

Southern East Anglia Quaker Meeting at Colchester, 27.11.2016

Representatives

Clacton-on-Sea – Hazel Jones, Karl Sage

Colchester –Mary Grocock, Peter Whiteley, Rosalind Kaye, Liz Hurley, Tim Holding and Carol Holding

Sudbury – Henry Ruse and Sheelagh Ruse

Earls Colne – Jenny Kay, John Kay

Present were 25 Friends, including 3 Attenders.

2016/53 Friends being met in the presence of God, *Quaker faith and practice* 28.02 was read.

2016/54 Death of a Friend

We record with sadness the death of Dennis Skeels on October 31, 2016, at the age of 90. Dennis attended Sudbury Meeting over many years. His funeral took place at Sudbury Meeting House on Saturday November 26; Peter Whiteley and Robin Hart served as elders. Dennis was interred with his wife in the Meeting House burial ground. We ask Sudbury Friends to prepare a testimony to the grace of God in Dennis's life for the AM Book of Memorials.

2016/55 Membership matters

2016/56 Appointments

Triennial Appointments

Area Meeting Clerk

The clerk withdrew. Alison Parkes comes to the end of her first triennium as Area Meeting Clerk on December 31. We thank Alison for her service to date and reappoint her to serve from January 2017 to end December 2019.

Jenny Kay

Assistant Clerk

Assistant Area Meeting Clerk

Ann Webb comes to the end of her triennium as Assistant Area Meeting Clerk at the end of February 2017. We thank her for her service and ask Nominations to bring forward a name to serve in this role.

Elder

Peter Whiteley comes to the end of his second triennium as Elder at the end of December and we thank him for his service. We appoint Julia Usher to serve as Elder from January 2017 to end December 2019.

Overseers

Jane Wolton has served as Overseer for one triennium; we reappoint Jane to serve from January 2017 to end December 2019.

Sylvia Jeffcock comes to the end of her second triennium as Overseer and we thank her for her service. We appoint Lucien de Leon as Overseer from January 2016 to end December 2019.

Registering Officer

Alison Parkes came to the end of her third triennium as Registering Officer in December 2015 so she has actually served for ten years. During this time she has been Registering Officer for two weddings, and we thank her for this service. We appoint Eliza Jones to serve as Registering Officer from January 2016 to end December 2019.

Trustees

Martin Rayner comes to the end of his third triennium as a Trustee at the end of December. We thank Martin for his service during these nine years. We ask Nominations Committee to bring forward the name of a Friend to take his place.

Clerk of Trustees

Trustees met recently and they bring forward the name of Peter Whiteley to serve as Clerk to Trustees. This name being acceptable to the meeting, we appoint Peter to serve in this capacity for the final year of his second triennium, from December 2016 to end December 2017.

Representatives

OPSW Conference "Journeys of Witness" takes place 24-26 March 2017. Booking must be made by January 27. Anyone interested in attending is asked to contact the Clerk. A bursary is available for anyone representing the AM; forms can be obtained from an elder or overseer or from the Colchester Quakers Yahoo group.

Forced Migration: how can Quakers Respond? This event takes place at Woodbrooke 3 – 5 February 2017. Robert Parkes and John Lewis are both willing and able to attend on our behalf. We authorise the Treasurer to pay the conference fees as well as accommodation and travel, as required.

2016/57 Clacton and Harwich Meetings

A minute has been received from Clacton Meeting, which is unable to appoint a Clerk to take the place of Hazel Jones, who completes her second triennium on this occasion at the end of December. Clacton's Premises Committee and Treasurer have undertaken to work together over the next six months to ensure necessary payments are made, the Meeting House is maintained to its current good standard, and that overheads are met to ensure Meetings for Worship can continue at both Clacton and Harwich. Clacton Friends have asked for AM's support during this transitional period and for guidance in relation to Qfp 4.35:

Qfp 4.35: For a local meeting to carry out its duties and other activities, certain appointments will need to be made (see [3.22](#)–[3.25](#) Nominations and appointments). The meeting must at least appoint a

clerk or convener and also a treasurer if it has any financial activities, or alternatively, Friends to share these responsibilities. The Recording Clerk should be informed of the names and addresses of the current holders of these offices in all local meetings.

In the absence of an appointed clerk, it is nevertheless possible for a Local Meeting to continue as such, with support from local Friends and from the Area Meeting. Our AM Clerk has sought clarification from the Recording Clerk, Paul Parker, who has confirmed that this is the case. It may be appropriate, for instance, for a Friend of the LM or AM to convene a business meeting at least once a year, as currently happens at Sudbury and Earls Colne Meetings. One task of Trustees is to work with LM Friends in each of our LM s to devise a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which will set out how the responsibilities of the LM will be met. Friends are encouraged to visit one another's meetings to get to know another better as well as the responsibilities before us.

Paul Parker also clarified an important distinction: when Meetings for Worship are open to the public, then this is a Local Quaker Meeting, with accountability to the AM and hence to BYM. When a Meeting for Worship is held as a closed group, perhaps in someone's home and without publicly advertising its existence, then this would be regarded as a worshipping group. It is clear that all of the Meetings in our AM meet this criterion for being a Local Meeting. We ask Trustees to work with the Friends of Clacton and Harwich, as well as our other LM s, to develop an MoU for each LM.

Each of us, as individuals and as Meetings, is challenged by the question, "What is your ministry?" By seeking an answer to this question, we can discover the extent to which we are meeting our responsibilities as Quakers and as Meetings, and the extent to which we need one another (including support from AM) in order to do so.

