

# Minutes of Central England Area Quaker Meeting held by Video Conferencing on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2021

Clerk: Alison Ironside  
Assistant clerk: Vic Grainger

Elders on duty: Cathy Khurana, Fiona Waterhouse.

## 2021.031 Opening Minute

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

Our Meeting began with a period of silent worship during which § 10.27 of Quaker Faith & Practice was read to us:

*Are there not different states, different degrees, different growths, different places? ... Therefore, watch every one to feel and know his own place and service in the body, and to be sensible of the gifts, places, and services of others, that the Lord may be honoured in all, and every one owned and honoured in the Lord, and no otherwise.*

*Isaac Penington, 1667*

## 2021.032 Representatives

The following meetings were represented here today:

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:

Richard Begg (SUT).

## 2021.033 Membership Matters

### a) Deaths

We record the death of Sheila Wilde (SOL) 23rd October 2020 aged 90<sup>1 SEP</sup>

We record the death of Heather Le Dieu (BOU) died on 28th March 2021 aged 80.

### b) Application for Membership

We have received an application from Tom Dunkley Jones, an attender at Cotteridge LM. 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 Sarah Jones, an attender at Cotteridge 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.

### d) Accepted Out

Helen Rowlands (COT) by Pickering & Hull AM

### e) Transfer Out:

Gill and David Grimshaw (WAR) to Banbury and Evesham Area Meeting

## 2021.034 Accomplishment of Marriage

We record the accomplishment of marriage between Rhiannon Emma Louise Grant (BOU) a member of Central England Area Meeting and Piangfan Naksukpaiboon (Angela) not in membership at Bournville Quaker Meeting House on Saturday 10th April 2021.

## 2021.035 Memorial Minute

a) We have received a memorial minute from Selly Oak Meeting for Lizzie Philipps and have had parts of it read to us.

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

b) We have received a memorial minute from Warwick Meeting for Elizabeth Collins and have had parts of it read to us.

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

## 2021.036 Report from Old Peoples Fund Trust (CEQOPFT)

We have had before us a report from the clerk of CEQ Old Peoples Fund Trust, who are responsible for the management of Oak Tree House, together with a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the CEQOPFT trustees and the trustees of Sir Josiah Mason Trust (SJMT).

We also receive a minute from Bull Street LM:

*Minute 2021/21 Oak Tree House*

*Bull Street Local Meeting has considered two documents recently circulated by Area Meeting Clerks concerning Oak Tree House:*

- *Clerks Report of CEQ Old Peoples Fund Trust*
- *Memorandum of Understanding between Sir Josiah Mason Trust and Central England Quakers Old Peoples Fund Trust*

*Many of us at Bull Street have had, and continue to have, close personal connections with Oak Tree House. It is a well loved establishment.*

*Change and laying down responsibilities often comes with concerns and strong feelings. We acknowledge a sadness about the planned changes to the governance of Oak Tree House, but at the same time, we recognise change is sometimes necessary to reflect changing circumstances and can bring about fresh opportunities, energy and connections.*

*We ask whether other models of Trusteeship have been explored? For example, opening trusteeship to attenders of our Area Meeting, to increase the pool of potential trustees.*

*Whatever changes are made to its structures of governance, it is our strong hope that Oak Tree House will continue to be run faithful to the letter and spirit of its founding principles.*

Kelvin Beer-Jones, the clerk of CEQOPFT, has spoken to the report explaining why they are suggesting these changes.

A rigorous process exploring possible ways forward found that the SJMT offered what seems to be the best option. They would take over as corporate trustee the regulations, standards and compliance that are needed.

The MOU is there to work through a possible transition period towards a merger and for Oak Tree House to have a more positive future as a welcoming home for Quakers.

We have heard Friends concerns and Kelvin has addressed them.



We agree that the CEQOPFT trustees proceed with signing the MOU.

Furthermore, we agree that the current Quaker trustees revise the trust deed for the Old Peoples Fund Trust to enable the current Quaker trustees to resign in favour of Sir Josiah Mason Trust succeeding as sole corporate trustee. The trust will be renamed such that the words Central England Quaker are removed from the trust deed and the responsibility that Central England Quakers appoint all trustees will also be removed from the trust deed. We approve that a Quaker Advisory Committee to SJMT be formed from amongst the retiring Quaker trustees and we ask Nominations Committee to make further nominations to serve on the Quaker Advisory Committee in accordance with the new terms of reference to the board subject to their ratification by a future Area Meeting.'

We thank the trustees of the CEQOPFT for their diligence and hard work in finding a way forward to keep Oak Tree House a welcoming home for Quakers.

