

Minutes of Central England Area Quaker Meeting held at Bull Street Meeting House on 18th January 2020

Clerk: Alison Ironside
Assistant clerk: Stella Roberts

Elders on duty: Wendy Burnett, Helen Steel.

2020.001 Opening Minute

Our Meeting began with a period of silent worship during which Advices and Queries nos 14 and 15 were read to us:

14. Are your meetings for church affairs held in a spirit of worship and in dependence on the guidance of God? Remember that we do not seek a majority decision nor even consensus. As we wait patiently for divine guidance our experience is that the right way will open and we shall be led into unity.

15. Do you take part as often as you can in meetings for church affairs? Are you familiar enough with our church government to contribute to its disciplined processes? Do you consider difficult questions with an informed mind as well as a generous and loving spirit? Are you prepared to let your insights and personal wishes take their place alongside those of others or be set aside as the meeting seeks the right way forward? If you cannot attend, uphold the meeting prayerfully.

2020.002 Representatives

The following meetings were represented here today:

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

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

Lisa Small (B&R), Pete Doubtfire (BUL), Mary Mather (WAL).
Robert Sprake (B&R), Margot Williams (SUT),

We welcome Arthur Lockett, who has been attending Selly Oak LM and is a member of Oxford and Swindon AM.

2020.003 Membership Matters

a) Deaths

We record the death of Elizabeth Parish (BUL), who died on 9 October 2019 aged 95.

b) Application for Membership:

We have received an application from Robert Sprake, an attender at B&R. We ask Nominations Committee to find names of visitors.

c) Journey into Membership:

i) We have heard the report of the journey into membership of Christine Bagnall, an attender at Hall Green 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.

ii) We have heard the report of the journey into membership of David Foxall, an attender at Sutton Coldfield LM. We welcome him into membership of the Religious Society of Friends and Central England Quakers. We ask his visitors to welcome him and the clerk to write to him.

d) Transfer Out:

Elaine Smith and Sue Jenkins (COT) to Northamptonshire Area Meeting.

e) Accepted Out

Elaine Smith and Sue Jenkins (COT) by Northamptonshire Area Meeting.

2020.004 Peace Hub Report

Pete Doubtfire has spoken to this report. He told us of the excellent work, partnerships and outreach at the Peace Hub on Bull Street, and they celebrated their 5th anniversary in 2019.

We heard that the new hours of 11am – 5pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday have been easier to remember and resulted in an increase of numbers to the Peace Hub.

Successful partnerships have included work with WMQPEP Junior Peacemakers and Footsteps.

The report was written before the year-end when there was a deficit in funding but final figures have balanced out.

They hope to look at anti-slavery issues this year.

They are grateful for all or any financial support from individuals or Meetings, and individuals can volunteer. Financial support from more of our Local Meetings would be welcome.

We thank Peace Hub volunteers, Pete Doubtfire and the management committee for their work. The report is filed.

2020.005 Gender Diversity

We have begun to look at this issue as an AM and we have received the following minute from Sutton Coldfield LM:

2020/09 Gender Diversity

We have had an initial exploration of the issues raised by the statements on gender diversity by both Quaker Life Central Committee and Young Friends General Meeting. We realise that there is a significant difference between the views of the two groups, and feel that there is a need for further inter-generational conversations on this matter. We accept that there is a lot of hurt on both sides, and suggest that Area Meeting invite representatives of Quaker Life and Young Friends General Meeting to facilitate an event that would enable everyone to feel listened to.

We ask the clerks to send this minute to Area Meeting.

Some of us may not really understand some of the difficulties that can be experienced by others and we need to listen in a spirit of love and support.

We hope to arrange a subsequent Saturday workshop before YMG to explore this matter further.

2020.006 Low Carbon Commitment Forum

Chris Martin has reported to us on the 2 professionally facilitated meetings on 18th November 2019 and 11 January 2020 and we receive the minute from the Low Carbon Commitment Forum that was made at the January meeting.

