

Minutes of Central England Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) held at Hall Green Meeting House and online on 23rd July 2025

Clerk: James Bradbury, Assistant Clerk: Paula Button
Elder: Donald Whitlock
Pastoral Friend: Huw Davies

2025.076: Worship

We have observed a period of stillness during which we heard 19 and 24 from *Advices and Queries*.

19: Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognise the gifts they bring. Remember that the meeting as a whole shares a responsibility for every child in its care. Seek for them as for yourself a full development of God's gifts and the abundant life Jesus tells us can be ours. How do you share your deepest beliefs with them, while leaving them free to develop as the spirit of God may lead them? Do you invite them to share their insights with you? Are you ready both to learn from them and to accept your responsibilities towards them?

24: Children and young people need love and stability. Are we doing all we can to uphold and sustain parents and others who carry the responsibility for providing this care?

2025.077: Representatives

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

The Clerks welcome the following Attenders joining us today: Adrian Edmonds (BUL), Kathleen and Jeff Chase (SOL), Becky Shirley (SUT)

2025.078: Trustee Matters

Sandra Berry, Clerk to CEQ trustees, reports that CEQ trustees are due to meet on 12 August, so there isn't much to update at this Area Meeting. Friends may be interested to know that conversations are ongoing with Banbury and Evesham Area Meeting and we expect to receive more information about the Meeting Houses, finances etc. in due course. Further afield, trustees across Britain Yearly Meeting are grappling with the impacts and implications of recent events and the government position regarding certain organisations. This is an ongoing discussion and trustees will report back to the September Area Meeting, together with other items that trustees will be discussing at their August meeting.

2025.079: Meeting for Sufferings Report

Nicholas Paton Philip (STO) has given an informative report on the Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) held on Saturday 5th July 2025. He expressed appreciation for being appointed as our representative and has enjoyed the experience. He attended the Meeting online as the CEQ named alternate online as Margot Williams (SUT), CEQ representative, was prevented.

He notes that the report is shorter than normal, but full minutes are accessible to all in the edition of the Friend, 11th July, as well as on the Quakers in Britain website

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/papers-and-minutes>

Items 4 to 7 were accepted on draft minutes. These were Membership; Appointments; Quaker Recognised Bodies; Prison and Court Register.

Item 8 - Quakers and Protest

This was an interactive workshop addressing emotional and interpersonal dynamics at Local Meeting level. Also looking at the continued right to protest in the light of ever-changing legislation.

A new guide was recommended for activists and two websites, Liberty and Green and Black Cross were recommended for advice and clarity about details around protesting. There was reflection on four rules of activism. Rebel; Perform; Citizen; Change Agent, and personal ministry from Lyndsay about her journey through activism.

Minutes from various Area Meetings following the police action at Westminster Meeting House were referred to.

The implications of the recent Supreme Court judgement for trans inclusion and single-sex spaces produced much ministry. A minute was agreed to affirm inclusive spaces for all.

Item 10 - BYM trustees

The process of reviewing the priorities of central work is to be completed shortly.

A new committee - Programmes and Prioritisation - has been set up to oversee central committee work.

There is a clear checklist and protocol in the making of public statements on behalf of Quakers in Britain.

BYM has reached an arrangement with Octopus legacy enabling a will to be written free of charge.

Item 11 - New Ways of Belonging

A report was circulated and approved from the New Ways of Belonging Working Group. Further work is needed in order for it to come to Yearly Meeting (YM) in May 2026 before MfS is laid down.

Item 12 - Quakers in Scotland

A new organisational structure in Scotland is due to go into effect by 20th September 2025 moving from General Meeting for Scotland to Quakers in Scotland (QIS) under a new charitable body. (SE Scotland has yet to formally agree to join). A draft minute was accepted.

