

Annual report 1st January to December 31st 2016

Young Friends General Meeting is one of the many Quaker gatherings within Britain; however, it is one with a difference. Not only is it a meeting that caters for those aged between 18 and approximately 30 years old but it is one which holds weekend residential events where individuals can live out the Quaker testimonies together. As a registered charity our objectives are the advancement of religion in accordance with the principles and practices of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and to advance any Quaker concerns that are adopted by the meeting.

Our main activity is to hold three main gatherings each year. In 2016 those meetings have been in Bournemouth, Liverpool and Lancaster, with Planning Weekends before each gathering - in Oxford, Settle, and Bradford on Avon respectively. In addition to the normal pattern of events there was a weekend focused on Quaker Faith and Practice and a fundraising ceilidh.

This report hopes to document and celebrate Young Friends General Meeting achievements in 2016 and appreciate all the hard work volunteers have invested to make YFGM happen.

Trustees and Governance

As a charity we have a committee of trustees and are responsible for ensuring that Young Friends General Meeting activities are focused towards achieving our aims and objectives as set out in our constitution, finance policy and minutes of the General Meeting.

Below is a list of trustees who served during 2016, and those who served at the time of this report being approved.

Convenor of Trustees (Chairperson)	Kellie Turner
Finance Trustee (Treasurer)	Alyn Still (to May 2016) Cáit Gould (from February 2016)
Clerk	Brigid Stoney (to May 2016) Pete Doubtfire (to May 2017) Jenny McCarthy (from May 2016) Michelle Dumont (from October 2017)
Management Trustee	Jenny McCarthy (to October 2016) Tim Rouse (from October 2016)
Quintessential Trustee	Toni Carmichael (To February 2017)

Overseer Trustee

Francesca Loise (from February 2016)

Tom Eddington (from October 2017)

As Quakers the members of YFGM share the responsibility for the wellbeing of the community, there is an understanding that the spirit is at work and that God's guidance can be discerned. Young Friends assemble in silence and stillness to recognise what direction is best for YFGM.

Although the community makes collective decisions, to make sure that the community is organised and nurtured individual Friends take roles including Clerks, (to record and facilitate the decisions of the meeting), Overseers (to ensure the pastoral care of the community) and Quintessential (Elders; who uphold the spiritual well being of the meeting).

The selection process for appointing people to roles is also driven by the community. Members of the community bring forward names of people who they believe have gifts that flourish by serving the meeting. A smaller group of people referred to as nominations committee consider those names and discern whether the role is right for that individual. The individual is approached to ask whether they are willing and able to fulfil the roles function. If they confirm that they are able and the nominations committee discern that they are the right person at the time to fill the vacancy the nominations committee will deliver the name to the wider gathering at YFGM. All of the process is done within the Quaker business method. The last stage is where the meeting brings forward any information that the smaller group may not have been aware of and then collectively that person is appointed into the role. Apart from overseers and quintessential trustees who are appointed by their respective committees as trustees the rest of the trustees are chosen through the method outlined above.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Young Friends General Meeting was set up in 1911 by a conference of Young Friends within London Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (now Britain Yearly Meeting).

In essence, YFGM exists to provide a space for young adults who self-define as Quakers or who are seeking truth, and invites those that are interested in the principles and practices of Quakerism. It is a space where they are encouraged to learn and use Quaker methods that have been passed down through the ages and being open to continuous revelation. YFGM provides young people a platform to express corporately their own experiences.

With the approaching end of the Joseph Rowntree grant (which will be further discussed later on in the report) "why does YFGM exist?" was one of the prominent questions trustees explored throughout 2016. This question became the focus of the trustees' weekend held in

Bradford on Avon in August. Through meetings for worship for business, worship sharing and spirituality sessions we were able to discern the following:

YFGM is:

- A community that uses the Quaker process and allows members to take ownership of those methods.
- A space that supports individuals in their spiritual journeys
- An influence on the future of Quakerism and builds connections with the wider Quaker world
- Allowing members to put their faith in action
- Building a community for Young Quakers

Through the activities on this weekend it became apparent that YFGM is still very much needed.

Activities

The first gathering of the year saw Young Friends travel to the south coast. Our members travelled from all over Britain to reach Bournemouth. As usual there was a jam packed agenda full of time to worship together, get to the heart of important topics and build new friendships. This weekend even saw some of our members brave the English Channel by taking a dip.

