

Follow up letter



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

10 October 2025

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings 3-5 October 2025

Dear Friends,

It was, as ever, a joy to meet with you once again and to have the opportunity for some more informal interactions as well.

I am sorry that the experience of a blended meeting was much more frustrating than usual. It certainly brought home how fortunate we are in the facilities available at Friends House to enable these meetings. I'm sure you'll join with me in expressing gratitude both to Britain Yearly Meeting staff and the staff at High Leigh for doing their best to make things work despite the difficulties.

It felt good to me to have an opportunity to look at some important but non-urgent items on this occasion.

We made a good start on considering the theological and community aspects of online and blended meetings for worship but there is obviously much more to do. I anticipate that Yearly Meeting and its committees will continue working on these issues. We're including Simonne Wood's speaking notes with this mailing, while Paul Hodgkin's notes were included in the advance papers, as a resource for your continued thinking on this.

We also considered the relation of Quakers in Britain to the state and, again, made a good start but I look forward to a more developed contemporary Quaker political theology as we continue working on these issues!

You may wish to bring the Britain Yearly Meeting annual report to the attention of Friends in your Meeting. It's available on the yearly meeting website at <https://quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/our-structures/britain-yearly-meeting-trustees#heading-1>

You can also continue to feed in to the review of strategic priorities for the yearly meeting by contacting trustees on bymtrustees@quaker.org.uk

You can similarly contribute to the Quaker Life consultation process on supporting Quaker communities 2026-2030. Details of how to do so are on the website at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/communities/development-work/future-approaches>.

Our next meeting is scheduled for December 6th and I anticipate a full agenda. Matters likely to be taken include proposed amendments to *Quaker faith & practice*, the annual report of the Book of Discipline Revision Committee, suggestions for new wording for the Quaker marriage declaration, and an application to become a Quaker Recognised Body from a new group (Sex Matters to Quakers). Papers will be available 2 weeks before the meeting as usual.

As we continue to hear of the various afflictions besetting the world at this time, I recall the words of George Fox:

“Sing and rejoice, ye Children of the Day and of the Light; for the Lord is at work in this thick night of Darkness that may be felt: and Truth doth flourish as the rose, and the lilies do grow among the thorns, and the plants atop of the hills, and upon them the lambs doth skip and play. And never heed the tempests nor the storms, floods nor rains, for the Seed Christ is over all and doth reign. And so, be of good faith and valiant for the Truth.” (Qf&p 20.23).

In Truth,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Card', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Card
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

The following papers are included in this mailing:

- MfS minutes October 2025
- Functions checklist



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings

Held at High Leigh Conference Centre and by video conference over the weekend of
3-5 October 2025

Minutes

MfS/25/10/01 Opening Worship and welcome

We have begun our Meeting in worship during which Minute 8 “Listening” from
Testimony of community, by Emily Provence was read.

MfS/25/10/02 Agenda

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

MfS/25/10/03 Theological & community aspects of online & blended worship: introduction

We have been joined by Simonne Wood, a member of Woodbrooke staff, and Paul
Hodgkin, a Yearly Meeting elder, who have both shared some prepared ministry
arising from their different experiences of supporting online and blended worship.
Simonne has reflected generally on meeting for worship, while Paul has focussed on
meeting for worship for business, specifically Yearly Meeting.

We will return to this topic tomorrow, when we will spend time together in small
discussion groups.

MfS/ 25/10/04 Worship

We started our morning with a period of worship during which we heard read
passage 2.18 from *This we can say: Australian Quaker Life, Faith and Thought*.

MfS/25/10/05 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 2026:

Release requests received:

Jo Hills – West Weald AM alternate

Nominated:

Hillary Stringer – QCCIR representative
Jacinta White – West Weald AM alternate

We appoint the Friends nominated to serve on Meeting for Sufferings, and agree to the request for release from service.