Item 13 - Meeting for Sufferings' Functions

A report on the YM transitory project was presented, setting out present functions and what body within YM will be taking responsibility in the new arrangements from May 2026 when MfS has been laid down. The report was approved although further work on the details will be undertaken

Finally, the Recording Clerk announced before closing worship that 20 arrests have been made as protesters gathered in London under the banner of Palestine Action. He invited the meeting to uphold them all in the light.

We thank Nicholas for his report.

2025.080: Proposal for a Children, Youth and Families Worker

We have received Minutes from 13 of our 14 Local Meetings on this proposal. All of the Minutes are supportive of the proposal – some Meetings have made suggestions or asked for clarification of aspects of the proposed role, and these will need to be considered as the role is developed. Some concerns have been raised about the 2 year “trial” period and we need to be realistic about what can be achieved in that timescale.

At Area Meeting held on 22nd February 2025, Minute 2025.022 (b) (Trustee matters) included the following request:-

Trustee Finance Committee have considered funding options for a proposal for a Children, Youth and Families Worker. Trustees recommend that funding for this post could be £20,000 per annum from Trustee funds, with the remaining £10,000 per annum being provided by contributions from Local Meetings. We ask Local Meetings to consider this additional 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.

As part of the Minutes sent to Area Meeting, the 13 Local Meetings that have responded have pledged a total of £8,820 of additional funding to Area Meeting, per year for two years, as their contribution to the overall cost of the Worker. This falls slightly short of the £10,000 target suggested by Trustees, but the AM Clerks have suggested that Local Meetings might consider holding a special

collection for the appeal in 2026, to augment the contributions from funds. Just £84 collected by each Meeting would make up the difference.

We agree to take the proposal forward, with the enthusiastic support of our Local Meetings. We ask Local Meetings to incorporate their pledges in their 2026 budgets, and to consider holding a special collection for the appeal in 2026.

We also agree to establish a small working group to liaise with BYM over the process for setting up the role - to include developing a job description, defining success criteria, and establishing appropriate working relationships with the Area Meeting. We suggest forming a group with at least one representative from each of specific CEQ bodies such as Trustees, Children & Young People's Committee (CYPC), Local Development Worker, and Elders and Pastoral Friends Support Group. The queries, suggestions and requests for clarification raised by Local Meetings could be addressed by this group. Following the appointment of the Worker, this group could continue as a support team for the Worker (assuming that formal line management would be provided by BYM). We ask the Clerks to co-ordinate the setting up of this group.

2025.081: Young Friends General Meeting Report

We have received a report from Becky Shirley (SUT) of Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM), and are pleased to have Becky with us today to speak to the report and answer questions. YFGM hold weekend gatherings for 18 to 35-year-olds who are Quakers or Quaker-curious. They have three main gatherings a year in February, May and October. These involve living and cooking together as well as sleeping on Meeting House floors. Most weekends involve worship, spirituality sessions, business sessions, special interest groups, entertainments, epilogue, and meals - all cooking and washing up is done by attendees but there is some helpful paid admin support.

The last YFGM was held on the early May bank holiday at Bristol Redlands Meeting House where in a spirituality session "What is a concern" was explored. In their business session they decided to lay down their Mental Wellbeing concern as its aims were fulfilled. This was a very moving session. Full minutes are available on their website. There are also many more social and fun events.

Accessibility is very important to the group and is always considered when choosing venues. Costs are available to those who need financial support.

Becky is happy to talk to anyone about YFGM, and will be at the Area Meeting for Worship at Sutton Coldfield for the cycle and a walk before lunch and the devotional meeting. Having a representative from YFGM is a step towards opening up wider communication, possibly visiting Local Meetings to build bridges and share experiences.

Becky has expressed interest in becoming a representative for our Area Meeting to YFGM. In accordance with our usual procedures, Area Meeting needs to agree to establish the role, and the matter is then referred to Nominations Committee. We agree to appoint a representative for YFGM, and ask Nominations Committee to bring a name to a future Area Meeting.

