Sue George – Sussex West AM alternate
Zélie Gross – Quaker Life Central Committee representative
Jo Impey – Kingston & Wandsworth AM alternate
Sally Sparrow – Ipswich & Diss AM alternate

Robert Thompson – East Scotland AM alternate
Anthony Woolhouse – Bournemouth Coastal AM representative

Nominated:

Mark Frankel – Kingston & Wandsworth AM alternate
Klaus Huber – Quaker Life Central Committee representative
Angela Le Grice – West Wiltshire & East Somerset AM alternate
Sally Sparrow – Ipswich & Diss AM representative
Robert Thompson – East Scotland AM representative

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

Avril Dawson – Ipswich & Diss AM
Sarah Eilbeck – Gloucestershire AM
Maggie Taylor-Sanders – Southern Marches AM/CCR y Gororau Deheuol

Apologies:

Bournemouth Coastal AM, Bristol AM, Luton & Leighton AM, South London AM, Southern East Anglia AM, Staffordshire AM, West Weald AM, YFGM

Other visitors:

Michael S Booth – BYM staff, Church Government Adviser
Sarah Bower – Quaker Chaplain
Catherine Brewer – Book of Discipline Revision Committee co-clerk
Rosie Carnall – Book of Discipline Revision Committee co-clerk
Mike Coote – Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee co-clerk
Grace Da Costa – BYM staff, Public Affairs & Media Manager
Robin Fishwick – Quaker Chaplain
Imi Hills – Junior Yearly Meeting Clerk
Kit King – YM Clerk's Support Group
Cato Pedder – BYM staff, Media Officer
Michael Phipps – Book of Discipline Revision Committee assistant clerk
Finn Pollard – Church Government Advisory Group convener
Lesley Richards – Symud Ymlaen Clerk
Emma Roberts – Quaker Chaplain
E. Elize Sakamoto – Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee co-clerk
Lisa Whistlecroft – Spirit-Led Ethical Employment Practice Working Group, Lancashire Central and North AM

MfS/23/03/04 Appointments

We have received the following nominations:

a) Central Nominations Committee

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

Representatives to other European Yearly Meetings

Re-nominate to serve as the representative to Norway Yearly Meeting 2023:

- Alastair Thomas, Lancashire Central & North AM

Re-nominate to serve as the representative to German Yearly Meeting 2023:

- Till Geiger, East Cheshire AM

Re-nominate to serve as the representative to Finland Yearly Meeting 2023:

- Mary Woodward, South East Scotland AM

Nominate to serve as the representative to Sweden Yearly Meeting 2023:

- John Phillips, South East Scotland AM

Nominate to serve as the representative to Switzerland Yearly Meeting 2023:

- Annie Brock Womack, Sheffield & Balby AM

Quaker World Relations Committee

Nominate to serve on the committee with immediate effect to 31 December 2024:

- Finola O'Sullivan, Cambridgeshire AM

Quaker Housing Trust

To serve from Annual Retirement Meeting (ARM) 2023 to ARM 2026:

Re-nominate:

- William Bewley, Cumberland AM
- David Hickok, North West London AM

Nominate:

- Jenny Brierley, York AM

Nominate to serve for one year from ARM 2023 to 2024:

- Hilary Patrick, West Scotland AM

For information, the following appointments were made as between-meeting appointments by the clerks of Meeting for Sufferings:

Representatives to Ireland Yearly Meeting

Re-nominate to serve as the representatives for 2023:

- Derek McLean, West Scotland AM
- Gordon Benson, Pendle Hill AM

Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee

Nominate to serve from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2025:

- Colin Holliday, Sussex West AM
- Diana Jeater, Hardshaw & Mann AM
- Sue Curd, Sussex West AM

Book of Discipline Revision Committee

Nominate to serve on the committee until the work is complete:

- Andrew Williams, East Scotland AM

Quaker World Relations Committee

Nominate to serve on from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2025:

- Ruth Homer, Devon AM

Quaker United Nations Office Committee (Geneva)

Nominate to serve on the body from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2025:

- Kate Graham, Leeds AM

b) Yearly Meeting Nominating Group

Central Nominations Committee

Release from service with immediate effect:

- Heather Mellars, Northumbria AM

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

MfS/23/03/05 Meeting for Sufferings report to Yearly Meeting 2023

The draft Meeting for Sufferings annual report to Yearly Meeting in 2023 was circulated to members of the Meeting following our meeting in December and changes have been incorporated. We receive the final report for our information (paper MfS 2023 03 06).

