

Minutes of Central England Area Meeting for Worship for Business, held at Coventry Quaker Meeting House on Saturday, 22nd October and also online.

Elders: Gyllian Brown and Diane Stobbs

Clerks: Stella Roberts (to minute 2022.081), Vic Grainger, and Judith Jenner (clerk to AM Trustees)

Host on zoom: Gillian Waddilove

2022.075 Opening Worship

We began our meeting with a period of worship during which we heard of the death of Barbara Wallin, a member of Bournville Meeting. The first part of passage 15.02 from Quaker Faith and Practice was read to us:

'As members of the Religious Society of Friends we are all called upon to exercise stewardship over the Society's resources. This is stewardship in its widest sense: ensuring that money and buildings are used wisely and well; that business decisions are taken in right ordering; that all within a meeting, both its members and its employees, are supported and helped to play a full role in the Society's affairs; that the meeting's children are cared for and nurtured; that eldership and oversight flourish. We are all called to participate in building a responsible and caring community.'

2022.076 Representatives

We had representatives from nine Local Meetings; Barnt Green & Redditch, Bull St, Hartshill, Kings Heath, and Solihull were not represented.

Lee Gunn, Carol Rank, Chris Dunkley and Maggie McHale, all attenders at Coventry LM, have been given permission to attend.

We also welcome Oliver Robertson, secretary to Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee, Elize Sakamoto and Mike Coote, two co-clerks of the Committee, who are joining us online.

Unfortunately Oliver was prevented from joining us in person.

2022.077 Membership Matters

a) Death

We record the death of Barbara Wallin, a member of Bournville Meeting, who died on October 9th 2022, aged 75 years.

b) Journey into Membership

We appoint Barbara Cockcroft (SUT) and Claire Bowman (BOU) as visitors to Clive Gordon (SUT)

c) Transfer Out

David Fish (COV) has transferred membership to Leicester AM.

2022.078 Memorial Minutes for Anthea Hill and Judith Chapman

We have received a memorial minute for Anthea Hill of Hall Green LM and heard it read to us. We thank Hall Green Friends and agree to forward the minute to AM Elders and Pastoral Friends Support Group for further discernment.

We have received the memorial minute for Judith Chapman who has worshipped at several LMs, including Cotteridge, Barnt Green and Redditch, and Stourbridge. It has been read to us and we thank the Friends who compiled it. We agree to forward it to AM Elders and Pastoral Friends Support Group for further discernment.

2022.079 Meeting for Sufferings Minute 22/10/06 Prison and Court Register

Meeting for Sufferings, held at Friends House and by video conference on 1 October 2022

MfS/22/10/06 Prison and Court Register

Fifty-one people, including the following Friends, took action at Kingsbury Oil Terminal on 14 September:

- Sue Hampton, a member of Luton & Leighton Area Meeting
- Phil Laurie, an attender at Westminster and Faversham Local Meetings
- Rajan Naidu, a member of Central England Area Meeting
- Arne Springorum, who worships with the Quaker worship group in Prague and is in international membership of Friends World Committee for Consultation. He is known as an attender at Wandsworth Local Meeting (Kingston & Wandsworth Area Meeting).

The 51 were held in prison ahead of court hearings. Rajan Naidu was sentenced to 34 days in prison. Sue Hampton, Arne Springorum and Phil Laurie received suspended sentences and were ordered to pay costs of over £400.

We agree to include this information in the Prison and Court Register and we hold the Friends involved in the Light.

Margaret Bryan, Clerk

The MFS minute above was sent to us as Rajan Naidu is a member of our area meeting and worships at Stourbridge LM. He was sentenced to 34 days in prison, finally serving 17, for repeatedly breaking an injunction against protests. Rajan sees his actions not as protests but as Nonviolent Civil Resistance (NCR). He writes passionately about his experiences, dictated over the phone from prison and published in the Friend for 14th October.

It is poignant to note that this recording of the names of suffering Friends began in the earliest days of our Society.

We ask the clerk to write to Rajan with a message of support.