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

Esther Boyd – Central England AM
Sue Curd – Sussex West AM
Yvonne Estop – Thaxted AM
Paul Hodgkin – Ipswich & Diss AM

Other visitors:

Michael Booth – BYM staff, Church Government Adviser
Ingrid Greenhow – Agenda Planning Committee Clerk
Stuart Masters – Woodbrooke Associate Tutor/member of Central England AM
Rachel Matthews – BYM staff, Approaches and Evaluation Manager
Cato Pedder – BYM staff, Media Officer
Simonne Wood – Woodbrooke Programme Coordinator for Worship & Spirituality

MfS/25/10/06 Appointments

Central Nominations Committee brings forward the following names for appointment or release as indicated:

Representative to France Yearly Meeting

Release from service in 2025:
Grace Roberts, YFGM
To represent BYM at France Yearly Meeting 2025
Joe Warren, Luton & Leighton AM

YM Agenda Committee

Release from service effective 21 August 2025:
Jean Scott-Barr, Mid Thames AM

Agenda Planning Committee

Release from service effective 21 August 2025:
Jean Scott-Barr, Mid Thames AM

YM Pastoral Care Group

To serve with immediate effect until the end of Yearly Meeting 2027:
Joyce Latimer, York AM

Quaker Life Central Committee

Release from service effective from 31 December 2024:
Gill Sewell, North London AM

To serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028:
Elizabeth Backhouse, Brighouse West Yorkshire AM
Linda Wood, Luton and Leighton AM

Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee

To serve with immediate effect until 31 December 2028:
Paul Ingram, West Weald AM

Quaker World Relations Committee

Release from service effective from 31 December 2025:
Susan Seymour, North West London AM

To serve from 1 January to 31 December 2026:
Ruth Homer, Devon AM

Nominate to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028:
Joe Warren, Luton and Leighton AM

Quaker Housing Trust

Release from service effective from 28 February 2025:
David Hickok, North West London AM

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations

Appointed by the clerks of Meeting for Sufferings between meetings:

To serve from 1 May 2025 to 30 April 2028:
Hillary Stringer, Ipswich & Diss AM

Book of Discipline Revision Committee

Release from service with immediate effect:
Michael Long, Northumbria AM

Yearly Meeting Nominating Group brought forward the following name, appointed by the clerks of Meeting for Sufferings between meetings:

Central Nominations Committee

To serve from 30 August 2025 until Yearly Meeting 2027:
Till Geiger, East Cheshire AM

We agree to these appointments and requests for release.

MfS/25/10/07 Quaker Recognised Bodies

We have considered the applications for registration and re-registration received since our last meeting.

We agree to:

- register George Gorman Memorial Fund
- register Glenthorne Quaker Centre
- re-register Rookhow

- re-register Conflict Minerals Campaign
- re-register RJ Working

as Quaker Recognised Bodies (QRBs) for a period of five years (to be reviewed during 2030).

MfS/25/10/08 Court and Prison Register

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

Clare Walters, Brighouse West Yorkshire, was arrested under terrorism legislation for allegedly showing support for Palestine Action, a proscribed organisation, after displaying a placard at a peaceful protest. She has been given a date to appear in court.

We agree to include these details in the Register and hold our Friend in the Light.

We are aware that many other Friends around the Yearly Meeting have been arrested at similar protests and for similar reasons. We also hold them in the Light.

MfS/25/10/09 Governance in Scotland

We receive and note the following minutes:

East Scotland Area Meeting minute 25.09.03

North Scotland Area Meeting minute 32/25

West Scotland Area Meeting minute 065/25

All three area meetings wish to lay themselves down and become part of Quakers in Scotland (QiS). We agree to this and endorse the proposals for reorganisation. We are content that QiS will take over the responsibilities of these area meetings.

In keeping with the legal requirement, each of these area meetings has obtained consent from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator to dissolve their area meeting charity.

We have been informed that on 20 September 2025 General Meeting for Scotland (GMS) held its final meeting and minuted its intention to dissolve the charity as soon as all legal formalities can be completed. As we heard at our July meeting, QiS will take over all the responsibilities of the General Meeting.

We ask our Church Government Advisory Group to propose appropriate changes to *Quaker faith & practice* to take account of these governance developments in Scotland.

When Meeting for Sufferings is laid down, there will be a new system of representatives to Yearly Meeting sessions. Until then, following the transition to QiS of GMS, East, West and North Scotland Area Meetings, we ask Quakers in Scotland

to make suitable arrangements so that four Friends continue to be appointed to attend Meeting for Sufferings (online or at the venue).

We uphold our Friends in Scotland as they develop new structures that aim to help Quakerism in Scotland to thrive.

MfS/25/10/10 Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC)

We receive the annual report of Quaker World Relations Committee (paper MfS 2025 10 10), and Ruth Homer has spoken to it, updating us on the committee's interactions and wide links with Friends in Europe and beyond.

