

# YOUNG FRIENDS GENERAL MEETING (YFGM)

*Bournemouth Friends Meeting House, 27<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> May 2005*

## **Minutes**

### **Present:**

Co-Clerks:	Nessa Grimes & Guy Milner
Treasurer:	Huw Still
Co-Convenors of Overseers:	Mike Stokes & Tom Rowlands
Management Officer:	Ruth Wood
Coordinator:	Ellie Colyer

### **Monthly Meeting Representatives:**

Bristol & Frenchay:	Andrew Rendle	Cheshire:	Darrel Spence
Colchester & Coggeshall:	Maud Grainger	Darlington:	Sally Nicholls
	Jez Smith	Hampstead:	Jonathan Doering
Hardshaw East:	Sarah Donaldson	Kingston & Wandsworth:	Annabella Krol
Leicester:	Peter Dixon	Luton & Leighton:	Hereward Mills
Mid Somerset:	Dorothy Lovell	Notts & Derbys:	Marie Drouin
Southampton:	Michelle von Hunnius	South East Scotland:	Vivian Barty-Taylor
Southwark, Lewisham & Bromley:	John Bacon	Reading:	Rob Osborne
Warwickshire:	Fran Lane	West Devon:	Hannah Jones
	Claire Kimberley	West Scotland:	Oliver Robertson
Westminster:	Ellen Marshall	Witney:	Alyn Still
Worcester & Shropshire:	Dawn Filtness	York:	Hannah Spiers

Adam Boardman, Adrian Platt, Aidan McCartney, Andrew Williams, Becky Herring, Ben Jarman, Bettina Gray, Blair Hunwick, Emily Maddison, Eudora Pascall, Fabienne Mari Ange, Hannah Leavett, Hannah Spiers, Helena Wren, Helen Percy, Hugh Williams, James Barnard, Jennifer Brett, Jenny Moy, Joseph Coffin, Katharine McIntosh, Kris Turner, Luke Spiers, Marion Penn, Mark Downing, Mark Russ, Nick Rendle, Paul Levy, Rachel Xerri, Sam Barnett-Cormack, Simon Best, Simon Gray, Tom Harris

**Total: 64**

### **05/13 Opening Minute**

We welcome each other to our May YFGM in Bournemouth, and extend a special welcome to Fabienne Mari Ange from Madagascar. We look forward to having the extra time over the bank holiday, and a smaller group, to grow closer to one another.

### **05/14 Report and Minutes from Planning Weekend**

Vivian Barty-Taylor has given a report from our April Planning Weekend. We will look at the relationship between Planning Weekend and YFGM later in our weekend.

### **05/15 World Gathering of Young Friends Appeal and Bursaries**

We have heard from Marie Drouin about the brilliant work that the WGYF Appeal Group have been doing. As of April, they have raised £24774.80 through generous donations from local meetings, and by holding an Auction of Promises, organising international meals and producing and selling a wide range of merchandise. We would like to congratulate the Appeal Group for their success.

We would like to extend the current appeal until the October YFGM 2005, since the money we raise between now and then will continue to support the running of the event.

In minute P04/09, we set aside an amount of £5000 from the YFGM General Fund to provide bursaries for Young Friends from BYM to attend the event. Not all of this money has been taken up, and we would like to open up these bursaries to support volunteers from Britain and Europe who will help to run the event. We authorize our YFGM Treasurer to oversee this process.

#### **05/16 Our individual links to BYM**

Simon Best and John Fitzgerald have introduced an informative and entertaining session about our individual links with Britain Yearly Meeting. They have given us an introduction to some of the work of BYM, and explained what we as individuals can do to get involved with this work. We thank Simon and John for speaking to us.

#### **05/17 World Gathering of Young Friends Spiritual Communication Exercise**

Jenny Moy and Marie Drouin have led us in a session exploring our conception of worship, and how worship challenges us, based on preparatory materials for the World Gathering of Young Friends. It has been rewarding to share these thoughts in small groups and through visual media. We thank Jenny and Marie for giving us the opportunity to do this.

#### **05/18 Relationship between YFGM and Planning Weekend**

Sarah Donaldson and Dawn Filtness have facilitated a discussion about how YFGM and Planning Weekend relate to each other. Some issues have arisen as we have worked within the current structures. It has been unclear where the balance of power between the two meetings lies and what authority Planning Weekend has to make decisions.

We want to empower and encourage everyone to participate in our decision-making processes. We also want to continue to allow time on the YFGM agenda for the exploration and discussion of spiritual, moral and ethical issues which affect us as Young Friends.

We consider that there may be some decisions that Planning Weekend can make, without divorcing the majority of YFGM from the decision-making process, and that these might be brought to YFGM as a report at the beginning of each YFGM, with the option of renewed discussion on those decisions if YFGM thought it necessary.

We ask the next PW to bring forward a clear set of proposals outlining what these decisions might be limited to and agree to continue PWs as a chance for smaller committees to meet and for ideas for the agenda to be thought through more carefully prior to presentation before the whole group.