MfS/23/03/06 Letter of Greeting to other European Yearly Meetings

We receive from Quaker World Relations Committee a draft letter of greeting (paper MfS 2023 03 07). We ask our Clerk to sign it on our behalf so that it can be sent to other Yearly Meetings in Europe this year.

MfS/23/03/07 Prison and Court Register

Ruth Cook, a member of West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting, has been carrying out nonviolent actions of civil disobedience under conscience, with Insulate Britain and Just Stop Oil, and has been arrested 14 times since October 2021. To date she has received fines of £1,200 and has several other Crown Court jury cases outstanding in which she is pleading not guilty to public nuisance. She was in the Royal Courts of Justice on 21 November 2022 for a Just Stop Oil action on the M25, in which she and four others breached an earlier injunction. Ruth was given a sentence of four weeks, suspended for two years – which will be brought into effect if she breaches any other injunction. The five people in the group were asked to pay costs of £21,500 within 56 days.

We agree to include this information in the Prison and Court Register and we hold her in the Light.

MfS/23/03/08 Communications group

At our last meeting we received a report from the group appointed to review Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings. One of the recommendations it made was to improve the part Meeting for Sufferings plays in communications across the yearly meeting. We now receive a proposal to form a time-limited group to work on this task and bring us recommendations for action (paper MfS 2023 03 09). We recognise that some categories of Friends have not been well served by our current communications strategies, and we ask that the terms of reference be adjusted to make specific reference to the need to consult them in this work.

With such amendment, we agree to the terms of reference for this group and ask our Arrangements Group to bring us nominations for appointment at a future meeting.

MfS/23/03/09 New book of discipline

In December we heard from our committee revising our book of discipline and thereafter sample text on nominations and marriage was shared with us. We have been asked for our views by the end of May this year – particularly on the voice of

the book, language, style, accessibility, and the balance between core and supplementary material.

Today the clerks of the Book of Discipline Revision Committee (BDRC) – co-clerks Rosie Carnall and Catherine Brewer, and assistant clerk Michael Phipps – have updated us on this ongoing consultation with Friends and we have had an opportunity to offer our own reflections on the sample texts. This feedback has been noted by the Committee and will inform its future work.

We have heard in particular about the importance of our nominations process and concerns about the adequacy both of the current theological articulation of this and the practical processes involved. The BDRC is tasked only with finding words that explain our current positions and practices rather than proposing changes to these, but there may be useful work to do in this area and we ask Arrangements Committee to consider this.

MfS/23/03/10 A single charity in Wales and the Marches

Further to minute MfS/22/07/06, We receive paper MfS 2023 03 11 which brings together minutes from Mid Wales, North Wales, Southern Marches and South Wales Area Meetings, and from Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales setting out their intention and agreement to form a single charity in Wales and the Marches. We also received a minute from Symud Ymlaen–Moving Forward Committee.

We endorse this proposal, recognising that this will be a new form of organisation for our meetings and hope the new arrangements help to release more energy of Friends into building communities through worship and witness. We ask Church Government Advisory Group to adapt the text of *Quaker Faith & Practice* to reflect such changes in due course.

MfS/23/03/11 Laying down Quaker Concern for the Abolition of Torture

Further to minute MfS/21/10/12, we have been notified by the Trustees of Quaker Concern for the Abolition of Torture (Q-CAT) that they wish to lay down the charity as they have been unable to find new trustees.

