

Minutes of Central England Area Quaker Meeting for Church Affairs
Held on 27.04.2022 online, hosted by Sutton Coldfield Meeting

Clerk: Stella Roberts
Assisting: John Sheldon

Elders on duty: Barbara Cockcroft (SUT) and Anne Ullathorne (COT)
Technical support: Richard Begg and Vic Grainger

2022.021 Opening Minute

Our Meeting began with a period of silent worship during which part of Quaker Faith and Practice 3.05 was read:

It is always to be recognised that, coming together with a variety of temperaments, of backgrounds, education and experience, we shall have differing contributions to make to any deliberation. It is no part of Friends' concern for truth that any should be expected to water down a strong conviction or be silent merely for the sake of easy agreement. Nevertheless we are called to honour our testimony that to every one is given a measure of the light, and that it is in the sharing of knowledge, experience and concern that the way towards unity will be found. There is need for understanding loyalty by the meeting as a whole when, after all sides of a subject have been considered, a minute is accepted as representing the discernment of the meeting.

Not all who attend a meeting for church affairs will necessarily speak: those who are silent can help to develop the sense of the meeting if they listen in a spirit of worship.

2022.022 Representatives

The following Meetings were represented today:
BAR; BOU; BUL; COT; COV; HAL; KIN; SEL; STO; SUT; WAL; WAR.

The following attenders have been given permission to attend this meeting:

Claire Cavendish (BUL)
Ian Taylor (SUT)

2022.023 Membership matters

(a) Marriage

We have been informed by Warwick Friends that a marriage between Sarah Margaret Bunney, a member of Central England Area Meeting and Joseph Gary Bell, not in membership, will take place at Warwick Meeting House, on Saturday 12th June at 2pm.

(b) Internal Transfer: Lin Singh Barrington from Selly Oak LM to the unattached list

2022.24 Memorial Minute for Heather Le Dieu

We have received a memorial minute for Heather Le Dieu of Bournville Local Meeting and had a shortened version of it read to us. We thank Bournville Friends and will forward the minute to AM Elders and Pastoral Friends Support Group for consideration.

2022.25 Responding to Racism Group (2021.37 and 2022.17 refer)

Following on from their presentation at area meeting in March, the Responding to Racism Group is asking CEQ to accept them as a Recognised Group so that they can develop their anti-racism work within an agreed formal structure. Val Jenner and Ruth Wilde have laid out the group's suggested Terms of Reference and a list of aims before us today.

We agree that Responding to Racism (R2R) should become a Recognised Group within Central England Quakers Area Meeting and hope that a budget of £500 could be found from the AM General Fund. We accept the Terms of Reference and list of aims which have been discerned and they are filed with these minutes.

We commend the enthusiasm and energy of this small group in bringing these important matters to our attention. It is hoped that interested Friends will come forward to join the group so that eventually each LM will be represented.

2022.26 Nominations Committee Report for 2021

We have received this report and learnt of the rewards and challenges experienced by those serving on this committee. Meeting online throughout 2021 ensured that most LMs were able to furnish representatives, although they naturally missed the personal contact of meeting face to face. A Nominations Committee's work is never done, and we are grateful for the research and constant searching for names that they do on our behalf. We hope that we can continue to simplify our structures and be mindful of our obligations towards serving our communities.

The report is filed, and we thank the clerks and the committee for their work.

2022.27 Tabular Statement for year ending 31st December 2021

We have received the Tabular Statement for 2021 which has been sent to Britain Yearly Meeting. It records the number of members, attenders and children in each of our local meetings and we thank Dave Rawcliffe and Judith Jenner for compiling it.

We note that there is a slow but steady decrease in our number of members, but attender numbers remain constant. We ask LMs to check their lists of young people to ensure that they are recorded in the correct category. It is important also, particularly in the case of attenders, to inform the area meeting office via data protection forms when people need to be added or have ceased to worship with us.

2022.28 Meeting for Sufferings Report

Both Claire Bowman, our representative, and alternate, Margot Williams were able to attend this meeting and Margot has sent us her impressions of the experience. This was the first MfS she has attended in person, having never been to Friends House or to a national Quaker gathering before. She felt enriched by the fellowship she found there.

Margot stresses the need for AMs to consider alternatives to the term 'overseer' as a matter of urgency, which is an item on our agenda today.

She points us to the official minutes online for a 'less subjective view' and encourages Friends to look at Oliver Robertson's prepared ministry about the war in Ukraine.

Claire Bowman has spoken to this report today.

2022.29 Community Justice Group Annual Report

Because of the pandemic restrictions, 2021 was a difficult year for CJG as their activities were severely limited for the second year running. Chaplains however have managed to keep in touch with their teams and meeting on Zoom recently, have described the inspiring work they do in prisons, hospitals, a university and various community projects.

