

Follow up letter



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

16 December 2024

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings 7 December 2024

Dear Friends,

It was, as ever, a delight to meet with you again. I felt the meeting was an invigorating mix of items requiring real work for discernment alongside some more straightforward but fascinating items.

We shared concerns raised by three area meetings on the use of new policing powers to curtail non-violent protest and have agreed to look at the right to protest and the impact of these powers at a future meeting.

We received an update on the work of the Book of Discipline Revision Committee, which is planning to bring a first draft of the new text to Yearly Meeting in 2027. In the meantime, Friends can engage with the work of the Committee by following the links available here: <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/resources/revising-quaker-faith-practice>

We agreed working terms of reference for the new Agenda Committee, which will plan and implement the transition to a continuing Yearly Meeting, enabling Central Nominations Committee to approach Friends for service. We also agreed to review the process for recognising a group as a Quaker Recognised Body and look forward to receiving the results of that work in due course.

We agreed to recommend to Yearly Meeting that Friends not in formal membership might be appointed to area and local meeting roles, subject to further legal advice where appropriate. Just a reminder that this is something that Yearly Meeting will need to agree, but I think there is recognition that this is accepting the reality of Friends' practice.

We ended the day by receiving reports from Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) and Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC). It is always good to be reminded that we are part of an international community of Friends.

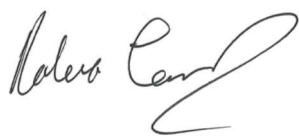
We were reminded in particular of the call from the World Plenary Meeting to engage further with its themes of Ubuntu, care for creation, and healing historical injustices. As part of the follow-up to the plenary, we were told of an initiative to bring young Friends from other yearly meetings to Britain and Friends are encouraged to engage with QWRC to help develop an itinerary and offer accommodation and opportunities for interaction with the visiting Friends. Epistles from yearly meetings can be found on the Friends World Committee for Consultation website here: https://fwcc.world/resources_cpt/epistles/

As part of the work of QCEA, we were told of a joint QCEA/Quaker Peace & Social Witness conference on the topic of Faith in Action in an age of permacrisis to be held 20-22 June 2025.

Remembering the weather conditions on the day that we met, which certainly made my journey home somewhat more entertaining than usual, I turn to the words of Stephen Allott in passage 26.74 of *Quaker faith and practice*, "What manner of spirit are we of? Have we any connection with the spirit which descended on the upper room, sounding like 'a mighty rushing wind'? Do we look to be swept out of our comfortable existence by an invading power which comes, as Jesus said, no one knows whence? Or do we look rather for a gentler movement within? Do we say, it was this Spirit of God which breathed into our human clay to make us living souls? It is there, in our humanity, but mixed with passions which confuse its purpose, limited by the tunnel vision of the self. Occasionally a blinding flash may come from without and someone is jolted forwards; but the Spirit's normal method is a quiet insistence, a still small voice barely audible amid the turbulence of earthquake, wind and fire."

I look forward to seeing you once more on 1st March!

In Truth,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Robert Card', written in black ink.

Robert Card
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

The following papers are included in this mailing:

- MfS minutes December 2024
- Functions checklist
- Book of Discipline Revision Committee – reflecting on *Advices & Queries* exercise



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 7 December 2024

Minutes

MfS/24/12/01 Opening Worship and welcome

We have begun our Meeting in worship during which *Quaker faith and practice* 3.02 was read.

MfS/24/12/02 Agenda

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

MfS/24/12/03 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 May 2026:

Release requests received:

George Conyne – East Kent AM alternate
Ruth Owens – South East London AM alternate

Nominated:

Gerald Bane – East Kent AM alternate
Ann Boater – North London AM representative
Rachel Celia – Dorset & South Wiltshire AM representative
George Conyne – East Kent AM representative
Mary Dower – North Scotland AM alternate
Liz Hoffbauer – Norfolk & Waveney AM alternate
Klaus Huber – Quaker Life Central Committee representative
Ann Kerr – West Scotland AM alternate
Linda Murgatroyd – Kingston & Wandsworth AM alternate
Lex Ryder – North Scotland AM representative
Janet Veitch – South London AM representative

We agree to these changes.

