

# Minutes of Central England Area Meeting held at Warwick Quaker Centre with Friends present in the Meeting House and others on line 21 July 2022

Clerk: John Sheldon

Assistant Clerk: Stella Roberts

Elders on duty: Diana Biddlestone (WAR), Gill Smith (WAR), Donald Whitlock (SOL)

## 2022.054 Opening Minute

Our meeting began with a period of silent worship during which §22.02 from *Quaker Faith & Practice* was read aloud:

*Our name, the Religious Society of Friends, suggests that we think of ourselves not only as Friends in the Truth, which the early Quakers saw themselves to be, but also as a society of friends, prizing friendship highly and recognising its value for the religious life.*

*In our intimate relationships, as in the wider community of our meeting, openness to one another can open us to the Holy Spirit and enable us to acknowledge that of God in our own hearts and in those of our friends.*

## 2022.055 Representatives

The following meetings are represented here today: BOU, BUL, COT, COV, KIN, SOL, STO, SUT, WAL, WAR. We are aware that the following meetings have been unable to send representatives: BAR, HAL, HAR, SEL. Hilary Johnson has spoken to us about the group which supports BAR where there are two new attenders.

The clerk has given permission for Peter Doubtfire, an attender at Bull St to join us today and Sarah Barker, our Principal Officer is in attendance.

## 2022.056 Membership matters

### Application for membership

We have received an application for membership from Edward Rugg, an attender at Warwick LM. Our Nominations Committee have brought forward Pete Duckworth (COV) and Helen Pemberton (WAR) as visitors. We accept these names and ask Friends to arrange the visit over the summer if possible so that a report can be brought to our meeting on 17 September.

## 2022.057 Accomplishment of marriage

We record the accomplishment of marriage between Sarah Bunney (WAR), a member of Central England Area Meeting, and Gary Bell, not in membership, at Warwick Quaker Centre on Saturday 18 June 2022. The Quaker Marriage Form H, Certificate of Accomplishment, is filed with these minutes.

## 2022.058 Nominations

Our Nominations Committee suggest the names of the following Friends for service as indicated:

AM trustee: Jim Green (WAL) to serve from August 2022 to July 2025

Communications Committee: John Cockcroft (SUT) to serve from September 2022 to August 2025

Priory Rooms Director: Alan Sanger (WAR) to serve from July 2022 to June 2026

Special Area Meeting Working Group: Vic Grainger (AML), Jo Hindley (COT), Cathy Khurana (SUT), David Pulford (SEL), Rae Ritchie (HAR), Louise Scrivens (SOL), Hilary Topp (COT), Margot Williams (SUT), Maris Vigar (STO)

These names being acceptable we appoint our Friends accordingly.

## **2022.059 How the truth has prospered in Warwick Local Meeting**

We have received Minute 2022.044 from Warwick LM

*We have been asked to consider how the Truth has prospered in our Meeting over the last year. The truth has prospered actively amongst Warwick Friends in the last year. We have returned in number to the Meeting House with some friends attending via zoom. Others are held as part of the Meeting though they are prevented from presence in either way. We work to support Ukrainians through a fundraising concert and an ecumenical supportive group. We reach out to our local community through our café and garden. We support our spiritual growth within the Meeting through reading Advices and Queries aloud in Worship, bible study, population concern, a responding to racism group and an ageing well group. We are discerning the right use of our vacant flat. Our children and young people's Meeting has changed. While no younger children currently attend regularly we are ready to receive them. Our young people attend Area Meeting youth club, meet in Warwick periodically and are being supported to attend national summer school. We have considered the term 'Overseers' and changed it to that of 'Pastoral support group'. The life of the Meeting has prospered with a wedding, party, memorial service, pastoral support through a Wheel of Friendship network and coffee and biscuits after Meeting has returned! We agree to send this record of the prospering of the Truth amongst Warwick Friends to Area Meeting.*

Gill Smith has spoken to this minute. Our Responding to Racism group has donated to Freedom United, an international anti-racism group and read *Why I am no longer speaking to white people about race*. We are encouraged to know that Warwick Friends are enjoying more social contact through parties, as well as coffee and biscuits, and that this is helping to re-establish life after the pandemic.

## **2022.060 Laying down of Peace Education, Campaigning and Networking subcommittee (PECAN) of Quaker Peace and Social Witness**

Further to Minute 2022.047 of our last meeting Vic Grainger, Gillian Waddilove (clerk of COV) and John Sheldon have been in contact with Yearly Meeting staff members Neil Jarvis and Oliver Robertson (Governance Manager and secretary to QPSW Central Committee respectively) who have told us that Meeting for Sufferings is not due to meet again until October. MfS would almost certainly refer our minute to QPSWCC and, since this meets in September, matters could be expedited by referring our minute to them in the first instance. We agree to this but we also ask for our minute and QPSWCC's response to go to Meeting for Sufferings in October. The Central Committee meets next on 17 September, the same day as our next meeting, so we hope to receive a formal minute from them at our October meeting, due to be held at Coventry on 22 October. Oliver Robertson has indicated that he and/or members of QPSWCC would be willing to attend our meeting and to engage with us on our concerns.