2022.080 Meeting for Sufferings report (from Margot Williams, AM rep)

Report on Meeting for Sufferings (held 1 October at Friends House and on Zoom)

Clerk: Margaret Bryan

Co-clerk: Robert Card

Recording clerk: Paul Parker

Papers: <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2022-10-agenda-and-papers>

Minutes: <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2022-10-follow-up-package>

To note:

- The Sustainability Monitoring Group **still** needs more members
- Area Meetings to respond by year-end about use of term "Overseer"
- Grants are available for Meeting Houses struggling to meet costs

Personal note:

Because of the rail strike, those of us who managed to make it to Friends House in person were very few in number, but this made for a cosier event for those present — and we all got two lunches! Several items were taken on draft minute which helped the business move swiftly and smoothly. Since I was there, on Sunday morning I attended Friends House Local Meeting for Worship. It was a youthful and vibrant meeting, with much spoken ministry and about 40 Friends present, including a couple visiting from Pennsylvania.

Agenda Item 9: Review of Meeting for Sufferings, Yearly Meeting and Yearly Meeting Gathering:

There is concern about discernment. Friends need to participate, so there is unease about sending representatives rather than involving the whole body. There is also a sense that there is not enough time. "Without discernment, there is no Quakerism". The need for change is acknowledged, but the debate continues as to how that change should be brought about.

Agenda Item 10: Report from BYM Trustees:

In view of the cost-of-living crisis, the Trustees remind us that financial help is available from the Meeting House Fund, particularly for energy efficiency. Workshops on simplification are being run over the next few weeks, and they may be willing to travel to Area Meetings.

Agenda Item 11: Work in Scotland:

Elizabeth Allen, Clerk of General Meeting for Scotland gave a comprehensive and inspiring address, the text of which can be found in the follow-up package.

Agenda Item 13: Appointment of attenders to central committees:

Pete Doubtfire and Chloe Scaling presented the review group's findings. Active and involved attenders were compared to long-standing and committed cohabiting couples who, while not in possession of a marriage certificate, are in every other way married. While many Friends were convinced by this analogy, others could not accept it, and the meeting could not achieve unity. A wide-ranging investigation into the meaning of membership is proposed.

Agenda Item 14: Sustainability:

Caroline Howden (the sole member of the Sustainability Monitoring Group) and Ollie Robertson spoke of the way that the language has evolved. Where we used to call it Global Warming or Climate Change, we now speak of Climate Justice, which is a way of focusing on those who suffer most acutely from the damage inflicted through exploitation by industrialised nations. Loss and damage reparations for climate change, and reparations for the enslavement of African people, are part of a continuum: exploitation of people, exploitation of resources, all the wealth flowing in the direction of the exploiters. What are our impacts, and how do we evaluate them? Whom should we seek to hold to account?'

Margot Williams, our Meeting for Sufferings representative, has sent us this report on some of the items covered other than the Prison & Court Register. It is filed with these minutes and we thank her for compiling it.

2022.081 How has the truth prospered in Coventry Meeting?

Coventry LM has sent us this account of their activities in the last year which seem to be rich and varied, both within the meeting itself and in its connection to events taking place in the city beyond:

On most Sundays we hold blended Meetings for Worship, in the Meeting House and on Zoom, which include a programmed reading from Quaker Faith & Practice; once a month we hold parallel non-blended Meetings for Worship. We are keeping this system under review. We hold weekly midweek MfW in the MH and MfW in a local park on Bank Holiday Mondays. We have a monthly Light group and a monthly QF&P study session; a monthly Friendly Bible Study was recently laid down.

We have introduced several opportunities for social connection, namely a Friendship Wheel, 'Tuesday Cheer' on Zoom, a book club and a film club and have re-established refreshments after MfW and monthly Bring & Share lunch. Our Spring Party gave an opportunity for many Friends, some of whom are less established in the Meeting, to lead activities.

We had a wonderful time participating in Coventry City of Culture. During the 'Faith weekend' we opened the MH to visitors and hosted a short dramatic production, took part in a 'Celebration of Light' and faith picnic, then towards the end of the year, took part in the city-wide closing parade under the banner of 'Faith'. The Meeting House was used for various multicultural and dramatic events. Several Friends facilitated a labyrinth weekend in a local park. Additionally, we laid a wreath of white poppies during the city's Remembrance Day ceremonies and played a prominent part in the annual Hiroshima Day ceremony in Coventry Cathedral.