Apologies:

Cambridgeshire AM, Kendal & Sedbergh AM, North London AM, Northumbria AM, Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire AM, Wirral & Chester AM.

Other visitors:

Jude Acton – BYM staff, Head of Inclusive Quaker Communities
Michael Booth – BYM staff, Church Government Adviser
Catherine Brewer – Book of Discipline Revision Committee Co-clerk
Martin Burnell – Church Government Advisory Group Convenor
Rosie Carnall – Book of Discipline Revision Committee Co-clerk
Sarah Donaldson – BYM staff, Quaker Church Affairs consultant
Tracey Martin – Director of Quaker Council for European Affairs
Cato Pedder – BYM staff, Media Officer
Michael Phipps – Book of Discipline Revision Committee Assistant Clerk

MfS/24/12/04 Appointments**Church Government Advisory Group**

To serve from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2027, renominate:
Martin Burnell, South East Scotland AM

To serve from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2027, nominate:
Kate Macdonald, Worcestershire & Shropshire AM

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations

To serve from 1 January 2025 to 30 April 2027, nominate:
Wendy Pattinson, Pendle Hill AM
Liz Eddington, Bristol AM

Quaker Life Central Committee

To serve from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2027, renominate:
Klaus Huber, West Wiltshire & East Somerset AM
Martin Wall, West Somerset AM

Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee

To serve from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2027, renominate:
Ann Floyd, Chilterns AM
Charlotte Lake, Southern Marches AM / CCR y Gororau Deheuol

Quaker United Nations Office (Geneva)

To serve from 23 January 2025 to 31 December 2026, renominate:
Clerk: Helen Drewery, South London AM

Quaker World Relations Committee

To serve from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2027, nominate:
Jenny Tipping, Bournemouth Coastal AM

To serve from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2027, renominate:
Finola O'Sullivan, Cambridgeshire AM
James Eddington, Bristol AM

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee

To serve with immediate effect to Yearly Meeting May 2026, nominate:
Hilary Tucker, Manchester & Warrington AM
Jean Scott-Barr, Mid-Thames AM

Release from service:
Sarah Fox, South East London AM

Central Nominations Committee

Release from service with immediate effect:
Frances Prestidge, Hertford & Hitchin AM
Lizzie Rosewood, York AM

To serve with immediate effect to Yearly Meeting 2025, nominate:
John Ainsworth, West Somerset AM

We agree to these appointments and requests for release.

MfS/24/12/05 Prison and Court Register

Meeting for Sufferings records the names of Friends who have appeared in court or been imprisoned as a result of their faith and acting under concern.

At this meeting we agree to include the following Friends with a summary of their circumstances.

In 2022 Viv Shah, an attender at Leicester Local Meeting (Leicester AM), was involved in a non-violent Just Stop Oil protest at Kingsbury Oil Terminal. The protesters blocked the entrance to the terminal and prevented tankers from gaining access. Viv Shah was held on remand at HMP Foston Hall for nine days, fined, and given a two-year suspended sentence.

Pasha Bell, a Friend from Exeter Meeting (Devon Area Meeting), was found guilty and sentenced to 22 months on 1 August 2024 at Basildon Crown Court because of their faithful witness as part of non-violent action organised by Just Stop Oil.

We uphold our Friends.

We note minutes received from Leeds, Southern Marches and York area meetings over the use of new policing powers restricting those wishing to make non-violent protest. The minutes record the circumstances of two cases on the treatment of Friends and others engaging in their faith-led witness. We share the concerns raised in these minutes and ask to consider the impact of new policing powers on the right to protest at a future meeting.

MfS/24/12/06 Spirit-led employment practice

In March 2023 we heard reflections from a group of Friends from Lancashire Central and North Area Meeting on employment practice. Meeting for Sufferings encouraged the group to develop these ideas and we now receive a resource in form of *advices and queries*. We welcome this and encourage Friends to share it within their communities. We ask staff to send it to relevant Quaker Recognised Bodies.