A number of members were fresh from their travels to Peru to attend the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) plenary meeting. Those that went were able to provide YFGM with a report and ran a special interest group for those who wanted more information. In the last YFGM of 2015 we decided to put money aside to fund UK friends and African Friends to attend the plenary meeting and were encouraged to hear that with the theme being the future over a third of the attendees were under 35. This was an investment in our relationship with Quakers across the world.

British Quakers tend to worship in silence, in the silence we wait for new insight and guidance and sometimes people are led to share those discoveries to the gathered meeting. Our spiritual session in Bournemouth explored the concept of silence and the mechanism of ministry along with advices and queries this provided members with an opportunity to deepen their knowledge and to discover their own truths.

An energetic ceilidh wrapped up the Saturday of YFGM with the meeting house warden joining the festivities, providing a mic and speakers for one member to direct the dancing. A group of talented members played instruments to provide the music to which a large group danced. It is wonderful how activities organically develop at YFGM.

March 2016, marked the centenary of the introduction to military conscription. At both the gathering in Bournemouth and Liverpool we reflected on those that stood against militarism 100 years ago as conscientious objectors.

The first bank holiday in May saw us reconvene YFGM in the city of Liverpool where 56 of our members gathered. As illustrated above Quakers do not live separate from the events that are happening within the world and with the approaching EU referendum a discussion group was brought together to allow space to express our thoughts and feelings surrounding the approaching decision the country was to make.

Quaker Faith and Practice is an attempt to provide a picture of what it is like to be part of the wider British Quaker community, alongside excerpts of people's experiences of the divine, the light or God it outlines the current structures of British Quakerism. This text comes in book format and is available online. A book of discipline revision preparation group has been set up as part of Britain Yearly Meeting's Quaker work and invited individuals and meetings to get to know the current book before any revision is considered.

Alongside the normal three YFGM gatherings each year, members of the community may propose event ideas that are "business free". These events are known as "YF(GM) free". As a response to the book of discipline revision preparation groups invitation a couple of members of YFGM thought it appropriate that a YF(GM) free be arranged so that as a community we could explore the text and bring out ideas for the future of the book of discipline. The weekend involved seven spirituality sessions and three speaker sessions an epistle was produced with the plan to share it with the revision preparation group to feed into their work. The organisers of the weekend felt it was equally as important that fellowship between young Quakers be central to the weekend as spirituality and so organised a buffet lunch, a meal in a local restaurant, availability of fizzy drinks and epilogue set outside the meeting house.

The Trident concern, which was adopted in 2014, continued their important work opposing the government's proposed replacement of the trident missile programme. At February YFGM they used a special interest group to prepare for the stop trident national demonstration. In this session they used creativity to produce a banner that they could march with that portrayed YFGM's stance against trident's replacement. Alongside the banner they produced an epistle to spell out the reasons why the community felt so strongly. The national demonstration was organised by The No Faith in Trident campaign group, who brings together faith groups so they can work together in hope that they make a bigger impact.

This campaign group organised a No Faith in Trident day which involved a vigil outside the nuclear weapons factory in Burghfield, Berkshire. This venue was chosen as the factory is involved in the production and transportation of nuclear warheads. A small number of members of YFGM chose to blockade an entrance to the factory so that vehicles were prevented from entering the site. The trustees of YFGM were approached by the steering group to consider whether YFGM would be able to provide transport bursaries for those who may choose to break the law and participate in the blockade. After seeking guidance from Quaker organisations who create activist material the trustees decided YFGM would be unable to pay a bursary to a person who they knew was actively going to break the law. Prior to the No Faith in Trident event a preparation gathering took place and was seen to be a

place where someone could decide whether or not to take action that could be deemed as illegal.

The Advices and Queries book is given to us as individuals to challenge and inspire. Number 35 guides individuals to respect the law of the country that they live in but reminds them that their first commitment is to God. If an individual recognises that the law is allowing injustices to take place they are reminded to test their convictions and ask their wider meeting for prayers and support while they are deciding the best course of action. This may include breaking the law.

Trustees felt that the right action to take was to fund this individual's attendance to the preparation gathering where he would be able to test his convictions and discern whether to participate in the actions proposed.