We are pleased that with the support of many British Friends the visit to Britain of four Young Adult Friends who participated in the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) World Plenary Meeting 2024 was a success. All four participated in Yearly Meeting 2025 in London.

We have heard that members of QWRC attended this year's annual meeting of the Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), in Poland. In this section there are two ongoing conflicts, and we are encouraged to hold the Friends living there in the Light, in particular the conscientious objectors.

In these times when conflict, untruths, and unfairness seem to dominate, we are reminded of this year's World Quaker Day theme, 'Love your neighbour' and the challenge of exploring what love can do.

We have been asked to reflect on how we can encourage and enable the community of Quakers in Britain to engage more with the concerns of our neighbouring Yearly Meetings across the Europe and Middle East Section of FWCC.

We look forward to receiving the reports of the representatives from other Yearly Meetings held in 2025 at the end of the year.

We thank QWRC for its report and Ruth for presenting it to us today.

MfS/25/10/11 Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

We receive minutes from the most recent meeting of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees held on 5-6 September along with a written report (paper MfS 2025 10 12). There are three parts to this report:

- Receipt of the annual report and accounts 2024
- The report on BYM Trustees work since our last Meeting for Sufferings
- Update on the review of strategic priorities for the centrally managed work

Annual report and accounts 2024

We receive the annual report and accounts for Britain Yearly Meeting for the year ending 31 December 2024. Meeting for Sufferings receives these on behalf of Yearly Meeting exceptionally this year, as requested by minute 20 of Yearly Meeting held

on 28 July 2024. We accept the annual report and accounts for Britain Yearly Meeting for the year ending 31 December 2024.

The Yearly Meeting Treasurer, Paul Whitehouse, has explained BYM's financial position. We are assured that BYM is essentially in a sound financial position, provided we watch our income and expenditure. At the moment, we spend more than we receive in income each year, and the deficit is funded from our reserves. This is not a sustainable position and budgets for 2026 and 2027 will have to be tighter.

All Friends and area meetings are asked to make sure they are contributing what they can, to help support the work of BYM.

We are asked to encourage our area meeting treasurers to sign up for the online events about BYM's future plans and how meetings can help carry out this work.

BYM Trustees report

Marisa Johnson, clerk to BYM Trustees and Kit King, assistant clerk to BYM Trustees have updated MfS on trustees work since we last met.

We are pleased to note that trustees will continue to publicise the adverse effects of current legislation on Quaker witness involving peaceful protest and civil disobedience. We have heard that the proposal to make an 'intervention' in the Judicial Review process over the proscription of Palestine Action was not accepted by the court.

The Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) document on the theological basis of trans inclusion, requested by Trustees, has been thoughtfully drafted and publication options are under consideration. Representatives may wish to note that the Yearly Meeting Trustees response to the issues raised concerning toilet facilities at Friends House is available online:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/re-statement-of-policy-on-provision-of-trans-inclusive-facilities>

We welcome the news that there will be a new Memorandum of Understanding between BYM and Woodbrooke on how they will work in future to deliver joint programmes.

Review of strategic priorities for the centrally managed work

Jo Hills (BYM Trustee) has spoken to us about the ongoing work of the review group.

We have received the first draft of the light-touch review of the strategic priorities of BYM's centrally managed work, for comment, and accompanying papers on the approach to the task and the work still to be done. The review group has requested our guidance on particular aspects of the review and we have responded. We hope to receive the final draft of the review at MfS in March 2026.

We thank our BYM Trustees and Treasurer for being with us today and we uphold them prayerfully in their faithful work.

MfS/25/10/12 Yearly Meeting May 2026

Fred Langridge (Yearly Meeting Clerk nominate) has told us about the plans for the Yearly Meeting session to be held 1-4 May 2026, at Friends House and online. We understand that the Yearly Meeting will be reflecting on the questions: In a divided world,

- what unites us as a Spirit-led community? How do we foster acceptance and belonging?

- as a Spirit-led community, how can we handle conflict well in a way that builds connections, nurtures community and finds common ground, overcoming divisiveness and polarisation?

There will also be opportunities to reflect on the ongoing changes to our governance structure and development of a new book of discipline. We encourage all Friends to engage with the preparation materials and to attend the May session of YM if appropriate.