William Waddilove and Tricia Bradbury attended the Quakers in Criminal Justice (QICJ) conference in February 2022 and William's report is included here. The theme was Trauma, Dysfunction and Criminality; speakers stressing the fact that hurtful experiences in childhood can lead to criminal behaviour and mental illness in later life. Tricia also spoke about her work in two prisons.

We thank CJG for their report and Tricia Bradbury for speaking to it today.

2022.30 Change of name from overseer

Minute received from Coventry LM

2022/03/04 Consideration of the name 'overseer':

Elder/overseers sent this minute:

22/12 Alternative name to Overseer (PCG joined the meeting for this item)

Further to BM minute 2021/12/01:

We feel that the current Coventry system is working and wish to continue with it. We propose dropping the term 'overseer' completely so that we have a group of elders appointed by Area Meeting, working with and supported by a locally appointed pastoral care group.

We value the work of our pastoral care group and our elders. We agree that we will accept this change of name and inform Area Meeting of our decision. We ask that Area Meeting consider changing the role name for those in our meeting previously appointed as elder/overseer to elder.

We thank Coventry LM for providing us with this information, a reminder that all area meetings are asked to report back to Meeting for Sufferings on the matter by the end of 2022. So far Bull Street is the only other LM to have provided us with a minute, giving their chosen term of 'Pastoral Friend'. In response to the March MfS report's item on the term 'overseer', Warwick LM has informed our co-clerks that they have provisionally adopted the term 'Pastoral Support Group' and will send a minute to us from their next business meeting.

We urge all other LMs to consider an alternative name and report back to us and to Elders and Pastoral Friends Support Group.

2022.31 Junior Yearly Meeting

This year's JYM was held at the Frontier Centre, Northamptonshire from the 9th – 12th April and was attended by four young Friends from our Area Meeting:

Adam Waters (SEL), Eddie Rugg (WAR), Katie Falk (COT) and Stephanie Edelsten (WAR)

More than 50 young Friends, aged 15-18, gathered to explore the theme:

Compassionate listening and spiritual engagement: How can we strengthen our faith community to make space for action?

Adam Waters has sent us a report which is filed with these minutes. He felt deeply inspired by the sessions and workshops around the theme and determined in the future to turn words into actions. There were also many opportunities to meet new friends and have fun. Adam greatly appreciated the work of the organisers and relished his chance to practise discernment on the Nominations Committee seeking Friends to plan next year's JYM.

Adam's hopeful attitude about the future of Quakers is comforting to older Friends!

Stephanie Edelsten has also written to us. She says: Thank you for enabling me to go to JYM. I met lots of nice, new people and had a break from exam stress. I enjoyed hearing from the speakers and meeting Paul Parker. The Easter egg hunt and the trashion show were lots of fun.

We are grateful to Adam and Stephanie for reporting back to us.

2022.32 Principal Officer

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Sarah Barker to the newly created post of Principal Officer to Central England Area Meeting. Her brief is to 'manage the work of the charity, implementing the strategy and decisions of the trustees and providing support and inspiration to Quakers in the various AM voluntary appointments and staff.'

Sarah will start work on June 27th and has agreed to attend the special AM at Woodbrooke on May 21st in order to meet Friends and learn about our plans for the future.

2022.033 Nominations and Appointments

Nominations Committee suggests:

Claire Bowman (BOU) to serve as Nominations Co-Clerk from Apr 22 – Dec 24
Claire Bowman (BOU) to serve on Communications Committee from Apr 22 – Mar 25
Sue Thompson (COT) to serve on Susanna Cole and Others Trust from Jun 22 – May 25
Donald Stubbings (BOU) to serve on Susanna Cole and Others Trust from Jul 22 – Jun 25
Peter Collard (NiM) to serve on the Woodlands Management Committee from Apr 22 – Mar 25
Marilyn Coulter (NiM) to serve on the Woodlands Management Committee from Apr 22 - Mar 25
Kelvin Beer-Jones (SEL) to serve on the Woodlands Management Committee from Apr 22 – Mar 25
Rosalie Rider (STO) to serve on the Bursaries Committee from Jun 22 – May 25
Barbara Groombridge (WAL) to serve on the Bursaries Committee from Jul 22 – May 25
Simon Best (COT) to serve on WMQPEP Management Committee from May 22 – Apr 25

These names being acceptable we appoint our Friends accordingly and ask the Area Meeting Office team to inform them, as well as any clerks/convenors of the relevant committees.

2022.34 Thanks and next Meeting

We thank Friends at Sutton Coldfield Meeting for hosting us online. The next AM will be a special one held on Saturday May 21st at Woodbrooke, 11am -4pm. Lunch is provided.

Friends going in person must register by May 4th

Forms are available electronically or on the printed leaflets sent to all LMs.

The AM on Saturday, 18th June will be a blended one held at Cotteridge Meeting House and online from 2-5pm.

Stella Roberts
Clerk this time

