

Minutes of Central England Quakers

Meeting for Church Affairs

Held at Warwick Quaker Meeting House on 18th July 2019

Clerk: Stella Roberts

Assistant clerk: Cathy Khurana

Elders on duty: Gill Smith & Paula Button (WAR)

2019.064 Opening Minute

Our meeting began with a period of silent worship during which we heard read to us part of *Quaker Faith & Practice: Chapter 4:02*

The area meeting is the primary meeting for church affairs in Britain Yearly Meeting. Its role is to develop and maintain a community of Friends, a family of local meetings who gather for worship and spiritual enrichment. It should provide that balance between worship, mutual support, administration, learning, deliberation and social life which can make its meetings enjoyable occasions and build up the spiritual life of its members.

2019.065 Representatives

The following meetings were represented here today:

BOU BUL COT COV HAL KIN SEL STO SUT WAL WAR

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

Christine Bagnall (HAL) Richard Begg (SUT) Fiona Waterhouse (SUT) Pete Doubtfire (BUL)

2019.066 Membership Matters

a) Resignation

We have heard read to us a letter from Peter Brittain of Walsall Meeting, who wishes to resign his membership, because of concern over the area meeting's investment policy. Peter wishes to remain as an attender at Walsall and is willing to continue as treasurer there, while ending his elder/overseer duties.

We accept Peter's resignation with regret and ask the clerk to write to him. We hope that he will still feel able to attend Walsall Local Meeting and serve in his role as treasurer.

b) Journey into Membership

Kate Panagamuwa has spoken to one of her appointed visitors and asks that her application be put on hold until she is clearer about the way forward. We record that this application has been postponed until a later date.

c) Internal Transfer

Bettina Gray (EDG) to Selly Oak LM

simon gray (EDG) to Selly Oak LM

d) Transfer Out

Sarah Woodhouse (EDG) to Wirral & Cheshire AM

e) Accepted Out

Sarah Woodhouse (EDG) by Wirral & Cheshire AM

2019.067 Minute of Record: Order for Burial/Internment/Scattering of Ashes

We record that the ashes of Antonia (Toni) Dorothy Alice RUMSBY were scattered in the garden of Warwick Meeting House after her memorial meeting on Saturday 13th July.

2019.068 Memorial Minute

A memorial minute for Toni Rumsby has been prepared by Warwick Local Meeting and we have heard it read. It will now return to Warwick LM so that any final amendments and/or additions can be considered. After this it can be sent directly to Elder/Overseers Support Group.

2019.069 Talking Friends Report

There has been a significant drop in the number of visually impaired Friends who subscribe to the publications recorded by volunteers for this charity, which results in less funding for maintenance and updating of equipment. While in the long term it will be increasingly easy to access material in many alternative ways, it is vital to continue to provide the service for the present subscribers, however few.

The report brings two issues before Area Meeting: firstly that very few people have come forward to serve as trustees or committee members and that most of the existing team are due to step down within the next year. They feel unsupported by the area meeting and wonder whether the committee will have to be laid down. As they meet via Skype however, it would be possible to seek new members from anywhere in the country.

The second related issue concerns the need for Yearly Meeting to be involved in producing all new material in a form accessible to visually impaired Friends. The Talking Friend suggests that area meeting send a minute to Meeting for Sufferings on this matter, in the light of our Society's commitment to inclusion. Sutton Coldfield LM **have** responded to this suggestion with the following minute:

(Sutton Coldfield LMB) 2019/60 Area Meeting in July

We have received the Calling Letter to be held at Warwick QMH on Thursday 18th July and briefly considered some of the reports and agenda items.

The Talking Friend report explains that the committee is in crisis, in that it is extremely difficult to find Friends to serve; it further asks us to consider sending a minute to Meeting for Sufferings challenging Britain Yearly Meeting to address the needs of visually impaired Friends. We support the suggestion of sending a minute to Meeting for Sufferings – this should be a national concern in the light of our commitment to inclusion. We send this minute to AM.

We suggest that the current committee advertise more widely for new members to all teams of readers, all our local meetings and on the area meeting newsfeed. We are reminded that there is no need to be nominated by Central England Quakers.

We support the Talking Friend trustees in their efforts to challenge BYM to meet the needs of visually impaired Friends and understand that the committee have sent a minute to various departments in Friends House. When they have received replies, we will return to this matter in the autumn. It would be helpful if at this time the Talking Friend committee bring a draft minute for us to agree on and then send to Meeting for Sufferings.

2019.070 Ecumenical & Interfaith Reports

Claire Bowman has compiled an impressive report on the many varied strands of work she has undertaken over the two years since she was appointed as the area meeting's Ecumenical and Interfaith Coordinator.