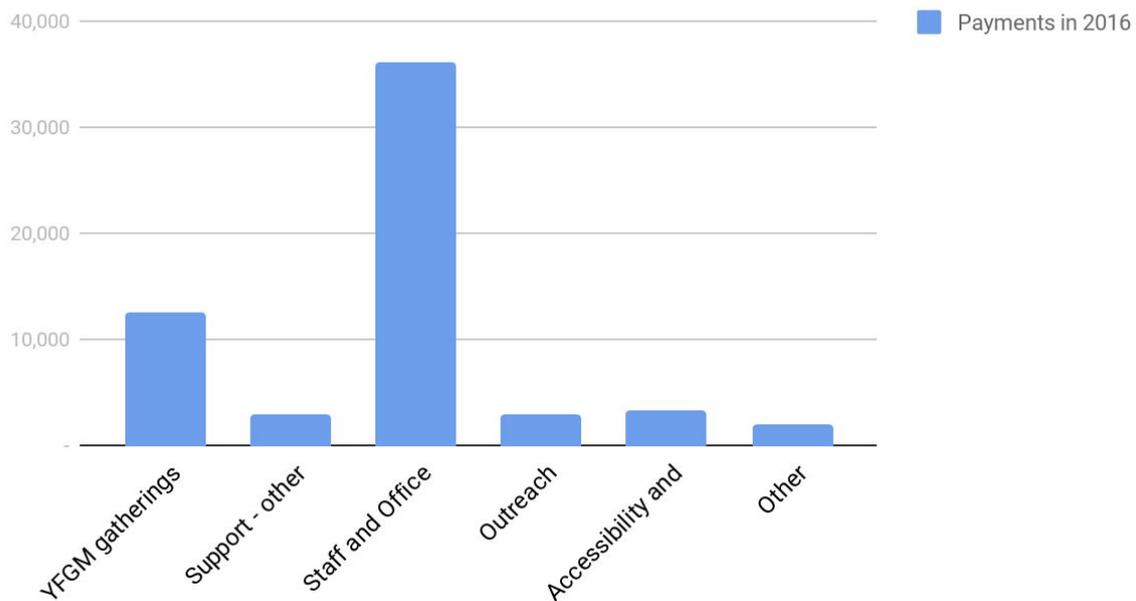
The series of events around Trident was arranged leading up to parliament's vote to replace the missile programme. Unfortunately, parliament voted to replace it and this will lead YFGM to consider what to do next in terms of this concern.

With an increased emphasis on outreach (attracting new members into YFGM) greater numbers of members attended the last YFGM of 2016 in Lancaster. Those numbers included many newcomers who were welcomed as part of the YFGM community. A frequent part of YFGM is to introduce members to the decision making process of Quakers. This is referred to as the "Quaker business method". Normally there would be a role play illustrating how the methods work; however, on the Saturday of this particular YFGM a different approach was taken. The business method was broken down into 4 concepts. Discussions about these 4 concepts were facilitated and as a result we saw that the divine reaches into all aspects of Quaker life even those that on the surface appear mundane. A representative from the Student Christian Movement delivered a session on what Quaker discipleship means. Through meeting for worship for business we explored our role as a community in the wider Quaker world through considering appointing representatives to both the Britain Yearly Meeting 'Engaging young adult Quakers' (EYAQ) project steering group and BYM's sustainability group. We agreed to appoint a representative to the EYAQ steering group, and look forward to working with Britain Yearly Meeting to improve engagement with young adult Quakers.

The mental wellbeing steering group have been led to focus on the contributions that YFGM has on people's wellbeing, good and bad, in the hopes that we can improve how we support people in the future. A proposal for a survey to take place with the aim to produce case studies was brought forward in Lancaster and approved by the whole meeting. This should be carried forward into 2017.

Finances

Payments made



As can be seen, our largest expenditure is our staff and office costs, which this financial year, look considerably higher than average (a little over £20,000 higher) due to a late invoice for costs from 2015. Our largest grant from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT), was awarded to us to support the internship programme (i.e. staff) established in partnership with Britain Yearly Meeting to help us achieve our strategy and meet our charitable aims and objectives.

