

# Minutes of Central England Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) held at Barnt Green Meeting House and online on 22nd February 2025

Clerk: Rae Ritchie Assistant Clerk: Paula Button  
Elder: John Cox-Woolven  
Pastoral Friend: Howard Saunders

## 2025.018 Worship

We have observed a period of stillness during which we heard of the deaths of our Friends Diana Williams (BOU) on 12th February 2025 aged 100 and Eric Adams (SEL) on 20th February aged 88.

We also heard passage 23.48 of *Quaker Faith and Practice*:

*God comes to us in the midst of human need, and the most pressing needs of our time demand community in response. How can I participate in a fairer distribution of resources unless I live in a community which makes it possible to consume less? How can I learn accountability unless I live in a community where my acts and their consequences are visible to all? How can I learn to share power unless I live in a community where hierarchy is unnatural? How can I take the risks which right action demands unless I belong to a community which gives support? How can I learn the sanctity of each life unless I live in a community where we can be persons not roles to one another?*

*Parker J Palmer 1977*

## 2025.019 Representatives

The following Local Meetings are represented: BGR, BOU, BUL, COT, COV, HAL, HAR, KIN, SEL, SOL, STO, SUT, WAR, WAL.

The Clerks welcome the following Attenders joining us today: Eil Conner-Manning (BOU) and Leah Roberts (HAR).

## 2025.020 Britain Yearly Meeting 2025

Britain Yearly Meeting 2025 will be held from Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> to Monday 26<sup>th</sup> May at Friends House, Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ and online. There will be a children's programme at Friends House and residential programmes for 11-15s and JYM for 16-18s. There will be a variety of online events from Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April to Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May to help Friends of all ages prepare for Yearly Meeting.

Bookings are open now <https://www.quaker.org.uk/ym/bookings>

Bookings for the Young People's Programme close on 23<sup>rd</sup> February, bookings for the children's programme close on 4<sup>th</sup> April. Bookings for the online fringe week and Yearly Meeting preparation sessions close on 7<sup>th</sup> April and bookings for Yearly Meeting close on 27<sup>th</sup> April.

If anyone would be interested in sharing accommodation in London, please contact Rae Ritchie [raeritchie1982@gmail.com](mailto:raeritchie1982@gmail.com).

If individual Friends or Local Meetings would be interested in a preparatory session for Britain Yearly Meeting, or even an informal gathering to meet one another ahead of the event, please also contact Rae Ritchie.

## 2025.021 Advices and Queries revision

The following was minuted at January Area Meeting following Nicholas Paton Philip's report on Meeting for Sufferings:

### **Minute Number 2025.010**

*Nicholas' report concluded with an addendum reflecting on Advices and Queries, with a request for individual friends and meetings to consider this. We ask the Area Meeting Clerks to bring an*

*opportunity for discernment to a future Area Meeting seeking contributions and discernment from Local Meetings first.*

This refers to the following passage from Nicholas' report, included in the January Area Meeting papers.

*Book of Discipline Revision Committee - reflecting on Advices and Queries*

*"What do Advices and Queries mean to you?"*

*Use this as a prompt for a go-round, giving each person the opportunity to share some thoughts. A listening circle, not a discussion.*

*Then take some time to write, draw, collage or otherwise create some new advices and queries. This could be as a group or an individual activity*

*You might want to think about:*

- *What you want to keep from the current ones*
- *What's missing that you want to include*
- *How you create something clear and simple, flexible and welcoming.*

We ask Local Meetings to consider their responses to this request from the Book of Discipline Revision Committee and submit these to the Committee via the Committee Secretary ([qfp@quaker.org.uk](mailto:qfp@quaker.org.uk)) by the end of June.

## **2025.022 Trustee matters**

### **a) Coventry Building Project**

Area Meeting minute 2025.006 asked Trustees to review the Area Meeting level of contribution from the current offer of £50,000 loan and £50,000 grant to the Coventry Meeting House Building project, in light of increased costs. Following the Area Meeting in January, Trustees also received minute 2025-17 from Barnt Green & Redditch Local Meeting in which they expressed their support for the Coventry Meeting House project, and their hope that some of the proceeds of the sale of the Redditch Meeting House should be directed to Coventry.

