

Minutes of Central England Area Quaker Meeting held by Video Conferencing on 28th November 2020

Clerk: Alison Ironside
Assisting: Stella Roberts

Elders on duty: Barbara Forbes, John Kimberley

2020.070 Meeting by Video Conferencing

We record that we are meeting again by video conferencing. The second lockdown means that we are unable to meet as a blended meeting at Bull Street Quaker Meeting House as planned.

Our Meeting began with a period of silent worship during which § 21.66 of Quaker Faith & Practice was read:

Sometimes religion appears to be presented as offering easy cures for pain: have faith and God will mend your hurts; reach out to God and your woundedness will be healed. The Beatitude 'Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted' can be interpreted this way too, but the Latin root of the word 'comfort' means 'with strength' rather than 'at ease'. The Beatitude is not promising to take away our pain; indeed the inference is that the pain will remain with us. It does promise that God will cherish us and our wound, and help us draw a blessing from our distressed state.

S Jocelyn Burnell, 1989

And also part of a letter from Isaac Penington to Friends in Amersham:

"Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand, if there has been any slip or fall; and waiting till the Lord gives sense and repentance, if sense and repentance in any be wanting. Oh! wait to feel this spirit, and to be guided to walk in this spirit, that ye may enjoy the Lord in sweetness, and walk sweetly, meekly, tenderly, peaceably, and lovingly one with another. And then, ye will be a praise to the Lord; and any thing that is, or hath been, or may be, amiss, ye will come over in the true dominion, even in the Lamb's dominion; and that which is contrary shall be trampled upon, as life rises and rules in you."

2020.071 Representatives

The following meetings were represented here today:

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

2020.072 Membership matters

a) Death

We record the death of Gisela Carlsohn (SEL), who died on 30 October 2020 aged 97.

b) Journey into Membership

We have heard the report of the journey into membership of James Stacey, an attender at Coventry 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.

c) Application for Membership

We have received an application from Gavin Regnart, who has been attending Bull Street Local Meeting. We ask Nominations Committee to find names of visitors.

d) Accepted Out

Rosemary Loving (WAR) by Surrey & Hampshire Border Area Meeting.

2020.073 Memorial Minutes

- a) We have received a memorial minute from Barnt Green Meeting for Michael Johnson and have had most of it read to us.
- b) We have received a memorial minute from Barnt Green Meeting for Ann Marshall and had it read to us.

We forward these minutes to Elders / Overseers Support Group for their consideration.

2020.074 CEQ Annual Report and Accounts for 2019

The 2019 CEQ Annual Report & Accounts were approved by Trustees and submitted to the Charity Commission in September. Copies have been sent to all LM Clerks and further copies are available from the Office.

The accounts show figures for both Charity and Group. The Group accounts include figures for Priory Rooms (Bull Street) Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary. 2019 was a satisfactory year for CEQ, with the Charity accounts showing a net positive movement in funds of £372,000 which was largely attributable to a £387,000 gain on investments.

The combined total of Central Fund cash and reserves at 31 December 2019 was £1.8 million. The equivalent figure for cash & reserves held by Local Meetings and Branches was £1.3 million.

An illustrated summary called *Central England Quakers in 2019* was published in time for Area Meeting last month. This booklet is designed for outreach as well as internal use, and we encourage Friends to distribute it as widely as possible, both in their Meetings and in their local communities.

We thank James Bradbury, the trustees, treasurers and examiners for all their work in producing the full report and accounts and the summary.

2020.075 CEQ Central Funds forecasts for 2020 and draft budgets for 2021

Central Funds are those managed by Trustees and exclude bank accounts and investments held by Local Meetings and Branches. The forecasts for 2020 are the expected outcomes at the end of 2020 and the budgets for 2021 are how we propose to allocate our resources next year.

In the past budget presentations to Area Meeting have been focussed on just two funds, "Trustees" and "General", but this year Trustees Finance Committee has decided to expand the analysis to all Central Funds (apart from the Trustee Reserve Funds) so that Friends can see the full picture.

A paper has been circulated in advance of the meeting containing a detailed commentary on the assumptions and proposals, supported by a bar chart representing receipts and payments through the Central Fund bank accounts.

The Priory Rooms gift received for 2020 was a record £120,000 bringing the total gifts over 13 years to £817,000. Due to the loss of trading in 2020 the gift for 2021 will be zero and this will have a massive impact on the Area Meeting's income in 2021.

