

Southern East Anglia Quaker Meeting at Colchester, 08.03.2015

Representatives

Clacton-on-Sea - Hazel Jones

Colchester – Tim Holding, Carol Holding (prevented), Ray Attrill, Rod Usher, Julia Usher (prevented), Robert Parkes, Jet Grommel, Peggy Lewis, Peter Whiteley, and Attenders: Pam Harris, Mary Grocock and Rosemary Sturgiss

Sudbury – Betty Scrivener, Henry Ruse, Sheelagh Ruse, Jane Carter

Present were 31 Friends, including 5 Attenders, and all but 2 of our representatives.

2015/13 Friends being met in the presence of God, Advices and Queries 17 was read.

2015/14 Responsibilities of Local Meetings

We have received a minute from each of the local meetings in our Area, confirming that they have endeavoured to carry out the duties laid down for them in QFP 4.33 and 4.34, to the best of their abilities. The minutes from Sudbury, Clacton, Earls Colne and Colchester were read out and are attached to this minute.

We note that Earls Colne Friends continue to consider their position with regard to becoming a local meeting again. At present AM Treasurers look after their financial affairs and Tim Holding serves as a link with Trustees in caring for the Meeting House. Earls Colne Friends would welcome future consultation with AM and Paul Parker, Recording Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting.

2015/15 Responsibilities of Area Meeting

We referred to the guidance to Area Meetings in QFP 4.10 and read part of 4.13. We heard AM Minute 2014/15. The process of discerning our purposes as an AM continued throughout 2014 and is not yet complete.

We are conscious of our responsibility as an AM for the appointment and service of Elders and Overseers, and for the level and nature of pastoral care in the Area Meeting (QFP 4.10 d). We note that AM Minute 2015/02 asked the clerks of Elders and Overseers to convene a meeting of all Elders and Overseers, as well as representatives from Clacton and Harwich Meetings, at the earliest opportunity, and together to explore ways in which Clacton and Harwich Friends might access and support eldership and oversight in their meetings. A meeting has been called for March 21. We ask the Clerks of Elders and Overseers to report to AM at the earliest opportunity.

2015/16 Appointments

Triennial Appointments

Elders - Robin Hart completed her third triennium as an Elder at Sudbury Meeting in December 2014. We thank Robin for her long service and reappoint her to serve for another triennium to end December 2017.

Overseers - Betty Scrivener completed her 6th triennium, and Jane Carter and Sylvia Frith their 3rd triennia as Overseers at Sudbury Meeting in December 2014. We thank them for their long service and reappoint them to serve until end December 2017.

Nominations Committee brings forward the name of Phyl Reid to serve as Overseer at Colchester Meeting. This name being acceptable to the meeting, we appoint Phyl to serve from March 2015 to end February 2018.

Funerals - Clacton Meeting is not able to bring forward the name of a Friend for the Funerals Committee. Carol Holding is willing to serve Colchester Meeting in this capacity for another triennium until end February 2018.

AM Nominations Committee - Martha Schwager wishes to be released from this role, having represented Clacton Meeting on this committee for 2 years. Clacton Meeting is unable to bring forward the name of a Friend for this role. We therefore ask Colchester and Sudbury Meetings to bring forward the name of a Friend to serve on the AM Nominations Committee.

Trustee - Nominations Committee brings forward the name of Ecky Prolingheuer to serve as Trustee. This name being acceptable to the Meeting, we appoint Ecky to serve from March 2015 - end February 2018.

Website Manager - Further to Minute 2015/05, Nominations Committee brings forward the name of Ann Webb for the role of Website Manager. This name being acceptable to the meeting, we appoint Ann to serve from March 2015 - end February 2018.

