

REPORT OF MEETING FOR SUFFERINGS 6 JUNE 2020

I attended my first Meeting for Sufferings as a Representative of York Area Meeting on 6 June, its first on Zoom, with a total of 98 Friends. My nomination was accepted and Nick Perks' nomination To serve on Friends Trust was accepted too. The name of Kim Harrison of Muswell Hill Meeting was put on the Prison and Court Register for her receipt of a 12 month conditional discharge for her part in the Greenpeace Demonstration at BP's London Offices.

Trustees Report covering the period before the Coronavirus Pandemic had shown a healthy position, although there were already concerns at the effects falling membership was having on our ability to fund Quaker work. Going forward they were committed to the Simplification and Reinvigoration of Meetings and putting in place decentralised structures, with all Meetings having access to a Local Development Worker within 5 years, though that timescale would probably be shortened. Recruitment is temporarily delayed because of the practical difficulties of recruitment during a pandemic. Since the Report was produced investments have suffered significant falls and because Friends House is closed, letting income which BYM benefits from to the tune of £1m a year is lost. It is planned to recruit a Fundraising Team to encourage Friends and their Meetings to increase their donations to fund Quaker work.

A previous decision to move from 5 Meetings for Sufferings a year to 4 did not meet with the approval of everyone so this has been passed back to Arrangements Group for consideration and submission back to next MfS in October. It was said that the rest of MfS for 2020 would almost certainly be on Zoom. The answer to a question on how much a one day Meeting for Sufferings costs at Friends House was £9,000 excluding staff costs. There was some discussion on how we might learn from other Quaker Meetings who have been coping with difficulties of accessibility for years.

There was a Report from the Quaker Housing Trust on the valuable work they have been doing.

Yearly Meeting Gathering which had to be cancelled because of COVID19 will now be held in Bath from 29 July to 6 August 2021 and, therefore, Yearly Meeting 2020 will take place on Zoom on the afternoon of Sunday 15 November. This will be open to all with bookings in advance, but capped at 1,000. There will be no Young People's Programme.

Finally, we divided into Breakout Rooms to discuss how our Meetings had been coping with not being able to meet in our Meeting Houses. The caring and flexibility which has arisen from coping with changed circumstances has on the whole been positive and opportunities for growth may well result.

We were blessed by the caring and listening and excellent organisation of the clerking team and staff which made what could have been a very difficult situation into an enjoyable experience.

For those who would like to read the Minutes they are available on <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/papers-and-minutes>

And a report appears in The Friend on 12 June 2020

Barbara E Penny