

Southern East Anglia Quaker Meeting at Sudbury, 08.05.2016

Representatives

Clacton-on-Sea - no Friend present.

Colchester – Robert Parkes, Eliza Jones, Phyl Reid (prevented)

Sudbury – Betty Scrivener, Sylvia Frith, Graham Johnston

Earls Colne - Jenny Kay, John Kay

Present were 18 Friends, including 3 Attenders and all but 1 of our representatives.

2016/23 Friends being met in the presence of God, *Quaker faith and practice* 23.10 was read.

2016/24 Death of Friend

Derek Adams, a Friend of Colchester Meeting, died on April 13 at the age of 80. The funeral was held in the manner of Friends at Colchester Crematorium on May 9. We ask Colchester Friends to prepare a testimony to the grace of God in Derek's life for the AM Book of Memorials.

2016/25 Membership matters

We have received a letter of application for membership from Freya Sandford, an attender at Colchester Meeting. Overseers have appointed Jenny Kay and Reg Webb to visit with Freya and we ask them to bring a report of their visit to the next convenient meeting.

2016/26 Appointments

Triennial Appointments

AM Nominations Committee - Clacton Friends bring forward the name of Hazel Jones to serve on AM Nominations Committee. We appoint Hazel to serve from May 2016 - end April 2019.

Elders - AM Nominations Committee brings forward the name of Ann Dowden to serve as Elder at Colchester Meeting. This name being acceptable to the meeting, we appoint Ann to serve from May 2016 to end April 2019.

Assistant Safeguarding Coordinator - We appoint Pam Harris as Assistant Safeguarding Coordinator, to serve from May 2016 to end April 2019.

2016/27 Gathering on Our Sustainability Commitment: Being a transformational community

Rosemary Sturgiss attended the second BYM Sustainability Gathering on our behalf, held at Swanwick on March 18-20. Rosemary described how the gathering was sparked into life by discussing creative ways of being a transformational community working towards sustainability. These included telling our stories and connecting people, our environment and our spirituality. A significant theme was loss, whether of lifestyle or practical or emotional loss.

We thank Rosemary for her report, and ask her to provide a written report to attach to these minutes, to appear in the newsletter and be uploaded to the Business page of the AM website.

2016/28 Meeting for Sufferings report

Robert Parkes presented his report from Meeting for Sufferings. The main theme at the moment is to discern how Quakers in Britain can put into practice the document "Our Faith in the Future".

We are part of the worldwide community of Friends: there are over 70 Yearly Meetings around the world. Although there are many ways in which we differ, we are nevertheless "one in the spirit". In living out our faith we are urged to work collaboratively with Quakers and non-Quakers and find ways of crossing boundaries, while becoming better connected with *Quaker faith and practice*. We were reminded of the need to understand the Quaker phrase "a tested concern".

We are challenged to consider how we might better connect with young Friends.

We thank Robert for his report, which is attached to these minutes, will appear in the newsletter and be uploaded to the Business page of the AM website.

2016/29 The Refugee Befriending group - update

Further to Minute 2016/19, Mary Grocock reported on initiatives taken recently to support the Syrian family we are befriending (the Harra family), and other refugee families. A tea-party was held at Colchester Meeting House on Saturday, May 7th, which was attended by all five of the Syrian families, several representatives of their befriending groups, as well as staff from Fresh Beginnings, including Hana and Deeb Abbara, who were on hand to help with translation.

Mary reminded us of the first tea-party, at which there had been much goodwill and a good deal of uncertainty. She shared a poem which beautifully captured the vulnerability and yet strength of the family we have befriended.

At this second tea-party we understood better the joys and sadness of the families. They have made a noticeable advance in their learning of English and their ability to communicate with us, and vice versa. Mary found a phrase to describe the plight of our young Syrian friend, Abdo, who is perhaps especially isolated yet carrying the loving burden of caring for his blind father. She described this as "heartbreaking beyond our imagining".

Our befriending group has expanded to involve several other Friends of the meeting. We hope to include the Harras at our Creative Days in the summer, as well as taking them to open garden events in Wivenhoe and Coggeshall. Friends are still needed and welcome if they wish to offer friendship and support.

The Area Meeting has bought 20 copies of a visual Arabic-English dictionary, for the use of our befriending group and the families, and for other befrienders as needed. Friends are invited to ask for a copy if they would like to be involved as a befriender.

We thank Mary for her report and ask her for a written copy to be shared in the usual ways.

2016/30 The future of Regional Gathering

Our Friend Jenny Kay gave us a brief history of how Regional Gatherings (RG) came about, when General Meetings were disbanded in 2005, thus eliminating a tier of business meetings. SEA QM is part of Essex and Suffolk Regional Gathering, which also includes Mid-Essex AM, Thaxted AM and Ipswich & Diss AM. RG takes place on the 4th Saturday of February, June and September. An agenda committee draws up the programme and the clerk minutes events and clerks the annual business meeting at which accounts are presented. The meeting hosting Regional Gathering provides refreshments afterwards.

Those who attend are enthusiastic about RG, but for some time attendance has been modest, and if numbers don't increase, it might be laid down. Susan Garratt, Clerk, has asked for help with deciding how to proceed in the future, which could lead to some changes from 2017. Some possible developments to Regional Gathering days have been made, as follows:

- * to run a children's programme. (This has largely ceased in recent years as host Meetings have not felt they could do so.)
- * to change the timing, perhaps MFW at 12.30 followed by lunch at 1.00, and to run our programme in the afternoon.
- *Posters displayed in every MH
- *local and area meetings to emphasise and publicise the events.

The next Regional Gathering takes place at Colchester Meeting on Saturday, June 25th, when there will be a Kindlers on the Road workshop entitled "What Does Love Require of Us?". Friends are encouraged to attend Regional Gathering and come to AM in the autumn prepared to consider further the suggestions made for the future of Regional Gathering.

2016/31 Two matters brought by AMs and forwarded by MfS.

Two matters have been brought to the attention of all AMs in the country and our discernment sought. We are asked to consider whether we intend to devote time to this discernment and, if so, to provide a minute to MfS in time for their December meeting. The topics for our consideration are as follows:

MfS Minute 14 - Decriminalisation of the possession, for personal use, of all drugs

This is a concern of Cornwall AM, which is asking for help with testing the concern. A briefing paper is available, and Friends from Cornwall would be happy to talk with us. More information is available on the South West Quakers website.

MfS Minute 17- Vision for a criminal justice system

Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee is considering this paper, which builds on and develops previous work. The Committee hopes Friends will help test the vision expressed in the paper.

All Friends are asked to inform themselves on these topics, which we agree to revisit at AM in September. The AM Website Manager has provided links to briefing papers on the Business page of the AM website, under "Calling papers". We ask Friends of each Local Meeting to assist one another with accessing printed copies of the material, as needed.

Queries can be addressed to LM Clerks and AM Clerk. We agree to invite a Friend from Cornwall AM to speak to us by September AM about the issue on drugs; we agree to pay travel expenses for this Friend. We ask Reg Webb to prepare an introduction for AM on the topic of a vision for a criminal justice system, which will help our discernment at AM in September.

Signed,

Alison Parkes

Alison Parkes
Clerk