

Minutes of Central England Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) held online on 24th June 2026

Clerk: Cathy Khurana, Assistant Clerk: Paula Button

Elders: Mina Tilt, Donald Whitlock

Pastoral Friends: Robert Morris, Celia Morris

2026.063 Meeting online today

This AM was scheduled to take place at Hall Green QMH and online, but in view of the red warning of extreme heat, the clerking team made the decision to hold it online only.

2026.064 Opening worship

We began our meeting today with a period of worship, during which we remembered our Friend Jolyon Hall who died in May.

During our opening worship we heard the following passage from Quaker Faith and Practice:

QFP 25.08 This is a marvellous world, full of beauty and splendour; it is also an unrelenting and savage world, and we are not the only living things prone to dominate if given the chance. In our fumbling, chaotic way, we do also make gardens, irrigate the desert, fly to the moon and compose symphonies. Some of us are trying to save species other than ourselves...

We have no reason to be either arrogant or complacent: one look at the stars through a microscope is sufficient to quell such notions. But we have to accept our position in the world with as much grace, responsibility and fortitude as we can muster, and try to grow up to our mission of love in this tangle of prospects and torments.

Pamela Umbima, 1992

2026.065. Representatives

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

2026.066 How the truth has prospered at Hall Green Meeting

We have received a full report on the spiritual and community events of Hall Green Friends. Meeting for Worship has a regular attendance of up to twelve Friends, they continue to hold a monthly Meeting for Healing, discussions around varied topics, and shared lunches. Solihull Friends regularly join these events.

Michael Langford's death is felt as a great loss to the Meeting.

The Meeting has many interfaith connections, and the Meeting House is well used by a variety of local community groups.

2026.067 Memorial Minute for our Friend Michael Langford

We have heard a memorial minute for our friend Michael Langford of Hall Green Local Meeting, and it is printed in the Area Meeting Papers.

We send the memorial minute to elders and Pastoral Friends Support Group for consideration.

2026.068 How the truth has prospered at Solihull Meeting

We have received a report from Solihull Friends giving us insights into the spiritual life of the Meeting, and their commitment to support for each other in their Quaker involvement. This includes attendance at Meeting for Worship, informal sharing of responsibilities, involvement in local and national groups and events concerning peace, homelessness and climate justice.

Solihull Friends regularly join Hall Green Friends for discussions and events and shared lunches.

2026.069 Walsall Local Meeting request for support

We have received the following request from Walsall Friends:

At Walsall LM's business meeting held on 17 May 2026 we agreed to ask area meeting for any support which they could give our meeting in view of our situation in being very small, with attendance routinely in low single figures. We were thinking of a support team, similar to that put in place for Barnt Green and Edgbaston. We are trying to reach out in our community and any support which Friends could give us would be really helpful. We are financially stable, we have a very good meeting place in St Matthew's church centre, who are very supportive of us. We meet in a large room with a refreshment area, ensuite toilets, its own fire exit and on-site car parking. As you know, Walsall area is very large, with a population approaching 300,000, and we do feel that there is potential for a thriving meeting. We have had a meeting with Hilary Topp, who asked us to consider an appeal for area meeting support. I will ask for it to be put on the agenda of the next Elders and Pastoral Friends support group meeting.

Jim Green

Jim Green was present at Area Meeting and spoke to us on the request. In particular, regular attendance of visitors at Meeting for Worship would be a very helpful start. Several ideas and suggestions were made about planning events in Walsall, and joining with Sutton Coldfield Meeting for events.

There needs to be a commitment to support Walsall Local Meeting and we discerned that the best way to do this is to ask Elders and Pastoral Friends Support Group to consider how they might help.

Those present today are asked to raise the matter in their Meetings and encourage Friends to visit Walsall Meeting.

2026.070 Eco Church scheme

We have been asked by Trustees Property Committee to consider our involvement with the A Rocha Eco Church scheme:

Keith Hitchcock asked if members of the committee had advice about the Eco Church programme.

Keith reported that Sutton Coldfield has lost its Eco Church accreditation and Eco Church

has introduced an expanded questionnaire of which a low carbon building is only one element.

Many years ago, area meeting asked all meetings to join the Eco Church scheme, with the hope that CEQ would become an Eco Church.

Since the new questionnaire involves so much more work, local meetings would need additional resources to continue the accreditation.

We send this minute to the clerks of area meeting.

