

Southern East Anglia Quaker Meeting at Colchester, 10.09.2017

Representatives

Clacton-on-Sea - Karl Sage

Colchester – Robert Parkes, Robbie Spence, Anne Watkinson

Sudbury – no representatives

Earls Colne – Jenny Kay, John Kay

Harwich - Hazel Jones

Present were 21 Friends, including 3 Attenders.

2017/46 Friends being met in the presence of God, the Epistle from Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017 was read.

2017/47 Appointments

Triennial Appointments

We received the following minute from Colchester LM:

17.39 We report that it has not been possible for Colchester LM Nominations to find a Friend to succeed Alison Parkes as our LM representative on the AM Nominations Committee. We ask AM to consider the possibility of AM Nominations and Colchester LM Nominations working together in the foreseeable future.

AM Nominations Committee - Colchester LM is unable at present to bring forward the name of a Friend to serve on the AM Nominations Committee. We agree that AM Nominations and Colchester LM Nominations work together for the next year to bring forward nominations for AM appointments. We ask them to review the arrangement in a year's time and bring their findings to AM in November 2018.

We received the following minute from Colchester LM:

17.43ii: We ask AM to find only five Elders for Colchester LM from the beginning of 2018. We ask Elders and Overseers to consider the role and number of overseers we need for our LM, at their next meetings.

Elders - We agree that only five elders be appointed for Colchester Meeting, from the beginning of 2018.

Jacky Hall has asked to be released from serving as Elder for Colchester Meeting. She has completed nearly two years of a triennium, for which we thank her.

Overseers - Jane Wolton has served as Overseer at Colchester Meeting over many years, for which we thank her. She has asked to be released from her current term in this role, which is due to end in December 2019. Norman Myall has also asked to be released as an overseer. He would have come to the end of his second triennium in December this year, and we

thank him for his service. We release Jane and Norman and await the discernment of Colchester overseers and elders as to the number of overseers needed.

Assistant Website Manager - John Hall has asked to be released as Assistant Website Manager. We thank John for his work in helping to maintain the website and ask Nominations Committee to bring forward the name of another Friend for this role.

2017/48 Trustees Report on current matters

Peter Whiteley, Clerk of Trustees, reported that there is a delay in presenting the Annual Report and Accounts for 2016. This is because our former bookkeepers failed to deliver them in a timely manner. The accounts have only recently been received by our Treasurer and Whittles. Trustees will forward the accounts to the Charities Commission before bringing them to AM in November.

We now employ Sue Dowden as our bookkeeper. Sue is making use of the accounting programme Paxtons, which is proving to be straightforward and efficient. This system should enable interim financial reports to be prepared for LM Treasurers, at fairly short notice, if required. Accounts are now available for the first half of this year. We ask our bookkeeper to share them with LM Treasurers. We ask Trustees to ensure optimum communication with LM Treasurers in future.

Quinquennial Surveys have been arranged for Colchester and Earls Colne.

2017/49 Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017 highlights

Six Friends of our Area Meeting attended Yearly Meeting Gathering (YMG) at Warwick University at the beginning of August. A few of them told us their highlights of the week. We heard how YMG was busy and full of energy and opportunities to get involved. Friends were inspired and invigorated by the spirit of other Quakers they spoke to in-between the formal sessions, as well as the contribution of very young Friends. Accounts of Friends' experience have appeared in the September newsletter.

2017/50 Refugee working group update

Alison Parkes described how our role as befrienders to two Syrian families is much appreciated by the families themselves and also Essex Integration (formerly known as Fresh Beginnings) and Refugee Action Colchester. We have been asked to meet with others in the town who would like to be befrienders and share our experience with them. The participation of more Friends would be very helpful in the befriending group. We may also expand our group to involve people from Colchester who are willing and able to help. This would only be after discussion with Essex Integration or Refugee Action Colchester.

An event is taking place at Firstsite to celebrate Colchester Borough becoming a Borough of Sanctuary. Many local institutions, including Essex University, VI Form College, Colchester Institute, faith groups and charities have pledged to support the initiative.

We agree to forward a resolution expressing our support to Colchester Borough of Sanctuary, stating the ways in which we hope to continue our involvement, as best we can, as a befriending group, listening to those in need of sanctuary and opening our hearts to

their stories. We thank Alison Parkes for her report, which is attached to these minutes, and we thank the members of the befriending group for all they are doing in support of our two families.

