

Calling letter



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

17 November 2023

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

It does not feel long since our rich residential meeting in October. On this occasion, we do not expect to receive minutes from area meetings, but we will be hearing reports from several of our standing committees and working groups on work throughout our yearly meeting.

As mentioned in the follow-up letter to our last meeting, Quaker Life staff will be running a **programme for children** (including both pre-school and primary ages) and young people at Friends House alongside our meeting. They will have their own programme of activities and we will bring all ages together for worship and lunch. If you have a child or grandchild under the age of eighteen or could encourage and enable the attendance of children and young people from your Meeting to attend, do give them this opportunity.

Our formal business will include the annual report of **Quaker World Relations Committee** on their work maintaining communion with the rest of the worldwide family of Friends, and from **Quaker Committee on Christian and Interfaith Relations** on how our yearly meeting is engaging with other denominations and faiths.

The **Book of Discipline Revision Committee** will also bring its annual report and a minute asking for guidance regarding the wording of the **marriage declaration** authorised by our discipline.

Following our decision in principle at our October meeting, the **Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering, and Meeting for Sufferings (GRYYM)** will be updating us on their work to enable the functions of Meeting for Sufferings to be held as a continuing Yearly Meeting throughout the year, possibly with some administrative tasks delegated to another group.

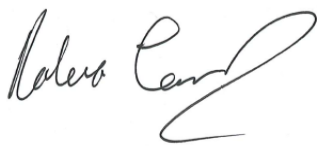
Similarly, at our October meeting, we made significant progress on our understanding of **membership** and we are now being asked to make a formal decision, clarifying some of the implications of our discernment.

As always, there will be some **routine business**: registration of Quaker Recognised Bodies, the making of our appointments (including our own clerking team), and an update on the work of trustees.

And, finally, we will hear from the **Yearly Meeting** clerk introducing the agenda for 2024 and inviting us to agree dates for Yearly Meeting in 2025 and 2026.

Reflecting on the turbulent times through which we are living, I look forward to sharing with you the opportunity to respond to the promptings of love and truth that continue to guide our yearly meeting in its witness to a world under Gospel order.

In Truth,



Robert Card
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

Papers enclosed with this mailing

Agenda

Minutes from MfS Arrangements Group

MfS 2023 12 06 Quaker Recognised Bodies

MfS 2023 12 07 Book of Discipline Revision Committee annual report

MfS 2023 12 08 Marriage declarations

MfS 2023 12 09 Report from the group to review YM and MfS

MfS 2023 12 10 Appointment of non-members for Quaker service

MfS 2023 12 12 Minutes and report from BYM Trustees

MfS 2023 12 13 QCCIR annual report

MfS 2023 12 14 QWRC annual report

MfS 2023 12 15 Yearly Meeting update and future dates

MfS 2023 12 14a Reports and epistles from other European Yearly Meetings is available as a separate file

A reminder of how you can prepare for the meeting

- 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 (sufferings@quaker.org.uk), before the meeting to be received by morning of **29 November**.



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

Agenda

Meeting for Sufferings – 2 December 2023

In-person at Friends House and by video conference,
open for arrivals from 9.30am for 10am start

	Item	Paper
10am	Session 1	
1	Opening worship	
2	Welcome and introductions	
3	Agenda Adoption and acceptance of the agenda	
4–6	Items to be taken on draft minute: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership (To follow) (04) • Appointments (To follow) (05) • Quaker recognised bodies (06) 	MfS 2023 12 04–06 For decision
7	Book of Discipline Revision Committee (BDRC) annual report To receive a report from the BDRC	MfS 2023 12 07 For information
8	Marriage declaration To consider a matter from the Book of Discipline Revision Committee	MfS 2023 12 08 For decision
Shuffle break		
9	Review of Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gatherings and Meeting for Sufferings To receive an update report from the group undertaking this review	MfS 2023 12 09 For consideration
10	Appointment of non-members for Quaker service	MfS 2023 12 10 For decision
12.45am	End of Session 1	

12:45am Lunch break

2pm	Session 2	
11	Appointment of the Meeting for Sufferings Clerks for 2024	For decision
12	Report from BYM Trustees To receive minutes of the recent meeting and hear from the Clerk of Trustees and the Yearly Meeting Treasurer	MfS 2023 12 12 For information
13	Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations annual report To receive the committee's annual report to Meeting for Sufferings	MfS 2023 12 13 For information
Shuffle break		
14	Quaker World Relations Committee annual report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To receive the committee's annual report to Meeting for Sufferings (14) To receive reports from BYM's representatives to other European Yearly Meetings in 2023 (14a) 	MfS 2023 12 14 MfS 2023 12 14a For information
15	Yearly Meeting To receive an introduction to the agenda for Yearly Meeting in 2024 and to agree dates for 2025 and 2026	MfS 2023 12 15 For information and for decision
16	Closing worship	
4pm	End of Meeting	



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held online 18 October 2023

Minutes

Present: Robert Card, Caroline Kibblewhite, Jean Scott Barr

Prevented: Ivan Hutnik

In attendance: Siobhán Haire, Neil Jarvis

1. Review of Meeting in October

We had a productive discussion regarding Meeting for Sufferings held at Hinsley Hall in Leeds.

The feedback from members of Sufferings and the Support Group was helpful and generally positive. We noted the difficulties for those online and discussed the issues raised.

2. Nominations

A Friends has been approached to serve on the Sustainability Monitoring Group. If the Friend wishes to serve we agree to send this nomination to Meeting for Sufferings for appointment.

3. Looking ahead

We are pleased to hear that our meeting in December will be held whilst the *Living Earth*, textile art exhibition is taking place.

We also note that young people are being encouraged to join us on the day in a parallel meeting. This provides us the opportunity to further explore different ways of working and encouraging all-age participation.

This approach is in line with the expressed interest from Yearly Meeting and the work being undertaken by local development workers, to explore broader participation in Quaker work.

We also shared some thoughts about the next triennium, in particular we noted the need to identify the location for our next residential meeting in 2025.

We note the ongoing work being undertaken by Yearly Meeting and Trustees with Meeting for Sufferings to review and re shape our meetings positively.

4. Any other matters

There being no further business to conduct, we part planning to meet again on 1 November to plan Meeting for Sufferings in December.

We closed our Meeting following some worship.

Signed in and on behalf of the meeting,

Caroline Kibblewhite, Clerk



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held online 1 November 2023

Minutes

Present: Robert Card, Ivan Hutnik, Caroline Kibblewhite, Jean Scott Barr

In attendance: Siobhán Haire, Neil Jarvis

1. Forward plan

We have considered our forward agenda, which informs our planning.

2. Meeting for Sufferings in December

We have considered potential business for Meeting for Sufferings in December. We have made suggestions for how we can share time together with the parallel meeting of young people and children which will be taking place in Friends House on the same day. We ask the clerks to finalise the agenda in consultation with staff.

3. Any other matters

There being no further business to conduct, we part planning to meet again on 13 December to review Meeting for Sufferings in December.

Signed in and on behalf of the meeting,

Caroline Kibblewhite, Clerk

Record of minutes received by Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

This is a record of all minutes received by Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group since the last Meeting for Sufferings with information about any decisions that have been taken. It also includes minutes received in the past where there are updates. If representatives wish to see a copy of a minute, or wish to contact the Clerks, please email sufferings@quaker.org.uk.

Minutes received since last Meeting for Sufferings

Body sending minute	Minute	Initial steps and decisions	Subsequent steps (if any)	Status
General Meeting for Scotland	23/09/08 Options for Scotland	25/9/23 Minute received 1/11/23 Tabled at MfSAG Received as update for information – no immediate action required from MfS		Ongoing work in Scotland to come to MfS in due course
YMAC	YMAC 2023-9-10, 11, 12, 16 Preparations for YM24	6/10/23 Minutes received 1/11/23 Tabled at MfSAG Agreed to bring to MfS in December		YM Clerk invited to MfS in December
Central England AM	2023.086 Stop Ecocide	25/9/23 Minute received 1/11/23 Tabled at MfSAG Considered in MfS in October		Ecocide considered at MfS in October

Updates to previously received minutes:

Minutes received from area meetings on Membership, Ecocide, Modern-day slavery and Sudan were considered at MfS in October and have been removed from the table of minutes.

Quaker recognised bodies

Introduction

This paper covers:

- Part A: two applications for registration as a new Quaker recognised body (QRB)
- Part B: four reviews of existing QRBs for continuing registration
- Part C: the laying down of one existing QRB.

Background

The guidelines for groups that would like to be a Quaker recognised body are on the BYM website www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups. That page also contains a list of current QRBs with their contact details and brief description.

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

Each QRB is allocated a BYM link staff member.

A: New applications

Two applications for registration as Quaker Recognised Bodies are ready to come to Meeting for Sufferings this time.

