

## Meeting for Sufferings, held February 3, 2016 at Friends House

~ Report by Carol Holding

The feeling for our theme was set, as QFP 25 07, which was written by Norfolk Cambs and Hunts Quarterly Meeting in 1957 was read in Meeting for Worship. In re reading I also turned to 25.02 which begins "our planet is seriously ill and we can feel the pain.." which was written by London Yearly Meeting in 1988.

The business began therefore with a report from the sustainability group by LIs Burch which praised the institutions like Friends House and Woodbrooke in particular for their efforts at sustainability and felt that the trend with individuals was encouraging but patchy. It is difficult to measure but the idea was not to say "don't fly" but invest in insulation, eat less meat and dairy, support wildlife trusts from trees to bogs. We should listen and not typecast and also learn to communicate with those who don't agree - Leave out words, guilt, blame etc. - more love. Quaker Life is exploring spiritual aspects of sustainability.

There were five strands of recommendation for action 1) Eldership 2) Oversight 3) Living Faithfully, 4) Right Ordering 5) Witness working for change where we include support for things like Fair Trade and for Meetings where isolation in this is felt by some members. Friends pointed out the difficulty of entrenched lifestyles and the time needed for this - Abolishing slavery took a long time even among Friends, but we are enslaving the planet and time is running out. Much effort and resources are needed at local, AM and National levels.

Connected with this is our pursuance of a concern from Pendle Hill in 2014 regarding Fracking and our stand, not so much against as FOR preservation of the earth using renewables. Our environmentalist voice relies on climate justice and equality and therefore fossil fuels should remain in the ground. Area Meetings should make sure Friends know about an event at Pendle Hill on 6th May and that it is not a "nimby" idea. We are actually importing shale gas from America. Not many people know this.

QPSW reported that our support is also needed as there are Cadet forces in state schools now and some teachers are suffering from a lack of accountability and transparency in government. And in the notices we were reminded by YFGM of the need for AMs to include is re more Young Friends to ensure the future of Quakerism, and that the deadline for nominations to Junior Yearly Meeting Gathering is 15th March.

Members of Sufferings listened to the annual report of its actions and its functions, eg what is its relationship with trustees and agenda committee. - Are we welcoming - and what is its relationship with our Area Meetings. We broke into Home groups to discuss 1) Are we doing the things we are asked to do? and 2) What would help us to do it better? One of our group's conclusions was to be more visible and available to Friends between meetings and to communicate not just vividly in Area Meetings but in casual conversation.

The triennial report of Quaker Housing Trust by Jenny Brierley was inspiring and began with a quote from Grayson Perry who said "the shock of events in the world is the spur to creativity" and asked if this happened for us. QHS, founded 50 years ago, would be shocked to see how bad things are now, how polarised is the situation in the shockingly dysfunctional housing market. And we are asked to live adventurously and take risks. QHS has found many practical and creative ideas but of course needs money. Tackling the symptoms of the crisis is vital but tackling the roots of the problem is also vital, and local meetings should also be proactive. QHT have three sources of funding. 1) Donations 2) legacies and 3) repayments of the interest free loans it makes. There will be a day conference on Housing if Friends are interested. It is free but participants need to register on the website.

Deborah Rowlands, Clerk of BYM ,reminded us of the YM Gathering at Warwick University at the end of July where there will be more space this year, more sport and different activities and no programmed events in the lunch breaks. Claire Scott-Booth said the focus would be on "anchoring" and workshops and plenary sessions would focus on "How we can integrate and what we can do", finishing with all Age Worship. Spiritual documents will be out at Easter.