

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS), Friends House London 2nd December 2017

1 We were back in London for this meeting and for part of the time we were joined by young Friends who were in Friends House for the Young People's Participation Day.

2 In 2014, following a consultation with area meetings, MfS recommended to Yearly Meeting (YM) that the time was right to begin a revision of our book of discipline - Quaker Faith & Practice (QFP). On that occasion YM was unable to reach a decision. However, the task of bringing a draft text for consideration to a future YM, via MfS, together with proposals for its publication, was given to the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group.

3 The Clerk from this group came to our meeting and spoke to a report from the group recommending that QFP be revised. The Group had found very helpful the feedback from Friends to the reading project which many meetings, including our own, had taken part in. MfS has in turn recommended to YM 2018 that it is time to have a revision to our book. It's early days, and there is much discernment ahead, but I feel we might see some exciting developments. For example, the Revision Committee has been given the freedom to be creative, while remaining in close contact with the YM, and has been invited to be alive to the opportunities of new technology. We were assured there will still be a book on the table on Sundays in meeting for worship but this time around we might also see artwork and illustrations, and, who knows, maybe have the option to "ask Google" for a reading.....

4 I always find the BYM Trustees report to MfS both informative and thought provoking. For me, it's another window on the bigger picture in which Quakers inhabit. For example, we heard about some of the challenges to delivering the work of Quakers in Britain, notably, the recruiting and retention of staff to work in central London. Careful discernment and the finding and allocating money to a concern only works if there are the people to take it forward.

5 One of those pieces of work, which thankfully seems well resourced at present, is the Sanctuary Everywhere Programme, which we are linked to as a Sanctuary Meeting. As part of this Programme, a Sanctuary Everywhere manifesto has been developed. An earlier draft was brought to an earlier MfS but we asked for more work to be done on it. The re-draft was brought to our meeting and after some further testing and discernment it was adopted. This is now available here.

<http://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/quakers-challenge-immigration-policy>

6 Quaker Life Central Committee has brought forward a draft strategy for Quaker Life 2018 - 2022. It is structured around the six sections in Our Faith in the Future, focusing, initially, on: MfW being the bedrock of living as a Quaker; Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all-age; and Quakers are well known and widely understood. Within this there are aims, and indicators of success. This strategy will shape the future work of the Committee. It will be brought before MfS next month.

7 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, January 2018