

## Meeting for Sufferings 07 10 17

Building on learning from visits to area and regional groupings by MfS clerks in 2014 the arrangements group decide to experiment with holding the Meeting outside of London. Manchester Mount Street meeting house was willing to accommodate us, so this MfS was held there.

The main purpose of the trial was to optimise links between AMs and MfS. A bring and share meal on Friday evening enabled local Friends and MfS representatives to get together and some local Friends also attended MfS as visitors. Friends and staff at Mount Street were extremely hospitable and provided lunch and a constant supply of hot and cold drinks. The day went well and all the arrangements worked smoothly.

During the opening worship section 1.02/16 of Advices and Queries was read in Welsh and English. Later in the day MfS sent greetings to Friends in Wales who are marking their 25th anniversary on October 21st in Newtown.

The big agenda items included a report from QPSWCC, the request from BYM Gathering that MfS look at the issue of diversity in our meetings and committees and, thirdly, an update on Central Communications and the Speaking out policy.

### QPSWCC

The report was divided into 3 sections, providing an overview of how the CC is discerning strategic direction and shaping the work of the department; highlighting some specific areas of change and achievement; and offering an update on each main element of QPSW's work. The CC asked MfS to consider whether they were happy with the way its work is developing.

Highlights of QPSW's recent work include:

- **Migration** which has led to the development of Meetings for Sanctuary and a Sanctuary Everywhere Manifesto.
- **Peace activism** focused on the week of action to stop the arms fair (DSEI) in London. (The names of Friends who were arrested at this event have been recorded on the court and prison register)
- **Nuclear Weapons** Ban Treaty at the United Nations in New York was agreed by 122 states in July thanks in part to the substantial contributions made to the negotiation by Tim Wallis, a member of QPSW staff.
- **Turning the Tide** in Kenya has been so successful that its peace workers have been able to introduce the programme to Burundi & Rwanda, where it will continue for the next 3 years.

The above are the highlights; QPSW's work internationally and nationally covers many other activities such as peace and conciliation work abroad, peace education at home, economic and criminal justice, as well as collaboration with Quaker United Nations Office, Quaker Council for European Affairs and Quaker Housing Trust.

In terms of strategic planning QPSW continues to wrestle with the challenges of the pressures they feel – often coming through MfS - to be more active on a wide range of issues and with the difficulties in balancing long-term (budget) and short-term (including

legacy or grant-supported) funding. Due to a change of management links between Quaker Life & QPSW are growing. In response to the question posed at the start of the report, MfS confirmed support for the way the work is developing.

### **Sanctuary project and the proposed 'Sanctuary Everywhere' Manifesto**

Helen Drewery explained that this work grew out of the concerns of Friends and legacy funding enabled a pilot project which has been extended for a further two years. Local meetings are being supported by Quaker Peace and Social Witness to join local initiatives that create a culture of welcome, and to foster their involvement in campaigning and advocacy. The six points of the manifesto have grown from many statements made by Britain Yearly Meeting in recent times and will allow Quaker Peace and Social Witness to work with organisations such as Amnesty and the Refugee Council. MfS appreciated the work that has gone into developing the manifesto and supported the principles behind it whilst recognising the difficulties that may be encountered in practice. However, representatives felt it was important to make more explicit the Quaker faith behind the manifesto, and referred it back to Quaker Peace and Social Witness. Hopefully it will come back to the next meeting of Sufferings for endorsement.

### Diversity

Yearly Meeting 2017's minute 38 drew together the consideration of a full week of YM sessions considering 'Living out our faith in the world'. One paragraph was sent specifically to Meeting for Sufferings:

*We have heard the call to examine our own diversity, particularly in our committee and organisational structure, locally and nationally. Diversity has several key dimensions and more may emerge in the future. We ask Meeting for Sufferings to look at how we can remove barriers and actively seek wider participation in the full life of our meetings, paying particular attention to race and age diversity and to keep Yearly Meeting informed in their annual report.*

To this end, MfS representatives have been asked to consider 3 questions with their Area Meetings or committees and respond to the Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group via the Deputy Recording Clerk, Juliet Prager - [julietp@quaker.org.uk](mailto:julietp@quaker.org.uk):

1. In what ways is your meeting (or committee or group) already diverse?
2. In what ways could it be more diverse?
3. What would help it become more diverse? What are the opportunities and barriers?

### BYM Communications and Speaking Out

Paul Parker, the Recording Clerk and Jane Dawson, head of communications reminded us of the speaking out policy agreed by MfS in 2014 following a desire among Friends for our voice to be more widely heard on issues that are important to us. The policy provides a framework to guide timely & appropriate responses in this fast moving age of digital media. An aspiration of Our Faith in the Future that Quakers are well-known and widely understood. The policy the accompanying short guide and advice are available from Central Communications.

### Other Agenda Items included

- i. Trustees report. Trustees would be happy to visit AMs
- ii. Minutes from AMs
- iii. Quaker World Relations Committee drawing attention to its endorsement of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) draft Open Letter on the future of Europe.

Sue Goodson AM Meeting for Sufferings