

Young Friends General Meeting
Bristol
YFGM 18th – 20th October 2013

Present:

Co-Clerks: Brigid Stoney & Ian Goggin

YFGM Finance Trustee: Alyn Still 'not present'

Management Trustee: Jessica Metheringham

Coordinator: Niki Karakaris

Guests: Kelvin Boot, Sue Barrance, Andrew Rosser, Effie Romain, Alex Davidson

Those Present: Lydia Dobson, Jen Hampton, Kevin Kikaya, Kester Ratcliff, Becky Riddell, Christopher Tedd, Laura Wallace, Holly Alcock, Sam Barnett-Cormack, Rhian Blades, Freya Blyth, Hannah Brock, Harriet Brown, Sarah Castle, Carla Denyer, Peter Doubtfire, Kim Edwards Jo Evans, Matthew Godwin, Ian Goggin, Catherine Gregory, Rachael Harrison, Niki Karakaris, Selina Larsen, Sophie Loewendahl, Rici Marshall, Rebecca Mattingly, Jessica Metheringham, Nathan John, Hereward Mills, Layla-Olaide Oladimeji, Andrew Rendle, Sam Robinson, Tim Rouse, Abigail Rowse, Dorina Shahaj, Tim Shorrocks, Kristin Skarsholt, Ericka Smith, Hannah Spiers, Brigid Stoney, Rachael Swancott Boon, Kelly Turner, Kris Turner, Edward Ullathorne, Helena Elizabeth, Julian Wood, Scott Mitchell

TOTAL 48

13.22 Opening Minute

We welcome everyone old and new to our October YFGM. We hope that we will have a weekend where we may explore in safety both our business and spiritual activities.

13.23 Budget

Our general fund treasurer, Ed Ullathorne and our convenor Rachel Swancott have presented us with the 2014 budget, which is attached to these minutes. This budget suggests that YFGM would be running a substantial deficit for the year of potentially £39,760 - eating into our reserves. This understandably makes us nervous, as we are moving from an over-large amount of reserves to too little. We want to avoid foolishly running ourselves into the ground.

Cutting expenditure is difficult as each individual element is important. As a result the energy to make this budget work will need to be directed towards finding new funding sources, with the help of the YFGM fundraiser and co-ordinator.

We need certainty over future funding and ask finance committee to set clear review points during the year so we can have early warning of funding not appearing. If expected funding sources have been unsuccessful or the reserves are too low in the view of the Finance Trustee and General Fund Treasurer, we ask them to bring the budget for immediate review to the next YFGM.

We thank finance committee for the hard work done in putting together this challenging budget that reflects YFGM's current period of change. With the provisions above, we approve this budget.

13.24 Co-options

This weekend the following people have been co-opted to serve on the named committees for the duration of the weekend:

Committee	Co-opted
Quintessential	Kristin Skarsholt
Quintessential	Rebecca Mattingly
Nominations Committee	Rachael Harrison
Nominations Committee	Tim Rouse

13.25 Reports

Over the weekend we heard four reports:

- Planning weekend newcomers reports was delivered by Dorina Shahaj who attended our last planning weekend, and was particularly impressed by how all the disparate elements suddenly came together at the end to create the plan for YFGM.
- The Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations report was read out by Rebecca Mattingly on behalf of Andrew Williams. Andrew has become very involved with the work of QCCIR, including editing its newsletter. He particularly encouraged us to read the World Council of Churches document "Economy of Life, Justice and Peace for All: A Call to Action". A copy of his report is attached to these minutes.
- Kim Edwards gave us a report on the Leaveners and her thorough involvement with the management committee and Leaveners events. Alongside YFGM, Kim and Lauren organised 'Spirituality and the the Arts' last August, and Kim encouraged YFGM to attend further events, including Nayler Passion (a choral work, learned over one week), and their annual 24 hour panto.

- The Living Witness report was given by our representative Carla Denyer. She reported that beyond being a YFGM representative she is now a trustee for Living Witness. Living Witness is currently reviewing its place and role, and its concerns have - following Minute 36 - become core concerns of Britain Yearly Meeting, and they are considering performing the 'reflecting' function required for a successful process Carla encouraged us to support Living Witness and its upcoming book with working title 'Beyond Consensus: Towards a Coherent Human Response to Climate Change'.

13.26 Catering and pan transport

We would like to thank Hannah Spiers for catering this weekend and Ed Ullathorne for transporting the pans.

