

Minutes of Central England Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) held at Warwick Meeting House and online on 25th July 2026

Co-Clerks: Cathy Khurana, Paula Button

Elders: Jane Beale, John Cox-Woolven

Pastoral Friend: Jane Cunningham

2026.077 Opening Worship

We began our meeting today with a period of worship, during which we remembered our Friends Arthur Lockett, Trevor Barker, and Brian Homer.

We heard read the following passage from Quaker Faith and Practice:

QfP 23.33 Guided by the light of God within us and recognising that of God in others, we can all learn to value our differences in age, sex, physique, race and culture. This enables mutual respect and self-respect to develop, and it becomes possible for everyone to love one another as God loves us. Throughout our lives, we see ourselves reflected in the facial expressions, verbal comments and body-language of others. We have a responsibility to protect each other's self-respect.

Because of their commitment to social concerns, some Quakers may find it inconceivable that they may lack understanding of issues involving racism. Jesus stressed the unique nature and worth of each individual. It is unreasonable to expect assimilation or to ignore difference, claiming to treat everyone the same. This denies the value of variety, which presents not a problem, but a creative challenge to live adventurously.

Personality, sex, race, culture and experience are God's gifts. We need one another and differences shared become enrichments, not reasons to be afraid, to dominate or condemn. The media have increased our knowledge of the world, but we need greater self-awareness if our actions are to be changed in relation to the information we receive. We need to consider our behaviour carefully, heeding the command of Jesus that we should love our neighbours as we love ourselves.

Meg Maslin, 1990

2026.078 Representatives

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

The clerks were pleased to welcome the following attenders:-
Pete Doubtfire (BUL).

2026.079 Concern for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

At Area Meeting in March 2026 (CEQAM minute 2026.043 Minutes from Local Meetings), we minuted our support for the concerns raised by QARN (Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network) about the current proposals regarding asylum and refugee status; and our concern that refugees and asylum seekers may no longer be considered a priority by QPSW.

The CEQAM minute was forwarded to Yearly Meeting Agenda Planning Committee, and we received the following response from Siobhan Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk, Quakers in Britain:

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of the Central England AM minute, which will be sent on to Agenda Planning Committee for their consideration, and may also be sent to other Quaker committees as appropriate. To support their further discernment, I would be grateful if you could let me know:

- *Whether the AM has any views on the nature of the resources which should be made available to Friends; and*
- *Whether the AM has any historic or current work ongoing in the support of refugees and asylum seekers*

In friendship,

Siobhan

We have considered this matter in our business meeting today and have discerned with a sense of urgency three specific areas where we believe Britain Yearly Meeting support would be significant, particularly in view of the current government proposed legislation:

1. That staff time is allocated to the matter of asylum and refugee issues;
2. That a session at Britain Yearly Meeting is included at the earliest possible opportunity to discern our ongoing concern. The Religious Society of Friends has a long historical commitment to asylum seekers and refugees;
3. That a statement is issued from Britain Yearly Meeting stating our opposition to the proposed legislation. We cannot support the hostile environment that is being created.

In considering the second question (*Whether the AM has any historic or current work ongoing in the support of refugees and asylum seekers*) the following history of the CEQ concern was agreed:

Our current request to Agenda Planning Committee is based on a longstanding concern within Central England Area Meeting (previously Warwickshire Monthly Meeting) about the rights of refugees, going back over 20 years. The Asylum group was set up in 2003 with a remit to educate members of the Monthly Meeting about current asylum issues and provide information about new developments. We were allowed by Monthly Meeting to set up the group without going through the usual nominations procedure so that those who shared this concern could join and maintain their involvement. The group reported regularly to Monthly Meeting (later Area Meeting) and disseminated information to Local Meetings, including requests for letters to be written on urgent issues. The group included immigration professionals, both Quakers and others from other denominations (Anglican, Methodist) who were happy to advise. The group made submissions to parliamentary reports and were involved in national networks such as Detention Forum. Some of the members of the group were involved in setting up the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network in 2006.

In 2013, Area Meeting was involved in the national City of Sanctuary conference which took place at Bull Street Meeting House and agreed to support the City of Sanctuary network.

For two years from 2015 - 2017 the Asylum Group organised fortnightly interfaith vigils in the grounds of St Philip's Cathedral in support of asylum-seekers and also arranged a visit to Yarl's Wood Detention Centre through a personal contact with the then chaplain.

The Asylum Group became a sub-group of the Area Meeting Peace Committee which provided support for our activities. These have included providing Orange Hearts for a display in the Peace Hub window during Refugee Week, encouraging Friends to write letters and send cards to MPs and local councillors, creating Refugees Welcome banners for display in all Local Meeting Houses, and responding to the most recent government proposals. Some of us are now part of the Peace Hub Action Group and our latest action was to support the QARN minute asking for more central BYM support for asylum and refugee work, and to forward our minute to Area Meeting.

