**Meeting for Sufferings November 2018**

*The agenda, papers, and minutes of Meeting for Sufferings is at*  ***www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/papers-and-minutes***

In “The Friend” 30 Nov and 7 Dec there is an excellent narrative of the topics and discussions at MfS which took place 23-25 November at Woodbrooke. It was an opportunity to discuss in depth the issues that have come to the fore during the year. It also shows the huge variety of concerns that are engaging Quakers.

**A simple church** Having a ‘simple church’ has been affirmed as a new priority, and will link with the revision of the Book of Discipline. To develop that ‘simple church’, should we aim to do less, and focus on a smaller number of issues?

**Palestine – boycott commitment** I heard by chance the Justin Webb interview with Paul Parker on R4 about Quakers taking a stand against businesses benefitting from the occupation of the left bank in Palestine. This press release had come to the notice of the Jewish Board of Deputies and they had commented rather tetchily about the Quaker action. The person on R4 made Quakers sound like the Mafia, ‘they’re all over the place’. An individual from the Press Office at Friends House gave a blow by blow account of how the news broke and how it was handled. I found this professional and impressive.

**Post-Brexit Divisions in the UK** Helen Drewery is retiring from head of Witness and Worship. She asked: ‘How has our work over the last year strengthened the life of our Yearly Meeting?’ Oliver Robertson is the new head of Witness and Worship. Jeff Beatty, clerk of Quaker Peace and Social Witness, said: ‘Our focus is on building sustainable peace and justice for all, but how are we to measure success? If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.’ Helen Drewery commented that it was necessary to ‘constantly...assess risk’ for activities. Jeff said that a group has been set up to consider ‘what makes our international work distinctive.’

**Diversity – an update** Jocelyn Burnell spoke of Quaker Life Central Committee’s call for gender diversity, and the commitment needed ‘to move forward together in making our Society a truly welcoming place for all’.

**Review of the Committee on Clerks** The review highlighted the work done saying that there were issues about transparency, simplicity, communication, and the unequal distribution of power. The review recommended, among other things, that BYM trustees should nominate their own clerk and the YM treasurer. YM clerks should be found by Central Nomination Committee, which should be expanded, while Committee on Clerks should be laid down. There is a need to help Friends who can develop the required experience to clerk very large Meetings.

**Sustainability** It is now clear that ‘sustainability’ is a major thread to link with environmental threats. MfS laid down the Sustainability Group, as the commitment to sustainability within the Yearly Meeting is now on firmer ground than previously. There are now four proposals for MfS to consider:

* Is MfS content with the way the work is being shared?
* Is MfS content with meetings between groups and committees taking place in future, to provide ‘liaison and mutual encouragement’?
* Should Woodbrook be approached about future exploration of Friends’ activities?
* Can BYM commit to becoming ‘carbon neutral’?

The first three proposals were accepted, but the fourth was felt to be complex, especially given the range and age of our Meeting Houses, and needed further work.

Paul Parker was part of a faith delegation that met Claire Perry, the energy minister, some months ago. He felt that there was a genuine engagement. Sufferings will return to the sustainability issue in the future.

*KH  
MfS Representative*