We agree to this.

MfS/23/03/12 Spirit-led employment practices

We have welcomed our Friends Jon Martin and Lisa Whistlecroft from Lancashire Central and North Area Meeting who have shared their reflections on ethical employment practices and how these might be realised in Quaker workplaces, as first communicated to Meeting for Sufferings via minute 21.9.1 Employment Practices in BYM. The group appointed by the Area Meeting to take this concern forward is planning to produce some resources to help Friends and employers consider spirit-led practice.

We have heard in particular that issues of confidentiality are important and we need to engage with and manage conflicts well.

We wish the group well and look forward to hearing more as appropriate.

MfS/23/03/13 Report from BYM trustees

Caroline Nursey, Clerk of BYM trustees, has updated us on recent work of the trustees.

The important issues of reparation for our part in slavery, have been raised and the need to link with area meetings engaged in this work. We have heard that trustees have discerned a two-stage process for taking this forward and we welcome this and uphold all those involved in this work.

We have heard that a new communications strategy is underway, which will supplement our own work agreed earlier in this meeting.

We have heard of the closing of the Woodbrooke Centre venue. Woodbrooke: Learning and Research intends to continue to be creative and experimental and we welcome plans to support that continuing work.

MfS/23/03/14 Yearly Meeting 2023 – additional Yearly Meeting session

We have heard from the BYM Clerk of trustees that it will not be possible to bring audited accounts of Britain Yearly Meeting to Yearly Meeting in April/May 2023. This is as a result of an early Yearly Meeting, new finance systems embedding, and a new finance team. As a result, we agree to call an additional session of Yearly Meeting 2023 on 1 July 2023 at 10am, which will coincide with the July Meeting for Sufferings, to receive and consider the audited accounts. This additional Yearly Meeting session will be open to all Friends to attend, in person at Friends House or online.

We send this minute to BYM trustees and to Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee, asking that this decision be well-publicised to ensure good attendance for the important scrutiny of BYM trustees' work.

We ask Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group to consider whether other sessions or agenda items of Meeting for Sufferings on this date might lend themselves to more open participation in the spirit of our minute MfS/22/12/08, and to put in place appropriate arrangements in good time if so led and to consider how such an experiment might be assessed.

MfS/23/03/15 Loyal Address

The Recording Clerk has told us about preparations for a group of 12 Friends from Britain and Ireland Yearly Meetings to make a loyal address to Charles Windsor, on 9 March 2023. The invitation was received in January, and text for the loyal address had to be submitted in late February. The text shares information about the current concerns of Quakers in Britain and Ireland. The text of the address will be shared in the follow up pack, and we expect to hear about the event and minute the full text for the record at a future Meeting for Sufferings.

MfS/23/03/16 Reports from central committees

Yearly Meeting in 2021 asked Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) Central Committee to continue its work on climate justice and Quaker Life Central Committee to consider how to support local and area meetings on cultivating an inclusive culture of welcome and on developing a vision for what it means to be an

anti-racist faith community. Yearly Meeting asked Meeting for Sufferings to receive reports on progress and today we have heard from both Central Committees.

We have been reminded of Quaker action at COP26 and of ongoing work supporting the 'Make Polluters Pay' campaign and the 'Insure Our Future' campaign.

The challenges that face the world outstrip our corporate capacity and it is laid upon each of us to rise to meet them as we are led. Britain Yearly Meeting's faith in action team can support Friends in taking forward individual concern and work in the world where this concern isn't a priority for the QPSW strategy for centrally managed work.

Quaker Life Central Committee has facilitated a number of opportunities for consideration of issues of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), sometimes in collaboration with Woodbrooke Research & Learning. In particular, work has been done on facilitating de-colonisation within the centrally managed work and in supporting work with young people, especially in relation to trans-inclusion.

We have considered how the different issues that we address are interrelated. While we must be careful not to underplay distinctions, the extent to which the world falls short of the gospel order for which we hope is a global failure. Racism and climate injustice are parallel mistreatments of non-favoured groups.