MfS/25/10/13 Agenda Planning Committee of Yearly Meeting

We are joined by Ingrid Greenhow, clerk of the Agenda Planning Committee of Yearly Meeting (APC). The APC wants to try to make our Yearly Meeting sessions ever more accessible, informative, inclusive, interesting and grounded in the Spirit. At present they are working on the sorts of processes and practices that will support that, including thinking about how to test and season the minutes that are sent to it. Later this year it will start thinking more in earnest about the agendas for the sessions in July 2026 and beyond.

We note minute APC 25/08 on the name 'Meeting for Sufferings'. APC will recommend to Yearly Meeting that this name is not retained. The function of upholding Friends who are suffering for their faith will be taken on by Yearly Meeting.

We are grateful to our Friends for their service and uphold them in their work.

MfS/25/10/14 Theological & community aspects of online & blended worship: continued

We have spent time together in small discussion groups. We were asked to consider the questions:

- How might being in different places affect our discernment of the Spirit among us?
- In blended meetings, are we one worshipping community or two?
- How do we best facilitate becoming a gathered meeting?

Many of us have felt our opinions changing as a result of this exercise, even if we feel that online experience is qualitatively different from that mediated by physical proximity. If we consider the fundamental basis of Quaker faith, how does this work

out in different modes? How do we ensure that pastoral care is extended to everyone in our community, however they participate?

Although some Friends have been experimenting with online worship for a while, for most of us it is a development that we did not foresee even six years ago. We are all learning together and seeking to find new ways to be in worshipful community. We hope that guidance on good practice might be further developed and disseminated; we note that we are not always good at introducing people to our practices. Excellent resources are available both within and beyond the Quaker community.

We are glad that many Friends previously excluded have been enabled to participate with the aid of these technologies. Let us be open to the leadings of the Spirit, wherever we may be led, and uphold those Friends who have responsibility for ensuring that we do things in right ordering.

We send this minute to Agenda Planning Committee.

MfS/25/10/15 Faithful relation of church and state

Further to minute MfS/23/07/09, we return to the matter of the faithful relation of church and state. Our initial consideration in 2023 arose out of Quaker participation in the loyal address <https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/a-privileged-body-quakers-and-the-history-of-loyal-addresses> We have been joined by Stuart Masters, a Woodbrooke Associate Tutor and member of Central England Area Meeting, who has shared prepared ministry to give some theological and historical context to the topic. We have spent time reflecting on the issues in an atmosphere of worship.

In our 2023 minute we posed the question: “Can our participation in civic ceremonies of this sort be a faithful witness to the alternate Gospel Order to which we are committed, or is it rather an expression of complicity with the domination system of worldly powers?” We still do not have a definitive answer to this.

We have heard that Quakers have been effective at lobbying for concessions for themselves and have been careful to distinguish between their conditional loyalty to the kingdoms of this world and their ultimate loyalty to divine government. We have heard that as we have used this privilege in more recent times, it has been used to speak out on issues of broader concern. We recognise that this is one very imperfect means of making our voice heard by those with power, but it may not be one that we should be too eager to relinquish. We hope that in retaining this privilege, we will use it boldly.

MfS/25/10/16 Faith, inclusion & growth

We have been joined by Rachel Matthews, a member of staff in Quaker Life, who has facilitated an interactive workshop as part of the consultation on the revision of the current Quakers in Britain and Woodbrooke strategy for supporting Quaker communities. We have explored how our Quaker communities could look in the 2030's and beyond; possible areas of priority for Quaker communities in the next 5-

10 years; and how the support offered through centrally managed work could enable those priority areas to flourish and strengthen over the next 5 years.

The consultation is continuing, and Friends can find out more on the Quakers in Britain website <https://www.quaker.org.uk/communities/development-work/future-approaches>.

MfS/25/10/17 Closing worship

There being no further business to conduct, we part, intending to meet again on 6th December 2025, nothing occurring to prevent.

Robert Card
Clerk

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

	Requirement	October 25 (minute #)
A	To set the priorities for the centrally managed work	11
B	To issue public statements in the name of BYM	
C	To receive regular interim reports from BYM trustees	11
D	To receive the BYM trustees' annual report & accounts for information	11
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	3 & 14
H	To keep under review and to test as appropriate the existing and new concerns referred to it by AMs and others	15
I	To foster communication throughout the yearly meeting	10, 12 & 13
J	To receive minutes from area meetings	
K	To make appropriate entries in the prison and court register	8
L	To appoint representatives to attend other Yearly Meetings	
M	To receive information about changes in the composition or status of general meetings and gatherings	9
N	To make changes in the composition of area meetings	9
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	