A group of Friends regularly volunteers with 'Clothing Coventry', helping to sort donated clothes which will be passed on to people in clothing poverty, including asylum seekers.

A group of 'Camino to COP26' pilgrims used the meeting house.

Reports of all these activities, and more, appear in our quarterly newsletter.

Mig Kerr, convenor of Elders, September 2022

We thank Coventry Meeting for this account, which has been read to us.

2022.082 Response from Quaker Peace & Social Witness Committee to concerns over laying down of the Peace Education and Networking Sub Committee (PECAN) (AM 2022.47 refers)

Minute received by AM from Coventry LM in May 2022

Minute 2022/05/02 of Coventry local meeting for business held 6th May 2022

Concern re the laying 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

CEQ AM minute 2022.047

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 laydown 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, (MfS) urging them to consider our concern.

[This minute was forwarded to Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) for their comments and two co-clerks and their secretary offered to speak to our concern at AM in Coventry.]

Minute received by AM from Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee

QPSWCC 22/46 MINUTE FROM CENTRAL ENGLAND AM

We have received a minute from Central England AM (paper QPSWCC 2022 09 06iii), concerned about the laying down of the Peace Education, Campaigning and Networking Sub-committee (PECAN). In the QPSW Strategy we have placed a high priority on peace and peacebuilding. Peace is at the centre of the vision which the strategy sets out, helping to fulfil our role as a Peace Church. These are the first of our leading issues for action, and are connected with sustainability and climate justice with the intention that we can work on both areas in integrated ways, which are also described in the strategy.

QPSW Central Committee continues to give governance and support to staff working on these areas through existing regular work reports, detailed reports, additional support and discernment at short notice, and has carried out a careful assessment through two nominated members of the CC of the continuing governance and support needs of Peace Education, the Peacemaker scheme, and Peace and Disarmament work. This centres on continuing discernment and openness to the leadings of the Spirit.

QPSWCC has also supported and linked with the Ukraine work, receiving detailed reports and helping to discern ways forward. QPSWCC is well aware that Friends' work on all concerns is wider than the work of paid staff, and encompasses contributions large and small from many Friends, and has set this out as a key part of the Strategy. We are starting to explore new ways to support and engage Friends, through the work of staff supporting faith in action, linking with Local Development Workers

and Quaker Recognised Bodies, with a new project being planned. Staff have carried out extensive analysis and consideration of the engagement needs, opportunities and limitations of Friends across the Yearly Meeting. We hope to be able to engage Friends through opportunities which are more varied and flexible than previous arrangements. These new opportunities and ways of working together are already being actioned. These will take some time and will continue to develop, and we continue to listen to the needs of the work, staff, Friends and the leadings of the Spirit.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings, to send on to Central England AM, and look forward to meeting with Central England AM at their area meeting on 22 October 2022.

Elize Sakamoto, Mike Coote, Adam Drury, Co-clerks

Pam Lunn (COV) has provided an introduction to this agenda item, expressing her personal disquiet about the laying down of PECAN, especially the fact, the timing and the manner of its laying down. Two of the three co-clerks from QPSWCC, Mike Coote and Elize Sakamoto joined us online, together with Oliver Robertson, head of Witness and Worship, the staff member to the committee.

The minute QPSWCC 22/46 had been circulated and is filed with these minutes.

Mike and Elize said they were here to explain the context in which PECAN was laid down. They said it was a changing world especially since the pandemic, and a shrinking Society and diminishing financial resource meant they had to make the best of what they have. The QPSW 2021 strategy was circulated with our papers setting out these changes.

It is important that QPSW structures could be simplified to enable quicker responses and to engage better with peace concerns, and for QPSW central committee to be faithful to Quaker concerns. And the QPSWCC co-clerks emphasised the need for alignment between local Friends' concerns, staff, and the committee (all volunteers).

We note the sadness of Pam and others over this restructuring, but we of Central England Quakers have to trust our Quaker processes and the discernment of others.

We thank Elize, Mike, and Oliver for giving us their time.

We ask clerks to send this minute to QPSWCC.

