

Report of Meeting for Sufferings 3 12 16

Young People's Participation Event

The annual young people's participation day ran alongside this session of MfS. They joined us for the opening and closing worship and also had the opportunity to meet informally with reps over lunch. Moya Barnett represented our AM and she has written a separate account of her experience of the day which has already been printed in Sheffield & Balby Quaker News.

Court & prison register

The names of some members & an attender who are to stand trial in relation to charges of aggravated trespass for blockading an entrance to the A&E nuclear warhead facility at Burghfield on the faith day of action in June were added to the register.

Quaker council for European affairs (QCEA)

Elaine Green, BYM representative to QCEA, presented a comprehensive report on the current position & changes to the governance structure of this committee and the future focus of its work programme which will be on peace & human rights. She stressed that there was still a role for QCEA within the community of Europe if not in its institutions. As Elaine has been appointed to the executive committee it was agreed that we would appoint an additional representative to QCEA We also recommended that in future matters related to funding & property should be managed between the QCEA executive committee, BYM trustees & the recording clerk.

Reports from other European yearly meetings

We received reports from friends who represented us at the following yearly meetings in 2016: Belgium and Luxembourg; France; German; Ireland; Netherlands; Norway; Sweden; and Switzerland.

Decriminalisation of the possession of all drugs for personal use

Friends will remember considering this issue which Cornwall AM has adopted as a concern. 30 AMs sent minutes. Of these 3 united with the concern, 12 were broadly supportive, 5 were unable to unite & 6 were

undecided. At this session of MfS a similar picture emerged – a lot of support for Cornwall but not ready to unite with them at this time. Friends present expressed an appreciation of the complexity of the issue and an interest in learning more and agreed there was a need to seek a humane and compassionate response to drug users. There was a lot of support for Cornwall AM in taking this forward with other AMs that have expressed an interest, working with Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs (QAAD) and other organisations where appropriate

Book of discipline - Quaker Faith and Practice (QFP) - revision preparation group

The group has concluded that the Church Government section needs to be rewritten, not just revised & suggests that the rewritten version should have 2 sections, the 1st stating core principles & the 2nd detailing how they are to be worked out in practice. They are very pleased with how enthusiastically friends have engaged with reading QFP and have compiled an electronic questionnaire to test knowledge of QFP. We agreed to extend their term of service for a further year to 2018 to enable them to complete their work.

Towards a vision for a criminal justice system

Friends will remember discussing this document in 2016. Lots of AMs sent minutes most agreeing with the principles expressed but wondering who the document was for and whether details on implementation were needed. It seems it was written by QPSWCC's Crime Community and Justice (CCJ) Sub-Committee as an internal working document. At the end of 2015 Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) commended it to Meeting for Sufferings with a view to finding out whether the paper represented the views of Quakers throughout Britain. Meeting for Sufferings then asked Area Meetings to consider the paper, before giving it full consideration. It was felt that this had been a helpful exercise. The minutes from AMs will be sent to the CCJ Sub-Committee to aid its further deliberation and it is hoped QPSWCC will continue working on these issues, and to consider what may be done next, continuing to work with others as appropriate.

Quaker recognised bodies

Friends may remember that 12 months ago MfS agreed to re-designate the Quaker Listed Informal Groups as Quaker Recognised Bodies and introduce a new structure that would facilitate the operation of the groups within a Quaker ethos. A review of each group is underway to ensure it is consistent with the new arrangements and four groups were approved at this MfS.

Trustees report

Ingrid Greenhow, clerk of BYM Trustees, presented a summary of the 2017 operational plan, and Peter Ullathorne, Yearly Meeting Treasurer, presented the 2017 budget.

Minutes received

There were minutes from Leeds AM concerning the Leeds Quaker-Jewish dialogue group, from Staffordshire concerning Government Sponsorship of Cadet Forces in State Schools, and from Central Committees concerning revisions to the text of QFP in line with agreed changes to the arrangements for recognising Quaker Groups and changes to Management Meeting, as well as recognition of the work of the Leeds Quaker-Jewish Dialogue Group and WW1 Memorial Meetings for Reconciliation.

Sue Goodson

Meeting for Sufferings Representative