



Yearly Meeting of
the Religious Society
of Friends in Britain

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

6 April 2016

Meeting for Sufferings 2 April 2016

Dear Friends,

I'd like to start by thanking you all for your discipline during the meeting. We weren't sure how the item on Living out our faith/call to equality was going to go, but I hope you agree that it was a deeply grounded session. It will usefully feed in to Yearly Meeting, both as a progress report and also our consideration of testing concerns provides useful preparation for the YM session on Sunday afternoon. I have included a link below to the 'Our stories' page on our website which was mentioned, and which has lots of examples of work happening in local/area meetings.

As I said, it felt important to allow enough time for each question. We didn't get on to the third question in the paper, but Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group will be looking at how we can pick up on that at a future meeting.

There were two items that were particularly referred back to AMs:

- **MfS/16/04/14:** the concern from Cornwall AM regarding the decriminalisation of the possession, for personal use, of all drugs. In addition to the paper that was circulated in advance of our meeting the detailed briefing paper is available on South West Quakers website (see link below), and Cornwall Friends are willing to help. They can be contacted by email: qcorrespondent@gmail.com
- **MfS/16/04/17:** the paper from QPSW CC on 'a vision for a criminal justice system'.

Do also share with your meetings the work of Quaker World Relations Committee. There is a link below to their page on the website, which includes a factsheet on the committee and also details on how to sign up to the QWRC network. I have also included a link to the Quakers in the world website, which is mentioned in the sustainability minute from FWCC.

Finally, a repeat of our reminder to Friends to register for Yearly Meeting and to read the documents in advance and send in any questions or comments before the meeting.

All the information about this is in the 'documents in advance' which can be found online – again, see the link below.

Yours in Friendship



Ethel Livermore,
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

Useful links

Living Out our Faith

Our Stories: www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/our-stories

Quaker World Relations and Sustainability stories

Quaker World Relations Committee network:

www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/our-structures/quaker-world-relations-committee

Quakers in the World: www.quakersintheworld.org

Cornwall AM's concern (for the longer background paper)

On the South West Quakers website:

<http://swquakers.org.uk/content/decriminalisation-possession-personal-use-all-drugs>

QPSW's 'vision for a criminal justice system'

About QPSW's Crime, Community and Justice work:

www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/social-justice-2/crime-community-and-justice-2

Yearly Meeting 2016

www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/ym

The following papers are also included in this mailing:

- April 2016 MfS Minutes

Meeting for Sufferings held at Friends House, Saturday 2 April 2016

MfS/16/04/01 Opening worship

During our opening worship we have heard read section 23.52 of Quaker faith and practice.

We have also remembered former members of this meeting who have recently died.

MfS/16/04/02 Apologies

We receive apologies from Hertford and Hitchin and West Kent AMs, which have not been able to send a representative on this occasion.

MfS/16/04/03 Minutes

The minutes of our meeting held on 6 February 2016 have been signed.

MfS/16/04/04 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 2018:

Release requests received:

Diane Furber – Manchester & Warrington AM alternate
David Jones – Meeting of Friends in Wales representative
Rachael Milling – Swarthmoor (South West Cumbria) AM alternate
Lin Patterson – West Wiltshire & East Somerset AM representative
Angela Seddon – Manchester & Warrington AM representative
Roy Stephenson – Lancashire Central & North AM alternate
Margaret Waterworth – Wensleydale & Swaledale AM alternate
Judith Weeks – Banbury & Evesham AM alternate

Nominated:

Gethin Evans – Meeting of Friends in Wales representative
Diane Furber – Manchester & Warrington AM representative
Elizabeth Gruar – Lancashire Central & North AM alternate
Laurence Hall – Young Friends General Meeting representative
Marion McNaughton – Manchester & Warrington AM alternate
Edna Rossiter – Wensleydale & Swaledale AM alternate
Jane Stephenson – West Wiltshire & East Somerset AM representative

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

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

Trevor Green – Cumberland AM

Other visitors:

Margaret Bryan – York AM
Linda Craig – Committee on Clerks

MfS/16/04/05 Adoption of Agenda

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

MfS/16/04/06 Court and prison register

Further to minute 2016/02/06, we receive minute 2016/30 of London West AM held in February 2016, regarding the witness of Sam Sender last July at Heathrow airport, alongside other members of Plane Stupid. On 24 February Sam Sender was sentenced to six weeks' custodial sentence, suspended for 12 months, plus 120 hours' community service. This will be added to the Court and Prison register. On the day of sentencing BYM issued a statement of support. We continue to hold Sam Sender in the light.