Currently, there continues to be a lot of grassroots activity by members and attenders across the Area Meeting: Individual Friends are befrienders through Restore (a project of Birmingham Churches Together) and several Meetings support local refugee groups and local projects.

The Area Meeting's Asylum Group welcomes all these practical and direct expressions of support while maintaining their focus on examining government policy and seeking to change proposals and policies which we find incompatible with our testimonies. It is this particular aspect of the work which we feel needs additional central support from BYM.

2026.080 How the Truth has Prospered at Warwick Local Meeting

It has been good to hear about the life and energy at Warwick meeting, the positive and upbeat feeling on Sunday mornings with members and attenders, young families and their children. Old Friends who have passed away are much missed but never forgotten. There is an active spiritual life – meetings for learning and a Bible study group - and much participation in the local community, with the Conversation Café happening regularly and Warwick and Leamington Peace Festivals both being supported. The Meeting House and garden provide welcoming spaces for everyone and are well used, the community café provides welcome refreshments.

We thank Warwick Meeting for their report.

2026.081 Support for Walsall Local Meeting

Following our discernment on this matter at Area Meeting in June (CEAQM minute 2026.069), the Area Meeting clerks feel that providing a structure for suggested intervisitation might be helpful. We suggest that Local Meetings consider finding an individual/pair/ small group of Friends who would be willing to sign up for a specific Sunday to join Walsall Friends for Meeting for Worship.

Given the number of Local Meetings within CEQ, if each one committed to one Sunday every three months, Walsall Local Meeting could have many visitors.

Elders and Pastoral Friends Support Group also considered the matter at a recent committee meeting and minuted the following:

Elders and Pastoral Friends Support Group Minute 2026/4; Support for Walsall Meeting:

We wonder if a stable group of regular supporters would be more effective than a wide range of visitors who are able to be there more sporadically. We also wonder if we might ask nearer Meetings from Wolverhampton or Lichfield if they could offer support.

In response to our CEQAM minute, four of our Local Meetings have already decided on visits to Walsall Local Meeting in the next few months. The request for visitors will now be sent to all CEQ Elders and Pastoral Friends to endeavour to find a small group of Friends who could attend Walsall LM regularly. We take this opportunity to remind friends that Elders and Pastoral Friends are appointed to an Area Meeting role.

Jim Green also expressed his thanks for the offers of visits from Local Meetings.

2026.082 Memorial Minutes

- i) We have heard a memorial minute for our Friend Eric Adams from Selly Oak Local Meeting, and it is printed in the Area Meeting papers.

We send it to the Elders and Pastoral Support Group for their consideration.

- ii) We have also heard a memorial minute for our Friend Mollie McDonald from Solihull Local Meeting.

We send it to the Elders and Pastoral Support Group for their consideration.

2026.083 Peace Hub 2025 report and appeal

A copy of the comprehensive Peace Hub Annual report for 2025 has been sent to all our Local Meetings, and Pete Doubtfire, Peace Hub coordinator has spoken to the report.

2025 saw a new start for Peace Hub, implementing a new strategy, and making use of greater flexibility to connect with and support a wide range of community and volunteer-led groups taking action for peace and social justice. The three strategic priorities focussed on i) working with and supporting other groups committed to peace and social justice, through outreach, inreach and networking; ii) organising peace events and activities that build on this partnership work; iii) taking people on a journey from passive to active in this peace work.

Three workshops (on taking people from passive to active) will be held in the autumn, and Friends are encouraged to attend and to spread the word.

We were reminded that Peace Hub is appealing to Local Meetings for financial support in 2026.

Interested Friends are also invited to join the Peace Hub Action Group which meets on zoom on the 4th Wednesday of the month at 6.0pm, to explore concerns, share mutual support, and inform the direction of Peace Hub's work.

The themes that have emerged for focussed work are i) the intersection of peace/climate justice/racism, ii) challenging the narratives of division, iii) militarism and the arm trade.

We thank Pete for speaking to us today, and encourage Friends to read the 2025 Peace Hub report.

2026.084 Children, Youth and Families worker update

We have received a report from Rae Ritchie on behalf of the working group for this project. It is hoped to advertise this new role from the end of August with interviews at the end of September or early October. The successful candidate could then start any time from November.

