

This was the third Young Quakers Participation Day, arranged concurrently with Meeting for Sufferings, at which the Young Friends considered one of the items on MfS Agenda. This year, I enjoyed accompanying Harvey Craddock from Wrexham meeting. There were 29 Young Friends at the event. Harvey enjoyed it, and will be submitting his own report.

We were advised at the start of Meeting for Sufferings that we had a very full Agenda, and that we would need to exercise discipline to keep to the planned times in order to meet our Young Friends for lunch and at the end. As it turned out, Young Friends were themselves so busy that they were still in Session when we accompaniers arrived: a good sign!

The matters before MfS were complex but not, in the main, contentious. Well-drafted documents and the early release of some supporting material enabled us to come prepared. I will outline some of them to you. They are all available in full on the old website, <http://old.quaker.org.uk>

- Long term Framework – ***Our Faith in the Future***. This piece of work is the successor to *A Framework for Action 2009-2014*, which was used successfully for Outreach but was felt to be a constraint on action when a new need in the world was identified that was not included in the Framework. This new document has been widely consulted on – the team preparing it received and digested over 300 responses – and is not time-limited. It picks up strands from its predecessor but this time it is *how* we act and react, rather than *what* we do. Its aspirational tone came in part from last year's Young Friends Participation Day (in which Ulysses Jones from Bangor took part.) Sufferings approved the short version (*attached*.) The group will now go on to develop supporting material for each bullet point. Outside the MfS session, I requested that *Our Faith in the Future* needs to be in Welsh also from the start, or it will be discourteous for us to use it here.
- **Quaker Credit Union**, proposed by the NWAM NE Economic Justice group. This was ably presented by Tricia Jones with Peter Higgins to cover some technical questions. Although reservations were expressed relating to what the required 'Common Bond' would be between (mainly) Quaker savers and (mainly) non-Quaker borrowers; and about competing with or diverting support from existing credit unions, MfS nevertheless discerned that the study into the feasibility of the proposed Quaker Credit Union should go ahead, and thanks were expressed to NWAM that we are active in this important Economic Justice field.
- Still within MFW, Southern Marches has been working on a proposal for a memorial at the **National Memorial Arboretum** to the civilian casualties of war. Their working title is the **Innocent Victims**, while acknowledging that innocent is a value-laden word. Victims? Civilians? Is a conscripted person, whether a soldier or worker in a bomb factory, or the lads of 19 who signed up before their brain wiring is incomplete not also a victim? If not innocent perhaps not guilty, as implied? A short, snappy title is required to catch the public imagination and to convey the message that war damages us all, for generations. The NMA needs the approval of Quakers at a national level, which has now been given. Southern Marches will proceed to develop the proposal and to raise funding.
- The World Council of Churches statement ***Towards a Common Vision***. The WCC has been working on this since 2013, and QCCIR (Quaker Committee for Church and Interfaith Relations) has been drafting our response. It came to Sufferings in an earlier draft in March, and is now much improved, entitled ***A Spirit-led Church***. This is a very rich document that will be useful to us as well as in communicating with others. QCCIR has prepared a Study Guide for Friends to accompany it. Amongst other uses, it could help us as we prepare for a possible revision of Q F & P.
- **Vibrancy in Meetings**. Up till now I must confess I had not understood the point of this project but it seems to be coming into its own now. There are to be 4 or 5 pilots around the UK, covering both rural and urban regions and including AMs that are struggling and those that are thriving, with new staff recruited and based in the field to support each pilot area. This will require additional funding, so applications are to be made to the Legacy fund.
- **QPSW**. We received a very complete and heartening report of QPSW's work in the UK and abroad. This includes behind-the-scenes work providing information, delivery and campaigning, on the Call for Equality; the

website *Your faith Your Finance* <http://www.yourfaithyourfinance.org> (in partnership with the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility); liaising with Quaker Life including on *Being Friends Together*, and for Young Friends *Be the Change*; Quaker Housing Trust; Peace Education, Disarmament, Turning the Tide; Sustainability; Criminal Justice; Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN); the QUNO office in Geneva; EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel); Peace training in several East African countries; reconciliation work in NE India. All this with only 20 staff, and 15 volunteers on the Central Committee.

On behalf of Quakers in Britain, a Statement on the refugee crisis was drafted. It was approved in principle but wanted it made even stronger, and authorised Helen Drewery to do this and to issue it as soon as possible. The revised version was issued later on 5 September. (*attached*)

Our faith in the future

Facing turbulent times, Quakers in Britain seek a future where...

Meeting for worship is the bedrock of living as a Quaker. In worship we become one with the Spirit, with each other and with our true selves. The Spirit is the source of strength and guidance for all we are and do. Our way of worship is open to all, and we are making it more widely known.

Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all-age. All are heard, valued and supported both in our needs and our leadings. Everyone's contribution is accepted according to their gifts and resources. All are welcomed and included. There are clear and effective ways of working together on shared concerns. Fellowship and fun strengthen the bonds between us, enhancing a loving community.

All Friends understand and live by Quaker discipline. Our discipline is actually 'letting go and letting God': not 'Thou shalt' nor 'I will' but 'What does Love require of us?' It works when we understand it and practise it! Because we understand it, we can share it with others. Our testimony guides us, but we have to work on what it means for each of us personally.

Quaker values are active in the world. Our lives speak peace, equality, respect for the earth and all its inhabitants. We offer friendship to all and solidarity to the marginalised. We speak truth to power with love. We hold those in power in the Light. We find creative and nonviolent ways to get our message across. We are in for the long haul; we're not afraid to take risks. We are called to live in the place where our 'deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.'

Quakers work collaboratively. We are well aware that we can't put the world to rights all by ourselves. We value the important work of others. By engaging with them we are already changing the world. We want to break down barriers; we refuse to prejudge who is or is not an ally.

Quakers are well known and widely understood. We are active in our local communities, reaching out in friendship, making more use of our meeting houses for events and renting or lending out. All members are ready and equipped to explain our way confidently and clearly to anyone who asks, as well as to speak publicly on issues of concern. We share our practices as appropriate and make full use of relevant media to reach out widely. In an increasingly divided world, we try to offer 'patterns and examples' of a caring community.

... a future where we let our lives speak

Quakers urgently call for safe paths for refugees

The representative body of Quakers in Britain, Meeting for Sufferings, has made the following statement in reaction to the unfolding refugee crisis.



'That which is morally wrong cannot be politically right'

Quaker faith & practice 23.26

“Quakers in Britain urge the UK Government to welcome those desperately seeking a place of safety, in Europe, from the dangers in their own countries. In this urgent situation it cannot be right to harden hearts against people who are struggling and dying on European soil and in the seas around us.

“In Britain we have a tradition of sheltering those in danger, as we did with the Kindertransport, rescuing thousands of children from Nazi-occupied Europe so many years ago, and more recently, when we welcomed refugees from countries including Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Iraq, Bosnia and Kosovo. It is time to open our hearts and communities again.

“This exceptional time of need calls for a proportionate response from all the governments of Europe working together. We call for mechanisms to be created that will enable people to travel safely and to secure legal protection – including in Britain.

“Refugees are fleeing from fear. Further violent interventions in countries such as Syria will not provide a solution. Difficult but compassionate decisions need to be made to secure peace for people in these regions.

“Quakers assert that all human life is precious – each person is a child of God and the loss of one diminishes us all. In this severe crisis, we hear the Spirit calling us to throw ourselves into the fray with all the love and courage we can muster.”