## 2021.037 Minutes Received

a) We have received the following minute from **Kings Heath LM**

### ***Meeting for Business 14.03.21 : minute 21/1***

*It was agreed that KHLM request formally laid down (sic) and continue in the future as a worship group.*

*Ruth Livermore as Clerk will send minute to Clerk of Area Meeting.*

And the following minute from our Elders and Overseers support group

*Minute 2021.14 "... Our understanding is that a Worshipping Group should be under the auspices of a Local Meeting."*

We do not feel able to make the decision to lay down Kings Heath LM at this time. We encourage those Friends at Kings Heath to explore links with other LMs.  
We are reminded that our membership is with Area Meeting.

b) We have received the following minute from **Selly Oak LM**

### ***SEL2021/2 Racial Justice (Stuart Morton)***

*We have received a report from the Selly Oak Meeting Racial Justice Group, a group authorised in SOQM minute 2020/23 to develop its work. We attach the report to these minutes. Following further discernment, we agree to support the work of the Group so that our Meeting might be open to new light regarding the endemic nature of racism in British society and which BYM is recognising is also part of its own being. We encourage each other to get involved, and start sharing our experiences, being open to changing our views, so that we can uncover our own biases and make real changes individually and corporately. We agree to forward this minute to CEQ Area Meeting, and through it indicate our willingness to cooperate with other CEQ Meetings in the development of this concern. we ask the Group to explore various ways for the community to engage with this issue.*

*We are keen to work with others on racial justice!*

c) We have received the following Minute from **Warwick LM**

*We agreed Minute 21/20 A concern for racial justice in relation to early Quaker involvement with slavery.*

*We have received the paper 'A concern for racial justice in relation to early Quaker involvement with slavery prepared by Rob Hooper. We agree to send this paper to Area Meeting, revised to reflect it is an issue not a concern. We ask Rob to provide further opportunity for us to consider this matter locally.*

These two minutes from Selly Oak LM and Warwick LM are for our information. We encourage LMs to involve themselves with these issues and we ask the AM secretary to circulate the paper from Warwick mentioned with these minutes.

d) We have also received the following minute from **AM Peace Committee**

*We have taken note of the Home Office's "New Plan for Immigration" and are dismayed by the attitudes and agenda which underpin it.*

*Unusually, the consultation on this document has been made open to individuals as well as groups and organisations. We note that QARN (Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network) and also the national campaigning network Asylum Matters are each producing guidelines on how to respond.*

*These guidelines are not yet available but we hope to have them before Area Meeting for Friends to see. Birmingham City of Sanctuary has also alerted its supporters.*

*The AM Peace Committee would like to commend these guidelines to Area Meeting with a request for an AM response, and also to encourage constituent Local Meetings and individual Friends to respond to the consultation in their own right. The deadline for responding is 5th May*

The guidelines are now available and have been drawn to Friends attention through our website and the newsfeed.

We encourage our LMs and individual Friends to complete the consultation paper referred to.

## **2021.038 Birmingham Churches Together: Anti-Racism Charter**

Hilary Johnson, who is on the Birmingham Churches Leaders Group, has spoken to this charter.

We agree to sign up to this charter.

## **2021.039 Triennial Nominations Committee for Eldership & Oversight**

The following names for a representative and alternate have been forwarded by our Local Meetings:

Bournville -			
Bull Street Rep	David Sargeant	alternate	John Kimberley
Cotteridge Rep	Ted Raybould	alternate	Harriet Martin
Coventry Rep	Andrew Rigby		
Hall Green Rep	Mina Tilt	alternative	Judith Millington
Hartshill Rep	Clare Barnett	alternate	Paul Hewitt <sup>[SEP]</sup>
Selly Oak: Rep	Nessa Grimes	alternate	Barnaby or Helen Waters
Solihull Rep	Donald Whitlock	alternate	Aileen Cook
Stourbridge Rep	Julia Furminger	alternate	Rosalie Rider <sup>[SEP]</sup>
Sutton Coldfield Rep	Cathy Khurana	alternate	Helen Begg
Walsall: Rep	Barbara Groombridge	alternate	Jim Green <sup>[SEP]</sup>
Warwick Rep	Paula Button	alternate	John Sheldon. <sup>[SEP]</sup>

We appoint these Friends, and remind them that the first meeting of this committee will be held online on 19 May 2021 at 6.00 p.m.

