

# Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations



## TERMS OF REFERENCE

...responsible for keeping Quakers in Britain informed of the various movements towards co-operation within the Christian church and opportunities for interfaith dialogue... [*Quaker faith & practice* 8.12, fifth edition].

### 1. Summary of Purpose

- 1.1. The Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations keeps Britain Yearly Meeting involved in and informed about the various movements towards inter-church co-operation and opportunities for interfaith dialogue.
- 1.2. It liaises and responds on behalf of the Yearly Meeting so that Friends' views on issues of faith and order are represented to other churches and communities of faith.

### 2. Authority, Delegation and Relationships

- 2.1. The Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations is appointed by Meeting for Sufferings and is accountable to Britain Yearly Meeting through Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees.
- 2.2. The Committee's meetings and work are conducted in faithful waiting on the spirit, in the expectation of being guided. We cannot constrain the spirit. If the Committee's leadings would take it out of the area outlined in these terms of reference it should record its leading in a minute to Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees who may discern the way forward or seek the guidance of Meeting for Sufferings.
- 2.3. The Committee should monitor and consider the outcomes of its work in its area of responsibility, and report its conclusions annually through Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees.
- 2.4. The Committee's annual report should help Trustees to ensure that the overall work is well-governed, coherent (in line with the vision expressed by Meeting for Sufferings), and appropriately resourced. The report should focus on the strategic role of the Committee, as described in section 3.1, and include future plans. Staff work is reported to Trustees in other ways, which the Committee may need to draw on without reproducing the material.
- 2.5. The Committee will develop a dialogue with Meeting for Sufferings, engaging them on principles, exploring the framework vision, focussing on major changes and seeking guidance on the future.
- 2.6. The Committee may communicate by minute with Meeting for Sufferings, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and other Central and Standing Committees of Britain Yearly Meeting.
- 2.7. The Committee is responsible for establishing functional sub-committees and working groups as required, for appointments to these subsidiary bodies and for their terms of reference. The Committee is expected to determine priorities for any

subsidiary bodies, to monitor and consider the outcomes of their work and to report its conclusions to Trustees. Membership of these groups may contain Friends and attenders not on the Committee. If required, the Committee is also expected to establish an effective nominations committee and to work closely with Central Nominations Committee.

- 2.8. The Committee may delegate its responsibilities to subsidiary bodies that it may appoint and may seek assistance from staff, and from its own and other working parties, groups, Friends and committees as appropriate.
- 2.9. The Committee may use the resources of the Quaker network maintained by Quaker Life to develop a network of correspondents to assist in its work. Ireland Yearly Meeting may also appoint a few additional Friends to keep in touch with the work of the Committee in this way.
- 2.10. The Committee should send a representative to the annual forum of the Quaker World Relations Committee in order to facilitate communication between the committees and should work with them as is appropriate, especially on theological issues which impact on the work of both committees.
- 2.11. The Committee should monitor inter-church and interfaith relations in the European and global contexts as these impinge on Britain, liaising with other bodies as appropriate. The Committee may respond to initiatives, informing Meeting for Sufferings when it intends to make such a response. It should maintain awareness of the contribution made by Friends from other Yearly Meetings to inter-church and interfaith relations worldwide.

### **3. Duties**

- 3.1. The Committee should:
  - 3.1.1. Establish and develop policies and priorities (including public policy positions) within its areas of work, in consultation with other relevant committees of the Yearly Meeting and agreed by Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees;
  - 3.1.2. Work with Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees to develop and oversee any relevant aspects of the Committee's programme of work within the framework agreed by Meeting for Sufferings and the operational plan agreed by the Trustees;
  - 3.1.3. Review activities in the life of Britain Yearly Meeting in relation to its vision and strategy, test concerns and discern emerging issues, growing points and risks. Advise Trustees concerning changes to the broad priorities and the shape and balance of aspects of the centrally managed work within the Committee's remit;
  - 3.1.4. Monitor the work done and the resources expended within its programme of work. Consider the outcomes achieved, reporting its conclusions to Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees in the Committee's annual report, especially when the report identifies new work or other major changes. It will particularly consider the effectiveness with which news of activities, issues and developments in inter-church and interfaith life is communicated throughout the Yearly Meeting. Reports should be timed to enable Trustees to report to Yearly Meeting.