13.27 Nominations Returns and Nominations to Nominations Committee

We appoint the following people to the following roles, and release those named. We thank those released for all their hard work during their terms.

Role	Released	Appointed	Until
Management Trustee	hand over until February 2014	Jenny McCarthy Jessica Methingham. ¹	Jan 2017 Feb 2014
Overseer	Rhiannon Redpath Ged Manning		Carried over Carried over
Convenor of Overseers	Ged Manning		
Quintessential	Hannah Brock		Carried over
YFGM's Representative to Northern Friends Peace Board	Peter Doubtfire Beth Howard	Matthew Godwin Freya Blythe	Oct 2016
YFGM's Representative to Living Witness	Helen Percy	Sophie Loewendahl	Oct 2015
Planning Weekend Newcomer	Dorina Shahaj Catherine Gregory Rhian Blades	Sam Robinson Harriet Brown Kevin Kikaya	Feb 2014

¹ Role extended until February 2014, to allow for a handover period.

Catering Co-ordinator	Tom Rowlands		Carried over
Events Co-ordinator	Ged Manning	Kristin Skarsholt	Oct 2015
TYQ Editor	Rosemary Oliver	Helena Worthington	Oct 2016
Nominations Committee	Jess Murray Owen Everett Abigail Rowse	Tim Rouse	Oct 2016 Carried over Carried over
Line Manager	Hilary Topp ²		
Employment Fund Treasurer	Paul Dodwell ³		

13.28 Employment update

Our convenor of trustees Rachael Swancott has given us an update on the changes to the YFGM office and employment structures, including how to contact the office. A copy of that update is attached.

13.29 Quintessential trustee

Quintessential committee have appointed Ericka Smith as the new Quintessential trustee until October 2015, releasing Hannah Brock. We thank Hannah for her service as a trustee.

13.30 Clerks' offering

This YFGM in Bristol sees our community in a period of change. It has been wonderful to see so many friends, old and new, as we word out the future direction of YFGM. We were visited by Kelvin Boot and Sue Barrance, who led a session describing their roles as Quaker prison chaplains. We heard how they are confronted with seeing that of God in everyone in difficult and challenging circumstances. This led many of us to consider how we apply our beliefs in our daily lives.

In parallel we had a talk and discussion with Andrew Rosser of BUYAN – the British and Irish Unitarian Young Adult Network. We discussed the similarities between Quakers and Unitarians, the different benefits that programmed worship can have and the challenges of catering to disparate views in a society not bound by specific creeds. Alex Davidson led a spirituality session on vocal ministry in meeting. He drew on his experiences of being part of a theatre group in Russia, drawing parallels with the experiences of early Quakers and highlighted the deep ministry and gathered meetings. He encouraged everyone to minister and highlighted our responsibility to speak,

² This position is being laid down due to the changes away from directly managing an employee

³ This position is being laid down due to the changes away from directly managing an employee

challenging us to recognise that ministry can sometimes have an unseen impact and we should trust that what we have said has been impactful.

In response to the consultation on Quaker Faith and Practice we spent time exploring our relationship with the book, considering how we use it and whether it meets our needs as Young Quakers today. Responses from this session will be attached to these minutes.

Special Interest Groups are a great opportunity to explore the varied interests and activities our members are involved in and can be challenging or fun. As always we had a diverse collection of Special Interest Groups:

- Liberal Judaism led by Michael Romain
- Baking led by Hannah Spiers
- Singing led by Sophie Loewendahl
- Costume making led by Selina Larsen
- Mental Health led by Julian Wood
- Young Friend Helpers at Yearly Meeting Gathering led by Rebecca Mattingly

Our main meeting room was transformed back to the 1920s for Saturday entertainments, with games, virgin cocktails and fancy dress. The entertainment was organised by the Appeal Group and overseers to raise money through donations for the Quaker Peace Centre in Cape Town.

This YFGM in Bristol has had a reflective feel. We have spent time thinking about ourselves as Young Quakers both within the wider Quaker community and also how we relate to other non-Quaker groups. We have considered how we express our beliefs in our daily lives and in our relationships with others. We have also made time to enjoy one another's company and eat the appropriate amount of cake.

We look forward to being together again at February YFGM in Manchester.