2022.083 Local Development Worker Appointment

Two candidates were recently interviewed for the LDW post covering our area and one of them was offered the job and accepted. The name of the successful applicant will be made known when all the necessary checks have been completed. The selection process involved answering questions from an interview panel and facilitating a group. Five geographical areas are covered by this LDW: Wirral & Chester, East Cheshire, Central England, Staffordshire and Worcestershire & Shropshire, so one person from each area took part in the proceedings.

John Sheldon as our representative has told us about his role as a member of a facilitated group.

2022.084 Quaker Week/World Quaker Day Activities

*Harthill LM began our Quaker week with Sunday meeting for worship and a lovely bring and share lunch with visiting **Coventry Friends**. Our exhibitions were open showing history of Quakers from George Fox to Fenny Drayton alongside the exhibition developed for the opening of the Quaker Service Memorial at the Arboretum about the history of Quaker Relief during the world wars in groups such as the Friends Ambulance Unit and Friends Relief Service.*

We also held a coffee morning on Saturday 1st October open to the community. We sold drinks, toast and cakes and had a jumble stall. Around 15 people attended and we raised money for Carriers of Hope. Our exhibitions were also open to view. The Quaker Service exhibition consists of 12 full size pull up panels along with DVDs, pamphlets and a teacher's guide and is available for other meetings in our area to borrow. Please contact Clare Barnett (clare@barnettfamily.me.uk) for more information. Harthill's next coffee morning will be the first Saturday in December (3rd) 10am -12 noon. All are welcome.

Stourbridge Local Meeting

*Quaker Week ran from 24th September – 2nd October 2022 and the focus this year was on 'Share your light' particularly welcoming new families. We are pleased to inform Area Meeting that, following a well-attended outreach event at Stourbridge Quaker Meeting House for Heritage Open weekend in mid-September, we welcomed a new family from the Ukraine to our Rainbows Children Group on 25th September, that Journeymen Theatre (run by Lynn and Dave Morris from Stourbridge Meeting) gave performances of their play *Breeding Grounds* at Bewdley Meeting House, Friends House and Kingston Quaker Centre during national Quaker week and that World Quaker Day, with a focus on*

'Becoming the Quakers the World Needs', was celebrated on 2nd October at Oakwood Prison supported by Tricia Bradbury (from Stourbridge Meeting), Quaker Prison Chaplain. Nicholas Paton Philip of Stourbridge informed us that he is taking time out by making a pilgrimage along 300 miles of the Camino de Compostela - 'a walk with hope.'

Greetings (from Sutton Coldfield Local Meeting)

Our activity was focused on the final Sunday, 2/10/22, also World Quaker Day. We arranged to share Meeting for Worship with Friends in Spain. Although this involved both timing and language challenges it was a special time and well worth it. There were 7 Spanish Friends on screen, from all across Spain, and most of whom had not met each other face-to-face. We were 7 in our Meeting House and 5 online. It was truly international as they included a German friend, long resident in Spain, and India was also represented by Hari Khurana online in New Delhi. We did well with a translator (an English-born Friend who had lived in Spain for many years); we shared lots of spoken ministry and had a good chat afterwards. We all enjoyed the encouragement of connections with Friends across the globe!

I hope that captures something of our meeting.

Several local meetings have reported to us how they marked Quaker Week and/or World Quaker Day with special events involving outreach into the local community, celebrating our Quaker history and engaging with current Quaker concerns. Intervisitation took place between meetings locally and even internationally.

As well as the descriptions from Hartshill, Stourbridge and Sutton Coldfield filed with these minutes, Bournville LM has told us they hosted an all-age meeting for worship with Selly Oak and Cotteridge, followed by bring and share lunch, on Sunday 25th September. On World Quaker Day, Sunday 2nd October, some Bournville Friends visited other meetings.

2022.085 Nominations and Appointments

Nominations Committee suggests:

Esther Boyd (COT) to serve on AM Property Committee (1 year in the 1st instance) from October 2022 – September 2023

This name being acceptable we appoint our Friend accordingly.

[For information: The Old People's Fund Trust is now laid down along with all the trustees, as Oak Tree House has become part of the Sir Josiah Mason Trust.]