The minute above refers to minute 2017.026 from 09.03.2017:

2017.026 Becoming an Eco Area Meeting as part of the “A Rocha UK Eco Church Award Scheme”

We have heard from Chris Martin, clerk of our Low Carbon Commitment Forum, who reminded us of Advice and Query no.6:

“Do you work gladly with other religious groups in the pursuit of common goals? While remaining faithful to Quaker insights, try to enter imaginatively into the life and witness of other communities of faith, creating together the bonds of friendship.”

The discernment to register and take steps to become an Eco Area Meeting is recommended to us by the Low Carbon Commitment Forum.

It is more than just buildings, and in fact we already comply with much of what is required. We are very committed through our Yearly Meeting decision at Canterbury in 2011 to be a Low Carbon Community.

We agree to this proposal and ask our Low Carbon Commitment Forum together with local meetings to take the necessary steps to register our Area Meeting as an Eco Area Meeting.

We thank Chris Martin and the Low Carbon Commitment Forum for their work.

Five of our Local Meetings are still accredited with the scheme (Bournville – bronze, Cotteridge – gold, Hall Green – silver, Stourbridge – silver, Warwick – bronze.)

Our discussion on the matter demonstrated that many of us are unfamiliar with the scheme, but those who were involved in 2017 found the process of completing the survey both challenging and useful.

We note that the survey questions have been revised and are more detailed.

As the Low Carbon Commitment Forum has been laid down, we suggest that this needs wider discernment and Local Meetings are asked to consider at their business meetings if the scheme remains relevant, and to let the AM clerks know the outcome.

We will return to the matter at Area Meeting in October 2026

2026.071 Trustees update

Sandra Berry, clerk to trustees, has updated us with recent trustee news.

The Property event and the Safeguarding session were well attended, and it is good to acknowledge the wealth of experience in our Area Meeting and the sharing of knowledge with and from each other.

Progress is being made with the Banbury and Evesham Area Meeting (BEAM) transfer project. The request to Britain Yearly Meeting for Evesham Local Meeting to move to Worcestershire and Shropshire Area Meeting will be considered at Yearly Meeting in July. We will be able to learn from this first move as we look at the detailed work for the remaining five Local Meetings in BEAM to move to our Area Meeting.

The 'getting to know each other' day at Ettington Local Meeting on Sunday 21st June was a very useful opportunity to make connections and hold helpful conversations.

2026.072 Leighton Park General Meeting Report

We have received a full report from Jane Mills regarding the Leighton Park School General Meeting in 2026. The primary focus of the school as stated is "to form young people of character, independence and confidence with a determined desire to change the world". It aims to encourage children to live adventurously, while still feeling loved, valued and safe. There is still something of the Quaker ethos and Quaker values which the school does try to hold on to against the challenges of the outside culture.

We heard of an individual who had been very well supported through her music scholarship.

We thank Jane for her report.

2026.073 Membership Matters

Deaths: Jolyon Hall, Warwick, died 27th May 2026 aged 92

Journey into Membership:

We have received the report on the journey into membership of Jonathan Bowmer, (War) and this has been read to us.

We welcome Jonathan Bowmer 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.

2026.074 Young Adult Representative

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/young-adult-representative-leaflet>

We have received a request from the Quaker Life Youth, Children and Families Team to consider if our Area Meeting could support the introduction of Young Adult Representatives. This is a role that has been shaped and refined by young adults themselves in response to the need for clearer support, recognition, and structures that enable a wide range of young adults to flourish while remaining safely connected to their Area Meeting.

Rae Ritchie suggested taking the matter to the CEQ Young Adult Friends group to discuss it further. We agree that this is a good way forward and look forward to hearing their thoughts on the Young Adult Representative role.

2026.075 Nominations

Nominations committee suggests:

Hilary Topp (COT) to serve for another triennium on the Susanna Cole Trust from July 2026 to June 2029

Paula Button (WAR) to serve as an Area Meeting Clerk for another triennium from August 2026 to July 2029

Maud Grainger (SEL) to serve as a representative to Continuing Yearly Meeting for a triennium from June 2026 to May 2029

Clare Barnett (HAR) to serve for another triennium on Outreach and Communication committee for a triennium from July 2026 to June 2029

Barnt and Redditch Local Meeting suggests:

Wai-Ling Bickerton to serve as a Pastoral Friend from June 2026 to December 2029

These names being acceptable, our Friends are appointed accordingly.

2026.076 Thanks and next meeting

We thank Hall Green and Solihull Friends for the preparation work of hosting Area Meeting, and coping with a very late change of plan to go online only. We hope to meet again both in person at Warwick QMH and online on Saturday 25th July. Area Meeting will be from 2–5pm, and will be preceded by a morning workshop on supporting refugees and asylum seekers, from 10.45 – 12.45.

Cathy Khurana, Paula Button – co-clerks