As well as representing Quakers on Birmingham church groups and joining interfaith activities, Claire has been involved in arranging events around issues such as climate action and along with other Friends is on the management committee of Birmingham City of Sanctuary. Her experiences have convinced her that the most effective way of working with members of other churches and faiths is through engaging with mutual concerns, 'enabling everyone to see the fundamental basis of discipleship we all start from.'

Most of Claire's activities have been Birmingham-based, so in the future she is planning to travel in the ministry and look at ecumenical and interfaith links in the wider Central England area.

As part of her role she has also been appointed to the CEQ Community Justice Group. We note that she also serves on the BYM Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR). She feels these contacts help to 'join all the dots' between local, area and national ecumenical and interfaith activities.

We thank Claire for her report and for all the work she undertakes on our behalf.

We have also received a description of interfaith matters and Churches Together in Walsall from Barbara Groombridge which beautifully illustrates Claire's report. Also included is a report from Wendy Burnett about a gathering at Bull Street entitled 'Towards a better understanding of Israel and Palestine.'

2019.071 Roots of Resistance

Pete Doubtfire has sent us a briefing about the planned Quaker presence at this year's Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) arms fair. The focus for Roots of Resistance will be on the 'No Faith in War' day of action on Tuesday 3rd September and will involve meetings for worship, protest singing and the displaying of a tapestry of mini-banners illustrating our commitment to peace.

Pete Doubtfire (BUL), Peace Hub Coordinator is on the core planning group and Vicky Cowell (COV), Lynn Morris (STO) and Louise Scrivens (SOL) are 'area organisers', there to support Quakers taking part. They can answer any queries Friends may have and attention is drawn to the training and information day at Bull St (Saturday, 3rd August) and a briefing session at Friends House (Monday, 2nd September)

Central England Quakers encourages as many Friends as possible to support the day of action, either in person or by upholding the event in spirit.

2019.072 Meeting for Sufferings Report

We have received a report of the Meeting for Sufferings held on 6th July 2019 and Cathy has spoken to it and answered questions.

With reference to the discussion document, 'Quakers and gender diversity', it is hoped to organise an area meeting event to discuss the topic. Individual Friends are also encouraged to respond to Quaker Life Central Committee.

2019.073 Trustee Matters

CEQ Trustees have agreed to grant £100,000 from the Selly Wood House Fund towards major refurbishment work at Oak Tree House, subject to legal advice.

We are happy to support this grant.

2019.074 Request to host Area Meeting in 2020

Further to Minute 2019.062, we have had offers for some months but still need hosts for the Saturday 7th March, Tu/W/Th 14/15/16 July and Saturday 24th October Area Meetings.

2019.075 Nominations and Appointments

Nominations Committee suggest:

- John Sheldon (WAR) to serve as Nominations Committee Co-clerk until December 2019

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- Barry Stimpson (B&R) to serve as CEQAM Trustee from July 2019 to June 2022
- Jim Green (WAL) to serve as CEQAM Trustee from July 2019 to June 2022
- John Morris (SEL) to serve on the Northfield Development Committee from July 2019 to June 2022
- David Gough (KIN) to serve on the Tabular Statement Team 2019
- Terry Stanley (BUL) to serve on Trustees Property Committee from July 2019 to June 2022
- Nicholas Tulley (BOU) to serve on The Talking Friend Committee from July 2019 to June 2022
- Donald Stubbings (BOU) to serve on the Susanna Cole and others Trust from July 2019 to June 2022
- Anne Giles (BOU) to serve on The Old Peoples Fund Trust from December 2019 to December 2022

From the Woodlands Trustees Nominations Advisory Sub Committee

(As approved by the whole Management Committee)

To serve on The Woodlands Management Committee:

David Morgan (Staffs AM) from July 2019 to March 2023

We appoint these Friends accordingly.

Release from Service

- Peter Brittain (WAL) as an Elder & Overseer
- Rob Hooper (WAR) as an elder from the end of December 2019

We release our Friends and thank them for their service.

2019.076 (Further to Minute 2019.037) Research request: Quaker Leadership.

A workshop with Stephen Allen to explore 'Influence Amongst Friends' has been booked for Wednesday 9th October at Bull Street Quaker Meeting House. More information and booking details will be sent out to local meetings in due course.

2019.077 Thanks and next meeting

We thank Warwick Friends for hosting Area Meeting today. We meet again at Hartshill QMH on Saturday, 14th September from 2.00 – 5.00pm.

Stella Roberts

Clerk this time