Attachments to the minutes:

Interchurch Interfaith Secretary's report

My second year at the YFGM Interchurch Interfaith secretary has seen my involvement with the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) increase. However, unfortunately due to my busy-ness completing a PhD I haven't been able to facilitate any interchurch interfaith activities at YFGM. I have continued to edit the QCCIR electronic newsletter which is sent out three times a year after the committee meetings. News from the committee and the major interchurch and interfaith organisations across the UK are contained in the newsletter, if you would like to subscribe contact Graham Spackman at Friends House (grahams@quaker.org.uk). Over the year QCCIR has been discussing a number of documents from the World Council of Churches, one of which I would really encourage you to read. The title of this document is '*Economy of Life, Justice, and Peace for All: a call to action*' and can be read here <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/poverty-wealth-and-ecology/neoliberal-paradigm/agape-call-for-action-2012/>. This document demonstrates that internationally Churches are making similar commitments to Britain Yearly Meeting in relation to sustainability and justice.

QCCIR is organising a day conference at Friends House on 25th January 2014 with the title '*Faith, what's God got to do with it?*' (<http://www.quaker.org.uk/quaker-committee-christian-and-interfaith-relations-day-conference-2014>). The speakers are David Boulton, Philip Goss and Rex Ambler and they will be speaking about the current theist/non-theist discussion within the society. Unfortunately, spaces are limited to representative from Area Meetings, so speak to your local Area Meeting if you would like to attend. My largest piece of work for QCCIR has been writing a series of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and answers on the decision of Britain Yearly Meeting to support same sex marriages. Following the discernment in 2009 QCCIR produced a pamphlet call '*We are but witnesses*' which explained how the decision had been reached, but not necessarily why. Unfortunately, four years later although the legal situation has changed there are those inside and outside the society who are struggling with the decision. Therefore, QCCIR took up the challenge to provide some FAQs and answers. There were three of us on the drafting subgroup and we would all agree that this has been a huge emotional and intellectual challenge, but I am pleased to say that hopefully in the not too distant future the FAQs will be available online. Finally, QCCIR invites interchurch and interfaith visitors to attend Yearly Meetings and some of you may have heard of the Rabbi's attendance at this years meeting. Although, we have an interchurch visitor for the 2014 Yearly Meeting Gathering, as you are in Bristol if anyone can suggest someone local who might be an interfaith visitor I

would be delighted to hear from you. If anyone at YFGM has any questions, or ideas related to interchurch or interfaith please get in contact with me.

In Friendship

Andrew Williams (yfgm.interchurch.interfaith@gmail.com)

Changes within the YFGM employment structure

Over the past two/three years as a result of our strategic review (a practice carried out intermittently by charities) YFGM has been discerning the correct way forward in terms of our system of employment.

Over the years several options have been presented to be community to be considered as a way forward.

Eventually YFGM decided to undertake an offer from BYM to share an intern. As a result of this decision it was necessary to make the current position of YFGM Coordinator redundant. The Trustees undertook this responsibility and have followed legal advice in the correct procedure and process. This has taken the best part of a year and has been difficult for all involved. I personally am very proud of how the Trustees have conducted themselves and think it is important to note how professional Hugo Finley our Coordinator has been throughout this and that we wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

All detailed information will be made available to YFGM on the website and can be requested from the Convenor of Trustees (yfgmconvenoroftrustees@gmail.com)

Rachael Swancott

These are responses drawn from Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM) over the weekend of 18-20 October, 2013. They are notes taken from a world café style discussion, not a minute that has been corporately discerned. Therefore opinions listed are those of one, or a collection of YFGMers present, not a statement from YFGM as a whole.

People moved around freely to four tables, with each table covering a different question. Each table had a different scribe, which accounts for the difference in notes (some in note form, some in paragraphs). We hope they are understandable but please email hannah.brock@dunelm.org.uk with any clarifying questions.

At the end, each table looked at the question 'Do we want to reissue Quaker Faith and Practice?' These answers are at the end.

Hannah Brock
On behalf of Quintessential committee

Are there ways in which our current church government as set out in Quaker Faith and Practice is at variance with what is actually happening? And is so, how?

Church government should be a practical expression of our testimonies.

Sometimes, non-Quaker Business Method methods are used to help facilitate decisions e.g. before a full business meeting.

QFP sets out the principles and methodology – not exact process i.e. it doesn't always say 'x Committee should meet y often'.

We heard of occasions when minutes are agreed not in person, but after the meeting (this usually wasn't successful).

LMs and AMs are already being asked to adopt new types of governance e.g. around our sustainability commitment. Could this go in with the tabular statement?

How much does QFP Church Government talk about the importance of being mates, and laughing together, and what this means for community. YFGM find social time extremely important. It overlaps friendship with difficulties.

