The Landing of William Penn, print of an oil painting by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

NEWSLETTER

SOUTHERN EAST ANGLIA AREA QUAKER MEETING

April 2021

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Meetings for Worship

CLACTON

Harwich

COLCHESTER

EARLS COLNE

SUDBURY

FIRST CONTACT
FOR FUNERAL
ARRANGEMENTS
Charles Bather. Alison Parkes

Editorial

Hello Friends

The daffodils are here and yesterday my family accompanied me on a blustery day out in Clacton. As we had not been that far for weeks and weeks, it was an incredibly happy outing. The dog chased a ball on wide empty stretches of beach, the children ate ice creams in the cold - and I popped into the hospital to have a life-saving vaccination. How wonderful. I feel so grateful to the brilliant scientists who got us to this place and the lovely volunteers who are helping it to happen. I keep thinking about Boris Johnson's claim that the free market is responsible for our successful vaccine roll-out. What strikes me is that we have been saved by the selfless toil of medical staff, volunteers, and others. And my arm is aching thanks to Astra Zeneca teaming up with Oxford University to provide cheap vaccines to the world by *foregoing* £millions, maybe £billions in profit. But still, I am so thankful. It feels like the beginning of the end… or is it the end of the beginning?

I have also been pondering Melanie's thought-provoking piece in last month's newsletter. It reminded me that whatever the supposed wrong, the 'perpetrator' is also a victim. Years ago, when training to be a barrister, I remember meeting a criminal lawyer, or rather a barrister specialising in crime, who clearly loved his niche. When I asked him why, he surprised me with the answer: "The punters." I eventually came to understand what he might have meant. Representing some of the people whose younger lives had seen a series of missteps, bad luck, cruelty, or deprivation - by treating them with a courtesy and respect that they were not used to - often felt like such a privilege.

Meeting for Sufferings

6th February 2021

Robert Parkes

"Silver linings"

Early in day we heard about the work behind the scenes that underpin Sufferings, not only the care and discernment that goes into preparing the agenda and background papers but also the technical and administrative stuff that makes the meetings happen. It is easily overlooked how much we rely on Friends House staff many of whom are not Quakers.

Paul Parker brought to life the Tabular Statement (TS) for 2019. At first glance we see a steady fall in overall adult membership and attendance, in keeping with most other mainstream churches in the UK (we lack the data to know what is happening to the numbers of children in meetings). This would be worrying if not for some interesting trends. Drill down and we see that whilst most larger meetings are shrinking, many smaller, newer, meetings are growing. These tend to be public meetings, not worshiping groups. With a net gain of just one new member per year per meeting the overall decline would be reversed.

We spent some time considering why this is happening, and the implications. Most central roles within the Society are drawn from those larger declining meetings, which means, as a Friend put it succinctly, the gene pool is drying up. We heard yet again about the burdens of property and other responsibilities taking us away from what needs to be done to enable a strong spiritual community. A "staggering" number of Friends were having to fill roles and struggling to look after properties that are simply no longer in the right place. The contracting-out of management of meeting houses seems to be gathering momentum. Would it be better to help some meetings to close rather than carrying on in a limbo state - that was not rewarding for those attending, and quality of worship mattered more than quality - and others to flourish? Our minute concluded the importance for AMs to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses in their constituent LMs and to offer support accordingly.

What will the Society look like post lockdown? We have survived the year, largely because Friends have adapted so well to online worship. It might be like Marmite but, ironically, it has opened a window on the bigger picture of Quakers worldwide. We are unlikely to be quite the same again. Are blended meetings the way ahead? If so, meetings will need to invest in the technology to

make them as seamless as possible. A Friend reminded us that once-upon-a-time Quakers could be relied upon to be at the forefront of technological change.

Much of BYM Trustees focus in the year ahead will be the simpler church supported by a simpler charity and the best way to engage and involve Friends in BYM's work. We can contribute to the conversation via clerkoftrustees@quaker.org.uk.