#### **05/19 Do we want an age limit to YFGM nominations?**

James Barnard and John Bacon have told us about some of the issues surrounding the nominations process for people near the upper end of YFGM's age range. In the past this has caused confusion where external bodies have asked for representatives within a specified age range. We ask that, where these criteria are made clear by external bodies, nominations committee follow them, but strongly maintain that, in the absence of these criteria, any representative we appoint is representative of YFGM whatever their age.

We feel that it is not appropriate for an upper age limit to be considered in isolation, as there are a number of factors that must be considered when going through the

nominations process. We ask that nominations committee and the special interest group considering this bring forward some possible ideas to Planning Weekend with a view to these being considered and then brought to October YFGM. We encourage those with interest in this issue to attend this Planning Weekend to offer their input and support this process.

### **05/20 YFGMs ‘breaking even’**

We have heard from Huw Still, our General Fund Treasurer, about finance committee’s thoughts on paragraph 3c in our finance policy. This makes an explicit link between the income we get from donations at YFGM and the cost of running YFGM (not including planning). We recognise that since YFGM cannot run without planning, it is arbitrary to aim to ‘break even’ in this way.

We will remove paragraph 3c from our finance policy.

We will provide information to support people in making a decision about how much to pay when they attend YFGM. It is important to continue to provide a ‘sliding scale’ of suggested contributions, but also information about how much different aspects of YFGM cost, in order to allow everyone to make a sensible, informed decision about how much it is fair for them to pay. We will encourage people to take into account their own travel costs for attending YFGM, adjusting their contribution as they feel necessary.

We ask finance committee to bring back a draft of this new information to the next YFGM.

### **05/21 Nominations**

We appoint the following people to serve in the following posts for the periods mentioned. We release from service those mentioned, warmly thanking them for all their work on our behalf.

<b>Position</b>	<b>Period of Service</b>	<b>Person appointed</b>	<b>Released from service</b>
Quintessential	3 years	Maud Grainger	Vivian Barty-Taylor
Special Interest Co-ordinator	3 years	Sally Nicholls	-
International Secretary	3 years	Marie Drouin	Simon Gray
Outreach Committee	3 years	Tom Harris	-
		Alyn Still	-
Pardshaw Committee	3 years	Darrel Spence	-
Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee Nomination Committee	3 years	Ellen Marshall	-
YFGM Appeal Group	Until October 2005	Aidan McCartney	Reappointed
		Nick Rendle	Reappointed
		Marie Drouin	Reappointed
		James Doering	Reappointed
<i>Young Quaker</i> Editor	3 years	Emily Maddison	Hugo Finley
Britain Yearly Meeting Summer Gathering Planning Committee Representative	Until Oct 2007	Mike Stokes	-
Additional attendees at Planning Weekend	Until October 2005	Ben Jarman	Aron Ellefson
		Michelle von Hunnius	Emily Maddison
		Oliver Robertson	Paul Dodwell

Leaveners Committee Representative	-		Fran Lane
Nominations Committee	2 years	Hugh Williams Sarah Donaldson	Ellen Marshall Sally Nicholls

### **05/22 Consultation from Membership Procedures Committee**

We have had time to consider the proposals from Members Procedures Committee which suggest a more flexible approach to the process of membership. We have worked in small groups and ask the clerks to send the notes from these to the Membership Procedures Committee as feedback.

### **05/23 RECAST report**

We have had time, both in small groups and as a whole, to consider some of the key recommendations that RECAST have proposed. We are mindful that any changes we make to our structures should help us to carry out God's work and listen to the Spirit's leading. Our religious purpose should not be compromised in an effort to streamline our organisation.

YFGM has recently gone through a restructuring process and we have found it valuable to keep the changes we have made under review. After trying some solutions out for a period of time, we have been able to continue with those that have helped us become a more cohesive and spiritually uplifting body. Other changes we have modified as we became aware of the different issues raised by working in this way.

We encourage BYM to be brave in going forward with the process of change as a response to the RECAST report, keeping our ability to respond to the call of God as our priority and allowing us the flexibility to adapt solutions if they don't meet our needs. We are in the middle of a long process and it may sometimes be hard to see where we will end up, but this is an uncertainty that BYM must embrace, not fear.

We thank Jenny Moy, Esther Boyd and Hilary Brooks for taking the time to come and present RECAST's recommendations to us. We send this minute to the Recording Clerk, and Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, along with the notes made on the proposals in our small group sessions.

### **05/24 Bank Account pass code**

We have had the opportunity at Planning Weekend to review the terms and conditions of the account, and have decided to continue using The Co-operative Bank p.l.c. We ask our treasurer, Huw Still, to register a new pass-number in relation to our account.

### **05/25 Volunteers**

We thank the following people for volunteering to help at YFGM in Bristol in October.

