

Minutes of Central England Area Quaker Meeting held by Video Conferencing on 6 March 2021

Clerk: Alison Ironside
Assisting: Vic Grainger
Assisting: Stella Roberts

Elders on duty: Robin Bowman, Donald Stubbings.

2021.014 Opening Minute

We record that we are meeting yet again by video conferencing. This is to keep our community safe and so we are not meeting face to face at Bournville Quaker Meeting House.

Our Meeting began with a period of silent worship during which §20:16 of Quaker Faith & Practice was read to us:

Our testimonies arise from our way of worship. Our way of worship evokes from deep within us at once an affirmation and a celebration, an affirmation of the reality of that Light which illumines the spiritual longing of humanity, and a celebration of the continual resurrection within us of the springs of hope and love; a sense that each of us is, if we will, a channel for a power that is both within us and beyond us.

Lorna M Marsden, 1986

2021.015 Representatives

The following meetings were represented here today:

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

The clerks have given permission for the following attenders to join us today: Paul Lynch (SEL), John Ironside (SEL), Rachel Boyd (MAAM).

2021.016 Membership Matters

a) Deaths

We record the death of William Rowley (WAL) who died on 10 January 2021 aged 87 years.

b) Applications for Membership:

i) We have received an application from Cathy Tuckett, an attender at Cotteridge LM. We ask nominations committee to find names of visitors.

ii) We have received an application to rejoin from William Whiting, an attender at Stourbridge LM. We ask nominations committee to find names of visitors.

c) Journeys into Membership

i) We have heard the report of the journey into membership of Margot Williams, 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.

ii) We have heard the report of the journey into membership of Gavin Regnard, an attender at Bull Street 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:

Helen Rowlands (COT) to Pickering & Hull AM

2021.017 Minute of Record: Order for Burial/Internment/Scattering of Ashes

We record that the ashes of Audrey May Holding were scattered in the garden of Stourbridge Quaker Meeting House on 22nd May 2016

2021.018 Memorial Minute

We have received a memorial minute from Bournville Meeting for Leslie Steed and have had parts of it read to us.

We forward this minute to Elders / Overseers Support Group for their consideration.

2021.019 Testimony for Howard Boyd

The memorial minute for Howard Boyd (our minute 2020.035 refers) that we sent to Elders/Overseers Support Group has been expanded and is suggested as a Testimony to the Grace of God as shown in the life of Howard Boyd.

This has been read to us and we accept this as a testimony and forward it to Britain Yearly Meeting.

2021.020 Quaker Christmas Parcels

We receive the report and accounts for the Quaker Christmas Parcels.

The committee decided that since the parcel packing couldn't happen in its usual form due to the pandemic giving vouchers would be a viable option.

So food vouchers were distributed to probation offices across the Midlands.

We are pleased that the committee were able to make this happen with the support of the individual probation officers using the vouchers to buy food for those they knew were in need; and three Friends, who were able to use grants from the committee to purchase food for the refugee and asylum groups they were in touch with.

We thank the committee for their work enabling this project to continue and are grateful for the work of their retiring treasurer, John Ironside.

2021.021 Minutes Received

a) We have received the following minute from **CEQ Trustees**

T2021.3C.1 Management of finances and property for Local Meetings

The draft proposal was circulated to trustees before the meeting and some comments have been received. Clarification was needed for some details of the proposal and this was given. Minor amendments were made to the terms of reference. There are concerns about the relationship with the Friends continuing to use the building and section 1.8 in the terms of reference was referred to.

The finance committee discussed the model and are content with the financial arrangements.

This is an interim proposal, and we are aware that the area meeting will change in the next year and hopefully Priory Rooms will return to their normal business. This arrangement will be monitored routinely by trustees and the arrangement will be reviewed after one year. We approve the proposal and will advise Area Meeting.

Trustees can now appoint members of the CEQ Meeting House Management Group, and we appoint James Bradbury, Bob Morris and Clare Peat and ask them to find other Friends with an interest in property management to join them. We agree to appoint new members by email between meetings. Andrew Callan and Wendy Wolfendale will attend meetings ex officio.

Judith Jenner, clerk.

b) We have received the following minute from Northfield Development Committee

2021.3

Quinquennial

The most recent QR highlights the lack of knowledge and expertise in managing and maintaining the building to the current standards required. We therefore ask for support from AM trustees in having this managed professionally.

We would like to retain a Quaker presence in the local area, and to hold events to do this in the meeting house, as well as supporting the Quaker Preschool.

We recognise that Cotteridge Elders are currently struggling with numbers, but we ask if they are able to support a monthly MfW on zoom for Northfield, and in person when possible.

We ask the clerk to send this minute to the Area meeting clerk.

c) We have also received the following minute from Clerks Advisory Committee

2021:02 At Area Meeting on 16 January we heard that Kings Heath and Barnt Green and Redditch Meetings wish to relinquish responsibility for their premises and finances and become worshipping groups.