A decision made back in 1992 prohibiting attenders serving on Central Committees is to be reviewed. For example, it effectively rules out many active young adult Friends who are willing and able to serve but are not in membership. This will need careful discernment. It will go back to the fundamental issue of the meaning of membership. Some Friends see a change as a way of drawing upon the richness and gifts of everybody that is part of a Meeting. Others see it leading to the "piecemeal erosion of the integrity of the Society".

The new strategy for QPSW will shortly be available on the Q website.

Woodbrooke is facing financial difficulties. AMs are urged to encourage Friends to attend courses and to support Woodbrooke through making donations.

As usual, a full report of the meeting and papers can be found on the dedicated MfS pages on the Quaker.org website. MfS also gets widely reported in The Friend

William Penn

John Hall

In a letter from Philadelphia of 16th August 1683, William Penn wrote to investors in London, describing Pennsylvania. In it, he described the Native Americans whom he called Indians, and thought were descended from one of the lost tribes of Israel. Part of that description was of how the Native Americans dealt with property:

"…in liberality they excel, nothing is too good for their friend; give them a fine gun, coat or other thing, it may pass twenty hands before it sticks; light of heart, strong affections, but soon spent; the most merry creatures that live, feast, and dance perpetually; they never have much, nor want much. Wealth circulates like the blood, all parts partake; and though none shall want what another hath, yet exact observers of property. Some kings have sold, others presented me with several parcels of land; the pay or presents I made them were not hoarded by the particular owners, but the neighbouring kings and their clans being present when the goods were brought out, the parties chiefly concerned consulted what and by whom they should give them. To every king then is a proportion sent. Then that king sub-divideth it in like manner among his dependants, they hardly leaving themselves an equal share with one of their subjects. And be it on such occasions as festivals, or at their common meals, the kings distribute, and to themselves last. They care for little, because they want but little, and the reason is, a little contents them."

First Contacts for funeral arrangements

At the most recent Area Meeting, Nominations brought forward the names of Melanie Read and Rod Usher to join Charles Bather who has had responsibility for arranging Quaker Funerals for the past 8 years.

This trio of Friends will be available to support Friends, Attenders and their families in the event of them wishing to arrange a funeral 'After the Manner of Friends'.

It is good practice for Friends to indicate their wishes regarding an eventual funeral; this can be done on a pro-forma 'Quaker Funeral Wishes'. Copies will be sent to the Clerks of all Local Meetings. Completed, these forms can be returned to one of the Friends mentioned above.

Melanie, Charles and Rod (First Contact) are able to offer advice regarding Cremations, Quaker Burials, Green Funerals and the scattering of ashes. There are Quaker Burial Grounds in Colcheter (Roman Road), at Sudbury Meeting House and Earls Colne Meeting House.

Charles, Melanie and Rod are willing to discuss any of the above with Friends and Attenders.

Transgender Issues

Maddie Powell

I have been reading the recent articles in this newsletter around transgender issues and felt moved to write in reply.

If you do not personally know someone who is transgender then conversations around gender can seem strange and confusing. It may even be that if you look carefully within yourself you might find that you are uncomfortable or afraid of the idea of transgender people. There is a natural human tendency to be afraid of the unfamiliar and the 'other', we like to stick with people who are like us. The best way to banish the fear is to actively change the unknown to the known. If you haven't done so already, I would urge Friends to seek out the voices of trans people and listen to their stories. Some great people to start with could be CN Lester, Munroe Bergdorf, Ben Vincent and Laverne Cox.

Perhaps you feel that you have no prejudices within you that need challenging but can't really understand what all the fuss is about with debates about gender. Please look carefully at arguments that may on the surface look to be about something seemingly straightforward such as boys not being allowed to share sleeping areas with girls, but on closer inspection have deeper issues running through them. Very often those issues are about transphobia, the fear that someone different from yourself might be a threat. When I first came across arguments about gender and toilet facilities or identities in passports, I didn't understand why there were such strong feelings about them. But I am lucky enough to know a trans person who was able to shed more light on these issues and give me insight into the fear for their physical safety and human rights that trans people have to cope with.