- 1. Conflict Minerals Campaign**
- 2. Rookhow**

Action required

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to approve these organisations as Quaker recognised bodies for a period of two years, as they are both relatively new groups.

Conflict Minerals Campaign

Constitution: A constitution was adopted on 7 May 2021.

Governance: The group has a management committee and an Annual General Meeting. They use the Quaker business method.

Type of Group: Emergent, free-standing

Foundation: The group was founded in 2020, with support from Manchester & Warrington Area Quaker Meeting.

Aims: To campaign for the people of Congo (DRC) to benefit from their mineral wealth

Activities: We have close links with Quaker Congo Partnership, including some overlapping membership.

We have members in DRC and in UK, Most of our members and supporters are Quakers. A number of our UK members live in Manchester. Our Committee includes Congolese living in Congo, people from Congo who have settled in the UK, and native British.

We have had a meeting with QPSW staff, and were helped by Turning The Tide in developing strategy.

We do not intend to register as a charity as our prime purpose is campaigning, and we do not want to be constantly thinking whether our work is within the limits of the Charity Commission for charities campaigning. It is possible that at some stage in the future we may set up a separate charitable organization for our work that is definitely charitable, to help fundraising.

Membership: 14 members, approx. 40 supporters

Finance: The accounts are audited or examined in accordance with their constitution and are available in their financial statement. The group is aiming for about £15,000.

Winding up: The Group may be wound up at any time if agreed by members present at a General Meeting. In the event of winding up, any assets remaining after all debts have been paid shall be given to another group with similar aims.

Archives: The group contact keeps a full set of notes of meetings.

Current contact details: Elizabeth Coleman, 6 Crosshill Street, Manchester M16 7LU

Email: conflictmineralscampaign@gmail.com

Website: <https://conflictmineralscampaign.org.uk/>

Staff link: Lyndsay Burtonshaw, Faith in Action coordinator (Peace)
LyndsayB@quaker.org.uk

Rookhow

Constitution: Rookhow was founded as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with a Constitution dated 9 March 2020.

Governance: Rookhow CIO is currently managed by 7 trustees, who are responsible for its governance and for the management of Rookhow, including its ancient woodland. One trustee is nominated from each of the local area meetings:

Swarthmoor (South West Cumbria) Area Quaker Meeting, Kendal & Sedbergh Area Quaker Meeting and Lancashire Central and North Area Meeting. These three area meetings are closely involved with supporting Rookhow's work.

Type of Group: Charity CIO (registration number 1188409)

Foundation: Rookhow is a Quaker charity in the Lake District with a Grade II* listed Quaker Meeting House, 16 bed Bunkbarn and 12 acres of oak woodland. Rookhow has for 300 years has been a meeting place for the 'scattered communities of the Society of Friends'. In 2020 Rookhow, which until then had been the responsibility of Swarthmoor (South West Cumbria) Area Meeting, was established as a CIO

Aims:

1. Providing Rookhow for the public benefit as a place for learning, spiritual retreat, and refreshment, open to all, especially disadvantaged members of society.
2. Stewardship and protection for the public benefit of the local natural environment including Quakers' Wood.
3. Maintaining Rookhow as a place of worship of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

Rookhow aims to develop a relationship with wider Quaker networks. This is a wonderful resource for the Society which Rookhow wants to share widely, especially with Quaker Meetings, interest groups, young people and their families.

Publications and activities:

- Regular in person and online worship Each Good Friday there is also a large Meeting for Worship, attended by 80-100 Quakers from all three local Area Meetings and further afield
- Historic England Open Days- volunteer guides show people around Rookhow and share its history and current work on the 1st and 3rd Friday of every month.
- Residential weekends.
- Rookhow provides funding to groups supporting disadvantaged individuals to enable them to stay at Rookhow. Initially supported by the Quaker Mental Health Fund UK, this is now supported by generous donations. Over 400 people from 30 organisations have been supported to stay at Rookhow.
- Visits and links with local organisations and events,
- Stewardship of the property and improving sustainability:
- Care of the ancient woodland which is a North Atlantic rainforest.
- A weekly newsletter is sent to over 300 people and a quarterly mailing to over 700 individuals and organisations.

Membership: For charitable purposes the trustees form the membership of the CIO. There are currently about 40 volunteers and a wider community of public users who benefit from the activities and services of Rookhow. These numbered 1,000+ guests a year, over 200 Open Day visitors so far in 2023.

Finance: The accounts are audited and examined in accordance with charity law, presented annually to the Charity Commission.

Winding up: In accordance with Charity Dissolution Regulations.

Archives: Rookhow keeps electronic records of all its activities.

Current contact details: Sue Nicholls, Development Manager, email: contactrookhow@gmail.com

Website: <https://rookhow.org.uk/quakers>

Staff link: Wendy Hampton, North West Local Development Worker, Quaker Life wendyh@quaker.org.uk

B. Reviews of existing QRBs

When Meeting for Sufferings grants QRB status, it asks for each organisation to be reviewed in due course.

For each of review an update from the staff link about recent activities and key information from the original application to Meeting for Sufferings is included.

There are four reviews submitted this time:

- 1. Quaker Decriminalisation Network**
- 2. Quaker Campers**
- 3. Quaker Arts Network**
- 4. Quaker Concern Over Population**

Action required

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to renew the registration of the first of these, the Quaker Decriminalisation Network for two years, to be reviewed in 2025 and the rest of these organisations as Quaker recognised bodies to be reviewed during 2028 (that is in five years' time).

Quaker Decriminalisation Network

Initial recognition 2014, review due 2023, emergent group. Staff link Clare Wood.

The group have had minimal contact with the staff link, Clare Wood. The group reports that the concern continues to be held by Cornwall Area Meeting although not in a very active way. However, they are continuing to work on their concern, with an article published in The Friend dated 27 October 2023.

As the group is still not firmly established, staff recommend that its QRB status is reviewed in another two years, in 2025.

Email: Voz Faragher vozfagher@gmail.com

Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/630116713798054>

Quaker Campers

Initial recognition 2018, review due 2023, free-standing group, staff link: originally Mel Cook, now Jude Acton

Quaker Campers continue to be active.

They would like to continue as a Quaker Recognised Body and to remain on the BYM website.

The campers are now aware that I (Jude Acton) am their link person and provided me with a report of their camp this summer and the minutes of their AGM. That is the extents of our connection.

Email: quaker.campers@gmail.com

website: none

Quaker Arts network

Initial recognition 2018, review due 2023, free-standing group, staff link: originally Nik Dadson, now Jude Acton

I have been in considerable contact with the committee and individuals who have been working on projects

I have supported John Lampen with ideas including how to manage safely, a project making films for the 400 anniversary of Quaker Life.

I have spent considerable time supporting Rici Marshall Cross with the editing of a LAN book for children that is now produced and am committed to publicizing this.

I have supported Linda Murgartroyd with her ideas around the LEP exhibition to be held at Friends House.

I also have met with their communications officer.

The committee keep me in touch with their work and have sent me copies of their minutes and reports.

Their details are correct.

Email: quakerartsuk@gmail.com

website: <http://quakerarts.net/>

Quaker Concern Over Population (QCOP)

Initial recognition 2018, review due 2023, free-standing group, Staff link Suzanne Ismail

QCOP continues to be active, organising several events each year, responding to enquiries and regularly updating its website. There has been some contact with the centrally managed work since recognition, largely to update staff on QCOP activities. Some discussions have also taken place to understand and try to navigate differing

perspectives on population held across the yearly meeting, including some of the centrally managed work programmes.

Email: qcop.contact@gmail.com

website: <http://qcop.org.uk/>

C. Laying down of a Quaker recognised body

Action required

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to agree to remove the Post Yugoslav Peace Link from the list of Quaker recognised bodies, at the request of the group.

Post Yugoslav Peace Link (PYPL)

Initial recognition 2018, Free standing group. Staff link Judith Baker.

The group has written an account of its work. The full report of the work and ministry of the Post Yugoslav Peace Link, explaining the rationale for laying itself down can be obtained on request from sufferings@quaker.org.uk.

The final part of their report is included here.

Rationale for laying down PYPL

PYPL members are sadly aware that their group has reduced through tragedies of the past few years. They have lost their Treasurer Ruth Baker, Oxford (2019), and former representatives in the region, Goran Bubalo, Sarajevo (2020) and Zorica Trifunovic, Belgrade (2022). They recognise their capacity to raise funds amidst other more visible global concerns has become more challenging. The restrictions of the pandemic continue to bring less opportunities for face-to-face contact which could be an ongoing concern in terms of older members and vulnerable health status. Although they are strongly aware of the legacy that conflicts across the region have, the group felt it was important to accept where they are now and to recognise the quality of the work they have managed to achieve. They are unanimous in their belief in and gratitude for the development of PYPL, which has created such positive opportunities across the region and with peace activists within the wider European countries. They agreed to take the necessary actions to lay down this group.