Trustees are in the process of organising the management of these Meeting Houses, but AM has suggested that we take a wider look at how to simplify our procedures and structures and premises and finances to support small struggling Meetings (Area Meeting minute 2021.007 refers. Britain Yearly Meeting's Simpler Meetings project also refers).

Today the Clerks' Advisory committee met in response to AM's request: "We think it worth exploring the concept of simpler meetings and ask our clerks and the Clerk's Advisory committee to consider how we may take this forward."

We have discussed this at length and in depth and realise that we are all working hard in our Local Meetings to support each other as worshipping communities during the pandemic. We suggest that AM comes back to a consideration of how to reorganise when we feel more able to do so. We feel that a threshing meeting with this one focus could then be held when possible.

All three minutes are for our information.

- The trustee minute means that a sub-committee of trustees property committee, CEQ Meeting House Management Group, has been set up and can support our Meetings and Branches that ask for help.
- In respect of 2021.021b, trustees are now in a position to help with the property and finance relating to Northfield Quaker Meeting House at a future date to be decided.
- We have heard that it is premature to lay down Barnt Green & Redditch Meeting and also too soon for Kings Heath Meeting as they have not specifically asked for this.
- We ask Elder and Overseers Support Group to consider how the Friends in those 2 Meetings might be supported.

We appreciate all the work undertaken by trustees to help put structures in place to support our struggling Meetings.

2021.022 Exploring our AM structures and Organisation to Meet the Opportunities and Challenges of the next 20 years

The minute from Clerks Advisory Committee was in response to part of our minute 2021.007.

A threshing meeting in person could be held later this year to consider any reorganisation of our AM and the possibility of simpler meetings.

We encourage Friends across the Area Meeting to participate in the Woodbrooke sessions on simpler meetings, which could help us in our future discernment.

To consider the suggestion that Woodbrooke might organise a simpler meetings event specifically for CEQ, we ask Clerks Advisory Committee in the first instance to take this forward.

2021.023 Triennial Appointment Process for Eldership & Oversight

In May 2020 by our minute 2020.029 this process was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic and consequent disruption. This year, although meetings for the process may still have to be held on line, we are much more familiar with doing this, and can set the process in motion again.

The new triennium will run from January 2022 - December 2024. We ask local meetings to begin this process by:

- a) Nominating a representative and alternate to the Triennial AM E/O Nominations Committee for 2021, whose names will come to the April AM for appointment.
- b) Appointing a local elders and overseers search group, which will include the representative and alternate, at their next local business meeting.

These names do not have to be current Elders or Overseers, though they should be members in good standing.

We ask the AM secretary to send out the triennial papers, which explain this process.

We thank the current Elders and Overseers for their extra year of service in these roles.

2021.024 Community Justice Group Report

We receive the report and accounts from our Community Justice Group.

We thank the Community Justice Group for their service and the report is filed.

2021.025 Nominations Committee Report

We have received the report from Nominations Committee on their work during 2020.

We are pleased that nearly every meeting has been able to be represented since meetings have been held by video conferencing.

We thank the co-clerks and the committee for their discernment on our behalf. The report is filed.

2021.026 Meeting for Sufferings Report

Cathy Khurana attended the Meeting for Sufferings meeting on February 6th 2021. The report has been circulated.

Cathy commented that there was a general feeling that the nature of concern needs to be clarified. The number as a proportion of Friends serving in roles is staggering.

It is good to hear how the truth has prospered across the Yearly Meeting.

We heard that our MfS interest group had been able to meet before our AM.

We thank Cathy for her report, which is filed.

2021.027 Nominations

Nominations committee have the following suggestions for service:

- To continue as an AM Trustee for 1 year in the first instance - Jill Stow (COT) from March 2021 - Feb 2022
- To serve on Clerks Advisory Committee - Sue Thompson (COT) from May 2021 - Apr 2024
- To serve on Northfield Development Committee - Tina Helfrich (COT) from April 2021 - Mar 2024
- To serve on WMQPEP - Ruth Wilde (SEL) from Apr 2021 - Mar 2024
- To serve as a Quaker link for Warwick University - Jane Cunningham (WAR) from March 2021 - Feb 2024

- To serve as Quaker Life Representative (alternate) - Lin Singh-Barrington (SEL) March 2021 - Feb 2024
- To visit Sarah Jones (COT) - Esther Boyd (COT) and Nicholas Tully (BOU)
- To attend QCEA Conference online May 20-22 2021 - Ruth Wilde (SEL) Clare Barnett (HAR)
- To serve on Clerks Advisory Committee - Simon Best (COT) from April 2021 to March 2024
- To serve on CYPC - Tearla Deardon (STO) from March 2021 - Feb 2024
- To attend Leighton Park School General Meeting on 12 March 2021 - Paul Levy (COT)

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

Release from Service

- Miriam Branson has asked to be released from Clerks Advisory Committee.
- David Fish (COV) has not taken up service on the Old Peoples Fund Trust and asks that he is released.
- Rob Hooper (WAR) is stepping down as the Quaker link at Warwick University
- Judith Chapman (B&R) wishes to be released as a Susanna Cole Trustee.

