

Minutes of Central England Area Quaker Meeting held at Stourbridge Meeting House on 15th June 2019

Clerk: Alison Ironside
Assistant clerk: Cathy Khurana

Elders on duty: Tricia Bradbury, Nicholas Paton-Philip

2019.050 Opening Minute

Our Meeting began with a period of silent worship during which §20.20 of Quaker Faith and Practice was read to us:

For a Quaker, religion is not an external activity, concerning a special 'holy' part of the self. It is an openness to the world in the here and now with the whole of the self. If this is not simply a pious commonplace, it must take into account the whole of our humanity: our attitudes to other human beings in our most intimate as well as social and political relationships. It must also take account of our life in the world around us, the way we live, the way we treat animals and the environment. In short, to put it in traditional language, there is no part of ourselves and of our relationships where God is not present.

Harvey Gillman, 1988

2019.051 Representatives

The following meetings were represented here today:

B&R; BOU, BUL, COT, COV, HAL, SEL, SOL, STO, SUT, WAL, WAR;

The clerks have given permission for the following attenders to join us today:

Ian Taylor (SUT), Hilary Allison (STO), Marina Manassei (STO), Rajan Naidu (STO)

2019.052 Local Meeting Concerns

We had an informative and interesting morning session when we heard of three concerns of Friends, which are supported by their local meetings.

Judith Parkin and Julia Furminger told us about their visit and workshops making re-usable SanPads in Western Uganda.

Carol Rank spoke about Coventry Peace House and associated Peace Organisations.

Sue Jenkins and Elaine Smith spoke about Hope Housing Projects which supports rejected (women) asylum seekers and of the local Hope House where they have built links. They told us of their plans for a sponsored walk to continue their support for this project.

It is hoped that this idea might be repeated in 2020, with another Meeting hosting such a vibrant morning session.

2019.053 Membership Matters

a) Journey into Membership:

We have heard the report of the journey into membership of Marina Manassei, an attender at Stourbridge LM. We welcome her into membership of the Religious Society of Friends and Central England Quakers.

We ask her visitors to welcome her and the clerk to write to her.

b) Journey into Membership:

We have heard the report of the journey into membership of Liwsi Butler, an attender at Walsall LM. We welcome her into membership of the Religious Society of Friends and Central England Quakers. We ask her visitors to welcome her and the clerk to write to her.

c) Accepted Out

Carole Rakodi (EDG) by South Wales Area Meeting.

2019.054 Memorial Minutes

We have received two memorial minutes, from Warwick Quaker Meeting for George Timlin and from Cotteridge Quaker Meeting for Julia Kordan. We have heard parts of these minutes.

We agree to send them to Elders/Overseers Support Group.

2019.055 Woodlands Reports

Dot Hull, the chairperson of the Trustee Directors, has spoken about the Woodlands. Financially they were solvent again these last two years but Dot warned us of the crisis in care throughout the country. Next year will be the 75th year of the Woodlands.

The Woodlands do struggle with finance from the local authority although Wolverhampton local authority do recognise they are an excellent home. This is due to the commitment of all the excellent staff.

We need more Quaker trustees as they are at their minimum number. Care of the Elderly is a long standing concern of this Area Meeting.

Trustees do need to keep abreast of changing Health and Safety matters, infection prevention and associated regulations; but Dot assured us it is possible to learn.

Interested Friends could be co-opted to serve on the management committee, not as a trustee, for a year to introduce them to the knowledge and skills required.

There is still a Meeting for Worship twice a month supported by Stourbridge and Wolverhampton local meetings.

The reports for 2017/18 and 2018/19 are filed with these minutes. We thank Dot Hull and the other trustee directors and the staff of the Woodlands for providing a Quaker environment and care for the residents at the home.

2019.056 QPSW Spring Conference Report

Donald Whitlock has spoken enthusiastically to his written report on this conference where the theme was inclusion, diversity and privilege. He was inspired by the activists he met.

He appreciated the inspiring, uplifting keynote speech by Nim Njuguna. The workshops he attended were not his first choices but the Action for Peace workshop was enlightening and he told us he feels that he might now be able to attend the DSEI demo with some Friends from Solihull Meeting later this year.

We thank Donald Whitlock for attending the conference on our behalf and the report is filed.

