

Minutes of Central England Area Meeting for Worship for Business, held at Cotteridge Quaker Meeting House on Saturday June 18th and also online.

Clerk: Vic Grainger
Assistant Clerk: Stella Roberts

Elders on duty: Michael Eccles (online), Anne Ullathorne
Childcare: Heather Rowlands and Chris Martin

2022.043 Opening Worship

During our opening worship we heard of the deaths of three friends, Daphne Maw, David Clark and Sybil Harvey-Lago. Part of the introduction (12.01) to Ch 12 of Q.F&P - Caring for one another - was read.

'Every conversation with another Friend, every business meeting, every discussion group, and every meeting for worship can increase our loving and caring and our knowledge of each other.... Careful listening is fundamental to helping each other; it goes beyond finding out about needs and becomes part of meeting them. Some would say that it is the single most useful thing that we can do'.

2022.044 Representatives

All our Local Meetings except Hartshill were represented.

2022.045 Membership Matters

a) Deaths

We record the deaths of three friends:

David Clark, of Walsall Meeting, who died on June 3rd aged 69 years.

Sybil Harvey - Lago (AML) who had worshipped at Kings Heath and Hall Green Meetings, who died on June 6th 2022

Daphne Maw, of Stourbridge Meeting, who died on June 12th 2022 aged 94 years. Her funeral will be held at Stourbridge Crematorium on July 6th at 2.10 pm, and afterwards there will be a Meeting for Worship at Stourbridge Meeting House, further details from Tricia or James Bradbury.

b) Resignation Sarah Parish

Minute from Bull St BM2022/17

Elders and Pastoral Friends have been reviewing membership of the Meeting, and Sarah Parish has decided to resign from membership. We agree to this.

We record the resignation of Sarah Parish following discernment from Bull St Meeting, and ask the AM clerks to write to her.

c) Marriage Emily Lloyd Quinton and Paul Corrigan

A Meeting for Worship for the marriage of Emily Mary Lloyd Quinton, a member of Leicester AM, and Paul Anthony Corrigan, not in membership, is appointed to take place at Bournville Meeting on August 22nd 2022.

d) Transfer Out

We agree to the transfer out of Vicki Fennell of Coventry Meeting, to Northumbria AM, and ask the clerks to write to her.

2022.046 Nominations and Appointments

Nominations Committee suggests:

- Susan Steadman (COT) to serve a further year as a Talking Friend Trustee from September 2022 to the end of August 2025.
- Nicholas Tulley (BOU) to serve a further triennium as a Talking Friend Trustee from July 2022 until the end of June 2025.
- Peter Ullathorne (COT) to serve a further triennium on the Trustees Property Committee from July 2022 until the end of June 2025.
- Terry Stanley (BUL) to serve a further Triennium on the Trustees Property Committee from July 2022 until the end of June 2025.
- Jill Stow (COT) to serve on the management committee of the West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project from June 2022 until the end of May 2025.
- Sarah Jones (COT) to serve a further Triennium on the Old Peoples Fund Trust from July 2022 until the end of June 2025, or until the committee is laid down.
- Gill Smith (WAR) to serve as Clerk to Area Meeting Trustees from January 2023 until the end of December 2025.

We accept these names and appoint them accordingly.

2022.047 Minute received from Coventry LM

**Minute 2022/05/02 of Coventry local meeting for business held 6th May 2022
Concern relating down of Peace Committee of Quaker Peace & Social Witness (PECAN), part of our national work.**

Pam Lunn brings to this meeting her concern about the laying down of Peace Committee as part of restructuring the central work of Britain Yearly Meeting. We support this concern. We agree to send the following minute to Area Meeting for their consideration:

As Friends, one of the things that others are likely to know about us is our historic peace witness. As Friends from Coventry, our meeting is embedded in a city that has had its own distinctive peace witness since the bombing of the city and cathedral in World War II.

Since the 1880s, the Peace Committee of London Yearly Meeting (as was), subsequently Britain Yearly Meeting, has been active and engaged with many other peace organisations both in Britain and elsewhere. It has been the heartbeat of our witness in the world.

We are, therefore, extremely concerned to hear of the decision that Peace Committee is to be laid down at the end of June this year. The current QPSW 'peace committee', which carries the heritage, learning and vision for Friends peace testimony, is now called 'Peace Education, Campaigning and Networking subcommittee' of QPSW Central Committee.

With no successor structure yet in place and with the vision behind the changes not having been widely shared, the laying down of this sub-committee appears to leave our staff members to respond on our behalf, without that support, as the current war in Ukraine continues unabated.