At their meeting in February, Central England Area Quaker Meeting (CEAQM) Trustees discussed the matter at length and considered factors including:

- that if the design is changed then the grants already given may be at risk, particularly if some of the accessibility plans are changed
- that there are time pressures as the planning permission is only until December 2025
- that one of the reasons for the higher costs is the original construction makes it more of a rethinking of the use of the space rather than a simple refurbishment
- that it is a strategic decision for the Area Meeting to invest in buildings, particularly where there is a healthy Meeting
- that as Trustees we need to consider the right value for money for large investments, and once money is spent it's gone
- that there are risks that if costs rise during the building phase then Area Meeting may be liable to pick up costs not covered by the money raised, or where unforeseen problems are discovered

Taking everything into account, Trustees recommend that to move the building project forward that Coventry Local Meeting are pledged a further £135,000 to get them to the 50% funding they need. The Coventry Local Meeting funding group would then need to demonstrate that the additional funding can be found.

Trustees also recommend that in order to help mitigate risk throughout the project, that an oversight group be set up with representation from Coventry Local Meeting design group, Trustees Property Committee and Trustees Finance Committee.

We agree to these two recommendations and ask Trustees to proceed with arrangements for both.

### **b) Children, Families and Youth Worker**

Further to Area Meeting minute 2024.125, Trustees Finance Committee have considered funding options for a proposal for a Children, Youth and Families Worker. Trustees recommend their recommendation, that the post is a 0.6FTE role for a two year trial period, and that funding for this post could be £20,000 per annum

from Trustee funds, with the remaining £10,000 per annum being provided by additional contributions from Local Meetings.

We feel that while there are still many details left to discern, this is a positive step for the Area Meeting that builds on the existing enthusiasm to better include children, young people and families in our communities, as evident at the recent Area Meeting Families Weekend, held in conjunction with Worcestershire and Shropshire Area Meeting. The Children, Families and Youth Worker would be welcomed by existing families and may encourage new people to join us.

We ask Local Meetings to consider this proposal in light of 2026 and 2027 budgets, noting that it equates to a commitment of £60 per month for two years if all Local Meetings contribute equally, with responses shared with the Area Meeting office by the end of June 2025.

### **c) Banbury & Evesham Area Meeting**

CEAQM Trustees have received a minute from Banbury and Evesham Area Meeting Trustees which is included in these minutes:

#### ***Minute 2024.53 Action Principles for Trustees following our Minute 2024.38 of July AM***

##### ***1. Arrangements for orderly laying down of our AM through transfer to other AMs***

*AM asks Trustees to work with our neighbouring Area Meetings, with the aim that our Local Meetings are transferred into their care, as follows:*

- *Central England Area Quaker Meeting for Ettington LM, and Stratford upon Avon LM.*
- *Oxford and Swindon Area Quaker Meeting for Banbury LM, Broad Campden LM and Sibford LM.*
- *Worcestershire & Shropshire Area Quaker Meeting for Evesham LM.*

*AM expects this process to end with the laying down of Banbury & Evesham Area Meeting, the transfer of all our Members and the closing or transfer of our charities and their assets, as well as the appropriate care of our employees.*

##### ***2. Provision for continuity***

*During this process our priority is the continuity of our Quaker worshipping communities. AM asks that if there is an urgent threat to our viability, that Trustees also consider moving all the Local Meetings to whichever Area Meeting can accept the Local Meetings soonest as an interim step to their ideal AM.*

##### ***3. Communications***

*AM asks Trustees to continue to communicate with our Local Meetings and AM Clerks about their plans and progress.*

##### ***4. Nominations***

*AM understands that Area Meeting needs to continue functioning to support our Local Meetings, and the work of Trustees, and we hope that Friends and Attenders will continue to offer service for the time it takes to carry out all these changes.*

##### ***5. Provision for LM requests***

*AM asks that if any Local Meetings want to leave before others, that Trustees prioritise this if it doesn't add significant risk to the viability of, or delay to the transfer of the remaining Local Meetings. AM agrees to the Action Principles and asks Trustees to proceed in accordance with them. AM reflects its hopes for the future.*

Clerk to Trustees, Sandra Berry, and the Principal Officer, Sarah Barker, have been involved in conversations with representatives from all four Area Meetings who are involved.

