

**Minutes of Central England Area Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
held at Cotteridge Meeting House and online on 18 March 2023**

Clerk: John Sheldon

Elders on duty: Michael Eccles, Harriet Martin, Anne Ullathorne

2023.018 Appointment of Assistant Clerk

We appoint Susan Steadman as assistant clerk for this meeting.

2023.019 Worship

We have observed a period of stillness during which we heard *Quaker Faith & Practice* 25.04 as follows:

All species and the Earth itself have interdependent roles within Creation. Humankind is not the species, to whom all others are subservient, but one among many. All parts, all issues, are inextricably intertwined. Indeed the web of creation could be described as of three-ply thread: wherever we touch it we affect justice and peace and the health of all everywhere. So all our testimonies, all our Quaker work, all our Quaker lives are part of one process, of striving towards a flourishing, just and peaceful Creation – the Kingdom of God.

Audrey Urry, 1994

2023.020 Representatives

The following meetings are represented: B&R, BOU, BUL, COT, COV, HAL, HAR, SEL, SOL, STO, SUT, WAL, WAR.

The clerk has given permission for the following Attenders to join us today.

Peter Doubtfire, Chris Dunkley, Lee Gunn, Rajan Naidu and Ian Taylor

We are aware that Kings Heath meeting have been unable to send representatives though we hear that they continue to meet regularly for worship and are in good spirit.

We welcome Charles Stevenson from South Australia and Northern Territory Regional Meeting currently sojourning in Birmingham and attending Bull Street.

We also welcome Kim Harrison and Naomi Richards from Woodbrooke to our meeting.

2023.021 How the Truth has prospered at Cotteridge Meeting

We have received a paper from Cotteridge telling us how the Truth has prospered in their meeting during the last year. We note from the report that the children have challenged the meeting to increase the number of children who attend. We have heard that the concerns of two Friends about Just Stop Oil and developing the Energy Champion initiative were heard, though the meeting felt challenged by them. Last weekend Cotteridge Friends went to Purley Chase where they were glad to spend time together, reconnecting for the first time since the pandemic.

2023.022 Membership matters

(a) Deaths

We record the deaths of our Friends William Whiting, Attender at STO 29 January 2023 aged 67 and Marilyn Reynolds (BUL resident in Switzerland) 10th February 2023 aged 87.

(b) Application for membership

We have received an application for membership from Kathleen Lesley (Lee) Gunn, an Attender at Coventry. We ask our Nominations Committee to find the names of visitors for Lee.

(c) Transfer in

John Maynard, Worcestershire and Shropshire AM, currently worshipping at STO

(d) Resignation

The clerks have received an email from Catherine Holland (SOL) asking to resign her membership. Solihull Friends are clear that this is appropriate and so we accept Catherine's resignation and ask our Membership Clerk to write to her.

2023.023 Terms of Reference for Lettings Advisory Group

Trustees' minute T2022.11.08 says, in part, *Meeting House Management Group was set up 2 years ago to do a particular job for trustees in response to an AM decision to support two LMs unable to continue managing their finances and buildings. It was a new venture. It has completed its initial task, and trustees will continue to provide this support through the service agreement with Priory Rooms, the management accountant and the principal officer's duties.*

There are now four meeting houses directly managed by Trustees through Priory Rooms and Trustees recognise the need for these to be developed and for the lettings marketed in line with a Quaker ethos. As a result, Trustees suggest that the Lettings Advisory Group be established in recognition of the need for Quaker discernment in how our centrally managed meeting houses are utilised both to be financially viable and to be a witness to the world, whilst still drawing on the professional services of Priory Rooms for their operational management.

We are grateful for the work which has gone in to this and agree that the group should be set up. We accept the proposed terms of reference and ask our Nominations Committee to bring forward the names of Friends to serve on the group.

2020.024 Report from Area Meeting Special Working Group

Further to minute 2022.98, we have received a report from the Special Working Group set up following last May's Area Meeting. We empathise with some of the difficulties and frustrations that the group have experienced as they have tried to discern "What love requires of us" as an Area Meeting. We look forward to the special meeting proposed for 13 May and encourage Friends of all ages to attend.

2023.025 Christmas Parcels

We have received the report and accounts for Christmas Parcels 2022. 870 Christmas parcels were packed at Selly Oak Meeting House before last Christmas for distribution across the West Midlands by the Probation Services and charities working with refugees, asylum seekers and homeless people. We know that these gifts are greatly appreciated by those who receive them and we are thankful to those Friends who work so hard to make this all happen.

2023.026 Tabular Statement

We have received a report from Judith Jenner and Dave Rawcliffe outlining the main findings following the preparation of the Tabular Statement for 2022 which has been sent to Yearly Meeting. This shows that, at 425, there 19 fewer Friends than the 444 reported last year. We thank our Friends for their work on our behalf.

2023.027 Nominations

(a) Our nominations committee suggests the names of the following Friends to serve as indicated:

Journey into membership – to visit Rajan Naidu (SEL) – Stuart Masters (SEL) & Damaris Vigar (STO)

New child welcome – Janet Blann

Area Meeting Children & Young People's Committee – Alan Wing (COT) to serve a further triennium April 2023 – March 2026

Peace Hub Management Committee Treasurer – James Bradbury (STO) to serve a further triennium April 2023 – March 2026

Communications Committee – Donald Stubbings (BOU) to serve April 2023 – March 2026

The Woodlands – Julia Furminger (STO) to serve a further triennium April 2023 – March 2026

Nicholas Paton Philip (STO) to serve a further triennium April 2023 – March 2026

Quakers in Community Justice Conference 24-26 February 2023 – Robert Sprake (B&R) and William Waddilove (COV)

These names being acceptable we appoint our Friends accordingly.

(b) Our Elders & Pastoral Friends Nominations Committee suggests the following Friends to serve as indicated:

Esther Boyd as Elder at COT from now until December 2024

Sue Thompson as Elder at COT from now until December 2024

Jane Cunningham (WAR) to Elders & Pastoral Friends Support Group

These names being acceptable we appoint our Friends accordingly.

(c) Release from service

The following Friends have asked to be released from service. We ask our clerk to write to them thanking them for their service.

Carolyn Arber (COT) as a Pastoral Friend

Simon Best (COT) from Clerks Advisory Committee

John Sheldon (WAR) from Area Meeting Nominations Committee

2023.028 Outreach

Further to Minute 2023.012, Report from our Nominations Committee, we decide to defer further consideration of the matter of outreach until our next meeting.

2023.029 What is Climate Justice?

We have spent the main part of the day considering this subject under the guidance of Woodbrooke tutors Kim Harrison and Naomi Richards and we are very grateful for their input.

2023.030 Thanks and next meeting

We thank Cotteridge Friends for their hospitality and technical support today, as well as Friends who volunteered to help in various ways. We hope to meet again, should nothing occur to prevent, at Selly Oak on Wednesday 19 April. Friends are asked to send agenda items to the clerk by Friday 7 April.

John Sheldon
Clerk this time