

Meeting for Sufferings: Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group Terms of Reference

To engage Quakers in Britain in learning, mutual exploration and growth; to provide and encourage a threshing process leading into readiness to participate in any revision of our Book of Discipline.

1. Summary of Purpose

1.1 The Revision Preparation Group is responsible for consulting Quakers in Britain and preparing the Religious Society of Friends for their input and engagement in the development and creation of any revised Book of Discipline.

1.2 The Revision Preparation Group will explore and experiment with different media and formats. It will begin the collection of possible new content and issues to be covered.

1.3 The Group will inform Meeting for Sufferings when it feels the time is right for Yearly Meeting to return to the question of revision. It will present options, recommend any revision process and describe the role for any Revision Committee to be proposed to Britain Yearly Meeting.

2. Authority, Delegation and Relationships

2.1 The “Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group” is accountable to Meeting for Sufferings and is appointed for three years initially. It reports annually to Meeting for Sufferings as well as at the conclusion of its work.

2.2 The Group may set up, appoint and lay down specialist working sub-groups and delegate to them the responsibility for specific areas of work. They may invite other Friends, Britain Yearly Meeting staff or specialists to help on a sub-group.

2.3 The Revision Preparation Group will define their sub-groups’ terms of reference, objectives, success factors and performance measures; and will support the sub-groups and monitor and evaluate their work.

2.5 The Revision Preparation Group will consult with Britain Yearly Meeting Friends for contributions which may be appropriate for inclusion in the Group’s recommendations or helpful to their work in other ways.

2.6 The Revision Preparation Group will consider concerns or issues from Britain Yearly Meeting Friends on the subject of a revision, which they may forward to Meeting for Sufferings if appropriate.

2.7 The Group’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 Group’s leadings would take it out of the area outlined in these terms of reference it should record its leading in a minute to Meeting for Sufferings who may discern the way forward or seek the guidance of Britain Yearly Meeting as appropriate.

2.8 The Group may communicate by minute with Meeting for Sufferings, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and other Central and Standing Committees of Britain Yearly Meeting.

2.9 The Group shall liaise closely with Church Government Advisory Group and Yearly Meeting Publications Group as appropriate.

3. Duties

3.1 The Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group will develop and provide recommendations and advice to Meeting for Sufferings and to Management Meeting as appropriate to the areas of responsibility of the Group, and within the strategic vision articulated by Britain Yearly Meeting in the long-term framework or similar documents.

3.2 The Group will consider the revision process which was used for the current Book of Discipline and the responses to the recent Meeting for Sufferings consultation.

The Revision Preparation Group will hold or commission consultations and provide or commission resources to help Quakers in Britain engage with the current book, and understand what would be involved in undertaking a full or partial revision of the Book of Discipline.

3.2 The Group will run or commission courses, conferences, workshops, lectures or other events to help the Society reach greater clarity on some of the outstanding topics identified by Meeting for Sufferings and listed in Section 7 Appendix 1 of these Terms of Reference.

3.3 The Group may, if it considers it would be helpful, propose consideration of some of the outstanding topics on the agendas of Meeting for Sufferings, Yearly Meeting or other Quaker bodies.

3.4 The Group will experiment with new formats and new media possibilities for the existing text, viewing this also as a pilot for any future revised book.

3.5 The Group will begin work on a collection (perhaps online) of newer material, on which a revision committee might draw in future.

3.6 The Group will report to Meeting for Sufferings when it feels the time is right for Yearly Meeting to return to the question of revision.

3.7 The Revision Preparation Group will offer recommendations to Meeting for Sufferings on possible ways to proceed including pros and cons of:

- a) no substantive revision in the foreseeable future
- b) interim or partial revision to serve for a number of years
- c) full revision

3.8 The report will include advice on processes to be followed, format(s) for the book, mechanisms for creation and collection of any fresh content, and Terms of Reference for any committee needed to undertake further work.

3.9 The Revision Preparation Group may work with partners such as Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, BYM work programmes, listed informal groups and other Quaker bodies. The Group will ensure that any agreements they make to co-operate or share work with other organisations have a clear and unambiguous basis, ratified by Meeting for Sufferings or Management Meeting accordingly.

3.10 The Revision Preparation Group will maintain effective communications within the structures of Britain Yearly Meeting and will operate within the policies on “speaking out” as regards external communications.

4. Membership and Attendance

4.1 The Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group membership consists of between 9 and 12 Friends, nominated by the Central Nominations Committee and appointed by Meeting for Sufferings.

4.2 The Revision Preparation Group may invite other Friends, Britain Yearly Meeting staff or specialists to help on particular issues on its behalf and to attend meetings. The clerk is appointed by Meeting for Sufferings from within the nominated membership.

4.3 The Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings, the Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, the Recording Clerk and the Deputy Recording Clerk may attend meetings ex officio. A member of staff, designated by the Recording Clerk, will normally attend meetings to act as secretary to the Group. Meeting without the secretary should only be with the Recording Clerk’s or secretary’s agreement.

5. Frequency of Meetings

5.1 The Revision Preparation Group shall meet as frequently as appropriate for discernment and accountability, with meetings fitting within the calendar agreed with the Recording Clerk’s Office.

6. Authority

6.1. The Group's meetings and work are conducted in faithfully waiting on the spirit, in the expectation of being guided. We cannot constrain the spirit. If the Group's leadings would take it out of the area outlined in these terms of reference it should record its leading in a minute to Meeting for Sufferings who may discern the way forward or seek the guidance of Britain yearly meeting as appropriate.

6.2 The Revision Preparation Group shall work within these terms of reference under the authority of minute MfS/2014/09/13 of Meeting for Sufferings held 06 09 2014. The terms of reference may be amended by minuted decisions of Meeting for Sufferings.

Appendix 1: Issues not covered or not sufficiently covered in Quaker faith & practice:

(Those which are frequently raised come first, and those said to require serious threshing marked +)

- ++Theism/non-theism
- + New technology and the use of e-communication in various capacities: minutes, records, membership records, on-line worship - ethics of the everyday use of it
- +Canterbury minute 36:Environment/sustainability/finance: ethics of the everyday
- +Membership
- The link between prayer, insight and action, the transformative nature of Quaker worship, Experiment with Light, Advices & Queries for Meetings
- Peace testimony in time of terrorism, our response, drones, witness at bases, conflict within meetings and ongoing disunity
- Family: parenting, safeguarding, changing patterns of family life, spiritual aspects of same sex marriage, being the single Quaker in a family, genetic engineering, surrogate motherhood