Management of funds:

The agreement at the time of establishment was that if PYPL were to be laid down, 'any money at that time in the hands of the Treasurer or held in a bank or other account shall pass to any organisation with similar interests, as determined by PYPL Action Group'. PYPL are currently in contact with several agencies within the region to explore how the remaining funds can be best placed.

Conclusion

PYPL members celebrate all that has been achieved over the years. The quality of

relationships established, the learning taken from shared experiences and the opportunity to engage with the rebuilding of communities post-conflict.

PYPL has laid itself down and we ask Meeting for Sufferings to complete the process by removing it from the list of Quaker recognised bodies of Britain Yearly Meeting.

Michael S Booth
Church Government Advisor
Quaker Church Affairs
November 2023

Book of Discipline Revision Committee fourth report to Meeting for Sufferings

Introduction

1. Following Minute 31 of Yearly Meeting 2018, Meeting for Sufferings established the Book of Discipline Revision Committee with Terms of Reference approved in July 2018, to bring to Yearly Meeting draft text for adoption as BYM's book of discipline, together with proposals for its publication. The appointment of our initial membership of 24, including two co-clerks and an assistant clerk, was completed by February 2019 and we first met in May 2019. This is our fourth progress report, following those in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Who we are

2. We are a diverse committee reflecting the breadth of Britain Yearly Meeting, as required by our Terms of Reference. Since our last report in December 2022, one of our members has been released at his request, and one new member has been appointed. Of our current 24:
 - geographically, about a quarter live in Scotland and Wales; and of the remaining three quarters living in England, broadly equal proportions are in northern, central and southern areas
 - three-quarters are female
 - our ages range from 20s to over 70
 - the lengths and nature of our Quaker backgrounds vary just as widely, as do our life and employment experiences
 - several of us face particular challenges, such as physical or mental health or disability, and this reminds us all of our role in enabling everyone to take part as fully as they can, while trying to ensure that no-one becomes burnt out or overburdened.

Our work so far

3. We have now met as a full committee 18 times. The first five were residential weekends face-to-face; then nine were held virtually by part-weekend zoom videoconferences during the coronavirus pandemic and its aftermath; and then four residentially face-to-face again by special permission in 2022 and 2023 to enable us to work intensively together in reviewing where we have got to and planning the remaining phases of our task in detail. We have also continued to work hard individually and in various subgroups on specific topics, and held check-in zoom committee meetings to keep track of these. Some of us are struggling with this demanding work alongside other calls on our time and energy, and some have needed to step back from our work for a while for health or other reasons.

4. Our **previous reports** described our steps to
 - learn **how best to work together** as a cohesive committee
 - document a set of principles for our **committee processes** and **developing content**
 - develop a working understanding of the **purpose of the book of discipline**
 - identify a range of different **audiences** for it, their expectations of it and how they might use it
 - articulate seven key **interlinked common themes** that will need to be reflected in it, and **five key insights describing the unity of our Quaker way** which will run as threads through it
 - develop principles for our choice of **language to express spiritual concepts and experience**, and for the **use of quotations and extracts**
 - clarify that the “**book**” **will need to appear in a variety of formats and platforms**
 - test the distinction between “**core**” material in the book (what Quakers do and why – the spiritual basis) and “**supplementary**” (detail on how we do it – to be published separately)
 - develop, with the help of an external consultant, a detailed **project plan and timescale** for completing our task by the end of this decade
 - refine our **list of (now around 30) main topics** to be covered in the new book
 - prepare substantive **first drafts on a number of these**
 - continue over-arching work to **review all these drafts for consistency, coherence, accessibility, and choices of language and voice** to reflect inclusivity and Quaker spiritual experience; and **to compile a glossary**
 - use a system for **tagging contributions and comments received from Friends** across the yearly meeting, so that these can be considered when drafting relevant text
 - **engage with Friends generally** to encourage interest in our work, through activities with Woodbrooke; leading sessions at Yearly Meeting, area meetings and other gatherings; setting up an online creative project; publishing “Frequently Asked Questions” and key messages; and having a presence on social media.

5. **By the end of 2023**, we will have
 - taken on board the learning from our sharing of **sample texts on marriage and on nominations** with Meeting for Sufferings, and through MfS representatives with area meetings and other Friends. We were grateful for the 184 responses we received from meetings and individuals. The feedback generally indicated that the “voice of the book” is along the right lines, the text is accessible, and there is a fair balance between drafted text and a selection of quoted anthology extracts. But it has also encouraged us

to do further work on defining more clearly what constitutes core material and what is supplementary; and ensuring that the language used is inclusive, makes people feel seen and heard, and deploys biblical quotations appropriately. The detailed and specific comments received – some of them contradictory - on the two sample texts are being taken into account in the editing process

- sent a minute to Meeting for Sufferings regarding changes to the **marriage declaration** suggested in the feedback that are beyond our Committee's remit
- “**banked**”, as good enough for now, **substantive drafts on the following 11 topics: discernment; meeting for worship for church affairs; nominations; concern; community; sharing the Quaker experience (outreach); marriage; trusteeship & charitable status (incorporating elements of resources/stewardship); worship; conflict; testimony**
- have well-advanced **drafts nearly ready for “banking” on 3 more topics: service; witness; spiritual and pastoral care**
- identified content for a separate topic on **Quaker theology** (previously combined with the spiritual experience topic)
- prepared material on **faithful lives** which will now be divided amongst related topics
- reviewed our approach to interlinked topics (currently being worked on), including **personal journey; funerals; diversity and inclusion; close relationships; and spiritual experience**, aiming at completing content for these during 2024
- revised (in the light of comments from Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations) a requested paper on our understanding of the **Quaker theological underpinning of our constitutional structures**, which we have sent to the groups reviewing Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings and other aspects of our structures to help them with their work, and which will inform our future drafting of text on these topics
- started to develop our approach to the **overall structure of the book**.

Our immediate next steps

6. During the year or so ahead, we hope to

- start drafting **text on the remaining main topics** not yet covered, aiming at completion by the end of 2025
- consider when, how and which **further sample texts** might usefully be **shared with Friends more widely** for their and our benefit, in advance of completing the whole book
- continue to liaise with the **current reviews of key aspects of church government** – particularly the reviews of yearly meeting/yearly meeting gatherings and Meeting for Sufferings (including their relationships with BYM Trustees) and central committees, the simpler meetings project, and

the exploration of membership initiated by Meeting for Sufferings – so that we can start drafting text at the earliest appropriate times on these topics, in the hope that the position may be clarified by decisions of Yearly Meeting on them in 2024 and 2025

- continue to **review drafts for consistency, coherence, accessibility, language and voice**
- bring together the **shape of the whole book**, how the topics fit together and flow while enabling the reader to find answers to questions.

Our longer-term timetable

7. Our project plan and timetable envisage presenting
 - a) to **YM in 2027 a complete first draft text** of the new Book of Discipline, for the start of the process of familiarisation and initial discernment, engaging Friends with the text and our approach to the book – an extended “meeting for learning” – resulting in clear guidance to BDRC on the next steps; and
 - b) (after a period of further learning and consultation with Friends throughout Britain, any revision required, and further familiarisation), to **YM in 2030 a complete finished text for adoption.**

This is a demanding, yet we believe achievable, timetable. When we have drafted all the 30 or so discrete topic texts, there will then be a substantial editing process. This will entail bringing the topic texts together as a coherent and consistent whole; writing introductions; editing and putting into BYM’s house style; cross-referencing and indexing; identifying the supplementary material needed and who should prepare and authorise it; and then printing and publishing in hard copy and electronically/online. We have started liaising with the BYM content and publications staff team on collaboration over these tasks.

We think that the complete first draft should ideally be made available to Friends at least 6 months before YM 2027 (i.e. by end-2026/start of 2027), to allow for thorough reading and discussion in preparation for YM.

The text itself should be accompanied by explanatory material on why the book is as it is, the processes for familiarisation and eventual decision, and proposed arrangements for the separate preparation and authorisation of supplementary material. We envisage that the new book will eventually be made available not only in print and as an electronic document but also through multiple media, so as to be accessible to all Friends. We are considering how far it will be practicable for any parts of the first draft to be trialled in different formats.

We hope YM 2027 will give us clear guidance on the voice of the book, its accessibility, the balance between core and supplementary material, any gaps needing to be filled or unnecessary material to be removed. This would be followed by a further consultation and revision process, leading up to

preparation of the finished text and its publication, preparatory consideration by Friends throughout Britain, and eventual presentation to YM 2030 for adoption.

All this activity means that over the next three years we may have less capacity than before to respond to invitations from meetings and groups to talk to them about our work. But we hope to collaborate with Meeting for Sufferings, YM Agenda Committee and Woodbrooke in helping Friends throughout the country to engage with the complete text from late 2026 onwards.

How can Friends get involved?