We are called to listen to the promptings of love and truth. Working from a place of love rather than fear means looking for ways to protect all vulnerable people, not one particular group at the expense of another. Women and girls face misogyny; trans women face the double blow of misogyny and transphobia. Conversations for example about who gets to use toilets and sleeping spaces should be about keeping everyone safe, not ignoring the violence that trans women face regularly.

Lifting everyone up is often a far greater and more complex task because it has to take into account all the different causes, of for example, violence against women. It is an easier and all too human habit to focus on a vulnerable and already discriminated against group and turn them into a threat, something to be scared of, rather than recognising them as complex human beings, as is everyone.

Simplicity Sandwich Cake

A Recipe

Una Lawrence

Ingredients:

Eggs

Margarine

Caster sugar

Self raising flour

Method

1. Weigh 2, 3 or more eggs, in their shells, according to whether you want to bake a Small, Medium or Large cake.

2. Weigh out exactly the same weight as the eggs for each of the following. Margarine, caster sugar and self raising flour.

3. Beat the margarine and castor sugar together until the colour changes from yellow to a soft creamy white. This will take about three to four minutes using an electric mixer or an electric hand held beater.

4. Add eggs and flour gradually and beat well.

5. Put the mixture into a deep cake tin. (Do not use sandwich tins). It takes a little longer to cook but makes a lovely deep sponge.

6. Leave to cool and when cold slice in half and sandwich together with jam, and cream too for an extra treat!

8. Dredge with icing sugar.

A slice makes a lovely dessert - just add custard.

Example:

Three medium eggs weighed in shells, say 160g

Margarine,

Caster sugar

Self raising flour.

160g each

Transfer into a 6" deep cake tin lined with greaseproof paper.

Pop into a hot oven, 180° c for approximately 25 to 40 minutes until baked. (Test by inserting a knife. If comes out clean the baking is complete).

Meeting on Funeral Arrangements

Area Meeting, held on Zoom. Monday 8th March, 2021

Rod Usher

In attendance: Charles Bather, Chair, Melanie Read, Rod Usher (who wrote these notes).

Papers in advance: Chapter 17 of Quaker Faith and Practice and SE Anglia Quaker Meeting: Guidance for the use of Area Meeting Burial Grounds (2017).

Notes:

1. Following a recent Area Meeting the following Friends were nominated to serve as First Contacts for advice on the Funerals of Friends:

Charles Bather, who has held this responsibility for many years.

Melanie Read, Colchester Meeting Caretaker and Acting Manager

Rod Usher, of Colchester Meeting.

2. These three Friends will share the responsibility for offering advice and guidance to Friends and Attenders whose families wish to hold a Funeral after the manner of Friends - either cremation, burial or Green Burial.

3. A form "Quaker Funeral Wishes" (2018) exists and will be held by all Meeting Clerks and the 3 Friends named above.

a. Friends and Attenders can complete one of these forms, at any time, to put on record their personal wishes, together with helpful information regarding addresses of their Executors, Solicitors, etc. Completed forms should be returned to one of the First Contact Friends listed above.

b. In the event of a death when no form has been completed the Friend offering advice to a family may find a copy of this form useful as an aide memoire.

c. Completed forms will be filed in the Blue File in the secure cabinet in the Strong Room at Colchester Meeting House. Charles Bather will co-ordinate this.

4. At the first contact regarding a possible Quaker funeral, a decision will be taken regarding the family's wishes:

Will the funeral be:

at a Crematorium

in a Quaker Burial Ground

In a Green Burial Ground.