Caterers: Oliver Robertson  
Andrew Williams

Pan Transport: Marie Drouin

Off-floor accommodation: Ellie Colyer

We ask our Co-ordinator to forward to Karl Gibbs in the Recording Clerk's office the names of the following people who would like to serve as ushers at Britain Yearly Meeting in York:

Mike Stokes  
Sally Nicholls

Darrel Spence  
Nessa Grimes  
Guy Milner

**05/26 Closing Minute**

It has been good for us to be together again in Bournemouth, and we have appreciated the extra time the Bank Holiday has allowed us to build our community and to get to know one another better. During the weekend we have had the opportunity to think about where we fit in, both in the structures that surround us in the Society of Friends and in our own relationships with God through worship. The strength we have shown in going through this process, and in building our community, has renewed and invigorated our faith. We have made the most of pleasant surroundings to share our talents with each other and to try to connect on many different levels.

We look forward to seeing each other again in Bristol, and extend to those of us participating in Britain Yearly Meeting, the Pardshaw Summer Gathering and the World Gathering of Young Friends our support in spirit.

Signed in and on behalf of YFGM,

Guy Milner and Nessa Grimes  
Co-clerks

## Membership Procedures Consultation

- YFGM is very supportive of using wider Quaker networks
- Good opportunities for local meetings to find out more about applicants by contacting other Quaker networks applicant is involved in
- We should publicise *how* to apply - better information might dispel some concerns which are about process & not principles
- Affirmation (when accepted into membership) is a good thing
- Important that discernment is focused so applicant is clear about why & whether membership is appropriate. Flexibility should not become wishy-washiness
- YFGM should support/encourage YFGM members and help them to integrate into their local meetin as well as national events.
- Concern about how YFGM's input might be received by MMs - also who would be approached to give this input?

Notes from the RECAST session at YFGM in Bournemouth. 27<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> May 2005

#### Pro-Active role for Quaker Life:

- Important to maintain distinction that Recording Clerk is not Chief Executive!
  - We are all ‘guardians of Yearly Meeting’s values’
  - Of centrally-managed work (yes)
    - But not through nominations process...
- Renewal of Eldership role necessary
  - YFGM well placed – explanation/understanding of business method given for new members and a renewal of the ideas behind it too
  - Business method can be lax in the society
  - Does YFGM have possibilities for ‘seeding’ the business method?
    - Less opportunity for getting into bad habits!

#### Meeting for Sufferings or Representative Meeting and Trustees for centrally managed work

- Will the pool of people able to be trustees be very small? It will be a hard job requiring specific skills  
Will it cut out younger people?
- The proposed new structure might make central work more effective/efficient to manage while reducing Quaker participation. Is this about the *secular* ‘business’ model?
- Keen to keep fullest possible representation
- Proposals could save money – *simpler*
- Current Meeting for Sufferings role in concerns – these should be tested first locally. Will there be too much delay if Representative Meeting only meets every few months?
- **Concerns about reduced representation**
  - Distance between Monthly Meetings and the work done and how the work is done
  - Relationship between representative meeting and the Trustees for Centrally Managed work
    - Difference between legal charity trusteeship and Quaker ‘trusteeship’

#### Changing names

- Support for ‘Quaker’ over ‘Friends’
- Would business meetings be referred to separately?
- Monthly Meeting communities – Area Meetings
- Would it be more difficult to distinguish between Preparative Meetings and Monthly Meetings?
- Meeting monthly represents an aspiration. Although there is a need to reflect reality.
- Why define our community by our business meeting?
- Changing names, would it make you feel differently about your wider Quaker community?

#### Representative Councils

- Fears that membership at these events would not be solved by replacing them with conferences
- Losing a valuable link
- RECAST talking about increased representation yet Representative councils being laid down and Meeting for Sufferings being replaced by only one representative council
- More preparation for representatives to increase interaction
- Are we not realizing reality?
- How will conferences better the feeding back?
- Changing the format – not addressing the problems?
- Balance of top down and bottom up – we mustn’t lose sight of it
- Tighten the existing structure (baby and the bath water)
- Would conferences be as well attended? Rep council been used to cover difficult topics!

Church Government in 2 volumes?

- You might think we have 1 book for 2 purposes so we should split it, but actually we have 1 book for 1 purpose – being a Quaker. There is no secular in Quaker life
- The participatory nature of a Quaker meeting makes it very important that everyone does know how things work, some people might also find it inspiring
- In Ireland people get both books when they join, one you might read, one's more for reference – but the church government one also has inspirational quotes. With two books, each is lighter.
- Definitive version is always now available online so it needn't be reprinted as often, paper reference will become less and less important
- We also support a re-write
  - Style has changed a lot in the last 40 years
- 'I grew up in a Quaker family and I still find bits impenetrable, we're making it hard for convinced Friends'
- Some parts are really important, eg history, membership, but the administrative things are less flexible eg nominations, basic processes.
- Distinguish between essential, advisory and optional (don't think YFGM follows any of the structures, just the business method)
- If you split it in two people will just buy the other bit but the non-administrative bits of church government are important for people to have and understand (administrative bits could be separated for more frequent revision)
- Bits which just apply to specific jobs could be separated although non-administrative descriptions of jobs are valuable for everyone and it would be hard to draw the line
- Could we change the order? At the moment, it's more like 'Practice and Faith'
- Cant' we have two books but you have to buy them together? Or keep them together!
- What's the downside of 1 book bits of which people don't read? More expensive, especially if you have to re-print it often.