2017/51 Sanctuary Meeting

Robert Parkes told about an initiative from QPSW (Quaker Peace and Social Witness) which asks Meetings to consider becoming "Sanctuary Meetings". Tim Gee, from QPSW, describes Sanctuary Meetings as "an invitation to all local meetings to (1) take part together in joining initiatives to welcome newcomers to Britain, (2) build alliances with anti-racist organisations, and (3) advocate together to change the law. For those already doing so it offers a mutual support structure and a coordinated channel into political change. For those where some things are happening, it is a way for the meeting as a whole to uphold the work."

We consider that we are to some extent already fulfilling the first two criteria through the work of our befriending group and by supporting the anti-racist organisation Stand Up to Racism, which meets free of charge at Colchester Meeting House. Our involvement with other Sanctuary Meetings will enable us to fulfil the third criterion, liaising with them to adapt laws and procedures to be more inclusive of refugees and other marginalised members of society. We support the notion of becoming a Sanctuary Meeting and we appoint Robert Parkes and Hazel Jones to coordinate this work.

Our Friend Hazel Jones has suggested the AM provide funding to hire a minibus to take our families on outings, such as to Earls Colne or Harwich. We welcome this and other initiatives.

2017/52 Support for the Mulanje Hospital in Malawi

In March this year we minuted (Minute 2017/22): We ask Trustees to consider how AM might effectively give further support to the hospital and to bring their recommendations to the AM. Sylvia Jeffcock and Alison Parkes contacted Dr Ruth Shakespeare, Director of the Mulanje Hospital in Malawi, on behalf of Trustees and the Area Meeting, to discuss how further support for the hospital might help to alleviate malnutrition. In particular they asked how support for breastfeeding - which research shows contributes to the alleviation of malnutrition in newborn babies - could make a significant difference.

Dr Shakespeare discussed the proposal with community midwives, who came up with a programme for breastfeeding promotion in the 72 villages which make up the Mulanje Hospital catchment area. The programme includes a series of radio programmes (an effective tool for communication where most of the rural population do not read), a training day on breastfeeding for Village Safe Motherhood Committees, focus group discussions with men and women at community clinics to better understand the challenges and cultural issues, and 'baby friendly' signposts for local business, churches etc which meet agreed criteria, including welcoming breastfeeding mothers. The programme would include monitoring and evaluation. Its cost would be £460.

We agree to give £500 to the Mulanje Hospital at this stage and authorise our Treasurer to make the payment. We ask the Clerk to communicate this to Dr Shakespeare and request the

results of the evaluation with a view to possible funding for a continuation of the programme.

2017/53 Regional Gathering

Tom Tebbutt, AM Treasurer, was recently contacted by the Treasurer of Regional Gathering, who requested that we make good the outstanding contribution due from our AM. In the past we have made an annual payment of £60 to Regional Gathering and £54.56 to CTEEL (Churches Together in Essex and East London). However, the current bank account for Regional Gathering has been frozen for some time, preventing the RG Treasurer from making payments into and out of the account. The amount due totals £511.68, covering the last 4-5 years and made up of £300 to Regional Gathering and £211.68 to CTEEL. We ask our Treasurer to take whatever steps are needed to pay the full amount due.

We agree that the time has come to acknowledge there is no longer sufficient commitment to Regional Gathering to warrant our continuing support. We ask our Clerk to communicate this to Susan Garratt, Clerk of Regional Gathering, thanking her for her dedicated service in organising Regional Gathering over many years. However, we recognise the value of making and taking opportunities to connect with our neighbours and to include AMs near us in events when appropriate.

2018/54 Dates of AMs in 2018

LMs were asked to consider the dates and locations for Area Meetings for Church Affairs and to report back to AM in September. We have heard from all of our LMs and are pleased that Harwich Meeting is willing and able to host AM for the first time. The timetable is as follows:

14 January - Colchester, 11 March - Clacton, 13 May - Sudbury, 8 July - Earls Colne,
9 September - Harwich, 11 November - Colchester

2018/55 Colchester Meeting House Refurbishment

We have received the following notification from Colchester Meeting:

LM Minute 17.42 - Premises Committee have suggested that we consider a major refurbishment of our building based on ideas put forward in the questionnaire replies and the Threshing Day held earlier this year. They want a building that is fit for purpose, welcoming and sustainable. We ask Premises Committee to take professional advice, preferably with at least two different firms and bring the results back to us with their comments.

We ask Colchester Friends to liaise with AM Trustees and come back to AM with costed proposals.

Signed,

Alison Parkes

Alison Parkes
Clerk