2016/58 Trustees Report on current matters

Peter Whiteley reported that in his appointment as Clerk to Trustees he will be assisted by Jenny Kay, who will attend the upcoming Conference of Trustees and Treasurers on our behalf.

The AM Safeguarding Policy has been updated and, once approved by Trustees, will be uploaded to the AM website.

Trustees are satisfied and inspired by the Circles of Support and Accountability Project at Glebe House, and have forwarded the second of three donations of £30,000 (as agreed by AM) to Glebe House.

Tom Tebbutt, Treasurer, reminded Friends that we still have a substantial amount of money available to be put to use at the discernment of the AM.

2016/59 Reports

Meeting for Sufferings

Robert Parkes reported on MfS held in London on 1st October. We heard how the document "Our Faith in the Future" is guiding the "Vibrancy in Meetings" programme and the work of QPSW. East Anglia is not yet included in the Vibrancy in Meetings programme, so we must discover our own vibrancy. Fresh ideas may come from Friends in

the USA, following a recent visit by the Recording Clerk, Paul Parker, and YM Clerk, Deborah Rowlands.

We thank Robert for his comprehensive report, which will be posted on the AM website and appear in the newsletter.

Area Meeting Gathering

Further to Minutes 2015/67 and 2016/41, Jenny Kay, Phyl Reid and Peter Whiteley organised AM Gathering held at High Leigh Conference Centre over the weekend of November 18-20. They reported that 30 Friends attended and through discussion groups and a range of activities explored the theme "Leading". Feedback was generally very positive. The facilities were excellent and suited to our needs. Sandra Berry's talk was very well received and inspired follow-up discussion. The number of Friends attending, although fewer than originally expected, contributed to optimum interaction.

Friends were enthusiastic about making a future booking, hopefully in 2018. Some Friends would like this to include families and cater for the needs of children and young people. However, we recognise that we currently have few families and that meeting the needs of children and young people adds another dimension to planning and delivering which we - and the venue - may not be able to provide. There may be other events which can better serve such a purpose. In order to secure High Leigh at a time to suit us, we accept that a Gathering for adults, along the lines of the one we have just had, is appropriate and desirable. We ask Jenny, Phyl and Peter to go ahead with booking a weekend for another Gathering at High Leigh, hopefully in 2018. We authorise AM Treasurer to underwrite such a booking. However, another organising group will need to take the event forward.

We warmly thank Jenny, Phyl and Peter for all their work towards a most enjoyable event.

Quaker Life Representatives Council

Eliza Jones attended QLRC on our behalf, for which we thank her. Eliza's report will appear in the newsletter.

2016/60 Request for Refugee micro-credit start-up

We heard from our Friend John Lewis about a micro-credit scheme which is being initiated by Refugee Action Colchester. The scheme aims to help refugees who possess business or entrepreneurial skills by providing modest start-up funds, within the terms of the micro-credit scheme. Most of the refugees likely to make use of the scheme have arrived in Colchester with little or no access to funds which would enable them to start a business. By supporting this scheme, any donation we make as an Area Meeting could enable refugee families to have a fresh start in their new lives here.

John suggested that an amount such as £5000 would make a substantial contribution to the success of the scheme, by helping to provide a secure capital base and thus kick-start the scheme. If a micro-credit scheme is working properly, the capital base will survive indefinitely; there should be no need to inject further capital.

We support in principle a donation of £5000 for the Refugee Action Colchester micro-credit scheme, subject to further discussions with Refugee Action Colchester about how the scheme would be administered. We ask John to report back to AM in January in the hope that we can take this forward.

We see this as an opportunity to work collaboratively with others along the guidelines expressed in the document "Our Faith in the Future".

2016/61 Vision for a criminal justice system

Further to Minute 2016/31, we have been asked by MfS to help test the vision expressed in the QPSW Central Committee paper "Vision for a Criminal Justice System". Reg Webb prepared a report, read to us by Jenny Kay, on this paper, which builds on and develops previous work. We thank Reg for his summary report, which is attached to these minutes.

The vision document articulates the principles by which we might examine our criminal justice system and our attitudes to crime, to offenders and to the victims of crime. The paper gives a series of statements which set out a Quaker vision, stating what we are **for**, such as "We are for holding offenders accountable for their actions and for balancing wrongdoing by reparation".

In setting out these statements, the paper envisages a society in which, for instance, prison sentences are applied only when there is no reasonable alternative, a society in which justice is non-retributive and, wherever possible, restorative to both the offender and victim. This would be a criminal justice system in which the benefits of forgiveness would be made available to all concerned. As Reg says in his report, Quakers might think of a just society as a primary objective, not a concept to be tinkered with when we think we can afford it.

Mary Grocock read from Guardian Weekly articles about the often dreadful consequences of our current overcrowded and inadequate prison system. We considered how our justice system has in many respects lost its way: instead of preventing reoffending, its focus has been on punishment. Friends spoke of the benefits of therapeutic prison communities. Our Quaker vision is to give offenders - and our society - a sense of future and of hope.

We recognise the difficulty of effecting change in the prison system. There is a huge sense of inertia and the challenge is to effect any change at all. Rather than focusing on the specific horrors, wastefulness and inappropriateness of the current system, we need to work out how change can be brought about.

Having a vision is all very well but facing up to reality and having an approach to effecting change - and the will for change - is what is needed. While we support the QPSW vision statement, we ask that the statement include some indication about that change should be initiated.

Signed,
Alison Parkes

Alison Parkes
Clerk