

# Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) is the representative body of Britain Yearly Meeting which makes corporate decisions through discernment whilst Yearly Meeting is not in session (for a better explanation, see Chapter 7 of Quaker Faith and Practice!)

Our representative, **Rici Marshall**, gives a taste of the 6th Feb meeting through three pieces of business discussed.

At our next MfS meeting, we will be considering stories from around the Yearly Meeting of how we are 'living out Quaker Values in the World'. What is YFGM's story? (Answers on a postcard, 63 Beechwood Terrace, LS4 2NG).

Your representative,  
*Rici Marshall*

## Refugee Crisis

Quaker Peace and Social Witness are meeting at the end of February to discern what further action Quakers in Britain should undertake in response to the current Refugee crisis. Citizens UK, a UK charity, is gathering support from other interested bodies to establish a 'Private sponsorship scheme' in which groups within the UK could commit to supporting an individual or family for the first 12 months of their being in the UK, financially and in all other ways to help them get established in the UK. The initial response to the question of whether Quakers in Britain should be involved was a 'guarded yes'. One Friend quoted someone they had worked with in local refugee and asylum seeker support who said that it's in a Quaker's DNA to help in areas such as this. Subsequently, less supportive contributions were made, expressing fear that this private scheme could create a 'three tier system', taking away resources for the current work being done by Quakers for refugees and asylum seekers and take away a focus on lobbying for a reform of our inadequate public system. We also don't want to risk drawing much needed efforts away from tackling War as the cause of the crisis. Many Friends had undertaken careful discussion with Friends in their meetings and this is all contributing to the discernment at Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) later in the month.

## Low Carbon Sustainable Community

We heard of work from the Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) Sustainability Group about the progress being made towards embedding our commitment to becoming a Low Carbon Sustainable Community into all of the work of all Friends within Britain. We reaffirmed that this commitment is not extra work to engage with, but enables a sharper focus for all that we do, as we include consideration of environmental impact of all of our activities. We are called to be doing real visionary work against the biggest challenge of our time. The focus of the commitment is hopefully continuing to move on, beyond a narrow focus on 'greening' our buildings', to having those tender conversations about how we bring greater change into our lifestyles. We were encouraged by the positive tone of the report and remember that we must go forwards in our work on this commitment joyfully. The BYM sustainability Group are organising a conference at Swannick about 'Being a Transformative Community' 18-20 March. If anyone would like to attend, spaces are still available.

## Long-term Framework

Over our last three meetings we have considered where Quakers in Britain are heading in the future, and the long-term framework. In September we adopted the 'Our Faith in the Future' text, and in December we considered the current state of our Area Meetings. At this February meeting we considered how to bridge the gaps, what are the barriers and how we overcome them. As representative of Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM), I was overwhelmed by a sense of joy at how YFGM is at the moment. I feel that right now we have the strength to be functioning how we want, as illustrated by the apparent ease of filling nominations (quite different from where we were 2 years ago). We have had great numbers of new people at every weekend over the last couple of years and are retaining many of them who are now fully integral members of our community. Contrasting our experience with the barriers expressed in other Area Meetings, I wonder if my feeling of YFGM's healthiness at this moment in time is through the sense of community we build and our transparency at explaining what we do and why. For example, members of Quinty take care to explain Quaker Business Method in a different and interesting way each weekend (in many Area Meetings, even long attending Friends have been confused about the point of the slightly more archaic parts of Quaker discipline). We are actively trying to live out our Quaker values in the World through our Concerns, and these are giving us extra experience in learning to build community. I do, however, wonder if my perception of the renewed healthiness of YFGM (and indeed my own Local Meeting) is partly the new perspective gained from taking on roles (i.e., Overseer) and would thoroughly recommend this to anyone!