There's nothing in QFP about Experiment with Light.

There's nothing in QFP about Epilogues. These are used widely in young Quaker residential events (including at YFGM), as well as at Woodbrooke.

In YFGM, Elders have responsibility for the business method both being taught and upheld. In QFP, it feels like it's just the clerk's particular responsibility. We've found it more successful to share.

In YFGM, we are people in they are willing and able first, then discern names.

In some times and places, perhaps we need to start from the bottom up, springing out of roles if they're a burden, but being flexible, and not bound by tradition / how other people do it.

Why is there no index of themes in QFP?

What should a 21st Century book of discipline be like? Are there other formats YFGM would find helpful?

It might be better with sections on theology and process the other way around: i.e. the first thing someone should read should be about Quaker practice and belief – not our processes. Or, we could have two separate books: one on governance, one on spirituality.

Do we need a Welsh addition? Or another language?

We would like an improved index with more thematic words.

An online format: broken down into sections and searchable (as now) would be welcome, but possibly better presented.

An EBook format too would be good - something portable. Also with an app? Users could be sent a message or quote each day.

Audio book welcome (downloadable from website).

...But definitely keeping as a paper book too.

Governance: procedure handbook (which also references formal groups in BYM lists) and it also contains more exploratory stuff – can this be separated out a little more?

It's really 'How to live your life to the fullest as a Quaker' – not a 'Book of Discipline'.

Diversity of Friends could be better represented – theists, nontheist, other faith backgrounds.

There's a danger of it becoming longer. What additions need to be made? Which sections do they cover in a better way (and can therefore replace current sections)?

It should contain an historical context of Quakerism – one story / overview and special places / ideas / people.

Advices and Queries is hard to read – why is this?

Something you give to newcomers ('Being a Quaker' by Geoffrey Durham also useful – it also recommends other good stuff to read).

Important to keep older content – gives context from history.

Perhaps it could contain an activity pack for newcomers, with a history, and bits to dip in to and discuss. A guided tour.

Governance and spirituality are both in the book for a reason – it explains practice important for all, a shared help.

Language – traditional vs. how we use words today e.g. discipline.

It's not a user manual – it's a starting point on a longer journey.

It should not be loads longer – that's not practical.

Could we have more detail on the online version?

Do friends in YFGM consider that Quaker Faith and Practice adequately reflects the current faith and practice among British Friends? If not why not?

In the discussion there were a few themes that people felt needed to be expanded on/included in the book, these were:

Same sex marriage: although the practical procedures that support people in knowing how to perform marriages in Quaker meeting are being updated, there was sense that there needed to be more spiritual reflections on same sex relationships/marriage within the book.

Sustainability: a call to more explicitly incorporate this into more areas of our practice.

Conflict in meeting: there was a feeling that there wasn't enough guidance/ reflection on this. The use of discourse; 'the book of Christian discipline', does this link to Christianity need to be revised? There were extensive discussions on this subject across groups.

- A change in language was discussed and a common sense that a direct link to the discourse of Christianity no longer reflected the beliefs and spiritual core of Friends. That there needed to be a greater emphasis on Quakerism being the central bond and then from that people could also come from a Christian/Hindu/Muslim etc background or faith. That Quakerism provides a common practice, values and faith, but within that an openness to different and no religion.
- From this were suggestions that at the beginning of the book there needed to be a section on the use of spiritual language e.g: "God". A recognition that in the book people's ministry may use language that does not immediately resonate with your own, however that in seeking to look beyond this and apply it to your own understanding, that we can connect with each other's experiences and ministry whatever the discourse.

Technology and communication: reflections on the spiritual aspect of this e.g being mindful of how we communicate with others.

The other suggestion was about format, specifically that guidance that relates to practical aspects of the meeting e.g business meeting could be shown in a format that is more accessible such as a video clip.

What use do Friends in YFGM make of the current Quaker Faith and Practice?

How well does it meet these needs?

Is it primarily for the use of Friends or does it have value in enabling others to understand us?

How is it used?

QF&P is not used much at YFGM, although it is read at the start of each session. It is valued by individuals - some people read random bits every morning (although not so

much the business bits). When reflecting on something, people look at what it says - sometimes they refer to it in MFW.

The dip in and out format is seen as good/useful. Opinions were strongly divided on the index: it was seen as a good concept, but the words in the index are often not actually the word you want to find, making it not useful. It looks more procedural from the front. The mixed chronology allows for comparison - e.g. by theme. There was a suggestion that if it is available electronically you could choose what to sort by - chronology, theme, etc.