We thank Becky for her report.

2025.082: Sibford School General Meeting Report

We have received a report from Russell Steed (SOL) of Sibford School General Meeting held on 21st June 2025.

The introduction of VAT on fees has caused considerable challenges to keep fees affordable. The fees have been reduced slightly.

There were two major items on the Treasurer's Report; the building called The Ark is being sold and will add £600,000 to the finances, and the bank used has been changed to allow for an overdraft facility for the school.

The Head's report spoke of a very busy place with much going on for an improved future. Results for year 13 were excellent, with students moving on to a wide variety of universities. The Head also reported that an outdoor theatre is due to be built on the campus.

There is still some boarding available, mainly with overseas students. There are a few Quakers at Sibford, both students and staff, but relatively small numbers.

More Quaker members are needed on the School Committee and there is an aim to revitalise various support bodies which help and support members, such as the Sibford Old Scholars Association, as well as the school.

There are sometimes problems regarding use of language in documents being Quaker friendly versus the legal requirements. Could this be dealt with centrally by Quakers rather than piece-meal? We will refer this question to Clerk to Trustees.

We thank Russell for his report

2025.083: Membership Matters

None this time

2025.084: Marriage, Certificate of Accomplishment

The clerks have received Form H, the certificate of accomplishment, for the marriage of Jonathan Bowmer and Kate Nicholls which took place on Saturday 21st June 2025 at Warwick Meeting House.

2025.085: Nominations

a) Nominations Committee suggests

Cathy Khurana (SUT) to serve as Area Meeting co-clerk for a triennium from August 2025 to July 2028

Esther Boyd (COT) to serve for another triennium on Trustees Property Committee from October 2025 to September 2028

Ann James (WAR) to serve on the Elders and Pastoral Friends Support Group from August 2025 to July 2028

Georgie Thomas (BGR) to serve on Peacemakers Management Committee for a triennium from August 2025 to July 2028

Anna Lyon (WAR) and Mina Tilt (HAL) to join the Community Justice Group.

Paul Hewitt (HAR) and Eleanor Nesbitt (COV) to visit Suzie Dench (HAR) on the occasion of her journey into membership

Mina Tilt (HAL) to serve as Area Meeting Ecumenical and Interfaith Co-ordinator from August 2025 to July 2028

Mina Tilt (HAL) to attend the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations Biennial Conference 13th-15th March 2026 as our representative.

Louise Scrivens (SOL) to attend the Quaker Earthcare Gathering 24th-27th October as our representative.

Sue Thompson (COT) to serve for another triennium on the Susanna Cole Trust from July 2025 to June 2028.

Eleanor Nesbitt (COV) to represent us as the Quaker Faith Contact for Warwick University.

Mig Kerr (COV) to serve on Peacemakers Management Committee from August 2025 to July 2028.

These names being acceptable we appoint our Friends accordingly.

b) Release from service

Anne Christie (BGR) from Peacemakers Management Committee

We thank our Friend for her service.

2025.086: How the Truth has Prospered at Hall Green and Solihull Local Meetings

Hall Green

It is a challenge to maintain the numbers at Meeting for Worship as well as the energy of the congregation, with between 8 and 12 Friends attending Sunday worship regularly. There are monthly Meetings for Healing and shared lunches after Meeting for Worship. There have been discussions on various topics. Friends from Solihull Meeting have joined the shared lunches and we enjoyed a joint study day together facilitated by the Kindlers. Tending the garden has enhanced our fellowship. The community of the Meeting remains relatively strong although we recognise that significant responsibility is placed on a few individuals.

There has been representation at most Area Meetings during 2024, as well as other Area groups and events and conferences, with members serving on many and varied CEQ committees.

The premises are used regularly by local community groups from a range of different religions. Working with Solihull Friends is a real step forward on which they look forward to building.