We urge those who have made this decision to reconsider it, with great urgency.

Gillian Waddilove, clerk

We have heard from Friends of Coventry LM about their distress over the laying down of the QPSW peace committee (PECAN) at the end of this month. Many of us in Area Meeting are also unhappy about this and other functional committees being laid down. There is still hurt about decisions to lay down Quaker Life functional committees in the past, especially Outreach Committee and the Committee on Eldership and Oversight. As Quakers it is very important for us to take part in the governance of our church. We want to be able to participate. We feel this is a short-sighted decision and doesn't give life to the Society and its work. Discerning the spirit is vital.

We were reminded however that on a practical level we want to be involved in the world but we feel we sometimes lack the human capacity to do what we want to do.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings, urging them to consider our concern.

2022.048 Minute received from Coventry LM

2022/06/03 Justice and Peace Group - request for support for their campaign re investment by the West Midlands Pension Fund in nuclear arms manufacturers

Ann Farr has brought this campaign to our attention, and Jo Hallett has spoken about it in our meeting today. We ask our clerk to write to Coventry City Council adapting the form letter provided. We strongly encourage all Friends to write to each of their ward councillors asking them to support Councillor Bally Singh in raising this matter with the West Midlands Pension Fund. The form letter will be circulated with these minutes. We agree to send this minute and the supporting papers to Area Meeting, asking that they encourage all local meetings and individual Friends within the West Midlands, to write to their councils and to their individual ward councillors.

Form letter (for Coventry Friends, others will need to adapt it

A call to end all WMPF nuclear weapons investments

We are aware that a portion of the money raised by the Council Tax is invested in the WMPF, for the benefit of its members. We have no quarrel with this. But we also know that the Fund invests in companies which manufacture and support the nuclear weapons industry, and to this we object most strongly.

We find it to be incompatible with the City's long-standing and widely-known reputation as the City of Peace and Reconciliation. Less well-known, perhaps, but equally important, is its commitment to the safety of refugees as a City of Sanctuary. Many of these refugees have been driven from their homes by wars. Weapons manufacturers profit enormously from wars, and we find it intolerable that our local taxes find their way into this trade.

We know that there are better ways. In 1982, the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki proposed an initiative which has come to be called 'Mayors for Peace'. The city of Coventry was among the first to respond to this initiative and has been part of the supporting group since 1985. Many hundreds of towns and cities around the world have joined since.

We see clearly that we now have an opportunity to renew and extend the vision proposed by Hiroshima and Nagasaki, by taking action at the local level, in respect of the investments we find so troubling. We are aware that we cannot achieve the withdrawal of investments on our own. It will require the support of the WMPF as a whole. But the process must begin somewhere, and we want the City of Coventry to be that place.

We know that the Trustees of the Fund meet next on June 29th. We therefore urge Coventry City Council and its Lord Mayor to stand with us in this declaration and communicate their stance to the WMPF.

We have heard from Coventry Friends about their campaign efforts to dissuade WMPF from investing with nuclear arms manufacturers. We support their efforts and ask LMs and individual friends to take prompt action if they feel so led. The form letter included with these minutes will need editing to suit local councils. We note that Trustees of the Fund next meet on June 29th so it is imperative to write to local councils without delay.

2022.049 Minute received from Barnt Green & Redditch LM

BG&R 22/34 Film showings at Barnt Green Meeting House

The Meeting agreed for film showings to go ahead in Barnt Green MH.

Wai-Ling Bickerton will contact the editor of the Village magazine to ask about any feedback about the film showings as mentioned in a recent article in the Village. The showings will be free, although we can charge or ask for donations towards refreshments and other expenses. The MH insurance cover has been increased by £4,000 to cover the audio-visual equipment now stored at the Meeting House.

Tricia Bradbury will find out the maximum number of people allowed in the MH for insurance purposes. We have a Music Licence which is up on the notice board. CEAM are members of the Cinema for All organisation which can sometimes provide equipment for film showing events. We will bear this in mind. There is a film showing already on the calendar for Sunday 26th June - it was agreed that we will have a film showing then and invite local friends and neighbours to it, starting at 1 pm. People will be invited to bring a picnic with them if they wish to. The film "What's up, doc" (Cert U) will be shown which lasts 94 minutes. Those who come will be asked which films they would like to see in the future. Items of equipment still needed include (with estimated prices):

- a roller screen of plain white fabric 14' 3" by 6' drop plus pole to raise and lower it £450
- Blu Ray £11
- Pelmet so things will look neater when screen not in use £42
- Facing acoustic hardwood to match the MH walls £100

We agree to this expenditure of about £603 and ask our Friend John West to purchase and install these items on our behalf. We have heard that our Area Meeting is keen for Local Meetings to reach out to their surrounding communities. We invite CEAM to contribute towards these costs.

