

Minutes of Central England Area Quaker Meeting held at Hall Green Meeting House on 7th March 2020

Clerk: Stella Roberts
Assistant clerk: Helen Rowlands

Elders on duty: Mina Tilt (HAL) and Donald Whitlock (SOL)

2020.012 Opening Minute

Our Meeting began with a period of silent worship during which we heard read to us passages from *Listening Spirituality – corporate spiritual practice among Friends* by Patricia Loring, pp. 159-160.

Without commitment to growth into transformed behaviour, the conduct of business can become an exercise in secular techniques of persuasion, manipulation or power. Without confidence in the presence and availability of the guidance of God, it becomes an utterly human search for consensus. Unless we intentionally listen for the movement of the Spirit beneath and through the human interactions, it's just politics...

..We are heirs of the Old Testament prophets who required that we measure our actions carefully by the yardsticks of justice and mercy. We are heirs of Jesus who requires that we love one another. Most especially we are heirs of John Woolman who was both gifted and meticulous in tracing the invisible economic connections and ethical implications of ordinary actions and objects. So it is hard to anticipate which innocent-looking questions will plunge us unexpectedly into issues that touch on the very heart of our spiritual life together.

2020.013 Representatives

The following meetings were represented here today:

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

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

Lisa Small (B&R) Margaret Annetts (COV)

2020.014 Membership Matters

a) Deaths

We record the death of Michael Johnson (B&R) on 18th February 2020, aged 83 years.

A memorial meeting will be held at Woodbrooke on the 17th March at 2.30pm

b) Journey into Membership:

i) We have heard the report of the journey into membership of Fiona Waterhouse, an attender at Sutton Coldfield 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) Application for Membership:

We have received an application for membership from Carolyn Arber, an attender at Cotteridge Local Meeting. We ask Nominations Committee to find names of visitors for Carolyn.

d) Transfer In:

- Alan Wing (COT) from Sheffield and Balby Area Meeting
- Donald Stubbings (BOU) from South-East Scotland Area Meeting

e) Accepted Out

- Ian Prior has been accepted by Worcestershire & Shropshire Area Meeting

2020.015 Meeting for Sufferings Reports

a) 7th December 2019 *One of three reports not taken in January (2020.010) and subsequently disseminated to invite possible queries or comment.*

This report from Claire Bowman gives details of the work of various national committees during the last year. As it was also Young People's Participation Day in Friends House Claire was accompanied by Eddie Rugg (WAR) and his mother Amy, Adam Waters (SEL) and Libby McCleary from Rugby LM. The theme of the young people's programme for the day was discernment with regard to the Quaker decision-making process.

We note that Hannah Brock Womack, who was nominated by Quakers in Britain as one of the presidents within Churches Together in England, was unable to take up the appointment as she is in a same sex marriage. She still chairs meetings of her group of churches and spoke at MfS in a positive way. We urge Friends to hold the situation in the light and hope that some individuals and churches may begin to question their stance in this matter.

b) 1st February 2020

We have received this report from Cathy Khurana and she has spoken to it.

Of particular note is the triennial report to MfS from the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA), reminding us that although the UK has left the EU it is still a member of other European organisations working for peace. QCEA urges Friends and meetings to engage with their peace and human rights programmes and to contribute financially to the work.

Communications Committee suggests establishing a group to support our MfS representatives and help disseminate outcomes from their meetings.

We encourage our representatives to form an exploratory group on a voluntary basis which should draft possible terms of reference to bring back to Area Meeting.

We thank Claire and Cathy for being our representatives and for their reports.

2020.016 Quaker Life Representative Council Report *(also circulated and not taken in January)*

This report from Donald Whitlock describes a conference held at Woodbrooke on the theme of mental health, exploring how local meetings could support and nurture Friends suffering illness or difficult conditions. Four keynote speakers told stories of their own struggles – all felt sustained by their spiritual lives, in and out of meeting and by the practical help and friendship they had experienced among Quakers.

The report lists a number of resources available online to help meetings understand and deal with these issues.

We thank Donald for speaking to his report today.

2020.017 Book of Discipline Conference Reflections: *(also circulated and not taken in January)*

This conference at Woodbrooke was facilitated by members of the Book of Discipline Revision Committee and Stella Roberts attended as the CEQ representative and reported back. The committee wanted to introduce themselves to this large group of Friends, to explain their own involvement and to explore the relationship of individual participants towards the current *Quaker Faith & Practice*. It was important to try and establish what is most valued, what is lacking and to learn together what elements a future publication might contain.

With regard to a minute from Hall Green LM received at the January AM (2020.007b), this report partly answers their query about how discussion on the process of revision will be implemented. It also gives the link to a form: *Ideas for the next Book of Discipline for BYM* at <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/qfp-idea/> whereby individuals or Quaker organisations can send suggested topics, make general points about the process or identify specific passages to be included.

The Book of Discipline Revision Committee will make their first report to Meeting for Sufferings in June and there will be ample opportunity to engage with them at Yearly Meeting Gathering in August. The contact person at Friends House is Michael Booth on 0207 663 1023 or by email: qfp@quaker.org

We note that Simon Gray (SEL) and Rhiannon Grant (BOU) are members of the Revision Committee.

2020.018 Observations on Outreach

Roderick Keefe, convenor of Outreach Committee, has sent us his report on activities taking place during the past year. Among the most notable was the Bournville Heritage trail, which included Woodbrooke gardens and Bournville Meeting House, the latter attracting over 1,000 visitors.

We are reminded of the fact that our membership is ageing and declining in numbers, a situation which needs reversing if we are to survive.