## **2022.061 Peace Hub Annual Report**

Peter Doubtfire, Coordinator of the Peace Hub has presented the Annual Report for 2021.

The Peace Hub is in front of Bull St Meeting where the public are invited to engage with staff in an informal way over peace and social justice issues. There were several successful outdoor events during the year and linkings with organisations such as Footsteps and the groups preparing for Cop26. With Junior Peacemakers the Peace Hub has gone in to schools to deliver workshops on climate justice and mental wellbeing.

At the moment the Hub is being used more, now that the tram works have finished on the street. Upcoming themes include Ukraine with an accent on peaceful means of security. The Hub is happy to help local meetings in their work and concerns, and are open to suggested topics; all Friends are welcome to visit the Hub. Volunteers will be back in soon and new ones are always welcome. The finances are healthy but Friends and local meetings are encouraged to donate.

We are very encouraged to know that the Peace Hub is recovering after the pandemic and networking well with other peace organisations. There is a good age spread on the committee; concerned Friends are invited to make their interest known to Nominations Committee.

We thank Peter Doubtfire for his continuing work and presence at the Hub as well as for presenting his report today.

## 2022.062 Quaker Life report

Ruth Livermore, our representative on Quaker Life Representative Council, has reported to us on the conference held online 8-10 April 2022. She felt that the conference was rather uninspiring and that post-pandemic healing amongst staff as well as representatives was needed. There has been significant staff restructuring following the pandemic and there seems to be uncertainty about roles. Ruth was disappointed that local development workers made little input to the conference. It is hoped that the October conference will be in person as this could affect the dynamic of the proceedings considerably. We note that there are new posters available as well as merchandise for outreach and Quaker Week. These will be more welcome than the old PDFs which one of our local meetings received.

We want to affirm how important and inspiring these conferences have been in the past and we hope they can be so again as the council finds healing in a post-pandemic world.

We ask our clerk, through Ruth Livermore, to share this minute with the clerk of QL Representative Council as well as with Rachel Matthews, Head of Supporting Quaker Communities, and Oliver Robertson, Head of Worship and Witness.

## 2022.063 Minutes from Sutton Coldfield and Bournville LMs

We have received the following minute from Sutton Friends

(a) 2022.030 Britain Yearly Meeting (part)

*...In the letter from the Yearly Meeting clerk accompanying the minutes we are asked to take particular note of Minute 027: **Action: learning uncomfortable lessons and taking forward our witness**, which calls on Friends to consider deeply how Quakers in Britain might make financial and other reparations for our part in the wrongs of the transatlantic slave trade*

*We will return to these matters, possibly through study groups, and hope that Area Meeting will give wider consideration for possible action.*

*We send this minute to Area Meeting.*

We support SUT's concern and suggest that local meetings engage with this issue by watching this year's Swarthmore Lecture as well as seeking resources from Woodbrooke, Yearly Meeting and the Peace Hub. Our Responding to Racism Group could help to co-ordinate this work which is likely to take years to reach any form of completion. We have been told that the Responding To Racism Group would be grateful for a Link Friend from each local meeting.

(b) 2022/035 Elder/Overseers matters

minute 6 Use of the term Overseer

*Meeting for Sufferings has asked all Meetings to consider the use of the term "overseer", as many Friends have felt uncomfortable with its perceived racist connotations, and to suggest alternatives. We recommend to LMB that we should use the term pastoral carer to replace that of overseer.*

(c) We have also heard that by Minute 2022.040 BOU have decided to change the name of overseer to Pastoral Friend.

On the matter of changing the name of Overseer we have heard so far from BOU, BUL, COT, COV, SUT, WAR. We ask LMs who have not yet considered this to report to us and Elders and Pastoral Friends Support Group soon so that we can report to Meeting for Sufferings by the end of the year, as requested.

## 2022.064 Stepping in to the future (What does love require of us? Ref 2022.040)

We ask Cathy Khurana to call the first meeting of the newly appointed Working Group as soon as possible without feeling that there is a commitment to continue as convenor. We suggest that the group collect all the papers that are available on this topic, drawing together threads that stand out strongly and reporting back to us as soon as possible on their discernment of the key issues. We hope the group will evolve their own way of exploring the material. We are reminded that we are all responsible for taking this matter forward.

## **2022.065 Thanks and next meeting**

We thank Warwick Friends for their hospitality today. The next Area Meeting, should nothing occur to prevent, will be blended at Selly Oak FMH on Saturday 17 September 2.00-5.00pm.

John Sheldon  
Clerk