It is good to hear of this encouraging initiative from Barnt Green Friends. Meeting House Management Group are supporting their request for funding. We hope these showings will be publicised to Friends, and that it will be an opportunity for intervisitation and in reach and outreach. We pass their request for part funding to the AM Trustees' Finance Committee.

2022.050 Minute received from Cotteridge LM

COT 2022/25 Change to Overseers name

We support our overseers' suggestion to a change of name from Overseers to Pastoral Friends. We send this minute to the Area Meeting.

We note this change of name from COT Overseers, and send this minute to AM Elders and Overseers Support Group.

2022.051 Minutes received from AM Elders & Overseers Support Group

a) CEQ/E&OSG 2022/10 Community Building

Howard Saunders has spoken to the document 'The Wellbeing of our Local Meetings'. We welcome this clarification and reminder of responsibilities, and forward it to Area Meeting. We hope that AM will adopt it as useful practice and that it will be sent out to all our Local Meetings.

E&O's Support Group paper

The Wellbeing of our Local Meetings

The wellbeing of local meetings should be the responsibility of all of its members and in particular, the responsibility of the Clerk supported by Elders and Pastoral friends. Advice and Query No 18 encourages us to make the Meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured. We must recognise that we also have a responsibility to nurture and heal not only individuals but also their relationships with each other if we are to have a healthy community. There will be many different approaches to the nurturing of a healthy community but Elders and Pastoral friends must also be prepared to act and seek to resolve disharmony or conflict within the community. This may well be difficult to do in practice but help is available through the Area Meeting

Elders and Overseers Support Group and it is important not to allow disharmony and conflict within the Meeting to fester or to be ignored.

Friends have a long tradition of conflict resolution but better that Meetings nurture the wellbeing of their community before any problems arise.

Howard Saunders June 2022.

We thank Howard and the E/O support group for preparing this thoughtful paper, and ask LMs to make use of it. It will be filed with these minutes.

b) CEQ/E&OSG 2022/11 Renaming of Elders and Overseers Support Group

Several Local meetings have already renamed their 'Overseers' as Pastoral Friends, and we feel this is also right for this committee to be renamed the Elders and Pastoral Friends Support Group. We send this minute to Area Meeting.

We are pleased to hear that the E/O group have decided to change their name and we will adopt it as a permanent change. We send this minute to the Elders and Pastoral Friends Support Group.

2022.052 Stepping forward into the future (22.37, 38, 39,40 refer) Plenary Session

Minutes and reflections received arising from the special Area Meeting on May 21st 2022:

Cotteridge LM minute 2022/22 The future of Central England Quakers: What does Love require of us? A Cotteridge Response

We have taken time to share our different experiences of the special Area Meeting held 21 May at Woodbrooke. We were glad of the opportunity to see our area meeting as a community, a group of people held together by the love of God.

It was good to meet together with so many Friends of so many ages and to use Woodbrooke. But many of us felt frustrated by the limited amount of time allocated to the topic which did not enable us to engage with it fully.

We feel that we want to have the courage to trust our processes and to give substantial time in open worship, discerning the future. Another meeting could be at Bull Street and we could include our children and young people there as well.

We realise we are at the beginning of the journey; some seeds are being picked up. We may need a more structured process as we continue on this journey so that we can meet the needs of our spiritual development over the next 30 plus years.

We send this minute to Area Meeting

Anne Ullathorne and Heather Rowlands Co Clerks

Coventry LM minute 2022/06/01 (I) Report from the special Area Meeting held 21st May, and consideration of the way forward:

Nine of us attended the meeting, either online or in person. It was good to see so many Friends from around the Area Meeting, and to enjoy Woodbrooke again. While at Woodbrooke, Maggie McHale made contact with Clare Barnett of Hartshill Meeting and agreed to restart formal intervisitation between our meetings.

The request from CEQ Trustees to consider how we would suggest using the resources available to further the work of the Area Meeting comes when we are already considering ways to more effectively run our meeting with reduced input by our members, to release Friends to help the meeting to move forward in

developing our worship and witness in the world. We ask CEQ Trustees to include administration of lettings for our Meeting House and the book-keeping duties of our treasurer in the work of the Meeting Houses Management Group (MHMG). We ask our

Premises and Finance committee, our lettings secretaries and our treasurer to liaise with the contact for MHMG.

