

Minutes of Central England Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) held at Hartshill Quaker Meeting House and online on 30th May 2026

Clerk: Cathy Khurana, Assistant clerk: Paula Button
Elder: John Cox-Woolven, Pastoral Friend: Daniel Keeler

2026.049: Worship

We began our meeting today with a period of worship, during which we remembered our Friends John Beavan, Rita Williams and Marion Longstaff.

We also heard read aloud the following passage from Quaker Faith and Practice, 24.36:

I do not know whether Quakers have special aptitudes or skills as mediators, but they tend to sympathise with both sides in an international dispute, as both are usually victims of past mistakes. Because Quakers believe that there is that of God in all people to which others may respond, they not only hope for the best but they expect the best, believing that bad situations are likely to get better with the input of a little honest goodwill. And because they consider that force nearly always creates more problems than it solves, Quakers feel impelled to do what is possible by reason and persuasion to resolve conflicts involving or threatening armed force.
Sydney Bailey, 1984

2026.050: Representatives

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

2026.051: Report from the Quakers in Criminal Justice conference

William Waddilove has given us a full and thoughtful report. This was an intensive and practical weekend of activities and plenary sessions covering such important areas as;

- dealing with trauma, (simple stress relieving techniques);
- conditions in prisons such as Wandsworth, (not fit for anybody);
- the purpose and value of support groups;
- difficulties faced by prisoners on actually leaving prison;
- how therapeutic communities such as those in the style of The Retreat can be helpful.

There were also three workshops on:

- Criminal punishment and Restorative practices in New Zealand ;
- The Value of Art Therapy;
- Trauma and Restorative Practice in Special Schools.

A Friend drew attention to the matter of personal possessions and property of those in prison. If there is no friend or family member to take care of things, everything you own may be sent for scrap. We have heard from Tricia Bradbury of CEQ Community Justice Group that this is indeed true. We have also been told that there are some charities which support prisoners with storage of personal possessions.

Another issue raised was the matter of our CEQ member who is serving a long prison sentence, and the need for ongoing support for him. The Community Justice Group would very much welcome Friends able to offer such support.

We thank William for his interesting report giving us an insight on how much goes into these conferences to guide our Quaker prison chaplains in their valuable work.

2026.052: Report from the CEQ Community Justice Group

We have received a very full and comprehensive report from Claire Bowman on the work of the Community Justice Group, which is printed in the papers for today's Area Meeting. Friends are encouraged to read it and share it in their Local Meetings.

This group exists for its members to offer mutual support to each other in their work around all forms of chaplaincy and other community support, including interchurch, interfaith and asylum seeker support. Members of the group attend relevant national conferences, and organize occasional events on appropriate topics.

Individual members of the group continue their chaplaincy work in prisons, Russell's Hall hospital, the police, the University of Birmingham, University of Warwick, and Coventry Migrant Women's project. They are also involved in Restorative Justice, Pray 24 Brum, and the West Midlands Church Leaders Group.

The Community Justice Group welcomes Friends interested in chaplaincy and interchurch and interfaith work. Ideas for particular events would be most welcome.

We thank our Friends for their work on our behalf and Claire Bowman for the report.

2026.053: Welcoming Prisoners

We were pleased to welcome Melanie Jameson from Quakers in Criminal Justice to introduce an approach to welcoming former prisoners to Quaker Meetings.

Melanie's presentation was specifically concerned with prison leavers who are still being supervised in the community by probation or police and have restrictions placed on them – 'license conditions' or an 'Order' such as a Sexual Harm Prevention Order, or a requirement to register with police.

The Welcoming All resource by Quakers in Criminal Justice (www.qicj.org) is a very useful and helpful booklet which encourages Local Meetings to consider welcoming former prisoners. It encourages dialogue and gives guidance on process to be prepared for a request to welcome a former prisoner.

We have had opportunity to ask questions and understand the challenges faced by both a Local Meeting and the ex-prisoner.

The Welcome Directory (www.welcomedirectory.org.uk) is a charity which creates a list of faith and belief communities ready to welcome ex-prisoners. We ask Local Meetings to consider the matter and discern if they feel able to be included in the directory.