## **2021.040 Nominations**

Nominations committee have the following suggestions for service:

- To visit Cathy Tuckett (COT) on her Journey into Membership – Susan Steadman (COT) and John Lampen (STO)



- To serve a further triennium as a trustee of the Black Country Urban Industrial Mission from April 2021 until the end of March 2024 – Jim Green (WAL)
- To serve on Peace Committee from April 2021 to the end of March 2024 - John Sheldon (WAR)
- To serve a further triennium on Peace Committee from July 2021 until the end of June 2024 – Peter Doubtfire (BUL)
- To serve a further triennium as a trustee of the Susannah Cole and Others Trust from June 2021 until the end of May 2024 – Rosalie Rider (STO)
- To serve on Trustees Property Committee from April 2021 until the end of March 2024 – Steve Pullan (COV)
- To serve a further triennium as a Trustee Director of Woodlands Quaker Home from April 2021 until the end of March 2024 – Richard Taylor (BOU)
- To serve on Area Meeting Outreach Committee from April 2021 to the end of March 2024 Liwsi Butler (WAL)
- To serve a further triennium on the Peace Hub Management Committee from July 2021 until the end of June 2024 - Roderick Keefe (COT)
- To serve a further triennium on the Peace Hub Management Committee from July 2021 until the end of June 2024 Alistair Dow (BUL)

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**

- Kris Turner (WAR) from AM Property Committee
- Bob Jeays (SAM) as a Trustee/Director of the Woodlands from the end of April 2021.
- Fiona Waterhouse (SUT) as an Area Meeting Trustee
- Simon Best (COT) from AM Nominations Committee

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

### **2021.041 Interim Triennial Elders and Overseers' Nominations**

The clerk of Triennial Elders & Overseers Nominations Committee brings forward the name of: Anne Ullathorne (COT) 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.

### **2021.042 Thanks and Next Meeting**

We thank Sutton Coldfield LM for providing Elders and helping with the technical side. We meet again, nominally at Cotteridge QMH on June 12th from 2.00 – 5.00pm.

Alison Ironside

Clerk

Held over: CEQ Trustees Report for 2020



## **CIRCULATION APPENDIX:**

### **A Concern for Racial Justice in relation to early Quaker involvement with slavery**

#### **Introduction**

Whilst we rightly celebrate Quakers' early leadings with respect to the abolition of slavery, we are not so vocal about the early involvement we had with slave owning and slave trading. Edwina Peart, Inclusion and Diversity Co-ordinator for BYM, writes of our "single heroic narrative". She also says that "a nuanced sense of ourselves is a sense that is true and that is a better one to build on", and that in "engaging with Britain's colonial past and complicity of Quakers and other faith organisations in slavery is a way of laying bare some of the links to current day racism". With the current raised awareness of racial justice issues, I feel it is an appropriate time to look again at our past involvement in slavery.

#### **Some facts**

**Barbados** : Many Quakers emigrated to Barbados and most accepted slavery and were involved in some respect. Barbados was the earliest slave colony. In 1671, George Fox was drawn to travel to the New World, starting in Barbados. It was a journey of great hardship. At that time there were several hundred Quakers in Barbados and five meeting houses. He probably encountered only domestic slaves and was not fully aware of the cruelty that the field slaves experienced. Fox suggested that slaves should be treated as children of the family and he encouraged worshipping with slaves. His advice to free slaves after a period of 30 years might be seen as a first step towards emancipation.

**America**: William Penn, who founded Pennsylvania in 1682, tolerated slavery for the sake of economic development. He used his contacts in Barbados to buy enslaved Africans, and held 12 slaves as workers on his estate. Pennsylvania saw the first recorded protest about slavery (the Germantown Petition against slavery in 1688). This was not taken up by their Yearly Meeting as it was a matter of "too much weight". 70% of the leaders of the Yearly Meeting held slaves. Penn left the colony in 1701. The state was the first to pass the Abolition Act in 1780.

These are just a few examples : other early British Quakers were undoubtedly involved in slavery and the slave trade in some capacity.

#### **My sources of information**

Edwina Peart quoted in an article in "The Times" 19/1/21  
"George Fox in Barbados" by Simon Webb  
"Christian Slavery" by Katherine Gerbner  
"Sugar in the Blood" by Andrea Stuart  
Recent letters to "The Friend"

#### **Comment**

We owe our existence to the faith of George Fox, William Penn and other early Quakers. We would by no means wish to condemn them from the perspective of current understandings. We ourselves might well be remembered in future years - despite the best efforts of some of our members – for marching our descendents into a climate catastrophe. Nevertheless I feel it would be helpful to have a more nuanced view of our history. As written in "Faith and Practice", "Be honest with yourself. What unpalatable truths might you be evading?".

## **Ways forward**

I have some ideas for future action and would welcome suggestions.

I would like any Minute that might be sent to the Area Meeting about this to suggest that we might link up with work currently being done by the Selly Oak Meeting's Racial Justice Group (as outlined in the papers for the next Area Meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> April).

Rob Hooper April 2021  
Warwick LM