MfS/16/04/07 BYM Trustees

Ingrid Greenhow has spoken to the minutes of BYM Trustees' meeting held on 19-20 February 2016, highlighting the work they are doing on managing risk.

Peter Ullathorne has introduced the review of financial activities for 2015. Although contributions from Friends were on target at £2million, we remind Friends of the minute from Yearly Meeting last year:

'We ask Friends and meetings to engage with the evil of social and economic injustice which creates a world in which the wrong things are valued. To do this requires owning and upholding the work that is already being done by Friends and in our name; helping to fund that work as generously as possible; and becoming involved in however small a way. For ourselves we need to find some action however simple to do now.'

MfS/16/04/08 Living out our faith (call for equality)

We have returned to the consideration of issues forwarded to us by Yearly Meeting 2015, minute 36 (minute MfS 2015/07/09 refers).

The YM minute in particular asks:

'...Meeting for Sufferings to take the work on social and economic injustice forward, co-ordinating the work of local and area meetings who might wish to become more deeply involved, and encouraging the deep spiritual and intellectual searching that could underpin a 'true social order' for our age.'

We have received paper 2016/04/05, which includes the full text of the YM minute together with feedback from the recent survey of actions taking place in LMs and AMs, a table prepared by QPSWCC's Economics, Sustainability and Peace sub-committee, and a table of AM minutes received by MfS over the past 2 years.

The subject is very broad and we have had a lot of information before us.

We have struggled with the concept of Meeting for Sufferings being responsible for co-ordination, and see our role more as encouraging and providing networking among Friends.

We hope that the Vibrancy in Meetings project will also aid networking across AM boundaries.

We note that there is an area on the website 'Our Stories' with stories from AMS, and encourage Friends to use and contribute to this.

We have spent time considering how we test concerns, and what will help Friends with this.

Listening to the Spirit in Meeting for Worship is our starting point.

We note the importance of being tender with Friends. Acting under concern can be a frightening experience, when you feel impelled and can do no other.

Many Meetings don't have experience of testing concerns. The process needs to be explained, clearly.

'If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.'

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

MfS/16/04/09 Appointments

a) Yearly Meeting Nominating Group

Brings forward the following names for release:

Committee on Clerks

Release:

Christine Cannon Kingston & Wandsworth

Central Nominations Committee

Release after Yearly Meeting 2016:

Helen Still North Wales AM

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

b) Central Nominations Committee

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

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

To serve from January 2017 to September 2018:

Ursula Fuller East Kent AM (re-appointed)

Lancaster University Court

To serve from 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2019

Julia Lasan Lancashire Central & North AM

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations

Release:

Joel Wallenberg Northumbria AM

Quaker Council for European Affairs

To serve as the Alternate until 31 December 2018:

Joshua Habgood-Coote Sussex East AM

Quaker Life Central Committee

Release:

Mark Lockwood Sussex West AM

Revision of the Book of Discipline: Review Preparation Group

To serve until 31 December 2017:

Anna Sharman Kingston & Wandsworth AM

Lizz Roe South Wales AM

Representatives to European Yearly Meetings

To serve as representative to the following Yearly Meetings in 2016:

France YM

Liz Scurfield North West London AM

Sweden YM

Gisela Creed West Scotland AM

Norway YM

Release as unable to make the dates of Norway YM:

Fred Ashmore Kingston & Wandsworth AM

To serve as representative:

Bronwyn Harwood Sussex East AM

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

Ireland YM

Appointed as representative by the clerks as a between meetings decision:

Marilyn Higgins South East Scotland AM

MfS/16/04/10 Quaker World Relations Committee

We have received the report from Quaker World Relations Committee (paper MfS2016/04/07) and Anne Bennett, clerk, has spoken to it.

We have heard how the committee has worked under its new terms of reference (and with fewer members) and is acting as a two-way conduit between BYM and Quakers worldwide.

Anne has told us more about the key messages from the FWCC World Plenary Meeting in Pisac, Peru 2016 as listed in the report:

- All YMs are asked to commit to concrete sustainability actions in 2016 and also to promote sustainability at every level from individual to YM. We urge BYM Friends to develop our 2011 commitment further and share it more widely.
- The energy, passion and value of our younger adults is a huge resource, underused in BYM.