2026.054: How the Truth has Prospered at Hartshill Local Meeting

We are grateful for the insights into the spiritual growth at Hartshill Meeting which show much life and activity for both inreach and outreach. These include visits and outings, small group sessions for both spiritual and practical interest, shared meals and inclusion and encouragement of young people. We wish them continued joy on their journey together.

2026.055: Lettings Advisory Group

We have heard of the work of this group which was set up to support and advise our Principal Officer, Sarah Barker. They have accomplished a great deal together but Sarah is now more experienced in this area and much less in need of ongoing support. Therefore, Area Meeting feels that this would be an appropriate time to lay down this Group. With many thanks to all those involved.

2026.056: Update on the Coventry Building Project

We have received an update from Coventry Meeting on their building project and Gyll Brown has spoken to it and answered questions. Their update is printed in the papers, giving details of the work and decisions made on contractors.

With funding promised and in place and a contractor agreed, the work is set to begin on 29th June 2026. We wish them very well on their journey. The Meeting House will remain open for the first eight weeks and then plans are in place for the Local Meeting, and all the lettings groups that wish, to move temporarily to Coventry Guides HQ while work is in progress.

Coventry Friends expressed grateful thanks to CEQ for all the support given.

2026.057: Trustee update

We have received the following from Trustees and Sandra Berry has spoken to it:

- The lease for a new tenant for Northfield Meeting House is hoped to start in the Autumn.
- Our Property Committee have considered ways in which we need to monitor any properties where we are landlords to tenants - especially in terms of making sure that we monitor the condition of our asset.
- Three policies have been updated (Sickness Absence, IT, and Data Protection) and are being rolled out as appropriate. The changes were primarily legal and regulatory and so do not need to come to Area Meeting for any decision making as they are in the trustee's remit of responsibility.
- The Social Media Policy is being worked on by Trustees and Elders/Pastoral Friends Support Group, and all the feedback received is being considered. A new draft will be circulated later in the year.
- Trustees have agreed some changes to our investment policy in light of a review of comparisons with other Quaker organisations (such as Britain Yearly Meeting and Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust). In light of the forthcoming change of lease arrangements for Northfield Meeting House, trustees have agreed to remove the 'Restricted' classification on the Northfield Meeting House funds

which enable them to be used wherever they might be needed within the Area Meeting.

Message 7 from Transfer Communications Group

Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting has sent a minute saying that they feel the transfer of five of the Local Meetings in Banbury and Evesham Area Meeting to Central England Area Meeting is in the best interests of all concerned at this time. They hope to continue the good relations that have been established already.

The next steps are for Banbury and Evesham Area Quaker Meeting, Central England Area Quaker Meeting and Worcestershire and Shropshire Area Quaker Meeting to go into the details of what needs to happen to make the Local Meeting transfers and close Banbury and Evesham Area Quaker Meeting. This will involve detailed discussions on a number of topics such as membership, property, employee matters, records for burials, marriages, Area Meeting records, insurance, safeguarding and lots of other things.

This process will take time, but all concerned want it to be completed as soon as practicable. The legal part of the process will include a request for formal minutes from each Area Meeting involved, and an application to Yearly Meeting for their approval.

As we work through these steps it is important for us to get to know each other. To help with this, **Banbury and Evesham Area Quaker Meeting Elders and Pastoral Friends are arranging a day when Banbury and Evesham Area Quaker Meeting and Central England Area Quaker Meeting Friends can meet together.** This invitation is extended to all Friends in both AMs. We thank Ettington Friends for hosting this event on **Sunday June 21st**. There will be Meeting for Worship at Ettington at 11 am followed by a walk and then a bring and share lunch at 1pm. In the afternoon there will be time for an initial discussion. A suggested topic is: "what are the practical steps we can all take to prepare ourselves and our local meetings to best work together? Tea will be served at 3.00 pm.

Please e-mail John Wade at johnwade06@aol.com if you plan to attend.

From David Sargent, Sandra Berry, John Crosfield, Stella Wilson, SusieTombs - the transfer communications group.

2026.058: Memorial minute for Bill Evans

We have heard a memorial minute for our friend Bill Evans, of Warwick Local Meeting, and it is printed in the Area Meeting papers.