It is seen to have 3 distinct uses:

- structural references!
- spiritual inspiration!
- newcomer reading - it is the first thing handed to newcomers

However A&Q is used more than QF&P possibly because of its size/separate publication.

How well does it meet needs?

It is seen as being about people and their experience - it gives a good appreciation of Quakerism as a whole - could be seen as a metaphor for Quakers. The collection of perspectives is interesting/enriching. It is seen as showing rather than doing.

The concept and content are seen as valuable and helpful/comforting/guiding, however not necessarily satisfying. The material can quickly get stale and/or old: variety is needed.

In a well-functioning community the spiritual aspects are more important than the procedural.

Use of Friends/others?

It's generally seen as mostly for Quakers. Some people see it as quite accessible to outsiders, especially A&Q, other people see it as not very accessible to non-Quakers - although that is not necessarily an issue. Outsiders can also dip in and out - if they know that they can.

There were differing opinions about the words "God" and "Christian: some Quakers don't identify with/find alienating, however it might make it more accessible to people from other religions. Some people don't like the "book of christian discipline" on the front and find it more of an issue than the "God" word. There was a question whether Christian Quakers feel the need the Christian label.

Similarly there were differing opinions about the language, as it is not necessarily accessible to all. It could be more moving. Older parts could be translated, but the quotes have historical value and there would be a risk of losing the nuances, however they could be annotated rather than translated, possibly with reflections on different possible meanings.

To the question: 'Do we want to re-issue QF&P - is it worth it?'

Group 1:

Our answer to the question does it need redoing is 'perhaps'. Much has changed since 1994. A major revision would be daunting (especially if it takes 9 years again) – maybe it needs tweaking?

Group 2:

We are 'lukewarm' about a rewrite. Do we want to spend time on this now? But if not now, when? Times have changed since the 1980s...this book could do more for us.

Exciting studd going on right now – we should do it in a few years' time. It's a changing world. Quakers are taking big decisions (e.g. the Kindlers revisioning work).

Group 3:

In asking if this is the right time to revise the book there was general sense that although all of the above are important, and people would like to see them updated, a complete revision of the entire book isn't necessary at this point in time. That our energy's as a society would be better served elsewhere.

Group 4:

There were two main reasons why people were in favour: revising the structure and amending the terminology.

Structure was seen as the biggest issue. The procedural section could be "lightened" to just principles and ideals, however business practice must be included as it is intrinsic to beliefs. Which parts that could be lost to make space will need careful consideration.

Removing "God-language" was seen as a major benefit of a re-issue. Getting rid of "Christian" was said to be worth it.

We as a whole praise simplicity, however asking members to hear the words someone else uses to describe their spiritual experience and mentally translate those to terms that are relevant to them is really quite complex: could this stop "God" from getting in the way of being Quakerly.! However, there was also a concern that the potential benefits of the review are not worth the resources that would be required, although it could start slowly.!

YFGM BUDGET	2014 Budget (£)		
	Target	% Reached	Forecast
Income			
BYM Grant	1,000.00		
JRCT Grant	-		
Legacies			
YFGM Contributions	4,000.00		
Meetings & Friends	8,000.00		
Interest	40.00		
Events	500.00		
Appeal	500.00		
Other Income	14,000.00		
Total Income	28,040.00	100%	28,040.00
	Allocation of Funds	Anticipated use	Forecast
Expenditure			
Running costs			
YFGMs - 2 "normal"	6,000.00	100%	6,000.00
May YFGM	22,500.00	100%	22,500.00
Planning Weekends	4,500.00	100%	4,500.00
Office costs	20,000.00	100%	20,000.00
Additional			
Accessibility	1,500.00	80%	1,200.00
Bursarys	3,500.00	80%	2,800.00
Representitives	-	100%	-
Training	2,000.00	70%	1,400.00
Young Adult Leaders	3,000.00	100%	3,000.00
Emeyf grant	-		
Contingency / other	1,000.00	0%	-
Outreach			
General	1,200.00	50%	600.00
Enquirers	1,200.00	80%	960.00
International	200.00	10%	20.00
Interchurch/interfaith	200.00	10%	20.00
Website / Young Quaker	200.00	100%	200.00
Events	500.00	100%	500.00
Appeal	500.00	100%	500.00
Total Expenditure	68,000.00		64,200.00
Surplus / (deficit)	(39,960.00)		(36,160.00)