- Difference sets us an uncomfortable challenge, but we welcome the fact that it calls us to deep and loving listening and sharing. Through this we can move beyond labels to meet God in one another.
- Continuing our mutual engagement with world Quakerism demands creative thinking and solutions. We must find ways to grow Quaker understanding and increase virtual and actual intervisitation sustainably.

We have also heard from other Friends who were at the Plenary in Peru and the positive experiences that were had, the friendship and sharing that existed between the various strands of our Quaker family.

We note that a conference entitled 'Living the transformation' has been planned at Woodbrooke 16-18 September based on the learning from the FWCC World Plenary.

We thank Anne and QWRC for their report and for their work on our behalf.

MfS16/04/11 FWCC International Representatives Meeting World Plenary: Sustainability

We receive minute QWRC2016/02/10, forwarding to us minute 16-20 of the International Representatives Meeting held in Peru, 19 to 27 January 2016. The Friends World Committee for Consultation Plenary Meeting asks all Yearly Meetings to initiate at least two concrete actions on sustainability within the next twelve months; to support individuals and groups in their meetings; and to support the work being done by Quaker organisations.

We forward this minute to BYM Sustainability Group, asking them to report back to us before the end of this year.

The Plenary Meeting also asks individual Friends and Quaker Meetings to share inspiring experiences of living sustainably, through the 'Quakers in the World' website. Members of Meeting for Sufferings will encourage Friends in their Area Meetings to do this.

MfS/16/04/12 Letter of greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting

We have noted the text of a letter of greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting, signed and sent by our clerk. We uphold Ireland Yearly Meeting, which is meeting this weekend.

MfS/16/04/13 Use of the phrase 'Quakers in Britain'

We receive minute 15.11.77 of Cambridgeshire AM, regarding the use of the phrase 'Quakers in Britain' by Britain Yearly Meeting staff. We forward this minute to BYM Trustees, asking for advice.

MfS/16/04/14 Decriminalisation of the possession, for personal use, of all drugs

We receive a minute of Cornwall AM, held on 12th September 2015 regarding the decriminalisation of the possession, for personal use, of all drugs. Cornwall AM asks MfS representatives to raise this concern with their Area Meetings. A briefing paper is available for Friends and Area Meetings.

We ask Area Meetings to consider this matter. We will return to this later in the year, when we will be able to consider Cornwall's minute alongside minutes from other AMs.

Cornwall AM also asked for action relating to the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) 'World Drug Problem' to be held in April 2016. Since its minute was written, a statement has been agreed, which can be used on behalf of Friends World Committee for Consultation by Quakers attending the UNGASS.

MfS/16/04/15 Arms trade: UK sales to Saudi Arabia

We receive minutes 16.01.7 of North West London AM and minute 5/16 of Ipswich and Diss AM, expressing concern about UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia, particularly in light of violent conflict in Syria and Yemen.

We forward these minutes to QPSWCC, asking it to discern appropriate action and to advise us at a future meeting.

MfS/16/04/16 Conscientious objection to military taxation

We receive minute 16.18.2 of Dorset and South Wiltshire AM, regarding a private members' bill which is to be heard in the House of Commons on 18th May, introduced by Ruth Cadbury MP.

We forward this minute to QPSWCC, asking it to take appropriate action, and to report back to our next meeting.

MfS/16/04/17 Vision for a criminal justice system

We receive minute 15/121 of QPSWCC, commending a paper on 'a vision for a criminal justice system' for our consideration. QPSWCC hopes Friends will help test the vision expressed in the paper. We ask AMs to consider it, and to respond direct to Meeting for Sufferings. We will return to this later in the year.

MfS/16/04/18 Sustainability and new energy technologies

Further to minute MfS 2015/07/11, we receive minute 8a of the BYM Sustainability Group held on 13 November 2015, responding to Wensleydale and Swaledale AM's concern about sustainability and new energy technologies.

We are glad to know that the Secretary of the BYM Sustainability Group, and a member of QPSW staff, have spoken with the clerk of the AM to listen, and to share information about existing centrally-managed work. We hope the AM will be helped through being connected to the BYM Sustainability Group and to other Friends seeking to find ways to grapple with the very challenging issues of climate change and sustainability.

MfS/16/04/19 Close

We close, hoping to meet again in London on 2 July 2016.

Ethel Livermore
Clerk