8. You can:

- pray for and uphold the Committee
- look at our webpage at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/resources/quaker-faith-and-practice/revising-quaker-faith-practice>
- contribute to our online creative project “Open to New Light” <https://padlet.com/bdrc/OpenToNewLight>
- share ideas for the new book, including telling us of inspirational and helpful pieces of writing. These can be offered using an online form <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/qfp-idea/> or by contacting the Committee Secretary by email qfp@quaker.org.uk or writing to Friends House
- engage with our social media accounts via Revising *Quaker faith & practice* pages on
 - Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/revisingqfp/>
 - Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/revisingqfp>
 - Twitter – <https://www.twitter.com/revisingqfp>

Conclusion

9. As always, we are hugely grateful to our Secretary and other BYM staff for all their work and support for us. We ask Meeting for Sufferings and Friends generally to continue to uphold us.

Rosie Carnall, Catherine Brewer, Michael Phipps: Co-Clerks and Assistant Clerk
Michael S Booth: Committee Secretary
November 2023

Friends serving on BDRC

Catherine Brewer, Rosie Carnall, Arden Chandler, Tas Cooper, Joycelin Dawes, Rhiannon Grant, Jessica Hubbard-Bailey, Catherine James, Pearl Johns, Jennifer Kavanagh, Sally Kikaya, Stevie Krayner, Matt Moore, Rachel Muers, Anya Nanning Ramamurthy, Finola O'Sullivan, Michael Phipps, Ben Pink Dandelion, Alastair Reid, Judith Thompson, Nuala Watt, Andrew Williams, Marcie Winstanley, Mary Woodward

Marriage declarations

Introduction

Should the wording of the Quaker marriage be revised?

The current marriage declaration includes references to God or the divine, it is the only place within *Quaker faith & practice* that requires an individual to use one of those words.

In 2022, the Book of Discipline Revision Committee (BDRC) shared draft text for the new book of discipline on marriage. In reading the feedback received it became clear that many Friends would appreciate a consideration of the wording of the marriage declaration.

The BDRC discerned that this is an important issue and is referring it to Meeting for Sufferings to decide if this matter is one for further consideration.

The staff member with day-to-day responsibility for supporting registering officers and the Quaker marriage process is Michael Booth, Church Government Adviser.

Why refer it?

The terms of reference of BDRC (section 3.5) read:

When necessary, request new discernment and guidance from Meeting for Sufferings or the Yearly Meeting on matters of discipline, where the Committee judges it is not possible in good faith to produce new text without such consideration, for example because of profound differences between current written discipline and actual practice.

What is the current declaration?

The current declaration in English can be found in *Quaker faith & practice*, section 16.52, and in Welsh in 16.53.

The English section reads:

When the meeting for worship is gathered, the couple at a convenient time shall stand, if able, and, taking each other by the hand, declare in an audible and solemn manner, the one after the other in either order, each saying:

Friends, I take this my friend [full name] to be my spouse, promising, through divine assistance, to be unto him/her/[commonly used name] a loving and faithful spouse, so long as we both on earth shall live.

The declaration may be prefaced by 'In the presence of God' or 'In the fear of the Lord and in the presence of this assembly'. The word 'spouse' may be

replaced by 'wife' or 'husband' as appropriate or by 'partner in marriage'. The phrase 'through divine assistance' may be replaced by the words 'with God's help'. The phrase 'so long as we both on earth shall live' may be replaced by the words 'until it shall please the Lord by death to separate us'. No other changes to the wording may be made. The choice of alternatives shall be agreed in advance by the couple and the registering officer. In any case, both must make their declarations in identical terms (or corresponding terms in the case of 'husband' and 'wife'); their promises must be equal and reciprocal.

This wording was agreed by Yearly Meeting in 2015.

How and why have changes to this wording been agreed?

There have been occasions where variations of these words have been agreed after consultation between the Church Government Adviser and the Recording Clerk (as 'keeper and interpreter' of our Church Government, *Quaker faith & practice* 8.21).

These variations are generally small in nature and have included:

1. agreement to using wording agreed by a yearly meeting in North America, where one of the couple grew up in that yearly meeting
2. using a pronoun other than her or him
3. being more relaxed about the alternative to the word spouse, by allowing "marriage partner" the second time and one person using spouse and the other husband or wife.

We have been firm in insisting that either "divine assistance" or "with God's help" be used, and that the same option is used by both of the couple getting married. We do not feel we have the authority of the Yearly Meeting to make a different decision, as this feels like a question about our yearly meeting's theological understanding.

How might the wording be changed?

Questions that were raised in the feedback received that might need to be explored are:

Must couples say exactly equal declarations?

At present both must choose "with God's help" or "divine assistance". Is insisting on the same wording forcing a couple to share a theology? Should it be open for one of the couple to use one option and the other the other option, or even omit any reference to God/the divine?

Some couples have chosen not to have a Quaker wedding, even though they wished to marry within our community, because one or both of them could not honestly use either of the options.

Can “they” be specifically included as a pronoun?

Since 2015, when the third of the current options “him/her/[commonly used name]” was added, there has been considerable societal change on the use of pronouns. The use of any pronoun is currently permitted by decision of the Recording Clerk. Feedback has suggested that “them” should be included as a definite option.

Who can change the wording?

The wording of the declaration is a Quaker matter, there is no legal reason for Quakers to keep to our current wording options for the marriage declarations.

As the wording is included in *Quaker faith & practice*, then currently Meeting for Sufferings has been authorised to make minor changes, while Yearly Meeting itself is the only place that major changes can be made.

Staff advise that the question of pronouns is a minor change that Meeting for Sufferings could accept, but that the question of omitting reference to God/the divine or of having greater freedom in the wording of the declarations are decisions for Yearly Meeting to take, on the advice of Meeting for Sufferings.

Recommendations

1. We recommend that Meeting for Sufferings consults area meetings and Friends generally on the question:

In the marriage declaration can each of the couple be offered the choice of using ‘through divine assistance’ or ‘with God’s help’, or to use neither of those phrases.

2. We recommend that Meeting for Sufferings accepts the recommendation that any pronoun can be used, and that “them” is offered as an alternative in text of *Quaker faith & practice* 16.52 and as appropriate in 16.53.

Michael S Booth
Church Government Adviser

The future shape of our Yearly Meeting

At its October meeting, Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) began thinking about how we might move from having an annual Yearly Meeting session plus four sessions of MfS and instead have a 'continuing Yearly Meeting' (continuing YM), which meets several times a year. MfS asked the Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gatherings & Meeting for Sufferings (the Review Group) to continue working on proposals so that Yearly Meeting 2024 can discern the way forward.

At this time, the Review Group feels it would be helpful to share our current thinking with MfS. That thinking isn't finished, and the proposals are not yet in a form that could be put before Yearly Meeting. We hope that MfS might be able to help us to develop them further. Please tell us (either in ministry in the session, or else by email before or afterwards – reviewgroup@quaker.org.uk) what feels right and what feels less right – including anything that is unclear or seems incomplete.

Positives of a continuing Yearly Meeting

At the last MfS, the Review Group shared some of the reasoning behind our recommendation for change. Friends who were not at the last MfS can find more on pages 56 to 64 of the papers for October (still available on the BYM website at: <https://quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2023-10-calling-letter-agenda-papers>)

At this stage, we wish to emphasise two positives that we expect to get from continuing YM:

- (i) We expect that there will be a children, youth & families programme at all continuing YM sessions.
- (ii) By holding four open meetings a year (see below) it should be easier to ensure there is sufficient agenda time to allow for discernment of complex and important issues, including the ability to revisit issues which need ongoing work.

Working assumptions for a continuing Yearly Meeting

The Review Group hasn't worked out all the details, but we are using some working assumptions. It's important that we find out now if Friends don't find them appropriate – we will still have time to reconsider before Yearly Meeting.

- (i) Yearly Meeting will remain the highest constitutional authority for Quakers in Britain and will retain all the powers that it currently has; as continuing YM it will meet more than once per year.
- (ii) BYM Trustees will be accountable to the continuing Yearly Meeting.
- (iii) Continuing YM would be open to all, just as Yearly Meeting is now.

- (iv) MfS would no longer meet as a separate body – it would be merged into the Yearly Meeting.
- (v) Continuing YM would meet four times per year. In general, one meeting would be held over several days (as over the May Bank Holidays currently) while the other meetings might last for a day.
- (vi) The option to hold a longer, residential-style meeting would still exist – this would not be expected to happen more than once every three years.
- (vii) There would be a single clerking team for all meetings of the continuing YM; the size of that team has not yet been considered fully (note that there are currently 5 clerks across YM and MfS).
- (viii) There would be a single Agenda Committee for all sessions of the continuing YM (note that there are currently one each for YM and MfS, i.e. YM Agenda Committee and MfS Arrangements Group).
- (ix) The new Agenda Committee would not be clerked by a member of the YM clerking team, although YM clerks would attend it.
- (x) The new Agenda Committee would focus on agenda planning and another group, including staff, would focus on the practical delivery of the sessions.
- (xi) There would still be an opportunity for formal representation at continuing YM: Area Meetings would be expected to send Friends to continuing YM as they currently are to YM (and as they currently do to MfS); those groups of Friends who currently send representatives to MfS would be expected to send Friends to continuing YM; other groups (such as Quaker Recognised Bodies) might also be encouraged to send Friends. The 'sending' body would appoint these Friends, rather than YM having to do so.
- (xii) The new arrangements would not come into effect until Yearly Meeting in May 2026. The new Agenda Committee might be appointed during 2025 and work alongside the current Agenda Committee for a while.
- (xiii) All continuing YM sessions would be blended.
- (xiv) The continuing YM sessions should not always be held at Friends House or in the south of England.

