Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) 2 February 2019

Book of Discipline Revision Committee

A group of people with wide and varied skills has been brought together for the revision for the Book of Discipline. Sixteen-year old James Weir from Cumberland and seventeen-year-old Anya Nanning Ramamurthy from North London Meeting (AM) are the youngest of the twenty-four selected by Central Nominations Committee. David Beale interim co-clerk of CNC described it as ‘the most important and difficult work I’ll ever do for Friends as it was so multi-dimensional’.

What can Friends offer in a ‘post-truth’ world?

‘The lack of honesty in public affairs is impacting on all our testimonies,’ so went the Southern Marches Area Meeting minute.

Stevie Krayer, Clerk of Southern Marches AM, acknowledged that untruths in the world are ‘not a new problem’: the concern raised was widely recognised as being significant. Paul Parker, recording clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting said that ‘our concerns...are shared by a wide range of organisations in civil society’ and that Friends may need to admit their ‘own complicity’ in being ‘taken in’, thinking that they are ’righter’ than others. He cited research that shows older social media users are more likely to share untrue content and reflected that ‘we‘re as human as anyone else...we may need to do more listening than speaking’. He urged Friends to find ‘simple things rooted in faith’ to say.

Friends reject plans to change AM representation

While newcomers may find MfS ‘confusing or opaque’, after discussion it was concluded that the process of having the ‘representative’ and the ‘alternate’ was better than having nominated appointees, as proposed. The Arrangements Group is to consider the matter further.

Record of all Friends who died in the First World War.

Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) has committed itself to creating a record of Quakers who died in the First World War, after moving ministry by Gethin Evans at MfS in February. Three minutes were sent by Mid-Wales Area Meeting last July about Quakers recognising the different ways that Friends were involved in World War One. While Friends’ Ambulance Unit (FAU) and Friends War Victims Relief Committee (FWVRC) are well documented, Friends who enlisted in the armed forces, and those who died, are not. Gethin Evans’ research indicates that at least 216 combatants, 16 conscientious objectors, thirty-three FAU and FWVRC members, and two civilians died during WW1.

Court and Prison register. Sentencing pending (as at 2 February 2019).

Representatives were extremely concerned at the way the Stansted 15 had been charged with anti-terrorism offences, which could have given rise to significant sentences in gaol.

Update: All were found guilty of endangering safety at aerodromes. Three of the protesters were given suspended sentences and twelve were given community orders. Each person will have a criminal record based on the charge, which counts as a conviction for terrorist activity.

Terms of Reference for Standing Nominations Group and Sustainability Monitoring group

Two new MfS groups had their terms of reference approved by representatives at Sufferings. The Standing Nominations Group will bring forward names of Friends for appointments referred by MfS.

The Sustainability Monitoring Group will monitor the Yearly Meeting’s commitment to sustainability. This will include monitoring receipt of reports from trustees, committees and Area Meetings as well as ensuring that Sufferings includes a substantive agenda item about sustainability at least once a year.