A new committee the 'Oak Tree House Quaker Advisory Committee' has nominated the following members:

David Cockcroft (COT) October 2022 – September 2025

Janet Blann (COT) October 2022 – September 2024

Peter Ullathorne (COT) October 2022 – September 2023

These names being acceptable we appoint our Friends accordingly.

2022.086 Minutes from Local Meetings

a) Warwick LM2022/53 Future of Central England Quakers - What does love require of us?

Seven Friends, who attended Meeting for Worship on 2nd October 2022, have considered the outcome of the special Area Meeting held at Woodbrooke on 21st May 2022 and the way forward for Central England Quakers. We heard contributions of individual friends, outlining the current situation and describing their experiences of Area Meeting.

We feel Area Meeting is limited in the way it currently operates. However, we value the role Area meeting plays in managing our church affairs, offering some social and spiritual sustenance and supporting the life of Local Meetings. We have heard examples of positive support in these areas, including Area Meeting Youth club. Moving forward, we need more positive encouragement for people to attend in all these areas. We are currently unsure what vision is needed to achieve this. We ask our Clerk to send this minute to Area Meeting Clerks.

We thank Warwick for their comments and pass them on to the Special Working Group

b) Cotteridge LM 2022/43 Fuel Poverty

Chris Martin has updated us on his concern he has around fuel poverty and climate change (minute 2022/32). The September Area Meeting was not in unity with supporting this concern and has asked for local meetings and area meeting committees to carry out further discernment. This matter will come to the next Area Meeting. We continue to support Chris with his concern and forward this minute to the Area Meeting.

We acknowledge your support of Chris Martin's concern. The updated document on his project, along with other material will be circulated to LMs for their consideration and responses during the next week. This matter has therefore been held over until the November AM.

c) Sutton Coldfield LM 2022/43 Elder/Pastoral Friends matters

Change of name - Minute 6.of E&PF 22. 07.22): Use of the term Overseer At our June meeting we recommended to LBM that the term Overseer be replaced by "Pastoral Carer" and this was agreed (minute 22022/35). We note, however, that Area Meeting subsequently adopted the term "Pastoral Friend", retitling Elders and Overseers Support Group accordingly. It would seem appropriate that we conform to this usage. We forward this minute to LB.

d) Walsall LM Minute 22/66 : Use of term "Overseer"

Meeting for Sufferings has asked all meetings to consider the use of the term "overseer", as many Friends feel uncomfortable with its perceived racist connotations. We support the suggestion to change the name from "overseers" to "pastoral Friends". We send this minute to the area meeting.

We thank Sutton Coldfield and Walsall LMs for informing us of their change of name for the term 'overseer'. We ask Local Meetings who have not yet considered this to report to us as soon as possible, so we can report to Meeting for Sufferings on the matter by the end of the year as requested.

2022.087 Proposed revised timetable for 2023 AM Meetings from Clerks Advisory Committee

Agenda item 12. Revised timetable for AM 2023

Month	Date	Venue
January	Sat 28th	BUL
February	No Meeting	-
March	All day,all age Sat 18th	COT
April	Wed 19th	TBA
May	Sat 13th	TBA
June	Sat 17th	TBA
July	Thurs 6th	WAR
August	Date TBA Devotional	STO
September	Week of 6th TBA	COV
October	All day Sat 14th	TBA
November	Sat 18th	BUL
December	No Meeting	-

Revisions were made to the first timetable in the light of comments made at the last area meeting and there are now ten meetings, rather than twelve, being proposed. Cotteridge LM have offered to host an all day, all age event in March; Warwick LM approve the proposed schedule as appropriate and offer to host in July; Stourbridge are pleased to host the devotional August meeting, date to be decided; Coventry can do September on a different date in the same week. Bull St has offered to host the meeting in November.

2022.088 AM Special Working Group

Rae Ritchie (HAR) has contacted Area Meeting to let us know she is now the convenor of the Special Working Group set up at Woodbrooke in May. The group has planned their next few meetings and 'look forward to discerning what love requires of us as an area meeting.'

2022.089 Thanks and Next Meeting

We thank Coventry Meeting for their hospitality today. The next AM will be at Bull Street at 2pm on November 19th. There will be a morning session about Communication within the Area Meeting, presented by the Communications Committee. (Details to follow)

Vic Grainger
clerk this time