Still to be decided

The Review Group has considered who would pay for representatives to attend continuing YM: the 'sending' body or Britain Yearly Meeting itself. Currently BYM pays for representatives to attend MfS, but Area Meetings are expected to help support members to attend YM. There are several financial issues to be considered here, including whether there should continue to be a bursary fund. The Review Group has not yet reached any conclusions.

A decision would also be needed as to how much flexibility should be given to the sending bodies in terms of setting the term of service, maximum length of term, use of alternates/deputies etc.

The extent to which preparatory sessions would be organised also needs thought. At present, the annual YM usually involves considerable preparation in the run up to the sessions. MfS is also usually preceded by an evening Zoom preparation session. Feedback from MfS is that this has been a helpful development and so it may be appropriate for something similar to continue.

What about everything else that MfS does now?

The Review Group recommends that continuing YM should take over all the functions where MfS is currently acting on behalf of YM between sessions. These include issuing public statements in the name of BYM; hearing from BYM Trustees; receiving the annual report and accounts; giving guidance to BYM Trustees on important policy matters.

Continuing YM would be responsible for setting the direction of the centrally managed work and ensuring that this work reflects the overall concerns of Quakers in Britain.

In addition, MfS has a number of other important functions that would not be appropriate for a continuing YM to take on. The Review Group is considering whether our existing committees should take these, or whether there may even be a need for a new committee. It is important that the Review Group works closely with the Group to Review Central Structures on this and so it isn't possible to give definitive answers yet.

For now, we can share that we have identified the following issues that need further thought:

- (i) Concerns of Friends and other minutes sent by Area Meetings need to be considered and tested appropriately. We will need a process for ensuring they get to the right body for discernment.
- (ii) Communication is still a major issue – the Review Group previously highlighted that, despite much effort, there is a widespread feeling that communication does not work well. We are currently exploring what good communication might mean in the Quaker context (it is probably more than the simple transfer of information).
- (iii) There may a need to consider how to manage/receive/respond to matters such as reports from representatives who attend other Yearly Meetings; appeals against terminations of membership; reports of any short-term working groups that may be needed.

- (iv) The Prison & Court Register will need to be completed. The recording of names is both an administrative task and a way of supporting Friends acting under concern.
- (v) Quaker Recognised Bodies will need to be recognised and reviewed. These bodies often carry out important Quaker work and support our corporate witness.
- (vi) MfS has some involvement in formal communications with other Yearly Meetings, e.g. through approving the Letter of Greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting. In practice such communications are not drafted by MfS itself, but are approved there.

The Review Group looks forward to hearing more from Friends.

Sarah Donaldson
On behalf of the Review Group
reviewgroup@quaker.org.uk
November 2023

Appointment of non-members for Quaker service

Introduction

Meeting for Sufferings commissioned a review of appointments to central structures which reported back to Meeting for Sufferings in October 2022 (paper MfS 2022 10 13). At that point, Meeting for Sufferings wished to consider membership more broadly (minute MfS/22/10/12). Meeting for Sufferings initiated yearly-meeting wide discernment and considered this again in October 2023 (minute MfS/23/10/06 – provided as appendix 1 to this paper). The minute asked for advice to be provided on the implementation of this decision.

This paper therefore sets out the steps needed to respond to Meeting for Sufferings' discernment across our structures. There are three main aspects which need to be dealt with:

1. Appointments to serve on committees of Britain Yearly Meeting
2. Appointments to roles at local and area meeting level
3. Appointments to roles defined by legislation.

Each of these requires different action from Meeting for Sufferings. Proposed actions are set out below for your consideration:

1. Appointments to serve on committees of Britain Yearly Meeting

Policy on this is set by Meeting for Suffering, most recently contained in minute 8 from April 1992 (see appendix 2). The policy is then implemented by Central Nominations Committee and other nominating bodies of BYM. Currently the policy states that only members should be appointed to key decision-making bodies of our Yearly Meeting such as central committees and Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, or as representatives to other organisations. Exceptions are sometimes possible.

To implement the core of the decision made in October, Meeting for Sufferings should now change its guidance to Central Nominations Committee to allow the committee to bring names of members and attenders to all roles appointed by Meeting for Sufferings. This could be done immediately, except for nominations for service as a BYM Trustee (see part 3 below).

As there are other nominating committees in the central structure, Meeting for Sufferings should also inform other central and standing committees of this change so that they take the same approach.

2. Appointments to roles at local and area meeting level

Guidance on local and area meeting appointments is contained in *Quaker faith & practice* paragraph 3.24 (i) (see appendix 3). Adjusting this paragraph to remove the

membership requirement for the roles listed would be a substantive change to our discipline beyond the authority of Meeting for Sufferings, requiring a decision by Yearly Meeting in session. Careful preparation would be required.

Does Meeting for Sufferings wish staff to work with Church Government Advisory Group to prepare materials which would allow Yearly Meeting to consider this change? If so, these materials would first be considered by Meeting for Sufferings before forwarding to Yearly Meeting for its discernment, no earlier than Yearly Meeting 2025.

3. Appointments to roles defined by legislation

Trustees

Charity law allows BYM to appoint whoever it wishes to serve as a Trustee. However, the yearly meeting Governing Document requires Trustees to be in membership, and relates this requirement to *Quaker faith & practice*. To enable the appointment of non-members as BYM Trustees, Yearly Meeting would need to change the Governing Document of the national charity to remove the requirement, and notify the Charity Commission accordingly (as a formality).

Similar constraints would apply at area meeting level. Area meetings have a similar Governing Document, based on a model document agreed by Yearly Meeting. To lift the membership requirement would require area meetings to update their governing documents in line with a standard text provided by BYM.

Registering officers (Scotland)

It appears that Registering Officers appointed by area meetings in Scotland are also required to be members of the Society. Staff and General Meeting for Scotland will need to seek further guidance on this, as it is not clear how the legislation would be interpreted should our approach to membership change. There is no such constraint in marriage law for England and Wales.

Does Meeting for Sufferings wish staff to work with Church Government Advisory Group to prepare materials which would allow Yearly Meeting to consider this change? If so, these materials would first be considered by Meeting for Sufferings before forwarding to Yearly Meeting for its discernment, no earlier than Yearly Meeting 2025.

Paul Parker, Recording Clerk
Michael Booth, Church Government Adviser
November 2023

Appendix 1: Minute of Meeting for Sufferings, October 2023

MfS/23/10/06 Membership

Last year, Meeting for Sufferings asked (minute MfS/22/12/10) area meetings and others to consider these questions: Why do we have membership? What is it for? Is it still necessary? If yes, what form(s) could it take?

Today we receive over forty minutes from area meetings and other bodies, and we are grateful for the care that Friends have taken to respond to these questions. We have also heard an interim report from the small group appointed by Quaker Life Central Committee to look at the issue of new ways of belonging.

We are reminded that membership is an expression of the reciprocal commitment between the individual and the community. That relationship need not be realised by belonging to a traditional area meeting but may be found where any community commits to supporting those who participate, and the participating individuals commit to observing the discipline, including education, of the community. This relationship is necessary but may not be best described by the word “membership”. We have heard that the current system distinguished different ways of belonging to our Quaker communities that are unhelpful, and we would like to ensure that these distinctions are not perpetuated. We understand that the current membership arrangements are not a necessary basis for our administrative processes and that we should trust our nominations process to identify the right person for any corporate responsibility that may be assigned. Administrative belonging is not identical with spiritual alignment: “the old labels we once used to identify ourselves... are no longer useful. We need something larger, more comprehensive.” (1 Cor. 12 v13)

Having in principle discerned that nominations need not be dependent on formal membership as it currently exists; we ask that this matter returns to us as a formal proposal at a future meeting.

We have started a conversation on this matter and ask Quaker Life Central Committee to work with Meeting for Sufferings in facilitating further opportunities for this to be continued with Friends throughout our yearly meeting, hoping that this can come to Yearly Meeting in session in due course.

Appendix 2: Decision of Meeting for Sufferings, April 1992

Minute 8: Appointment to Committees

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

We agree to the recommendations in the report.