Gillian Waddilove, clerk

Selly Oak LM Minute 2022/31 Special Area Meeting

Following Minute 2022.40 Stepping into the Future, we have reflected on the Special Area Meeting held at Woodbrooke on the 11th May. We were taken by the joyful nature of the day, the chance to meet with others and be energised. We noted the different feels of the morning which felt invigorating and the afternoon which felt flatter as we moved into the Business side of the day. We reflected on a few traditions such as intervisitation that have fallen by the wayside. We are conscious that when things feel like a chore, they no longer give life to our community.

We are considering as Selly Oak supporting an 'intervisit' day where one Sunday a year we do not worship at Selly Oak but choose to visit other meetings.

Do we focus too much on structures, finances and property and not enough on the life of the Meeting, or do those structures, if managed, give life to the Meeting.

We ask that Area Meeting consider regular similar events at Woodbrooke for the Area Meeting with a focus for fellowship, fun and learning.

We ask the Area Meeting to consider that appointing a small group to take this forward may not result in the creative response craved by our community. Repeating a pattern from the past may not be the most effective way forward.

We are aware of the burden on so many Friends and the experience of 'burn out'.

We want to share a way forward that supports what we do and how we do it and how we protect one another of the rigours of service. Can our financial assets be of service in terms of staff capacity and expertise.

We are grateful for the day, for those involved in organising and for the welcome and hospitality of Woodbrooke.

We are aware that there are more issues here and ask our Elders and Learning Coordinators to suggest some small group discussions following Meeting for Worship over the year.

Personal reflection from Caroline Gibbs, Solihull LM

What does love require of us as an Area Meeting?

Giving equal weight to in reach as well as outreach perhaps.

Many Friends have been adversely affected by the significant and life-changing events of the past few years.

This period may have created or brought to the surface painful memories or awareness of undercurrents that can longer be ignored.

In our desire to get up and out there again we may unintentionally overlook the disconnection some Friends are experiencing.

We could consider what we can do in these instances to help Friends reconnect, work better together, in order to face out and continue our work in the world."Water cannot be drawn from an empty well."

This introduction to the plenary session was provided by the clerk:

Where we are at the moment:

Barely a month since a large AM of over 100 AM friends - so great interest in the subject.

Information from this May 21st meeting not yet analysed though (we hope) it is preserved - we have only ideas and thoughts from the children's programme, Pete Duckworth's analysis of LM minutes and individual thoughts received before May AM, and minutes and thoughts received after the May AM - to go on. So, our information gathering is not complete.

So, what has happened since? *Following Clerks Advisory Committee meeting in June, a number of names were sent to AM Nominations Committee for discernment for the small group to be appointed to take things forward. There is not any clarity yet as to what will be the brief, and a worry whether*

with such a large number of concerned friends this will be the right way, or the only way forward. The AM clerks have not yet had an opportunity to discuss this.

It is clear that we need some long-term strategic thinking, which is best done by a smaller group able to thrash things out.

It is also clear that there is massive grass roots interest in change and renewal, this may best be done outside our formal structures of nominations and appointment, with small informal groups coming together around shared Quaker passions. This already happens around our activism, which is not so confined by our structures - climate emergency action, the asylum group, responding to racism etc. Could we extend the concept to energy for e.g., Quaker social gatherings, inreach, outreach, learning etc?

We probably need a combination of both approaches.

One thing that stands out is around provision for children, both providing childcare at AMs and AM gatherings, and at a LM level, of providing support with children and young people's programmes.

This could be a paid position, and if the funds are available, could be achieved fairly quickly.

Personal reflections from Vic Grainger June 2022

We have received several minutes from LMs on this topic which will be circulated with these minutes, and have shared our further thoughts on stepping forward into the future: we need to build on what is working well rather than focussing on what we don't do well. We are only at the beginning of re-building our Area Meeting community, especially after the pandemic. We need to analyse the information we have gathered before we can make decisions for the future. We need to find our kindred spirits among friends in the Area meeting. Particularly we feel the need to explore childcare provision for parents and children's programmes. We want to encourage imaginative use of our Meeting Houses. We can learn from other Area Meetings as well as from other churches. We ask AM Trustees to consider administration for lettings etc to ease the burden of Local Meetings. We would like to have another plenary meeting on this matter.

2022.053 Thanks and next meeting

We thank Cotteridge friends for their hospitality and especially Heather Rowlands and Chris Martin for providing childcare. We next meet on July 21st at Warwick Meeting House at 6pm.

Vic Grainger
Clerk this time.