3.2. The Committee is also responsible for the following duties:

- 3.2.1. To undertake work laid upon it by Britain Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, working within the resources made available by Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees;
- 3.2.2. To consider communication opportunities from an early stage in the planning of all work, consulting with the Communication and Services department;
- 3.2.3. To keep Britain Yearly Meeting informed of inter-church and interfaith developments and opportunities for dialogue and co-operation between churches, between faiths, and between churches and faiths;
- 3.2.4. To respond on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting (further to 3.2.3) so that Friends' views are represented to other churches and communities of faith, and to inform Meeting for Sufferings when it intends to make such a response;
- 3.2.5. To ensure that appropriate induction and training are provided for its own members and members of its subcommittees and working groups;
- 3.2.6. To maintain effective communications within the structures of Britain Yearly Meeting and operate within the policies adopted by Meeting for Sufferings on "speaking out" as regards external communications;
- 3.2.7. To nurture members of Britain Yearly Meeting (specially within local meetings) in awareness and understanding of the inter-church and interfaith dimension of religious and spiritual life, encouraging them as appropriate and responding to requests for help or information;
- 3.2.8. To develop, in consultation with Quaker Life, Quaker Peace & Social Witness and others, resources to bring together Friends in their local and area meetings, and other groupings, to learn more about, and support, inter-church and interfaith issues and relationships.
- 3.2.9. To identify, consider and clarify theological, social and other relevant issues:
  - 3.2.9.1. which arise in the life of Britain Yearly Meeting from our inter-church and interfaith involvement: (e.g. membership, the nature of our Religious Society, etc.);
  - 3.2.9.2. which emerge in the inter-church and interfaith life of Britain, (so that Britain Yearly Meeting can make an informed contribution at the various national and local levels);and draw them to the attention of relevant Britain Yearly Meeting committees and bodies;
- 3.2.10. To ensure that the work of the Committee is manageable, achievable, and within budget;
- 3.2.11. To make appointments to inter-church and interfaith bodies which are delegated to the Committee by Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, (for example to the national committees and groups of Churches Together in England);
- 3.2.12. To consult with and advise the Central Nominations Committee over appointments to be made to inter-church and interfaith bodies and to help those appointed to be as effective as possible;
- 3.2.13. To receive reports from Friends appointed by Meeting for Sufferings and the Committee and, where appropriate, from those appointed by General Meeting for Scotland, Meeting of Friends in Wales and other European

Yearly Meetings. Friends nominated by General Meeting for Scotland, Meeting of Friends in Wales and Ireland Yearly Meeting shall have a special responsibility to report to and from their nominating bodies;

- 3.2.14. The Committee should consult with Meeting for Sufferings through Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees in the circumstances laid down in section 7.03 of *Quaker faith & practice* (5th edition).
- 3.3. To achieve the aims of the Committee's overall strategy for their work in accordance with agreed procedures of Britain Yearly Meeting, the Committee is encouraged to ensure that their work:
  - 3.3.1. Is coherent with other centrally managed work, by liaising with other committees and groups or more widely as appropriate;
  - 3.3.2. Is well understood tested and supported, by working with Friends within Britain Yearly Meeting through Quaker structures and processes;
  - 3.3.3. Shares experience and expertise, by working with other Quaker bodies nationally and internationally;
  - 3.3.4. Provides appropriate advice by liaising with staff and volunteers;
  - 3.3.5. Is rooted in Quaker values, expresses Quaker testimonies and builds upon Quaker experiences;
  - 3.3.6. Supports Friends in Britain Yearly Meeting individually in their lives, jointly in their meetings, and corporately in the yearly meeting, to witness to Quaker values and testimonies;
  - 3.3.7. Primarily occurs where Quaker witness has a particular contribution to make and such work can best be done centrally either on behalf of or in support of Friends.

#### **4. Membership and attendance**

- 4.1. The Committee will have a maximum of 15 appointed members and may co-opt a further 10 members. At least one name is submitted through Central Nominations Committee by General Meeting for Scotland, at least one by the Meeting of Friends in Wales and one by invitation to Ireland Yearly Meeting to nominate from amongst its members through Central Nominations Committee. [*Note for clarity: these latter three names form part of the 15 total*].
- 4.2. Members are appointed by Meeting for Sufferings on behalf of Yearly Meeting for a three-year period, one third retiring annually on a rolling basis, with names submitted by the Central Nominations Committee. Reappointment is possible for a second term and exceptionally for a third.
- 4.3. The clerk and assistant clerk are appointed by the Committee from their number.
- 4.4. The Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings, the clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and the Recording Clerk (or his/her nominee) may attend meetings ex-officio.
- 4.5. The World Office of Friends World Committee for Consultation is invited to send a representative (normally the general secretary) to meetings of the Committee.
- 4.6. The Interfaith/Inter-church secretary of Young Friends General Meeting is invited to attend ex officio.
- 4.7. Other Friends, specialists or members of staff may be asked to attend by invitation of the clerk for specific agenda items.

- 4.8. A member of staff, designated by the Recording Clerk, will normally attend Committee meetings to act as secretary to the Committee. Meeting without the secretary should only be with that person's or with the Recording Clerk's agreement.

## **5. Frequency of Meetings**

- 5.1. The Committee should meet as frequently as appropriate for discernment and accountability, with meetings fitting within the calendar agreed with the Recording Clerk's Office [As at April 2011, meetings were residential, three times a year].
- 5.2. The Committee will meet sufficiently frequently to ensure the effective use of the resources it manages and to make timely contributions to the planning, review and reporting cycle:
- 5.3. The Committee should agree a mechanism for conducting business between meetings.

## **6. Agreement of the Terms of Reference**

- 6.1. The Committee shall work within these terms of reference with effect from 1 January 2015 under the authority of minute BYMT-2014-10-15 of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees held 3 October 2014.
- 6.2. The terms of reference should be reviewed at least triennially and may in the interim be amended by minuted decisions of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees.