

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS), Friends House (FH), London, 3rd June 2017

1 My report this time focuses on just three key areas: interfaith activity; money and our faith in the future.

2 We received the annual report from the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations, hearing about ecumenical and interfaith activities of all kinds, our role in community and the possibility of meaningful encounters, if we have the courage to step outside our own front door more often. Many meetings are part of their Local Churches Together network and they find this a valuable way of being part of the wider community. We know from our own experience though that networks extend to other faiths, re-affirming that across our communities there is more that unites us than divides us. It is, I suggest, within our gift to develop this further.

3 We heard from Peter Ullathorne, Yearly Meeting Treasurer. He reported a relatively comfortable position up till now which has enabled Quakers in Britain to carry out its planned work. That said, delivery of some time-limited projects has only been possible through legacy funding; and there are various risks to our financial stability looming ahead, such as the HS2 development around Euston station that has the potential to undermine the vibrancy of Friends House. So, if we wish BYM to sustain its current level of activity let alone do more, Friends' support to BYM will need to increase to an average of £225 per member.

4 Meeting for Sufferings adopted our faith in the Future, our long-term framework document, in September 2015. This was not a "top-down" exercise, rather it was the result of discernment by Quakers throughout Britain, especially young friends. It provides a word picture of what Quakers in Britain today would like the Society to be like in the future. It is intentionally broad and not detailed, leaving each individual, meeting or committee free to discern where they are today and then decide on what actions they need to take to move their part of Yearly Meeting towards this vision. It already informs much of the discernment within our own meeting. We may wish to give this further thought.

5 As usual, a full report of the meeting and papers can be found on the dedicated MfS pages of the Quaker.org website

Robert Parkes, July 2017