

York Area Meeting

Meeting for Sufferings Report (April 2021)

(Also see MfS Webpage for Minutes as well as The Friend 16 April for their report.)

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees Report

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees reported from their meetings that they have been looking at the relationship between BYM Trustees and AM Trustees and how to relieve the burden on AM Trustees. (AM Trustees Interest Group are already talking about this.)

Workshops are being arranged on how to do things and at simplification of central governance structures. The aim is to have a Simple Church and a Simple Charity and Reinvigorate Quakerism.

The Simplification Working Group is moving towards radical change, worshiping and sharing concerns across meetings and, when needed, being willing to lay down structures. Being led by the Spirit should be central.

A series of Workshops are being facilitated by Woodbrooke on this. Decisions won't be taken until 2022.

The Report from Staff to BYM Trustees had communication objectives for Quakers:-

- More effective message, and
- Becoming fundraising organisation

The issues of anti-racism became more urgent when 2 former staff members had tweeted their grievances. Some staff feel uncomfortable about their experience of racism. There was no disciplinary action required but it didn't mean there were no issues to address. There has been workplace staff training and there will be a report on revision of procedures. Racism does take place in Quakers. BYM Trustees are participating in 3 sessions of training in racism and hope other Committees will do the same. The William Penn Room at Friends House will have a name change as part of an overhaul at Friends House. We all have work to do in our Meetings and inside

ourselves. We have heard it is important to acknowledge our history and failure to address the past within our Society.

Discussion on Assisted Dying

This resulted from 2 Minutes received from North West London and Staffordshire Area Meetings seeking support of Quakers for a change in the law to allow Assisted Dying, which were put out to all Area Meetings for their responses.

There was also a pre-Sufferings special meeting in the week before MfS for a more detailed discussion.

Also many AMs had responded with differing views and many AMs did not respond. At Mfs some strong opinions were expressed on both sides.

It was clear that Quakers have not reached unity but that lack of unity was not a weakness.

There are issues of the availability of properly funded palliative care and how does what an individual wants affect the choices of others.

We need to uphold all Friends following the leadings of love and truth in their hearts. It is important to keep conversations going and Friends may wish to engage with other organisations concerned with this issue.

Minute on Terms “Overseers” and “Elders”

(This was referred to Quaker Life Central Committee) QLCC found that existing language is hurtful and work needs to be done.

They therefore encourage Meetings to explore their own terminology and possibly at the same time look at combining roles.

Some Meetings are already using *Pastoral Care Team* and *Spiritual Development*.

Area Meetings are being left to experiment with names until the end of 2022.

Minute from Manchester and Warrington Area Meeting

Sought to increase awareness of the human rights abuses of Uyghurs and encourage Friends to work with others to try change the situation.

Quakers against Torture has published a paper on this.

Yearly Meeting 2021

Will be online from weekend at end of July to 8 August. In the next few weeks first preparative documents will be sent out along with Booking Form.

Clare Scott Booth reported that issues of Privilege and Climate Injustice are urgent and, over the Pandemic particularly, have got worse.

The theme will be:

For Our Comfort and Discomfort; Living Equality and Truth in a Time of Crisis

This will be broken down into -

1. Quaker responses to racism - committing to being an Anti Racist Church
2. Acknowledging and Welcoming Gender Diversity, focusing on where we can find unity and saying Trans People are Welcome
3. Faith based action for Climate Justice - what our faith requires of us and how we might work with others

It has been decided that Yearly Meeting 2022 will be 27th- 30th May.

Barbara Penny
Meeting for Sufferings Representative