5. Discussions should be held with the Funeral Director to explain the wish is for a Quaker Funeral.

6. The conduct of a Quaker Funeral:

The Friend leading the funeral, or other Elder or Friend, will explain the nature of a Quaker Funeral.

The Friend will probably speak about the deceased person.

Friends and Attenders at the funeral will speak if they wish, or give short readings, or make or play music.

It is assumed that an Elder will be present at the Funeral.

7. At the end of the Meeting the two Quakers, will shake hands to announce the end of the Meeting, and one of them will approach the chief mourners to conduct them out of the building.

8. Other details discussed: -

the intention is to offer explanatory leaflets as people arrive for the funeral -

burials and the formal scattering of ashes involves the completion of a form; this must be

kept by the Area Meeting -

details regarding burials, plots of land and double graves, by request, will be discussed with the Family

9. In the event of a Meeting House Funeral, regard should be given to: – ensure parking spaces are reserved for family members and those with particular needs -

-seating close to the front of any funeral should be reserved for family members and those travelling from a distance.

10. Rod is to write a short piece in the Newsletter explaining the team of First Contact Friends who are available to support the organisation of Quaker funerals within the Area Meeting.

11. These notes are to be sent to the Area Meeting Clerk and the Clerks of each SE Anglia Quaker Meetings.

Wikipedia

A Historical Reminder

The first Quakers lived in mid-17th-century England. The movement arose from the Legatine-Arians and other dissenting Protestant groups, breaking away from the established Church of England.

The Quakers, especially the ones known as the Valiant Sixty, attempted to convert others to their understanding of Christianity, travelling both throughout Great Britain and overseas, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Some of these early Quaker ministers were women.

They based their message on the religious belief that "Christ has come to teach his people himself", stressing the importance of a direct relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and a direct religious belief in the universal priesthood of all believers.

They emphasized a personal and direct religious experience of

Christ, acquired through both direct religious experience and the reading and studying of the Bible. Quakers focused their private lives on developing behaviour and speech reflecting emotional purity and the light of God.

In the past, Quakers were known for their use of thee as an ordinary pronoun, refusal to participate in war, plain dress, refusal to swear oaths, opposition to slavery, and teetotalism. Some Quakers founded banks and financial institutions, including Barclays, Lloyds, and Friends Provident; manufacturing companies, including shoe retailer C. & J. Clark and the big three British confectionery makers Cadbury, Rowntree and Fry; and philanthropic efforts, including abolition of slavery, prison reform, and social justice projects. In 1947, the Quakers, represented by the British Friends Service Council and the American Friends Service Committee, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

A Journey

John Lewis

A station platform under a hard, cold grey winter sky. Nobody to meet him. But with the self-confidence of westerners he stumbles off through the rutted ice and snow to the only point of contact – an office in an unknown town.

It was getting dark when he found the address. No signs, so he banged on the door hopefully and waited. A girl opens up but does not invite him in. She calls the manager who introduces himself without a smile.

The task was to help form a credit agency amongst the chaos and bitterness of the collapse of communism; specifically, to work out why this group had failed to start handing out their western aid money. On that first visit there was visible resentment of the foreigner from the west who had come to sort them out.

It was a bad week with little to show so he returned home. The remains of the old regime prevented progress and officials were frightened of authorizing anything. Communist and byzantine bureaucracy was impenetrable. Every factory was closed. Nobody had any money. The shops were empty. The staff were frightened and the manager wary.

Two visits later he had negotiated a tense visit to the local authorities, allowing us to operate. The first hurdle. A nameplate was put up over the office. Visible progress but no real movement."See you next month " came in more friendly tones.

A month later we had an unsmiling interview with the manager of the state bank. We could now receive money from Brussels (the little group was EU funded). The atmosphere in the office was changing. This was progress, perhaps the first real movement. The staff felt like professionals, proud of their enterprise. We were on our way.