We are happy to hear that both QPSWCC and QLCC have been faithful in addressing the tasks laid upon them by the Yearly Meeting, and look forward to further reports.

MfS/23/03/17 Changes to *Quaker faith & practice*

We receive recommendations from Church Government Advisory Group (CGAG) for making changes to *Quaker faith & practice* outlined in our paper MfS-2023-03-16

We agree to the changes following the laying down of Quaker Stewardship Committee and the introduction of the name Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales.

The Group suggests we do not attempt to replace the words 'overseer' and 'oversight' in the current text because the words appear in numerous places to describe both current and historic practice. Instead, we agree to the proposal to insert explanatory text near the start of Chapter 12 to explain our decision to stop using the term 'overseer'. In taking this decision we are mindful that the Book of Discipline Revision Committee will be working on material for pastoral care for the new book of discipline.

MfS/23/03/18 Quaker chaplains

Quaker chaplains can be found in a variety of settings, including prisons, secure units, universities, colleges, schools, hospitals and hospices, on the streets, in sports clubs and workplaces, often as part of an ecumenical or interfaith chaplaincy team. The work offers particular challenges both for the individuals undertaking often challenging work, and for Quaker processes in working with secular organisations. We have been joined by Sarah Bower, Robin Fishwick, Emma Roberts, and Oliver Robertson to explore something of the richness of this ministry.

We have been reminded that this service opens up Quaker communities that may be invisible to the wider yearly meeting.

We thank our Friends for sharing their experiences and uphold all Friends serving in this capacity.

MfS/23/03/19 Closing worship

Our business being concluded, we part meaning to meet again on 1 July nothing occurring to prevent.

Robert Card
Clerk

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

	Requirement	March 23
A	To set the priorities for the centrally managed work	
B	To issue public statements in the name of BYM	15
C	To receive regular interim reports from BYM trustees	13
D	To receive the BYM trustees' annual report & accounts for information	
E	To make a report on its own activities to YM	5
F	To determine the dates of YM	14
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	16, 18
H	To keep under review and to test as appropriate the existing and new concerns referred to it by AMs and others	12, 16
I	To foster communication throughout the yearly meeting	8
J	To receive minutes from area meetings	12
K	To make appropriate entries in the prison and court register	7
I	To appoint representatives to attend other Yearly Meetings	4 (6)
M	To receive information about changes in the composition or status of general meetings and gatherings	10
N	To make changes in the composition of area meetings	10
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	13
R	To authorise action and minute as required under other sections of <i>Quaker faith & practice</i>	
S	To set up an arrangements group and support and working groups to assist its own work as it sees fit	



Quakers in Britain

Loyal address – full written version

As representatives of Quakers across Britain and Northern Ireland, we give thanks for the grace of God as shown in the life of the late Queen Elizabeth and we offer prayers for you on your accession.

We thank you for speaking out for the environment over many decades. Quakers believe that a just solution to the climate crisis requires interrogating and disrupting our existing economic systems, which are not operating within ecological limits or upholding the wellbeing, dignity and equality of all.

For us, equality means everyone feeling welcomed and valued for who they are, that we see their equal spiritual worth as a child of God. Who are we to reject what God has created? Our differences are a blessing, and we should rejoice in them. When we connect with other people then our differences do not divide us.

We have welcomed trans and gender diverse people within our Quaker worshipping communities. We have committed to being an actively anti-racist church, and to making reparations for our past involvement in slavery. It is a moral imperative on us all to try to repair the harm done, as echoes of that harm are still felt today.

We are grieved to see the harms caused by fighting in Ukraine and the many other armed conflicts throughout the world. Every casualty, civilian or soldier, is a valued human life lost or damaged. We may think wars end through force of arms or negotiation, but peace is maintained by building relationships, mutual dependency and shared prosperity.

We hope and pray that you will be guided by the example of Jesus Christ and serve wisely and lovingly, and can counsel your governments to do the same.