2015/17 Membership matters

Membership termination

Martha Schwager wishes to resign her membership of the Area Meeting in order to return to her roots in the Roman Catholic Church, which does not accept dual membership. Martha met with Overseers Carol Holding and Jenny Kay to discuss her resignation. She has learned much from her lengthy time with Quakers and her two years in membership, for which she is grateful. Martha made a considerable contribution to the Area Meeting on Nominations Committee and as Oversight representative for Clacton and we extend our thanks to her for this service. Martha will be attending Colchester Meeting and other Quaker functions with Ray and Amber, so we hope we will not lose touch with her. AM accepts Martha's resignation and wishes her well.

2015/18 Greenwood Educational Trust

The Greenwood Educational Trust is a fund administered by Friends which gives small grants to the children of Friends and attenders in the meetings of Essex and Suffolk.

To receive a grant, a child or young person must be under 25 and wish to receive a grant for educational purposes. It is a condition of the Trust that the child must be in need, or more practically, that the parents must feel they are in need. The application is informal and no form-filling is necessary.

The fund is not big, so grants are small, usually in the range £100 - £300 for each child.

If you feel you are eligible, or if you know of someone who is, please contact one of the overseers of your Meeting or alternatively contact John Lewis, a Greenwood trustee; John's contact details are in the AM List of Members and Attenders.

2015/19 Britain Yearly Meeting May 1-4

Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) is to be held at Friends House, Euston, London, from May 1 - 4. Yearly Meeting 2015 is the first of three YMs on the theme 'living out our faith in the world'. One of our focuses this year is housing as a particular example of a tested concern in the areas of inequality and injustice.

There is no need to register for Yearly Meeting. We ask Elders and Overseers to ensure that interested Friends and Attenders know about BYM. There is bursary assistance available for travel expenses.

2015/20 Regional Gathering

Further to Minute 2015/11, Colchester Meeting has offered to host Regional Gathering on 26 September. We thank Colchester Friends and the clerk will notify Susan Garratt, clerk of Regional Gathering. The theme for this year is 'Quakers 2015: Living out our faith in the World'.

2015/21 Area Meeting Gathering

Further to Minute 2014/63, Colchester Friends Peter Whiteley, Jan Squire and Phyl Reid have offered to help plan and organise an Area Meeting Gathering in 2016, with assistance from Jenny Kay. Others may be asked for their help. The organising committee will make initial enquiries and report back at the earliest opportunity, with a view to holding a gathering in 2016.

2015/22 Discerning our purposes - next steps

Further to Minutes 2014/39 and 2014/46, we recalled our process of discerning our purposes as an Area Meeting, with the specific focus of the right use of our unrestricted funds. Minute 39 summarised what took place and the discernment reached. Minute 46 framed questions which LMs were asked to consider and respond to, in order to continue the discernment. We agreed that any leading would need to be tested by further discernment of the Area Meeting, as to whether it is realistic and within our means. Colchester Meeting has responded by bringing forward its leadings for further consideration.

AM Minute 46 stated:

"We heard of the need to be careful and to consider how we as Quakers want to do things. What should come first is our commitment to taking action and then seeing how we can make our money support it.

"We ask Friends to reflect deeply on what action we should be taking, to test any leadings and, where appropriate, bring them to Area Meeting for further discernment."

Minute 46 went on with a series of statements followed by questions which LMs were asked to consider further. These are the questions which are most relevant, at least in part, to the response from Colchester Meeting:

We ask LMs to listen and to learn from their local community in answer to the question, "What is the most pressing need?" We ask them to explore the options for working together with other faith groups to achieve more together. We ask LMs to bring their findings to AM for further discernment and support.

We invite interested Friends to find out more about the work of the Quaker Housing Trust, whether there are any openings for local projects which we could support, and to suggest how the AM could take this forward.

We ask interested Friends to explore options for AM to provide loans and investments in local and Quaker projects and to bring their suggestions to AM.

Minute 46 also stated: **"We seek a sense of Whoosh! from Local Meetings! We recognise the 'borderlands', which are hidden and secret places in which the seeds of our future work will grow. When we find the deep concern that reverberates within us all, it will become apparent what we should do.**

We heard the minute from Colchester Meeting, which we considered in parts and altogether.