2019.057 Update from Low Carbon Commitment Forum

At last Area Meeting (minute 2019.045 refers) we agreed that the clerk should sign the faith leaders letter to Birmingham City Council and we are pleased to hear that Birmingham City Council have now declared a Climate Emergency.

We recognise that this is just a first step and more work needs to be done.

We thank our Low Carbon Commitment Forum for the update report on this, filed with these minutes, and ask them to work with Friends and other faiths in other council regions across the West Midlands and Warwickshire and also ask them how our Area Meeting can contribute in the Birmingham area.

2019.058 Minute Received from Stourbridge LM

We have received Stourbridge's minute 57/19:

Following a performance of a Rock and a Hard Place on 27th April, three Stourbridge Friends met representatives of two women's aid organisations - Black Country Women's Aid (BCWA) and West Mercia Women's Aid (WMWA). It was agreed that we would ask for some financial support to be provided from the Area Meeting Black Country Fund to help these organisations.

According to CEQ guidelines on the correct application of charitable funds, this proposal needs to be accepted as a concern by a Local Meeting, then forwarded to Central England Area Meeting. We are pleased to adopt BCWA and WMWA as a concern of this Meeting.

The BCWA is hoping to have a new extension built and this would need furnishing; their estimate of the cost is £1000 per room. We would ask Area Meeting to donate £2000 from the Black Country Fund. This agreement will allow us to donate to West Mercia Women's Aid and other similar organisations in the future, should we wish to do so.

We ask our clerk to send this minute to Area Meeting.

We understand from Trustees Finance committee that there is money available in this fund, and as this is a LM concern we are happy for money to be granted as requested.

We refer the matter back to Finance Committee for implementation.

2019.059 Investment Update and Revised Investment Policy

Further to our minute 2018.123 at our December 2018 Area Meeting, we are returning to the concern raised by Walsall Meeting.

We have received no minutes from Local Meetings on this matter.

Local Meetings have discretion to invest where they think fit, but should take advice as appropriate.

Our Trustee Finance Committee are still recommending that Meetings use the Churches, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA) COIF Ethical Fund.

We note that Walsall's concern has not gone away, as the COIF ethical fund can be invested in companies that have a very small percentage in areas we would not wish to be involved with although it does screen all investments. We acknowledge that this remains a concern to Walsall Friends, shared by other individual Friends.

As a result of Walsall's concern, our Trustee Finance committee have reviewed the Investment Policy. John Kimberley, our investment treasurer, explained our trustees' position in updating the investment policy which now included some advice taken from Britain Yearly Meeting's (BYM) investment policy, where trustees have obligations which may constrain them more than as individuals. The new version (revised May 2019) is accepted. We are reminded that this policy is a work in progress and further revisions may occur.

We welcome trustees' recommendation to change brokers, in due course, to Rathbone Greenbank Investments, an ethical investment broker, who also manage BYM investments.

2019.060 Nominations

Nominations committee have the following suggestions for service:

- Alistair Dow (EDG) serve on the Peace Hub Management Committee from June 2019 to May 2022
- David Fish (COV) to serve on Old Peoples Fund Trust from June 2019 to May 2025
- Sue Thompson (COT) to serve a third term as an AM Trustee to May 2022
- Claire Bowman (BOU) and John Cockcroft (SUT) to visit Ralph Wallin on his journey into membership
- Helen Begg (SUT) and Howard Saunders (BOU) to visit Barbara Wallin on her journey into membership
- Peter Duckworth (COV) to serve on the Outreach Committee from June 2019 to May 2022

We approve these names and appoint them accordingly

Release from Service

The following Friend has asked to be released:

Cyril Bezant (SEL) from Christmas Parcels Committee

We agree to this request and thank him for his service.

We ask Nominations Committee to find a replacement name.

2019.061 Church and Peace Request

We have received a letter from Church and Peace asking if Priory Rooms can be again used as a venue for a future Regional Gathering meeting of Church and Peace in 2020. Barbara Forbes has spoken to this request.

We agree to host this meeting.

2019.062 Requests to Host Area Meeting in 2020

A suggested list of dates is circulated with these minutes and the clerks would welcome offers of hosting Area Meeting next year.

2019.063 Thanks and Next Meeting

We thank Stourbridge LM for hosting AM. We meet again, at Warwick QMH on July 18th from 6.00 – 9.00pm.

Alison Ironside

Clerk this time