We have discerned in our Meeting that this memorial minute stands as a Testimony to the Grace of God in the Life of our Friend, and we send it to Agenda Planning Committee of Britain Yearly Meeting.

2026.059: Membership matters

Deaths:

- John Beavan (COT) died 20th March 2026 aged 79 years
- Rita Williams (BOU) died 8th May 2026 aged 99 years
- Marion Longstaff (STO) died 14th May 2026 aged 85 years

Journey into Membership:

We have received a report on the journey into membership of Christine Gunter (BGR) from Stephen Petter and Georgie Thomas, and this has been read to us.

We have also received a report on the journey into membership of Ellie Rushton (BOU) from Ralph Wallin and Valerie Jenner, and this has been read to us.

We welcome Christine Gunter and Ellie Rushton into membership of Central England Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). We ask their visitors to welcome them and the clerk to write to them.

Transfer out requests:

Jane Stanley to Staffordshire Area Meeting

Phil Dahl to North Somerset Area Meeting

2026.060: Nominations

Nominations committee suggests:

Anne Ullathorne (COT) to serve on finance committee for another triennium from June 2026 to May 2029;

Wendy Burnett (BUL) to serve on Records Advisory Committee and as Keeper of Records for a year from May 2026 to May 2027;

Esther Boyd (COT) and Eil Conner-Maling (BOU) to serve as our representatives to Continuing Yearly Meeting for a triennium from June 2026 to May 2029;

Cedric Hodgson (BOU) to serve on Peace Hub Management Committee for a triennium from June 2026 to May 2029;

Nicholas Paton Philip (STO) and Frances Rutter (WAR) as visitors to JS on his journey into membership;

Howard Saunders (BOU) and Carole Pannell (STO) as visitors to TJ on his journey into membership.

Nomination from Warwick Local Meeting for an Elder:

Jane Beale (WAR) to continue to serve as an Elder from July 2026 to December 2026.

These names being acceptable, our Friends are appointed accordingly.

Release from service:

Jane Stanley (WAL) as an Elder and Pastoral Friend and from Records Advisory Committee

Marina Manassei (STO) from Quaker Christmas Parcels Committee and Community Justice Group

We thank Jane Stanley and Marina Manassei for their service and release them from their roles.

2026.061 Update on Children and Young People's Development Worker

We have received the following update and Rae Ritchie has spoken to it:

We are pleased to report that Leicester Area Meeting would like to work with us to jointly fund a Children and Young People's Development Worker covering the two regions. We have already committed to funding this role for three days per week for three years and Leicester Area Meeting will now fund an additional one day per week for the same period, as outlined in the following minute from their April Area Meeting:

15/2026: Funding of Children/Youth Development Worker

Further to minute 06/2026 of our last meeting, we have received a report from Sarah Shaw the Local Development Worker giving more detail about the proposal to fund jointly with Central England Quakers a Children/Youth Development Worker.

We welcome the opportunity to work with Central England Quakers to fund a Children/Youth Development Worker. We agree to fund this post for 1 day per week for 3 years from Area Meeting funds. We ask our Clerks to contact Central England Quakers confirming our decision. We recognise that for this project to work we need to have a clear idea of what we are hoping to achieve, and we will therefore appoint a support group to work together so that our aims are in place by the time the CYPDW is in post. We ask our Trustees and AM treasurers to review our budget accordingly. We ask Nominations Committee to bring forward the names of Friends to serve on the support group.

As this minute states, the next step is for them to set up a support group. Once this is established, we will meet with them and with Kirsty Philbrick, Quaker Life Team Leader for Children and Youth Development Work, to begin the process of making this appointment.

We look forward to sharing further updates in due course.

Rae Ritchie, on behalf of CEQ Children & Young People's Development Worker support group

We remind Local Meetings of their commitment to funding this role and expect that this will be requested in 2027 following the appointment of a Children and Young People's Development Worker.

2026.062 Thanks and next meeting

We thank Harthill Friends for hosting Area Meeting today. Our next Area Meeting will be held on Wednesday 24th June 2026 at Hall Green Quaker Meeting House, with tea from 5pm and Area Meeting from 6–9pm.

Cathy Khurana

Clerk this time