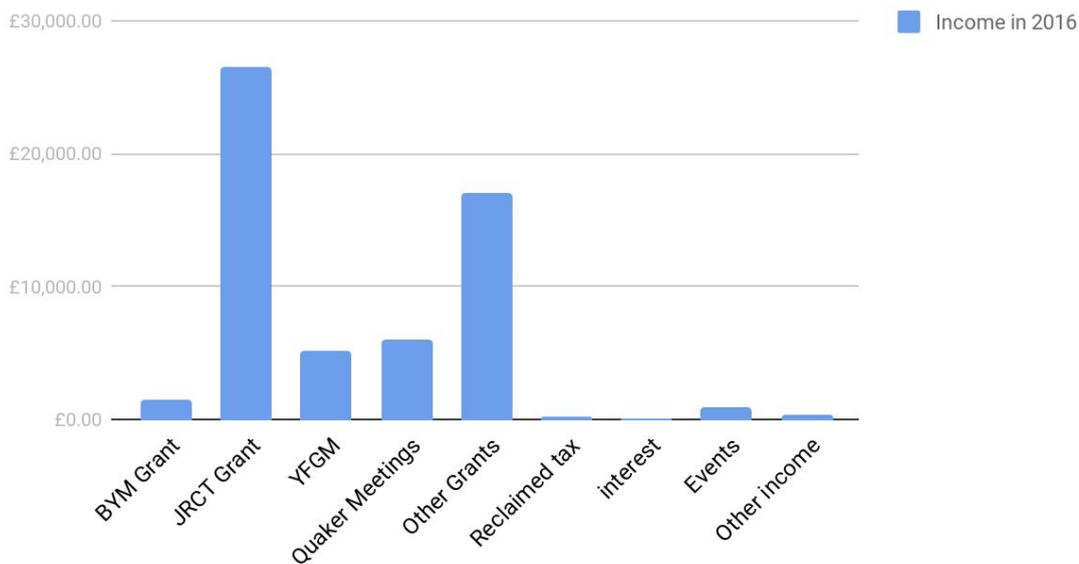
This year (under 'other') we made a one off payment to support young adults to attend the Friends' Worldwide gathering held in Peru. This was a pledge that as a community YFGM made in our October meeting in 2015, and which we paid out in 2016. The money was donated to Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) as the organisers of the gathering to distribute to Young Friends accordingly.

In a similar vein of developing connections with Friends across the world two representatives were also sent to an interfaith gathering in Poland, for which our interfaith representatives sourced funding from Churches Together in England, and Britain Yearly Meeting. This arrangement was unfortunately not arranged through our usual business method. Due to short time constraints it was organised and agreed during planning meetings amongst volunteers and as a result didn't undergo the usual rigor and oversight of our other activities. The outcome was complications surrounding payments in and out of our accounts and receipts from the organising charity which took a lot of unpicking to sort out. We are still awaiting refunds of deposits made and are in communication with the charity about this. We have tightened up our policy surrounding payments outside of YFGM events and approving attendance at events in light of this.

Fundraising

We worked to diversify our income streams in light of our final grant from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) being given at the end of this year. As can be seen in the table below, the JRCT grant is by far the largest single source of income we had and it was important for us to prepare to meet this financial gap through other means when it ended at the end of 2016. As a community we appointed a new fundraiser with that very aim, and it was heartening to see an individual brought forward who had experience that could bring in new ideas.

Income Sources



With our fundraiser's fresh input we have developed a range of ideas to help continue to fund our activities. Our fundraiser has been approaching and applying for a wider range of grants and bursaries and created a fundraising schedule; we developed a fundraising leaflet which will be shared around Quaker Meetings across Great Britain in early 2017 to seek donations; we have approached our parent church (Britain Yearly Meeting) for further support with 'outreach' to bring our work to the attention of more young adults who can benefit from involvement in our community; and for the first time held a fundraising ceilidh event to raise awareness of our work and help raise funds in an engaging and entertaining way.

Our Reserves Policy

"The minimum level of reserves that we aim to maintain should be approximately equal to six months to one year plus any expenditure required in order to honour existing employment contracts. We may also need to build up extra funds to enable us to offer a new contract on this basis. This is in order to enable us to survive a sudden drop in our expected income and to get new fundraising strategies in place without immediately curtailing our activities. The level of reserves required should be considered annually during the budgeting process, and the budget should be set in accordance with this policy."

Given that our reserves fall to £59,951 this year end, and our total expenditure this year was £59,974 we are currently holding a satisfactory sum (equivalent to approximately one year of expenditure) in our reserves, in light of this being the final year of funding from our largest donor, and in anticipation of a deficit of up to £15,000 next year, we feel that having reserves towards the upper limit of our policy is appropriate.