Important points

1. We will be sure to share the job advertisement widely but ask Friends to also circulate the details to anyone who might be interested.
2. As mentioned above, the candidate may be able to start the role this year, not in 2027 as previously anticipated. We will let you know as soon as we can so Local Meetings that have pledged financial contributions can adjust their budgets accordingly.
3. The role will start with a period of induction with the Quaker Life Team so you may not see or hear from them when they first begin.
4. We also fully expect that the appointee will need to take some time getting to know us and Leicester Area Meeting, which is why the role is for three years. Building relationships takes time.
5. In line with the Area Meeting minute that established the DW (Development Worker) Working Group, we will transition to being a Support Group for the development worker. We are, however, looking for other people to join the group now, especially Elders and Pastoral Friends. If this is of interest, please get in touch.

Thanks to Rae for this exciting report!

2026.085 Families Weekend report

We have received a report on the Families Weekend held at the Greenhouse @ Barnes Close 19th – 21st June 2026 from Helen Waters and Hilary Topp.

52 Friends of all ages gathered for a third Quaker Families Weekend. Almost half the participants were children aged 0 – 17, and there were families from three Area Meetings – Central England, Worcestershire and Shropshire, and Gloucestershire. The Families Weekends are a really important way to build community and help families feel part of the wider Quaker family.

The summer weather enabled many activities to be enjoyed outside, including Meeting for Worship on the Sunday morning, with everyone taking part in a partly programmed meeting.

2026.086 Membership Matters

Deaths: Arthur Lockett (SEL) died 2nd July 2026, aged 81;

Brian Homer (SEL, not in membership) died 10th July 2026 aged 80;

Trevor Barker (HAL) died 13th July 2026, aged 84.

Application for membership

We have received an application for membership from Leah Watson-Roberts (HAR). We ask Nominations Committee to find the names of two Friends to visit Leah.

We have received an application for membership from PH. We ask Nominations Committee to find the names of two Friends to visit PH.

Journey into membership

We have received the report of the journey into membership of TJ and this has been read to us.

We welcome TJ 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.

We have received the report of the journey into membership of JS and this has been read to us.

We welcome JS 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.

Friends interested in offering pastoral support could do so by, for example, sending cards or letters via the Area Meeting office.

We were reminded that if/when the time comes that these individuals are released from prison and wish to attend a Local Meeting, this must be organised and facilitated by the Safeguarding Team.

World Quaker Day will be celebrated in the prison on Monday 5th October and interested Friends should contact Tricia Bradbury if they would like to take part.

Transfer Out Confirmed:

Anna Baker (SEL) to Worcestershire and Shropshire Area Meeting

2026.087 Nominations

Nominations committee suggests:

Vic Grainger (BOU) to serve on Clerks' Advisory Committee for another triennium from July 2026 to June 2029;

John Kimberley (BUL) to serve on the Susanna Cole and Others Trust for another triennium from July 2026 to June 2029;

David Gough (KIN) to serve on Records Advisory Committee for a triennium from July 2026 to June 2029;

These names being acceptable, our Friends are duly appointed.

Release from service

Michael Bickerton (BGR) from Outreach and Communications Committee

Lesley Morgan (BGR) as an Elder

We release our Friends and thank them for their service.

2026.088 Hosting Area Meeting in 2027

Local Meetings are asked to consider which Area Meeting on the suggested programme for 2027 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.

Please send all offers to Helen in the office by 13th September 2026.

Offers have been received and accepted by Bull St LM to host January AM and November AM, and Bournville LM to host July AM on Thursday 22nd.

Month	Day	Date	Time	LM host
January	Saturday	23rd	1045-1245 workshop 1400-1700 business	BUL
February	Tuesday or Wednesday or Thursday	23rd/24 th /25th	1800-2100	Online only – no host needed
March	Tuesday or Wednesday	23rd/24th	1800-2100	
April	Friday or Saturday or Sunday	23 rd /24 th /25th	Devotional and social	
May	Saturday	22nd	1045-1245 workshop 1400-1700 business	
June	Saturday	26th	1045-1245 workshop 1400-1700 business	
July	Thursday	22nd	1800-2100	BOU
August	Saturday	14 th or 21st	Devotional and social	
September	Saturday	25th	1045-1245 workshop 1400-1700 business	
October	Tuesday or Wednesday or Thursday	26 th /27 th /28th	1800-2100	
November	Saturday	27th	1045-1245 workshop 1400-1700 business	BUL

2026.089 Thanks and Next Meetings

We thank Warwick Friends for hosting Area Meeting today.

Our next meeting is a devotional meeting with no business, and will be held on **Saturday 22nd August** at 2pm for Meeting for Worship at Barnt Green Meeting House. In the morning there will be a walk and picnic in Lickey Hills, leaving at 11.0am.

Our next Area Meeting for Business will be held on **Saturday 26th September** 2.0 - 5.0pm at Stourbridge Meeting House preceded by a workshop from 10.45-12.45 on Trans and Non-binary Inclusion led by a group of Young Friends.

Cathy Khurana, Paula Button

Co-clerks this time.