MfS/24/12/07 Quaker Recognised Bodies

We agree to re-register 'Dabane Support Fund' as a Quaker Recognised Body for a period of five years (to be reviewed in 2029).

We note the trustees of Friend's Therapeutic Community Trust are closing the charity and consequently we agree to remove this body from the list of QRBs.

MfS/24/12/08 The process for registering Quaker Recognised Bodies

The advisory group we set up to examine the current practice for registering Quaker Recognised Bodies has reported back with a recommendation to review the process for registering and re-registering Quaker Recognised Bodies (paper MfS 2024 12 09).

We agree to this and the draft terms of reference for the review.

We are reminded that further work needs to be done regarding accountability of Quaker Recognised Bodies and the risk of reputational damage their activities may have for Britain Yearly Meeting.

MfS/24/12/09 Revision of the Book of Discipline

We receive a report from the Book of Discipline Revision Committee (BDRC) on its activity for the past year, and the clerks of the committee have spoken to it.

BDRC is under the care of Meeting for Sufferings and we record our deep appreciation for the considerable work they continue to do for the yearly meeting.

We are pleased to see the progress made to create our new book of discipline.

We have been given details of how the committee is working and it is keen to point out that its role is to reflect and describe Quaker practice, rather than to instigate and direct. The committee has shared the steps it intends to take to finish drafting by the end of 2025, so that it can edit the text and produce a complete first draft of the new book before the end of 2026. Friends will be encouraged to read and discuss the first draft, in preparation for it coming to a Yearly Meeting session in 2027. We understand that after careful consideration, the committee has decided not to seek feedback on sample draft text, in the interim period. Instead, it invites Friends to engage with BDRC work. The committee aims to bring the complete and final text to a session of Yearly Meeting in 2030, for adoption.

The report includes ways to support and uphold the committee and get involved in its work. We encourage members of Meeting of Sufferings to share this with Friends in their meetings, and encourage them to engage with the work of BDRC. The group has also provided us with a copy of their exercise 'Reflecting on *Advices and Queries*', which we and our meetings might like to try.

We thank Rosie Carnall, Catherine Brewer and Michael Phipps for the report, and Rosie and Catherine for presenting it and answering our questions.

MfS/24/12/10 Report from BYM Trustees

We have heard from Marisa Johnson, Clerk of Trustees, and Paul Whitehouse, Yearly Meeting Treasurer, who have told us about matters from their meeting on 22 November.

We note Trustees approved the budget for 2025 and operational plan for 2025–2027 for centrally managed work carried out by BYM on our behalf.

MfS/24/12/11 Continuing Yearly Meeting agenda committee

We receive a paper from the Recording Clerk with draft terms of reference for an agenda committee to serve the continuing Yearly Meeting. We note Yearly Meeting will be approving final terms of reference in 2025 and we are being asked if the current draft is good enough so that Central Nominations Committee is able to start work on finding nominations to serve. We agree to the draft terms of reference as a working document as set out in paper MfS 2024 12 12. We recognise that flexibility and charity will be required of all of us in working through the transition to the new ways of working.

MfS/24/12/12 Clerks of Meeting for Sufferings

We agree to appoint Robert Card (Manchester and Warrington AM) as Clerk and Elizabeth Allen (South East Scotland AM) as Assistant Clerk from 1 January 2025 until the rise of Yearly Meeting May 2026.

MfS/24/12/13 Laying down the Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings

Yearly Meeting 2024 accepted the report of the Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings (GRYYM). Its task being complete, we lay down the group and thank its members for their work.

MfS/24/12/14 Appointment of attenders for Quaker service

In December 2023, following discussion of the principles of membership in October 2023, Meeting for Sufferings agreed that nominations need not be dependent on formal membership and we authorised Central Nominations Committee and other nominating committees in the central structure to bring names of members and attenders to all roles appointed by Meeting for Sufferings (with the exception of BYM Trustees) (minute MfS/23/12/09), recognising that we seek the right person to serve.