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

2021.028 Interim Triennial Elders and Overseers' Nominations

The clerk of Triennial Elders & Overseers Nominations Committee brings forward the names of: Rosalie Rider (STO) for appointment as an elder to serve for the remainder of this extended triennium till Dec 2021.

We agree to appoint her to serve until the end of December 2021.

2021.029 Nominations Committee for 2021

Nominations Committee members are appointed for 3 years and this usually runs in sync with the Elders and Overseers trienniums. Since that process was put on hold we realize that no Friend has yet been appointed to nominations committee for this year.

We confirm the appointment of Friends listed below until the end of December 2021.

B&R	Judith	Chapman	N	HAR	Claire	Barnett	D
BOU	Anne	Giles	N	KIN	David	Gough	N
BOU	Donald	Stubbings	N	SEL	Alison	Ironside	N
BUL	Barbara	Forbes	N	SEL	Vic	Grainger	N
BUL	John	Kimberley	N	SOL	Janet	White	N
COT	Peter	Ullathorne	N	STO	Rosalie	Rider	N
COT	Simon	Best	N	STO	Trish	Bradbury	N
COV	Andrew	Rigby	N	SUT	Barbara	Cockcroft	N
EXO	AM	Secretary	Ex-Officio	WAL	Barbara	Groombridge	N
HAL	Celia	Morris	N	WAL	Jim	Green	N
HAL	Joy	Aldworth	N	WAR	John	Sheldon	N
				WAR	Rob	Hooper	N
BOU	Claire	Bowman	Co-Clerk				
COT	Janet	Blann	Co-Clerk				
HAL	Ruth	Livermore	Co-Clerk				

2021.030 Thanks and Next Meeting

We thank Bournville LM for providing Elders. We meet again, nominally at Sutton Coldfield QMH on April 22nd from 6.00 – 9.00pm.

Alison Ironside

Clerk

Appendix 1

The proposal referred to in **T2021.3C.1 Management of finances and property for Local Meetings** included the following points.

At the Area Meeting in January 2021 Barnt Green & Redditch and Kings Heath LMs asked for help with their property and finances and trustees were asked to respond. Since then, the property and finance service committees have considered how these smaller meetings can be supported centrally and the governance and compliance committee considered where this new development would sit in our present area meeting structures.

The area meeting will be considering the future arrangements for smaller meetings unable to find Friends to take on the responsibilities of property and finance until any decisions are made for the way forward trustees have considered how to manage these now. This will be an interim measure.

Finances

The management of the finances is relatively easy and Wendy Wolfendale is willing to increase her hours and set up and manage one central account with sub funds for each of the properties.

A new bank account will be opened to hold the LM funds. This account will be administered by Wendy Wolfendale, with Trustee signatories.

Wendy can set up the cash book using Sage and each of the properties will have a designated fund with all receipts and payments allocated to the appropriate fund.

The LM fund will be a centrally managed fund, included in the quarterly management accounts presented to finance committee and Trustees.

The funds of the participating LMs will be transferred to the new account. Once all DDs and SOs etc have been transferred to the new account the current LM bank accounts would be closed.

The LM fund will receive donations earmarked for designated sub-funds, receive room hire income, and will be used to pay utility, repairs and maintenance, insurance and other property expenses including professional staff costs.

Any LM investments would come under the care of Trustees, and they will be allocated to the individual designated funds.

The receipt and disbursement of funds from the designated funds will be controlled by the structure in place for managing the properties and lettings. Wendy would implement instructions, and these will require a formal Payment Request Process so that she can be reassured that all expenditure requests are approved.

Property

The management of the property will be undertaken by Priory Rooms staff as part of CEQ's service agreement. A work schedule has been agreed with Andrew and this will be kept under review by the clerks to trustees and Priory Rooms directors.

Management

Trustees recognise that the care of the property will need more oversight than the financial activities and propose that the trustees' property committee will include the new management group in its duties. The committee changed its way of working a few years ago and small working groups take responsibility for the different areas of work. This new group would comfortably fit into this structure. It will be responsible for setting a budget and receiving the quarterly reports.

Currently the property committee receive the minutes of the Bull Street Premises Group and oversee their budget. The trustees appoint friends representing the different groups using the Bull Street premises to the BSPG. Trustees will appoint members of this the new group.

The finance committee will also receive these as it will be a centrally managed fund. The day to day management of the finance administrator will remain with the treasurer to trustees.

Trustees are challenged to set up a new way of working and realise that this system will not be perfect, but this is an interim proposal and will be carefully monitored by trustees.

Terms of reference for the CEQ Meeting House Management Group have been agreed by trustees.

Judith Jenner