Colchester LM Minute 15.13 Supporting local projects

1. Further to minute 15.09, Rosemary Sturgiss has prepared a report, attached to these minutes, which suggests that we might set up an enabling fund to support local organisations to tie in with action on social inequality within Colchester. We should decide how and why we could support them in their work. Rosemary suggested a social justice and inequality group within our Meeting which could lead to a liaison role. We support the idea of using our members but we are conscious of limits to our energies.
2. We wish to support Glebe House and ask Area Meeting to adopt it as an ongoing Quaker concern, using heritage money. Glebe House wishes to set up Circles of Support, which started as a Quaker Concern, for their transitional residents, and needs an initial donation of £30,000 as there is no other source of money. We agree to ask Area Meeting to provide this sum. We were advised that Area Meeting is currently running a deficit of £40,000 a year, which with reserves of £400,000, would lead to no reserves within ten years. However, our understanding is that Area Meeting has discerned that it wishes to support community projects.
3. We request Area Meeting to give £20,000 a year for three years to Colchester Local Meeting to support essential work within the community, such as to the Women's Refuge and the Night Shelter.

We gave careful consideration to Colchester Meeting's minute, in particular its request for support to Glebe House. We heard that at AM in May the Trustees Report and Accounts may help Colchester Meeting take forward its other proposals.

Our Friend, Honor Chamberlain, described the work of Glebe House and how it changes the lives of young men, ex-sex-offenders, who are in great need of ongoing support. We recognised the deep personal connection felt by many Friends of this Area Meeting to Glebe House and its important work.

Glebe House Trustees want to start Circles of Support and Accountability to support the young men beyond their period of residence at Glebe House. We heard of the need for trained and supervised support, which is crucial for recruiting and maintaining ongoing Circles of Support and Accountability.

We heard about the hostile environment ex-sex-offenders face in the outside world, and how this is not a matter that achieves popular support. As Quakers we have the opportunity to offer unconditional love to young people who are in great need of it.

We support in principle the notion of adopting Glebe House as an ongoing Quaker concern for this Area Meeting and allocating appropriate funds for it to continue and extend its work, as a matter of urgency. We ask our Trustees to contact Colin South to find out more. It would be helpful to find out which other AMs are supporting Glebe House and to speak directly with Glebe House to discuss where any donation would be best directed. We need more information in order to be assured that we can offer continuous support over a number of years. We want to invest in an ongoing project, not a temporary solution.

We ask Trustees to explore the ways in which a sum such as £30,000 could be released for this purpose, and the consequences of such a donation, so that we may return to this in May.

We welcome the sense of urgency - the Whoosh! - which has come through the minute from Colchester Meeting. We find that we can unite behind the proposal to support Glebe House as an ongoing concern for this Area Meeting. We ask for more detail and for advice from Trustees to help us discern our next steps.

2015/23 Alternatives to Trident update

Reg Webb reported on the ways that the Alternatives to Trident group has been campaigning locally, reaching out to others in the community and finding ways to raise the profile of Trident as an election issue in the run-up to the general election.

Reg's report is attached to these minutes and will appear in the next newsletter.

2015/24 AM Website presentation

Further to minute 2015/05, Ann Webb, newly appointed Website Manager, presented the draft Area Meeting website to the meeting, with help from John Kay's projector and technical support.

Friends were impressed with the website and would like to thank Peter Sawyer at KallKwik for designing it and also John Hall, Ann Webb and Alison Parkes for their work in bringing it to fruition.

The draft website will be available for Friends to view for two weeks. Friends should apply to Ann for the link and passwords. Ann's contact details are in the Area Meeting List of Members and Attenders. We ask Friends to send their comments and questions to Ann and Alison within two weeks.

We agree to adopt the website, which will go live in two weeks' time.

Signed,

Alison Parkes

Alison Parkes
Clerk