[For information as not given in minute 8, the report contained recommendations as follows (nb London Yearly Meeting is now known as Britain Yearly Meeting):

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.]

Appendix 3: Current text of *Quaker faith & practice*

Qf&p 3.24i

Those nominated to serve as clerk of a meeting, elder, overseer, treasurer, registering officer or as a member of any nominations committee should be in membership. Those nominated to serve as a trustee must be in membership. In case of difficulty the Recording Clerk may be consulted.

Report from BYM Trustees

As usual, this cover note seeks to point members of Meeting for Sufferings to the most significant minutes from this trustee meeting. Our November meeting routinely includes consideration of various reports – including Health and Safety – which are critically important, but where it's not necessary for you to read the minute unless you are particularly interested. And we considered a number of process topics around terms of reference and nominations for committees and groups, delegations, the operational plan for staff, and the risk register which are covered in minutes that are also optional reading.

Our Treasurer will speak to three minutes at Meeting for Sufferings in December. **Minute 2023/11/06** formally approves the accounts for 2022 prior to their submission to the Charity Commission. Our Treasurer will talk about what the accounts show at a meeting open to all Friends on 29 November and will introduce them to you at Meeting for Sufferings. He will also explain the budget for 2024 (which we approved in **Minute 2023/11/08** that notes a few key points). And he will talk about **Minute 23/11/15** that approves an updated fundraising strategy for the next three years, and explain how members of Meeting for Sufferings can help with this.

We considered Audit Committee's thorough and useful review of BYM's response to the pandemic in **Minute 23/11/13** and I will say more about this at the meeting. For the first time while I have been clerk, as **Minute 23/11/16** states, we agreed a confidential minute that is not included in your papers. I will say a bit more about this when we meet, but the reason for the confidentiality is the commercial sensitivity of negotiations with potential future renters of Drayton House (the investment property attached to Friends House).

And, finally, do look at **Minute 2023/11/11** which highlights some points from the Recording Clerk's report, to see some of what was delivered by staff during September and October.

Caroline Nursey
Clerk BYM Trustees

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Friday 10 November 2023, by video conference

Minutes

Present: Alison Breadon, Catherine Brown, Kit Fotheringham, Kate Gulliver, Ellie Harding, Carolyn Hayman, Marisa Johnson, Caroline Nursey (Clerk), Silas Price, Graham Torr (Assistant Clerk), Frances Voelcker, Danielle Walker Palmour (except minutes BYMT/23/11/13–14), Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer)

Prevented: Georgina Bailey

In attendance: Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk; Vipin Narang, Finance Director (to minute BYMT/23/11/15); Paul Parker, Recording Clerk; Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship

Visitors: External members of BYM Trustees' Audit Committee: John Ashcroft, Tina Leonard and Janet Slade (minute BYMT/23/11/13); Simon Best, Head of Programmes and Partnerships at Woodbrooke (minute BYMT/23/11/12); Beth Follini, Fundraising Manager (BYMT/23/11/15); Ursula Fuller, incoming Trustee in 2024 (minutes BYMT/23/11/1–24); Sandy Horsfall, Convener of Property Development Steering Group (BYMT/23/11/16–17); David Loxton, Head of Communications and Fundraising (minute BYMT/23/11/15).

BYMT/23/11/01 Welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest check

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We confirm our agenda.

During our opening worship, we heard *Quaker faith & practice* 28.07.

BYMT/23/11/02 Continuing business

We receive a list of continuing minutes including extracts from the following minutes of our last meeting: BYMT/23/09/09 Link trustees; BYMT/23/09/10 Nominations Group; and BYMT/23/09/13 Preparation of 2022 annual accounts. We will be returning to most of these matters at today's meeting. Clerks, however, are not bringing a third name to serve on Nominations until the additional three trustees to serve next year have been appointed.

BYMT/23/11/03 Minutes received

We receive the following minutes:

- Quaker World Relations Committee, 8–10 September 2023
- Quiet Company Board, 19 September 2023
- Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee separated minute YMAC 2023-9-10
- Quaker Life Central Committee, 27–29 October 2023, noting separated minute QLCC 23.38 on changes to the holding of Quaker Life Representative Council from 2024.

BYMT/23/11/04 Scheme of Delegation

There have been no changes to delegations to warrant revisions to the Scheme of Delegation (BYMT 2023 11 03a) but we note the document needs some updating because, for example, some source documents have been revised. We ask for a final version at our next meeting.

BYMT/23/11/05 Health, Safety and Environmental Committee

We receive the annual report of the work of the Health, Safety and Environmental Committee (BYMT 2023 11 03b) setting out their oversight of health and safety measures at Friends House, Swarthmoor Hall and the Yorkshire Centre in Leeds. It also reports on sustainability-related matters, and we note that ideas continue to be developed for improving the environmental performance of our buildings and operations.

We thank Quiet Company and People Operations staff for their broad-ranging work in keeping staff and public safe and secure across our properties.

BYMT/23/11/06 Annual accounts 2022

We receive the draft Trustees' annual report and financial statements for 2022 (BYMT 2023 11 04a), the external auditor's management letter (BYMT 2023 11 04b) and the Letter of Representation (BYMT 2023 11 04c). We also receive Finance & Property Committee minutes from 6 November 2022 (BYMT 2023 11 05a) and note FP23/39 recommending that we accept the annual report and accounts for 2022 and sign the Letter of Representation.

Our Treasurer has introduced this item.

It is a trustee responsibility to consider each year whether or not the charity is a going concern for the year ahead. We have taken account of the strength of our balance sheet and expected cashflows for the next 12 months and confirm that we consider the charity to be a going concern.

We record our thanks to Sayer Vincent, our external auditors, for their work. The auditor's letter makes clear and helpful recommendations for action in the coming year to avoid the problems that have arisen this year and to address various underlying matters. We recognise that this constitutes a lot of work for the finance team that Management Meeting must ensure is delivered effectively. We ask Finance & Property Committee to support staff, and to monitor progress and report to us on the key points identified. We will pay attention to this work at each of our meetings next year.

We approve the annual report and financial statements and authorise our Clerk and Treasurer to sign them on our behalf.

The annual accounts and financial statements will be filed with the Charity Commission and also made available on our website. We have arranged an online meeting on 29 November at 7pm open to all Friends to present the document.

We authorise the Treasurer to sign the Letter of Representation to the auditors.

We thank staff and others for their work in producing these documents.

BYMT/23/11/07 Management accounts for period ended 31 August 2023

We receive a report on the accounts for the first eight months of 2023 (BYMT 2023 11 05b) and our Treasurer has spoken to the item.

While the difference between expenditure to date and income so far is significantly greater than the deficit we had planned, we note that the variation is primarily due to timing of grant expenditure. The Quiet Company is making a bigger than anticipated positive contribution to our finances, and donations and grants are also a little above target. Conversely, investment income, legacies and charity trading income are below budget resulting in total income being close to budget to date.

BYMT/23/11/08 Budget 2024

We receive a paper setting out the proposed budget for 2024 (BYMT 2023 11 06a). Finance & Property Committee has reviewed the proposal and commends it to us (FP23/40). Our Treasurer has introduced this item.

We note that:

- The budget fits into the financial parameters previously agreed and is an investment budget with an agreed deficit
- The budget is shaped to deliver the priorities agreed in 2018 and shows investment to address our strategic-level risks including the creation of a leadership post for inclusive Quaker communities as part of our response to strategic risk one on major change in the Quaker community
- Staffing is being strengthened in the finance function
- The 2024 salary increase for staff has been agreed following consultation with the union, at 6.66%
- A significant portion of our expenditure is substantial grants to QUNO, QCEA and other bodies, and a grant agreed last year to Woodbrooke Learning & Research.

We agree the budget as set out in the paper.

BYMT/23/11/09 Operational plan 2024–26

We receive the operational plan (BYMT 2023 11 06b) setting out the priorities for centrally-managed work. We are very pleased to see the attempts to assess impact and how activities in the plan address our major risks where appropriate. We note how the process is being used by senior managers to monitor and review work and are pleased that it is becoming a live tool that helps staff carry out their work effectively. This makes us able to carry out our governance role more effectively.

BYMT/23/11/10 Risk register

We receive a report on the current status of strategic-level risks and how these are being managed by Management Meeting (BYMT 2023 11 06c).

We note the need to stand back from the register sometimes to review risk more broadly and hope to do this at our 2024 residential meeting.

BYMT/23/11/11 Recording Clerk's report

We receive a report from the Recording Clerk (paper BYMT 2023 11 07).

