

## **Meeting for Sufferings December 2nd 2017**

The annual young people's participation day ran alongside this meeting. They joined us at the start and end of the day, and some of them also joined us for the items on the revision of the book of discipline and the sanctuary everywhere manifesto. Jonathan, Emily and Sarah from our AM attended.

The two main items on the agenda were the book of discipline revision preparation group report and the sanctuary everywhere manifesto.

### **Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group (RPG)**

This group has been considering the feasibility of revising Quaker Faith and Practice Following a consultation with AMs in 2014, MfS recommended to Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) that the time was right to begin a revision. The RPG was set up when BYM failed to reach a decision on the matter. This group has taken a considered approach involving establishing the Quaker Faith and Practice (QFP) reading project and the theology think tank and receiving feedback from both. The results of their work have allayed fears of exacerbating the religious differences between us and using time energy and resources that could be better spent on the problems in the world. Their recommendation is that the time is now right for a full revision of QFP and MfS endorsed this.

This revision should:

- 1) Begin with, but not be limited to church government, namely the sections which focus on our procedures and corporate discipline.
- 2) The revision should divide material between that in the main body of the book, which lays out principles, and supplementary material, which gives details.
- 3) The revision should draw on the richness of theological thought in our yearly meeting, now and historically, seeing diversity as fundamental to our community, not as a flaw.

4) The Revision Committee be given the freedom to be creative, while remaining in close contact with the yearly meeting.

The RPG was delighted with the responses to the QFP reading project, which came from all over the yearly meeting.

### The Sanctuary Everywhere Manifesto

Following the October Meeting for Sufferings request for further work on this a revised draft was presented to this meeting. This provided more of a historical and faith context for the manifesto as well as offering some amendments to the original text. MfS representatives engaged passionately & wholeheartedly in considering the altered document and a final version was agreed and is available for use. (See appendix to this report)

### Minutes from AMs

Minutes from AMs were received on the following:

- i. Staffordshire AM - Concern about the poverty of public services in the UK.
- ii. Kendal & Sedbergh AM - For the Common Good - Ride of Witness for Equality & the Common Good to be held in summer 2018nwhich will be passing through 12 AMs.
- iii. Devon AM - asking BYM to consider adding to their current list of exclusions for investment purposes any company that is profiting from the occupation of the West Bank.
- iv. Sussex East AM - regarding concern over the use of taxes in the UK to fund involvement in war.

All of these minutes were forwarded to QPSWCC for advice, pending future consideration. The third was also forwarded to BYM trustees and Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations.

## Reports

Reports were received from Meeting of Friends in Wales and General Meeting for Scotland, as well as from other European Yearly Meetings.

Sue Goodson

Meeting for Sufferings Representative

## **Appendix**

### **Sanctuary Everywhere Manifesto**

As Quakers, we have long worked for peace and equality, because of our belief that there is that of God in everyone, everywhere, whoever they are.

Through Quakers' longstanding work welcoming newcomers to our shores, we have seen up close that the government's creation of a 'hostile environment' is increasingly embedding policies of discrimination into the practices of the British state. Quakers in Britain are committed to working with others to change this, creating a culture of compassion and welcoming hospitality that answers that of God in every person.

Our Meeting for Sufferings was born of a response to the government's systematic discrimination against Quakers in the past. Today we turn that experience into solidarity, and stand against all oppression and suffering. We declare our determination to work for sanctuary everywhere, including here in Britain, by agreeing this Manifesto for change.

- Human rights standards for all should be the foundation on which any national policy or international agreement on migration is founded, and these include the right to work, to learn, to housing, to medical care and to security in the event of adverse circumstances beyond personal control.

- We will campaign for change to the asylum process so that it is built on a culture of compassion and practical response, rather than starting from an assumption of disbelief.
- Within the UK system of immigration detention is institutional violence and discrimination. We oppose indefinite detention, which we believe neither right nor necessary, and will work towards the closure of all detention centres. Other more humane policies are more effective and should be introduced.
- Our belief in every human being's equality leads us to oppose unjust deportations and removals, whether to the EU or to the wider world.
- The humanitarian risks of trafficking and unsafe passage lead us to work for new, peaceful, safer routes of migration including the introduction of humanitarian visas and improved rules for family reunion.
- To ourselves and wider society, we reaffirm our determination to acknowledge and dismantle discrimination in all of its forms, wherever it is to be found.