Solihull

The new Meeting venue is Shirley Methodist Church and three or four new regular attenders now enjoy the peaceful and friendly atmosphere. One of the Meeting's attenders has been welcomed into membership. Elderly members who have not been able to get to Meeting have been visited for conversation and worship. Solihull Meeting are pleased to help those who are incapacitated by illness or age and are continually working to be inclusive of those who are finding things difficult.

Last year other Meetings were visited as part of the George Fox 400th birthday, strengthening fellowship. A trip to Baddesley Clinton National Trust to see the Christmas decorations in early January was enjoyed. Members of the Meeting are connected with various causes including Restoring Relations, Peace and Climate Justice actions and Solihull Churches Action for the Homeless.

Since moving to Shirley there have been shared lunches with Hall Green Meeting and a joint Kindlers event. This mixing has been very positive and we look forward to more opportunities. Friends in the Meeting have concerns relating to the Testimonies of Peace and Sustainability and the outward support of Climate Justice and Opposition to the Arms trade.

2025.087: Quaker Week and World Quaker Day

Quaker Week 2025 is 27th September to 5th of October, and World Quaker Day is Sunday, 5th October.

Friends World Committee for Consultation have announced that the theme for World Quaker Day 2025 will be "Love your neighbour" taking as its guiding scripture Galatians 5:14 "For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'".

Please let the AM office know if your Meeting is organising an event for Quaker Week or World Quaker Day so that a calendar of events can be produced. If your meeting does not feel able to organise an event could you team up with another Meeting?

2025.088: Area Meetings 2026 – provisional dates and requests for hosts

Local Meetings are asked to consider which Area Meeting on the suggested programme for 2026 they could host and, for the weekday meetings, which day of the week they would prefer. The Area Meeting clerks would like to encourage Local Meetings to consider partnering with other Local Meetings to host jointly. It would be helpful to the Area Meeting clerks for Local Meetings to offer a first and second choice of month. Please note that the morning workshops will be organised by the Area Meeting clerks with Local Meetings providing space and refreshments. Costs of providing food (whether homemade or bought in) can be claimed back from Area Meeting funds.

Please send all offers to Helen in the office by 15th September 2025.

Month	Day	Date	Time	LM host
January	Saturday	24th	1400-1700 preceded by activities fayre over lunch	BUL tbc
February	Tuesday or Wednesday or Thursday	24 th /25 th /26 th	1800-2100	
March	Saturday	28th	1045-1245 workshop 1400-1700 business	
April	Friday	24th	devotional	
May	Saturday	30th	1045-1245 workshop 1400-1700 business	
June	Tuesday or Wednesday or Thursday	23 rd /24 th /25 th	1800-2100	
July	Saturday	25th	1045-1245 workshop 1400-1700 business	
August	Saturday	15 th or 22 nd	1400-1500 devotional preceded by walk in Lickey Hills	BGR tbc
September	Saturday	26th	1045-1245 workshop 1400-1700 business	
October	Tuesday or Wednesday or Thursday	27 th /28 th /29 th	1800-2100	
November	Saturday	28th	1045-1245 workshop 1400-1700 business	BUL tbc

2025.089: Thanks and next Meetings

We thank Hall Green and Solihull Friends for their warm welcome and hospitality today. We hope to meet again, should nothing occur to prevent, on Saturday 16th August for a Meeting for Worship (with no business) at Sutton Coldfield Meeting House from 2pm to 3pm, preceded by a guided walk or cycle in Sutton Park in the morning and lunch. Meet at Town Gate B73 6BU at 10.30am for the walk/cycle. Please let Cathy Khurana know scquakers@outlook.com if you would like to come to the walk or cycle and if you would like to bring children.

The next Meeting for Church Affairs will be held on Saturday 27th September 2pm to 5pm at Coventry Meeting House preceded by a workshop from 10.45-12.45 on the 'What Does love Require of Us?' process.

Signed in and on behalf of Central England Area Meeting

James Bradbury, clerk this time