The report gives updates and news under the headings of BYM's strategic priorities:

- Thriving Quaker communities: the first in-person Trustees' and Treasurers' Conference for several years included 45 Friends across the yearly meeting with a further 15 online; Quaker Life Representative Council met in person for the first time since the pandemic and has proposed meeting regionally in future; for Yearly Meeting 2024, Agenda Committee is seeking to put inclusion of all ages at the heart of the planning with programmes for various age groups held on site at Friends House.
- Sustainable and peaceful world: Israel and Palestine – with great regret, the evacuation of current EAPPI volunteers; carefully crafted statements on Israel-Palestine by BYM, with other Quaker agencies and with other Christian bodies; arms fair protests at the Excel Centre; UK peacebuilding and supporting faith communities to respond rapidly at moments of crisis; continued work on insurance as part of climate justice work; exhibition and performances in Scotland linked to the Peace at Heart report.
- Simpler structures and practices: groups working on both the review of Meeting for Sufferings and on central structures have met and a proposal about a continuing yearly meeting is likely to come to Yearly Meeting 2024 and other matters to Yearly Meeting 2025.
- Distinctively Quaker: work continues on membership and on trans issues; an advocacy highlight was helping secure the first ever Westminster debate on loss and damage.
- Well-governed: a focus has been strengthening the finance team.

At our meetings in June and September we discussed a reporting dashboard of key information to help us see emerging issues promptly and we are pleased to see this included in the report at this meeting. We will send any suggestions for further developing the dashboard to the Deputy Recording Clerk. The report includes an updated illustration of how strategic responsibilities are assigned within the Management Meeting team.

a) Change to Management Meeting

We record that Lorna Service, Interim Head of Finance and Resources, left Britain Yearly Meeting on 1 November 2023.

BYMT/23/11/12 Climate Crisis: spiritual nurture and learning project

We are joined by Simon Best, Woodbrooke's Head of Programmes and Partnerships.

We receive a report covering October 2022 to September 2023 updating us on progress of this project funded by BYM and being delivered by Woodbrooke (paper BYMT 2023 11 08).

Simon has introduced the report which includes a table setting out the impact of the work against each of the project objectives. It notes developments including

meetings becoming increasingly involved with the eco church network, and the emergence of a strong 'Quaker Support for Climate Action' group. Woodbrooke is working increasingly closely with Local Development Workers in this area too.

We thank Woodbrooke Learning for the report and work and hope to make it well known among Friends.

BYMT/23/11/13 BYM's response to the pandemic

We welcome the external members of BYMT's Audit Committee John Ashcroft, Tina Leonard and Janet Slade.

The Audit Committee has finalised its report on BYM's response to the pandemic (BYMT 2023 11 09) and John Ashcroft has introduced it to us. The report is generally positive about the way that BYM responded to the crisis and we have reflected on what we can learn from how we worked then. We recognise that the good functioning of Management Meeting was key to this as it would be in any crisis.

We received a draft of this report in November 2022, but noted that Management Meeting intended to respond to the issues for consideration at paragraph 66 (minute BYMT/22/11/09). Appendix 2 of the final report sets out the management response against each of the report's recommendations for consideration.

We ask Audit Committee to monitor the actions in the management response and to comment on that in their next report to us.

We ask the Health, Safety and Environmental Committee to consider whether mitigations around air quality at Friends House are in line with current best practice.

We note the recommendation that the Book of Discipline might provide greater clarity as to the respective powers of area meeting trustees, Elders and Meeting in session in responding to a risk such as the pandemic. We recognise the complexity of this because of differing practices in area meetings. We ask Quaker Life to reflect on this matter.

We thank Audit Committee for this very useful report.

We forward this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee.

BYMT/23/11/14 Review of central structures

We receive the latest minutes from a meeting of the Group to Review Central Structures held on 21 October (BYMT 2023 11 10). We have also heard an update from Ellie Harding, the convener of this group.

BYMT/23/11/15 Fundraising strategy

We welcome David Loxton, Head of Communications and Fundraising, and Beth Follini, Fundraising Manager, who have introduced the draft Fundraising Strategy 2024–26 (paper BYMT 2023 11 11).

We are grateful for what has been achieved, despite the pandemic, since the decision to set up a fundraising team was taken in 2019 and the previous strategy was agreed in 2020.

We note that the fundraising team consider that the strategy can lead to further growth in fundraising income of 5% per year despite declining membership and cost of living pressures on members.

We approve the strategy.

BYMT/23/11/16 Drayton House

We receive a report from the Property Development Steering Group (BYMT 2023 11 12) and we are joined by Sandy Horsfall, the Group's convener.

We thank the group for their report and work, and have given guidance for negotiations as set out in a confidential minute BYMT/23/11/17.

BYMT/23/11/17 Confidential minute Drayton House

BYMT/23/11/18 Nominations

BYMT Nominations Group brings forward the following nominations and proposals (BYMT 2023 11 13).

Reparations Working Group

- Release **Kit Fotheringham** with immediate effect.

Property Development Steering Group

The membership for this group is currently one member of Finance & Property Committee, one Quiet Company board member, two trustees and one additional Friend along with the Head of Estates serving as secretary. Nominations Group asks for the following changes to be made to 2.1 of the terms of reference:

- **One or two** BYM Trustees
 - One committee member of Finance & Property Committee
 - One board member of Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd
 - One **or two** additional Friends
 - Head of Estates, who will also serve as secretary.
- **Graham Torr** to serve as a non-trustee member from 1 January 2024 for the lifetime of the group.

Employment Committee

Nominations Group asks for the terms of service on the Employment Committee to be extended from two to three years to enable better rotation for the three serving trustees and for the terms of reference at 2.1 to be updated accordingly.

We agree to these appointments, releases and amendments to terms of reference for the Property Development Steering Group and Employment Committee.

We agree to make available agenda time at our February meeting to review the volume of roles occupied by trustees and whether there is scope to reduce the

workload. By that time, we hope that three further trustees will have been appointed to serve alongside Ursula Fuller from January 2024 taking us to our full complement.

BYMT/23/11/19 Reparations working group

We receive minute RWG/23/10/04 from the Reparations Working Group asking for changes set out in paper BYMT 2023 11 14 to its terms of reference.

In addition, our Nominations Group requests (BYMT 2023 11 13) in place of the current requirement to appoint two trustees, that it should be to appoint 'up to two trustees'.

We agree to these changes.

BYMT/23/11/20 Link trustees

We receive paper BYM 2023 11 15 from our assistant clerk summarising our feedback on how the process of linking trustees with BYM departments is working, along with notes from a discussion with Management Meeting.

We agree to use pre-existing gatherings as a way for trustees and staff to meet, and to experiment with some of the other ideas in the paper. We will review this in a year's time.

BYMT/23/11/21 Trustees' news

We receive a report of recent activities of trustees (BYMT 2023 11 16).

BYMT/23/11/22 Preparing for Meeting for Sufferings and for the meeting open to all Friends about the accounts

We have prepared for Meeting for Sufferings in December.

BYMT/23/11/23 Communicating trustees' work

We have discussed how we might communicate our work.

BYMT/23/11/24 Reviewing the meeting

We have reviewed the meeting.

BYMT/23/11/25 Time with Recording Clerk

We have met the Recording Clerk.

BYMT/23/11/26 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

Caroline Nursey
Clerk

Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations annual report 2023

Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) is responsible for keeping Britain Yearly Meeting informed of relevant issues and movements which emerge from the faith life in our three nations and of opportunities for dialogue and co-operation between churches and faiths. In 2023 we have worked on our revised terms of reference that enable us to involve a wider network of local Friends in the ecumenical and interfaith mission of our Yearly Meeting. This renewal work will be completed by the end of this calendar year, but we have already established our working groups to work in greater detail on supporting our inter-church and inter-faith relationships as well as the capacity within the Yearly Meeting to commission pieces of work on our spiritual life and theology. Our new structures and nominations processes allow us to co-opt as many Friends as we need on to our working groups. This does not mean that we are asking yet more of the Central Nominations Committee in finding these Friends to serve. Indeed we have transposed to co-options two membership positions on the main QCCIR, thus reducing the current demand on our BYM appointments process. Our QCCIR composition is set out at the end of this report.

During the course of this year we have contributed to the ongoing discussion around aspects of governance in our Yearly Meeting and submitted a response to a consultation paper received from the Book of Discipline Revision Committee (BDRC). Whilst this work did not directly impact on our relationships in the ecumenical and interfaith spheres, as a Standing Committee of BYM, we felt we had a contribution to offer.

In January we held a webinar on being an anti-racist community that was generally well received. We also held two online Special Interest events in advance of the Yearly Meeting in April. One was led by Susan Barber of the World Council of Churches, who was a guest at one Yearly Meeting (YM) business session, whilst the other had an interfaith focus, led by speakers Jasvir Singh and Eleanor Nesbitt. Other guests at YM sessions were the chair and co-moderator of the Interfaith Network and a minister of the Unitarian Church in Britain.

Other activities covered by representatives of QCCIR this year included the preparations for the World Day of Prayer in March 2023 and 2024, the work of the Religious Council for England and Wales and the Interfaith Network Theology Advisory Group. The Interfaith Network (IFN) deserves a particular mention since during this year its government funding was withdrawn and BYM took steps to register our concerns about this existential threat to faith relations in this country. QCCIR submitted a request to BYM Trustees to increase our contribution to the running costs of IFN, and their subsequent approval will help to sustain the Network whilst the government lobbying continues.