Church Government Advisory Group brings us possible changes to *Quaker faith and practice* for extending this principle to local and area meeting roles where our current practice is that role holders either should or must be in membership (*Quaker faith and practice* 3.24).

We recommend to Yearly Meeting that amendments to our discipline should be made to permit Friends not in formal membership to be appointed to area and local meeting roles. This would include serving as a trustee, including service as treasurer, although we ask that legal advice be taken to clarify the implications of these latter two so that suitable template constitutional documents can be provided to area meetings ahead of any trustee appointments.

We recognise that this is the latest step in an ongoing process of discernment and that there is further work to be done on the spiritual meaning of membership. We feel that it is important that the text of our discipline should foreground the spirit-led discernment of our practices. This might imply that option (b), the amplified text in paper MfS 2024 12 14, might form a suitable basis for any amendments.

MfS/24/12/15 Quaker World Relations Committee

Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC) has provided a report of its recent work. Together with this, we have received reports from other European Yearly

Meetings held in 2024: Finland YM, France YM, German YM, Ireland YM, Norway YM, Sweden YM and Switzerland YM.

We have been asked, how can we encourage Friends and meetings to respond to the spiritual call from the World Plenary Meeting 2024, and engage further with its three themes: Ubuntu, Care for Creation, and Healing Historical Injustices?

MfS/24/12/16 Quaker Council for European Affairs

We receive a report from on work of the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) and we welcome Tracey Martin, its director, to our meeting today to introduce it and to answer our questions.

Post Brexit, QCEA is still relevant to Friends in Britain. BYM appoints a representative and alternate to the QCEA General Assembly, and along with individual Friends continues to support and take a strong interest in its current work on migration and peace, climate justice and peace, and dialogues for transformation.

We note that from 20 to 22 June 2025 QCEA and QPSW will hold a joint conference in Brussels, on the topic, 'Faith in Action in an age of Permacrisis'.

We acknowledge the importance of solidarity with Quakers in other European countries, as we believe another world is possible and together we can try to build it.

We thank Tracey for speaking to us today.

MfS/24/12/17 Closing worship

We closed our time together in worship.

Robert Card
Clerk

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

	Requirement	December 24
A	To set the priorities for the centrally managed work	
B	To issue public statements in the name of BYM	
C	To receive regular interim reports from BYM trustees	10
D	To receive the BYM trustees' annual report & accounts for information	
E	To make a report on its own activities to YM	
F	To determine the dates of YM	
G	To deliberate on how best to support the spiritual life of the yearly meeting and to further the development of its visionary and prophetic role	13
H	To keep under review and to test as appropriate the existing and new concerns referred to it by AMs and others	5, 6, 13
I	To foster communication throughout the yearly meeting	6
J	To receive minutes from area meetings	5, 6
K	To make appropriate entries in the prison and court register	5
I	To appoint representatives to attend other Yearly Meetings	14
M	To receive information about changes in the composition or status of general meetings and gatherings	
N	To make changes in the composition of area meetings	
O	To give assistance to area meetings in the amicable settlement of disputes	
P	To hear appeals against area meeting decisions	
Q	To give guidance on policy matters referred to it by the BYM trustees from time to time	
R	To authorise action and minute as required under other sections of <i>Quaker faith & practice</i>	
S	To set up an arrangements group and support and working groups to assist its own work as it sees fit	13

Book of Discipline Revision Committee – reflecting on Advices & Queries

“What do Advices & Queries mean to you?”

Use this as the prompt for a go-round, giving each person the opportunity to share some thoughts. A listening circle, not discussion!

Then take some time to write, draw, collage or otherwise create some new advices and queries. This could be as a group or an individual activity.

You might want to think about:

- What you want to keep from the current ones
- What’s missing that you want to include
- How you create something clear and simple, flexible and welcoming