MINUTE to Area Meeting made at Special Forum Gathering 11 January 2020

Britain Yearly Meeting committed to becoming a low carbon community in 2011. Since then the CEQ Low Carbon Commitment forum has met three times a year, sharing progress in reducing carbon footprints, participating in the Eco Church scheme, developing an Area Meeting environmental policy and increasingly supporting climate action and engaging with politicians.

At its meeting in September 2019 the forum minuted that it should carry out some professional scoping work on the opportunities for Central England Quakers to contribute to the work of the Birmingham, and other, climate emergency task forces.

2020 is a critical year for climate justice and action with the UK government hosting the COP26 Conference in Glasgow in November. Christina Figueres, architect of the 2016 Paris Climate Agreement said, "the decisions we make in 2020 will decide the quality of life for every living thing on this planet for at least the next century. That is not an exaggeration that is our reality". Reflecting the urgency, Central England Quakers need to be bold, outward looking and willing to speak truth to power.

Recognising the new situation we agreed that from now on we need to work together under the (working) title of "West Midlands Quaker Climate Emergency Action", joining with others and having co-clerks coordinating action.

At an open meeting on 11 January 2020 33 friends worked in groups to come up with specific actions and ways forward. These included (i) political lobbying and enabling Friends to engage with their elected representatives, (ii) initiatives to decrease the carbon footprint of social housing, meeting houses and homes, (iii) plans for Earth Day 2020 and working with young people, (iv) raising awareness at the grassroots and (5) moving towards more sustainable transport.

We ask Area Meeting to support and uphold our on-going work.

We do support and uphold this work. In order to carry this work forward we encourage all interested Friends to work with the group that we agree to now call "CEQ Climate Emergency Action"; and we ask this group to liaise with our Nominations Committee to bring forward the names of 2, 3 or 4 Friends to be co-clerks of this new group.

We urge the group to consider the Quaker spiritual aspects as an integral part of this work.

2020.007 Minutes Received

a) We have received the following minute from **Cotteridge LM 2019/44 **Arrest of Friend acting on concern****

We record that our Friend Jo Hindley was arrested on conspiracy to cause public nuisance on October 10 2019 while participating in an action on climate change in London. She was released and no further action has been taken to date. The Clerk will send this minute to Area Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings.

The latest Governance Gold document from Friend's House asks that AMs remember that the prison and court register is a public document. Area meetings should take care therefore to establish the facts, and to assure themselves that the Friend consents to this information being recorded and placed in the public domain, before forwarding details to Meeting for Sufferings. An AM minute is not required.

b) We have received the following minute from **Hall Green LM 2020/09 **Any Other Business****

Further to Minute 2019/87 we ask the co-clerk to send a minute to Area Meeting asking how discussion on the process (of the revision of Quaker Faith & Practice) will be implemented. We will ask whether AM is already involved and if so, what progress has been made and how individuals and Local Meetings can participate.

(There was a meeting or meetings held at Northfield a couple of years ago but we don't know what, if anything, happened afterwards.)

We hope this can be answered or considered at Area Meeting on Saturday

This will be answered when we take the conference report on the Book of Discipline.

c) We have received the following minute from **Bournville LM 2019.73 (8 December)**

In response to our minute 2019.67 of 17 November 2019, which suggested that we invite someone with more knowledge in this area to our meeting on 8 December, we have received a written submission from Anne Ullathorne of Cotteridge Meeting, who yesterday clerked the final meeting of her three years as clerk to MfS. Anne is prevented from attending today's meeting. This document has been circulated, together with a response from our member Donald Stubbings, who presented the expression of disquiet which led to minute 2019.67.

In response to Anne Ullathorne's submission we are satisfied that the setting up of the vibrancy project was handled in right ordering by MfS. However, issues of who begins and who leads the initiatives that develop within BYM, and how these are publicised, not least in the manner and importance given to them at Yearly Meeting in session, seem to us to need further consideration and discernment.

Communication within our AM (detail and balance of reports from our MfS representatives and Quaker Life representatives) may also need further attention. We would like to suggest that a further article might be submitted for publication in The Friend, and by other means of communication, encapsulating the information that has been submitted to us for today's meeting (for which we express our warm

thanks) and the discernment of this local business meeting itself. We send this minute to AM.