At their February Meeting, CEAQM Trustees noted the following:

- That Banbury & Evesham Area Meeting (BEAM) are now in a good position to manage this process in a careful and considered way, as new Trustees have come forward
- That the current view is that the whole process of laying down BEAM would take in the region of two years
- That individual Members and attenders of BEAM have already made connections with neighbouring Local Meetings in CEAQM, and we need to ensure that F/friends are made welcome and supported through what may be a difficult time

- That we must ensure that matters relating to property, finance and other resources are led by CEAQM Trustees as they will need to liaise carefully with BEAM Trustees on legal and governance matters

Trustees ask if Area Meeting are happy for us to proceed on the detailed work for this, bearing in mind any specific legal or governance decisions would need to come to Area Meeting for approval.

Trustees recommend that a small working group within the Area Meeting is set up to work through the details holistically, so that the practical and spiritual aspects of these proposed changes can be supported.

We support Trustees to move ahead with this work and to establish, in liaison with Area Meeting Nominations Committee, a small working group to support the process. We also thank Sandra Berry and Sarah Barker for their work with BEAM during this time of transition.

## **2025.023 New mid-week meeting for young adult Friends**

There will be a new mid-week Meeting for Worship on the second Wednesday of the month at Selly Oak Meeting House, from 6-8pm. The first one will be on Wednesday 12th March.

The plan is for a short Meeting for Worship, followed by a shared meal and conversation.

The meeting is particularly aimed at Young Adult Friends, aged 18-35.

It would be lovely to have a few Friends who might be able to commit to being there whilst the group gets established, to help with eldership, cooking, hosting etc.

For more information, or if you are able to help, please contact Hilary Topp, [hilaryt@quaker.org.uk](mailto:hilaryt@quaker.org.uk) 07579 853884.

We ask Local Meetings and individual Friends to share details of this new Meeting for Worship with any F/friends that may be interested, particularly any members and attenders in this region aged 18-35.

## **2025.024 Nominations Committee report**

We have received the report for 2024 from the Nominations Committee. The new year started with a new team of Clerks and experienced several difficulties but meetings have been held after every Area Meeting, mostly online with regard to Local Meeting representatives, but also in person when possible.

Nominations have generally gone smoothly with some roles being easier to find names for than others. The committee is very grateful for the support of Sarah Barker and Helen Waters at Bull Street.

There is a relatively large pool of Quakers to find names from but the Nominations Committee itself is sometimes overlooked. The work of this committee is essential in keeping the whole Area Meeting functioning well. In some instances, Local Meetings have used their own reps from their own Nominations Committee to attend. The commitment to work on the committee is not huge. Any Friend can serve on Nominations and provide useful contributions towards finding Friends who may have gifts to offer. New Friends are often very beneficial as their own experience is fresh and may provide new ideas. The Nominations Committee Co-clerks rely on Local Meeting representatives for their local knowledge of individuals in their own Meeting, so this is a very important role.

Let's all be positive about the joy that our volunteering can bring us and appreciate the personal growth and development, especially spiritually, that these roles can offer.

We thank Vic Grainger, Claire Bowman and Julia Furminger for the Nominations Committee report.

## **2025.025 Quaker Christmas Parcels report and accounts**

We have received the Quaker Christmas Parcels Report and Accounts and can read about both the goodwill and gratitude that this scheme continues to generate after sixty-plus years. A probation officer quoted in the report wrote that "A man has been released from prison today. He has been a rough sleeper for years and is very underweight. Against the odds Probation have found him accommodation this time. It was a great help to give him a bag of food as he is very vulnerable." Similarly, a recipient wrote that "It is indescribable how much this food parcel is needed and how grateful and thankful I am to receive this parcel, so thank you."

We also heard that Local Meetings, some trusts and individuals have continued to make generous financial contributions to the project. Even so, 2024 saw an operational deficit of £1160 – the second consecutive year where expenditure exceeded income. We ask Local Meetings and individual Friends to give as much as they are able in 2025 and encourage Meetings to consider holding special Christmas Parcel fundraising

events as some have in the past. As its Treasurer's report notes, "Every £1 given is not only appreciated but enables us to continue to provide parcels to those in great need." We also encourage anyone who may have knowledge of other trusts or possible sources of funding to reach out to the committee.

We thank Howard Saunders and Mina Tilt for their reports and for the hard work that they and the rest of the committee put into making this amazing feat happen each year. We also thank the Probation Service for their support, particularly in ensuring that the parcels reach their intended recipients.

## **2025.026 Tabular Statement report**

We have received the Tabular Statement Report for the year ending 31st December 2024.

