

Meeting for Sufferings 7.4.18

Carol Holding

During the opening Meeting for Worship an Essex Friend Angela Pivac was remembered. She was also a trustee of the Greenwood trust. QFP 20 68 was read and this talks of great understandable anger but no understanding “If we are angry we know how wars develop. It does not matter who is wrong, What matters is that we care enough to talk to each other”

This had great resonance for me.

THE SUFFERINGS APPEAL REVIEW GROUP report given by its convenor Beryl Milner seemed much in this spirit. One of the recommendations was that conflict resolution could be called Conflict navigation and naturally mediation must be based on agreement by both parties. It is important to beware the void of inaction and to take professional advice early BUT not outside Quakers. It emphasised that mediators do not resolve conflict –only enable parties to resolve conflict and acknowledged the devastating and lasting effect of some conflicts.

A Moving report from the SUSTAINABILITY GROUP reminded us of the Canterbury Commitment of 2011 and of its national and personal responsibility and it spoke of the commitment of many and the frustration of some, and also the desirability of reporting back annually. It is no longer a group outside the main committee structure. Sustainable living can be a joyful way of life which needs a spiritual basis and more money. We are not alone in either the struggling or in thinking we have an answer. In 1948 Roger Wilson in his Swarthmore Lecture on peace building recognised it takes time.

It is however central to what we do. It is a tricky even dangerous step but it is everyone’s concern, and an adventurous outlook is needed, and if existing structures are impeding progress, change them. The problem of the five times repeated failure of the group is not technical but fundamental. The minute said we have been moved to reaffirm our commitment and the spiritual basis as well as its centrality to all we do.

Somehow this must also ring in our heads when we consider the minute from Southern Marches Area Meeting of Jan 25th 2018 which asked “ In this Post Truth world” what can we do in the face increased contracting out of services who see secrecy as essential. Intense scrutiny as well as lack of it can lead to lack of honesty and we should begin with ourselves.

To me it felt like a let down to say “We return to this in November”

Finally the report by the convenor of BYM trustees, by Ingrid Greenhow was lively and thought provoking. When I first went to Sufferings six years ago, Jonathan Fox presented briskly and accurately, then Jennifer Barraclough put in the passion, and now Ingrid led us through the possible cliché/death wish of the grey haired middle class society that we are and said we need to change our ways of working to suit younger and working Friends. They should be part of Meeting for Sufferings and we should stop recycling ourselves, embrace diversity and not tokenism- Diversity of race and class. Our culture at present excludes young members. We have an average age of 64 and 70% have degrees and we should include younger members with nurturing a