Friends are urged to engage more with their local communities as a way of promoting understanding of the Quaker way. The committee can provide resources and helpers for any meeting wishing to arrange events.

We thank Rod for speaking to his report today.

2020.019 Quaker Christmas Parcels 2019

We have received both the QCP Committee report on this annual scheme and the treasurer, John Ironside's report and statement of accounts. It is good to know how well organised the initiative is and how appreciated by the recipients.

We thank the committee for its work, the donors who make it possible each year and those involved in the December parcel packing sessions.

Special mention must be made of John Ironside - we thank him for his sterling work, both as treasurer and shopper for the goods to be included. We also thank Cyril Bezzant and Trevor

Barker for their long service on the committee and Tricia Bradbury who has spoken to this report today.

2020.020 CEQ Trustees Report 2019

This comprehensive report lays out the responsibilities of trustees to ensure that charity law is being followed by our organisation. It details the varied work of the five service committees during the year: finance, property, employment, records advisory and governance and compliance. The first four committees have one or two trustees and rely on other members being appointed by Area Meeting.

Judith Jenner, clerk to trustees, has spoken to us today and we thank her for her report and all our trustees for the considerable amount of work done on our behalf.

Friends are encouraged to consider serving as trustees, hopefully as a way of learning new skills and discovering new interests. It would be good to have all local meetings represented on the trustee body.

2020. 021 Kings Heath Meeting House

South Birmingham Friends Institute Trust (SBFIT), who currently own Kings Heath Meeting House, have been in consultation over the past year with CEQ trustees and Kings Heath Friends over the possible transfer of the property into our Area Meeting. The briefing document in our papers outlines the negotiations that have taken place.

Bob Morris, a trustee of both SBFIT and CEQ, has spoken to us today and we have received the following minute from a meeting of CEQ trustees on 5th March:

Transfer of Kings Heath Meeting House

A briefing paper for Area Meeting has been circulated by South Birmingham Friends Institute Trust (SBFIT) and CEQ trustees and will come to Area Meeting on Saturday 7th March.

The Charity Commission were consulted about the transfer and whether there were any restrictions on the land and the response was that matter was for trustees to decide. SBFIT are happy to progress the transfer and it will be for Area Meeting to decide if they will accept the Meeting House.

During 2019 trustees have considered this matter and now that the legal questions have been answered satisfactorily, they support the proposal to transfer Kings Heath Meeting House to Central England Quakers.

We agree to this transfer of building and land and ask trustees to undertake the necessary work to complete it, including negotiation of the exact sum of money to be transferred in respect of major repairs following the quinquennial survey

2010.022 Tabular Statement 2019

We have received the Tabular Statement for 2019 which has been sent to Britain Yearly Meeting. It records the number of members, attenders and children in each of our local meetings.

The fall in numbers is partly due to the need to obtain consent forms from individuals under new data protection regulations. We were unable to contact some Friends and others decided to resign their membership. Our figures are probably more accurate than previously, thanks to this exercise.

We thank Dave Rawcliffe, David Brayley-Willmetts and Chris Martin for their work in compiling the tabular statement.

2020.023 Triennial Appointment of Elders & Overseers

We have received a briefing paper which details the process for nominating and appointing elders and overseers for our area meeting. This is compiled by Vic Grainger and Nicholas Paton Philip, clerk and assistant clerk of AM Triennial E & O Nominations Committee.

The new triennium for elders and overseers will run from 2021-2023, so in 2020 the third year of the present triennium, the nomination committee will be expanded by representatives from each LM, who meet together on three occasions to examine their practices of eldership and oversight and with input from LMs, to discern the names of e/os for the next triennium.

Vic Grainger has spoken to us and we authorise her and the assistant clerk of AM Triennial E/O Nominations Committee to begin the nominating process as described

2020.024 Nominations and Appointments

Nominations Committee suggest:

- Peter Fishpool (COT) and Barry Stimpson (BGR) to visit Robert Sprake on his journey into membership
- Judith Jenner (COT) to serve as an AM trustee from January 2020 until the end of December 2022
- Adam Waters (SEL) Sammy Gilbert (SUT) and Eddie Rugg (WAR) to attend JYM
- Sarah Evans (COT) to serve on the Old People's Fund Trust from April 2020 until the end of March 2026
- Carole Pannell (STO) to serve as an AM Safeguarding Co-ordinator from March 2020 until the end of February 2023
- Ginnie Wollaston (STO) to serve on AM Children & Young People's Committee (CYPC) from October 2019 until the end of September 2022
- Matthew Gough (KIN) to serve on AM CYPC from February 2020 until the end of January 2023
- Ellie Wilde (SEL) and Alan Wing (COT) to serve on AM CYPC from March 2020 until the end of February 2023
- Dave Rawcliffe (WAR) and Lin Singh Barrington (SEL) to serve on AM Outreach Committee from March 2020 until the end of February 2023
- Nicholas Ronan (STO) and Howard Saunders (BOU) to be reappointed to the Christmas Parcels Committee from April 2020 until the end of March 2023

We approve these names and appoint our Friends accordingly

Release from Service

- Marian Ives (COT) from Old People's Fund Trust
- David Morgan (SAM) as a Woodlands Company Trustee/Management Committee

We release our Friends and thank them for their service.

2020.025 Thanks and Next Meeting

We thank Hall Green LM for hosting Area Meeting and Solihull and Kings Heath Friends for helping with the arrangements. We meet again at Selly Oak QMH on Thursday, April 23rd from 6.00-9.00 pm.

Stella Roberts

Clerk this time