### *Members*

The total number of members at the end of 2024 was 409. This is nine fewer than the 418 reported last year. In line with our agreed data protection policy and members privacy statement we do not hold data on gender.

Losses in members were:

- Deaths: 7
- Transfers to other Area Meetings: 6
- Terminations of membership: 0
- Resignations: 3
- Lost contact: 0

Increases in members were:

- Personal applications: 2
- Transfers in from other Area Meetings in Britain Yearly Meeting: 5

### *Adult attenders*

At the end of 2024 there were 225 recorded adult attenders. This is 22 more than the 203 reported last year.

### *Children (under the age of 16)*

39 children were recorded at the end of 2024. This is a decrease of 3 from the end of 2023.

We note that there are a couple of errors of addition in the table and ask Helen Waters to double check the figures.

We thank Helen Waters for her report.

## **2025.027 How the Truth has prospered at Barnt Green and Redditch Local Meeting**

We have read about the varied ways in which the Truth has prospered at Barnt Green and Redditch Local Meeting over the past year, including outreach, spiritual exploration and nurturing a sense of friendship and community within the Meeting as well as showings of every film featuring Quakers that is known about. We thank Friends for their report.

## **2025.028 How the Truth has prospered in Local Meetings**

For the second year in a row, Area Meeting has a booklet collating all of the reports on how the Truth has prospered in Local Meetings. This provides a wonderful opportunity to learn more about other Local Meetings in the area, both opportunities for growth and nourishment as well as shared trials and tribulations. We ask Local Meetings to publicise the booklet with Friends. We also thank Helen Waters for her work to compile the booklet.

## **2025.029 Membership matters**

- a) Deaths: Diana Williams (BOU), 12th February 2025 aged 100, Eric Adams (SEL) 20th February 2025 aged 88
- b) Reinstatement: Anthony Yelloly (BUL)
- c) Termination (lost contact): Eileen Harris (BGR) and Geordie Mortiboy (WAR)
- d) Internal Transfer: Anne Christie, BOU to BGR

## **2025.030 Nominations**

- a) Nominations Committee suggests:
  - Wendy Edwards (WAR) to serve as Registering Officer for another triennium from March 2025 to February 2028
  - Wendy Burnett (BUL) to serve as Keeper of Records for another year from March 2025 to February 2026
  - Chris Terry (BOU) to serve on Outreach and Communications Committee for a year from February 2025 to January 2026
  - Jane Mills (SUT) to serve as our representative to Leighton Park General Meeting for a triennium from March 2025 to February 2028
- b) Appointments of Elders and Pastoral Friends:
  - Bournville Local Meeting suggest Eleanor Jackson to serve as a Pastoral Friend from January 2025 to December 2025 and Rhiannon Grant to serve as an Elder from January 2025 to December 2025
- c) Appointments to Area Meeting Nominations Committee
  - Walsall Local Meeting suggest Jim Green to serve on Area Meeting Nominations Committee for another triennium from January 2025 to December 2027
  - Bournville Local Meeting suggest Anne Giles to serve on Area Meeting Nominations Committee for another year from January 2025 to December 2025

These names being acceptable, we appoint these Friends accordingly.

- d) Release from service
  - Ian Neal (BOU) from Peacemakers Management Committee

We thank our Friend for their service.

## **2025.031 Friends acting under concern**

The trial of four Friends from Central England Area Meeting for action at the Telford Arms Fair 2023 was held for 3 days on 20<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025 at Walsall Magistrates Court. The verdict will be given at Wolverhampton Magistrates Court on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March – please hold these Friends in the light in the days ahead and contact Jo Hindley for details of planned support.

## **2025.032 Intervisitation**

Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2025 is a fifth Sunday and therefore an intervisitation Sunday. We encourage people to use this opportunity to visit another Local Meeting.

## **2025.033 Thanks and next meetings**

We thank all Barnt Green and Redditch Friends for their warm welcome and hospitality today.

We hope to meet again, should nothing occur to prevent, on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March at 2pm at Cotteridge Meeting House. Beforehand there will be a workshop facilitated by Quaker Peace and Social Witness entitled 'Making a Splash', which will run from 10.45-12.45. It is hoped that this will be a safe and brave space in which to explore protest. The workshop is suitable for ages 10 and above and we hope to provide a parallel children's programme for under 10s too.

Signed in and on behalf of Central England Area Meeting  
Rae Ritchie, clerk this time