Area Meeting activities include committee expenses, courses, bursaries, sustainability, outreach, ecumenical/interfaith work and grants to external bodies. The grants budget for 2021 (within AM activities) is given in the paper, and includes a proposal to make an additional grant to Workcare for chaplaincy work.

Friends support BYM in many different ways (individually and through their Meetings) and the annual grant from Central Funds is an additional, corporate donation. The figure agreed for 2020 was £25,000, and Trustees recommend that (in view of the financial pressures faced by BYM) we plan the same figure for 2021, despite our own financial constraints.

We are happy to confirm the grant of £25,000 to BYM.

General Purposes Grants for projects are the grants we give to Peacemakers, Peace Hub & Ecobirmingham. In addition to the budgeted £50k grant to Peacemakers in 2020, Trustees have agreed to provide a further emergency grant of up to £20,000 to be paid before the end of the year. Trustees recommend that this can be funded from the Black Country Fund in these special circumstances, as that Fund is currently under-utilised. All three projects have agreed to a reduced grant for 2021, reflecting the very difficult financial situation faced by the charity.

Trustees propose that we will need to draw £80,000 from reserves to support the budget expenditure next year.

We recognise that 2021 is going to be a very difficult year for CEQ, financially, due to the loss of the Priory Rooms gift, and the need to draw on reserves to “balance the budget” – for the first time in many years. We are fortunate to have adequate reserves at this point, but we will need to consider the extent to which they should be rebuilt in future years.

Trustees are well aware that Local Meetings and Branches are also suffering additional costs and loss of room hire income and may also need to draw on reserves next year.

We accept and approve the Central Funds budget for 2021.

We remain very grateful for the CEQ treasurers' team and all the local Meetings' and branches' treasurers and examiners for working so hard on our behalf.

2020.076 Nominations

Nominations committee have the following suggestions for service:

- To serve a further triennium on the Peace Hub Management Committee from November 2020 to the end of October 2023: Jim Green (WAL)
- To serve on Trustees Finance Committee from November 2020 until the end of October 2023: Helen Waters (SEL)
- To complete the Area Meeting Tabular Statement 2020 Dave Rawcliffe (WAR) and (ex officio) the Area Meeting secretary
- To visit Martyn Tarbert (EDG) on his journey into membership: Hilary Johnson (COT) and Peter Fishpool (COT)
- To serve a further year as a Priory Rooms Director from November 2020 until the end of October 2021: John Kimberley (BUL)
- To serve on the West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project Management Committee from November 2020 until the end of October 2023: Anne Ullathorne (COT)
- To attend (on Zoom) the Young People's Participation Day: Eddie Rugg (WAR)

We approve these names and appoint them accordingly and ask the Area Meeting Secretary to inform them and the convenors of the relevant committees.

Release from Service

The following Friends have asked to be released:

- Nicholas Paton Philip (STO) from service as an Elder
- John West (B&R) from AM Nominations Committee
- Gillian Waddilove (COV) from service as an Elder & Overseer from the end of December 2020

We agree to these requests and thank the Friends for their service and ask the Area Meeting Secretary to inform them.

2020.077 Interim Triennial Elders & Overseers Nominations

The Interim Triennial Elders & Overseers Nominations Committee put forward the following names as Elder/Overseers for Sutton Coldfield LM, from Jan 1st 2021 - Dec 31st 2021: Cathy Khurana and Fiona Waterhouse.

These names being acceptable we appoint them accordingly and ask the Area Meeting Secretary to inform them.

2020.078 Susanna Cole and Charities Report and Accounts

Tony Pegler and the trustees have prepared this report and the accounts.

We are reminded that this charity can help members and attenders of our Area Meeting in financial need with both one-off or recurrent grants.

We note that the trustees are particularly concerned to help young people with needs in relation to education, vocational training, and starting work or a business.

We thank the trustees for their work and the report and accounts are filed.

2020.079 Quaker Life Representative Council Report

Ruth Livermore was able to attend this Representative Council meeting on Zoom as both our representative and alternate were prevented.

Ruth felt that the Zoom environment was not ideal for this gathering.

We thank Ruth Livermore for her honest report, which is filed.

2020.080 Next Meeting

We hope to meet again on January 16th from 2.00 p.m. hosted by Bull Street LM. The calling letter for that meeting will inform Friends about the format to be used, whether blended or virtual; it is still unlikely to be fully face to face.

Alison Ironside

Clerk this time