We held our June QCCIR meeting this year in Wales. In the Llangasty Retreat House in Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) we met up with local Friends as well as representatives of interfaith and ecumenical bodies in Wales. We invited our local Friends to observe the QCCIR meeting in session that dealt with the stage of our reorganisation to set up our working groups and appoint the group convenors. At other times in our meeting we heard from Friend, Jan Arriens on his work on truth and integrity in public life and Colin Heyman from the Jewish Reform Synagogue in Cardiff on approaches to building inclusive relationships with the Jewish faith community.

Our work on diversity and inclusion has developed this year in collaboration with BYM representatives on Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), Churches Together in England (CTE) and the European Churches Roundtable on Legacies of Slavery. There will be further co-options of representatives to external bodies to which BYM is invited and our QCCIR nominations process is now better placed to involve interested Friends from a growing network.

Finally, we can report that the CTE 4th Presidency passed in May this year from Friend, Hannah Brock Womack to Anna Krauss, Minister in the Lutheran Assembly in Britain. The conversations around diversity and inclusion within CTE and the indirect governance implications of that distressing period in the community life of CTE continue.

Elaine Green
Clerk, QCCIR
November 2023

QCCIR Membership list to October 2023:

Claire Bowman (assistant clerk)
Catherine Brewer
Penelope Cummins
Nigel Dower (General Meeting for Scotland)
Elaine Green (clerk)
Will Haire (Ireland Yearly Meeting)
Judith Hedges (Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales (CCQW))
Judith Mason
Rachel Muers (co-opted member)
Madeleine Pennington
Janet Scott
Evelyn Shire

A Workplan for 2024–2025

In the last two years we have revised our Terms of Reference and ways of working. Under the overview of a reduced core QCCIR, we have established working groups to lead our work on interchurch relations, interfaith relations and theology and spirituality. Through their convenors, these groups can support the work of Friends across BYM, coordinating with each other as may on occasion be required.

We might consider for the next two years:

1. In 2024, the joint conference with Woodbrooke on the theme of *Working Together in Faith* will be held at High Leigh conference centre and preparation for that is well underway.
2. The main focus of the interchurch and interfaith working groups in the coming year will be to engage as many Friends as possible through webinars, blogs and local action in cooperation across faith boundaries. This endeavour is also likely to encompass divergence of belief amongst Friends and may provide the opportunity to work together with QWRC on the theme of diversity. The BYM theme of repairing the loss and damage of slavery and the climate crisis presents the opportunity for new areas of dialogue and companionship across divides.
3. We are conscious that many Friends are finding common ground with other faith groups on matters of racial and eco-justice and these are ecumenical as well as interfaith themes which we must continue to support. We need to agree with Friends on Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) and their staff on how to support their work in this area and avoid duplication of effort. We have not been successful to date in supporting concerns emerging through the work of our Quaker Life Regional Development Workers. We aim to continue to build up communications with this staff group who are closer to our Friends across the Area Meetings. We have not yet made inroads in involving Young Adult Friends in our work, but we are confident that our new opportunities for co-options may bring more names to our attention and we shall seek better ways to communicate with this group of Friends.
4. We are aware of the critical BYM work on racial injustice and reparations, spearheaded by the CTBI and supported by the BYM Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator. We have nominated a QCCIR co-opted Friend to work on reparations and we seek new ways to make these relationships within BYM most effective and joined-up.
5. A group of Friends drawn from across BYM contributed to a symposium hosted by the Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University in June 2023. This was not a QCCIR initiative but BYM is now part of a dialogue within the framework of *Receptive Ecumenism* i.e. learning from other churches, on the particular subject of synodality, i.e. participative decision-making. It has become evident that Quakers have a great deal to contribute to this conversation and it may be appropriate for QCCIR to host events in 2024–25

in conjunction with Quaker Life on the theme of spirit-led discernment and faithfulness in decision-making.

6. Having met with guests in Wales in June 2023, it is our intention that we meet as the committee in Friends House in June 2024. In June 2025 we plan to meet with invited guests in England, probably in Leeds.

Quaker World Relations Committee annual report 2023

Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC) works within and across the world family of Quakers. We are charged with a dual remit:

- Enriching understanding between British Friends and Friends worldwide.
- Engaging Quakers in Britain in Quaker issues and concerns around the globe.

QWRC committee members are also appointed as BYM representatives to Friends World Committee for Consultation–European and Middle East Section (FWCC-EMES).

A. Overview

In 2023 our main focus was enabling Friends from Britain Yearly Meeting to engage with other Yearly Meetings and Quakers from beyond our borders and to maintain and strengthen ties between EMES and other sections of FWCC.

The committee is supposed to have six members but has not had a full complement for the last few years and only 3 continued their service into 2023. We welcomed two new members this year and hope that an appointment will be made to bring us up to full capacity.

B. QWRC in 2023

Our activities included:

a. Liaison with the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) and representation on European and Middle East Section (EMES-FWCC)

We continue to interact online with Friends from EMES-FWCC and other Sections through regular events such as EMES representatives' meetings, EMES peace & service network meetings and through online worship opportunities.

This year EMES held its annual meeting in May at Woodbrooke and online, 2 members of this committee helped with the planning. 50 Friends gathered in Birmingham and 10 online, all 5 committee members attended in person as well as a representative of Young Friends General Meeting with costs covered by the QWRC budget.

The theme was: *Responding with hope to God's call to cherish creation – and one another. For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.* Jeremiah 29:11 (NRSV)
The epistle is available at <https://fwccemes.org/news/emes-annual-meeting-2023-epistle>

At the meeting we were updated about the situation in Ukraine and efforts by Friends to channel funds and support initiatives there, we also joined in online worship with Friends from the Kyiv worship group. We were able to hear via zoom from The

friends School Ramallah and from Quakers in Brummana Lebanon. Woodbrooke staff led several sessions and we explored themes which will be taken forward to the upcoming World Plenary Meeting in 2024. There were also opportunities to hear personal testimony from Friends and updates about work by Quaker organisations.

b. Guests and worship at Britain Yearly Meeting 2023

We invited 2 guests from EMES (from Poland and Georgia) with one attending in person and one online, we provided an online welcome session for Quakers from other yearly meetings and an informal get together at Friends House. We also facilitated 3 semi-programmed worship sessions in blended form. There were some difficulties with these and we hope that in 2024 to hold one worship session online only and one in Friends House.

c. Supporting BYM representatives to European Yearly Meetings

We provided an online session for representatives preparing to attend Yearly Meetings in Europe.

d. Sustainability

An audit of the impact of travel to and from the EMES annual meeting was carried out (following the adoption of the sustainability policy in 2022) and next years annual meeting will be held online. For the first time a World Plenary Meeting will be held in a blended format, one of the three interrelated strands will be care for creation.

e. Inclusion and Diversity

We have been informed of the FWCC World Plenary Travel and Digital Transformation Fund which will enable the participation of Friends from the global south, both in person and online at the World Plenary Meeting in August 2024. We asked BYM Trustees to consider what amount BYM might be able to offer to support this initiative.

C. Opportunities and challenges in 2024

In 2024 we plan to focus on:

- The FWCC World Plenary to be held in South Africa and online from 5–12 August 2024 with the theme ‘Living the spirit of Ubuntu: Responding with hope to God’s call to cherish creation – and one another’
- We hope to help British Friends prepare for this and engage with the three interrelated strands: ubuntu/community, healing historical injustice and care for creation.
- Welcome Friends from other parts of the world to Britain Yearly Meeting.

Queries for MfS

- How might BYM consider the views of Quakers in parts of the world affected by slavery and colonisation in their consideration of reparations?

- How can we encourage British Friends to use the opportunity the World Plenary Meeting offers to connect and explore with Friends from other parts of the world?

Ruth Homer
Co-clerk
November 2023

Friends currently serving on QWRC

Ruth Homer
Tracey Martin
Antony Froggett
Susan Seymour
Finola O'Sullivan

Please note: reports and epistles from other European Yearly Meetings are provided in Paper 14a and this paper is available separately from the MfS page of the website.

Yearly Meeting

At this meeting, Meeting for Sufferings:

1) will hear a short introduction to the agenda for Yearly Meeting 2024 to be held 26–30 July at Friends House and online

2) is asked to consider minute 2023-9-23 from Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee and decide on the dates for Yearly Meeting in 2025 and 2026.

YMAC 2023-9-23 Dates for Yearly Meetings 2025 and 2026

We recommend that Yearly Meetings 2025 and 2026 are held on the proposed dates:

- Friday 23 May to Monday 26 May 2025
- Friday 1 May to Monday 4 May 2026

We send this minute to Meeting for Suffering for their consideration.