We feel that it is the communication within our AM that we can address now by forwarding this minute to our Communications Committee and the Clerks Advisory Committee

d) We have received the following minute from **Stourbridge LM**

9/20 Quaker Testimony to Truth and Integrity:

We have a concern about the amount of falsehood to be found in public life—in news reporting, politics, marketing, hate mail on social media and in other areas. We hear that Meeting for Sufferings received 43 minutes from Area Meetings about this issue at its February 2019 meeting, so the concern is widespread among Friends. Yet there is no Yearly Meeting programme primarily concerned with putting the long-standing Quaker testimony to Truth into action; and we believe that many Friends may be unsure how to witness to it at a more local level. Is there a lack of Quaker discernment about this testimony? We would like to ask for a working party to be set up by Meeting for Sufferings to come forward with suggestions on how Quakers can witness to truth individually and as Local Meetings, and possibly at national level too. We ask our clerks to forward this minute to Area Meeting for consideration.

We have not had time for a proper discernment on this issue although it is central to our Quaker testimony. We will return to this at a later date.

e) We have received the following minute from **Warwick LM** and the supporting document is in our papers.

Minute 19/72 Workcare Financial Support Concern - John Sheldon

John Sheldon has brought us a financial support concern for Workcare Coventry and Warwickshire, an ecumenical organisation which provides workplace chaplaincy for those of any faith and none. (explanatory paper filed with these minutes)

We have heard how John Sheldon has tested his concern thoroughly. We are asked if we feel able to support this concern by offering £500 per year for 3 years to this work.

A concern was raised that we might be 'hiring priests', questions were raised about chaplaincy for those of other faiths and whether employers also contributed.

Having considered these matters, we are happy to support this concern, from our meeting's funds, regardless of what Area Meeting and Coventry Meeting decide.

We ask our Clerk to send this minute and the accompanying paper to Area Meeting and ask our Friend, John Sheldon to make known their willingness to speak to this concern.

AM supports this work and hopes that it can continue. We pass the information on to Trustees Finance Committee to see at what level we can support this, while looking at the overall strategy of what AM should support.

2020.008 Nominations

Nominations Committee have the following suggestions for service:

- Greg Coombs (EDG) to serve on Trustees Property Committee from February 2020 to January 2023
- Donald Stubbings (BOU) to serve on Communications Committee from February 2020 to January 2023
- Vicky Cowell (COV), Gavin Regnart (BUL), and Louise Scrivens (SOL) to attend the QPSW conference 20-22 March at Swanwick
- Julia Furminger (STO) and Nicholas Paton Philip (STO) to serve for a further three years on Woodlands Management Committee from April 2020 to March 2023
- James Bradbury (STO) to serve for a third triennium on Peace Hub Management Committee from March 2020 to February 2023

We approve these names and appoint them accordingly

Release from Service

- Trevor Barker (HAL) from Christmas Parcels Committee.

We thank him for his service and ask Nominations Committee to find a replacement name for this vacancy if required.

2020.009 Interim Triennial Elders and Overseers' Nominations

The clerk of Triennial Elders & Overseers Nominations Committee brings forward the names of

- Donald Stubbings (BOU) as an Elder.
- Philip O'Shea (EDG) as an Overseer.
- John Sheldon (WAR) as an Elder.

to serve for the rest of the current triennium till Dec 2020.

We agree to appoint these Friends to serve until the end of the triennium Dec 2020.

- Anne Giles (BOU) to change role from an Elder to an Overseer for the rest of the current triennium.

2020.010 Reports Not Taken

We have had to hold over 3 reports and we are encouraged to disseminate the reports more widely and bring them back to a future AM if there are matters to discern.

2020.011 Thanks and Next Meeting

We thank Bull Street LM for hosting AM. We meet again, at Hall Green QMH on March 7th from 2.00 – 5.00pm.

Alison Ironside

Clerk this time