A couple of months later we had our first customers. They were to borrow money for small enterprises: a dozen hens or setting up a corner shop. These people had never been able to borrow money under communism so there were long, long discussions to make sure they understood. Most borrowers were women, focussed on their children, on food and clothes but in a male society this brought other challenges. We were all learning as we advanced together.

Now the foreigner's advice was unimportant. The important girl was the one who assessed the honesty of a borrower or the value of a pig. Business classes were starting. The manager was invited to give talks. The group advanced under it's own momentum.

The next month there was a staff meeting to consider progress. This was the eighth monthly visit. It was full summer. He said cheerful goodbyes to the office staff and a hug to the manager, who spoke the lovely words " We can manage now. Thank you. I will let you know if we need you".

Quite a struggle but we got there. On the train home he fell asleep with a smile.

The Future of our Area Meeting -Trusteeship

Jenny Kay

This paper follows the last minute of the February AM and is written in preparation for the next AM on 18 April when we will report on the continuing dialogue with our neighbouring Area Meetings and start to explore what changes we might consider making to ensure that the necessary business is managed as simply as possible enabling us to deepen spirituality and fellowship, extend outreach and develop the use of our Meetings Houses

The discernment will be made in Area Meeting with the guidance and advice of trustees. As trustees we have minuted that AM takes the lead. We ask that as many Friends and attenders as possible take part. The attendance in February was 25 and we need to maintain this. One of the concerns in the Trustees Risk Assessment is that we do not always have enough Friends taking part in the discernment process.

At present we do not have enough Friends to take on the administrative roles but we are finding ways to manage. AM nominations now depends solely on the work of the Colchester Nominations Committee. We have already taken many steps suggested on the Simpler Meetings BYM website.

The AM could be facing a more serious issue should we be unable to appoint further trustees; we need 5. The last three appointments made were Friends who had already served six years in the past. If no-one is able to come forward before the end of the year when three of us will have completed two terms we will be in breach of our governing document. At present I am not sure exactly what the implication of this will be with the Charity Commission.

Resulting from my regional links through Zoom meetings there is the possibility of setting up with neighbouring AMs through Woodbrooke, a session on Trusteeship designed for new and trustee-hopefuls. Whatever changes we decide to make it is likely that we still need trustees at least for the foreseeable future. Please feel that you can express an interest in trustee service without waiting to be asked. Please tell a trustee, elder, overseer, clerk or nominations member.

There is now an urgent need for AM Trustees throughout BYM to share experiences. This has been made possible through the use of digital media. We can learn from the changes in organisation that are taking place in other parts of the country. I sense a growing feeling that we need to form larger groups for administration purposes while at the same time, as I read in the Meeting for Sufferings Report that smaller meetings are thriving.

A Poem..

Friendship by Elizabeth Jennings

Such love I cannot analyse
It does not rest in lips or eyes
Neither in kisses nor caress
Partly, I know, it's gentleness

And understanding in one word
Or in brief letters. It's preserved
By trust and by respect and awe.
These are the words I'm feeling for.

Two people, yes, two lasting friends.
The giving comes, the taking ends.
There is no measure for such things.
For this all Nature slows and sings.

From: David Lawrence

Quaker Quote

Una Lawrence

QF&P 2.84

If we met more often for worship in each other's homes, it would remind us that God is with us in every place, at the kitchen sink and at the table; we should get to know one another more intimately, and could break bread together; the home atmosphere might make it easier to invite our acquaintances to join us; and any increase in numbers would lead to multiplication by cell-division; and an expanding coverage of the community.

David W Robson, 1971

ZOOM Meetings

John Hall

Here are the details for this week's meetings together with advance details for Area Meeting.

Topic: Café Quaker

Time: Apr 3, 2021 11:00 AM London

Host: Susan Rhodes

Join Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84619905950?pwd=bE4zaDZmQUNKWWpMREFWNlpCNkJHQT09
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84619905950?pwd=bE4zaDZmQUNKWWpMREFWNlpCNkJHQT09>

Meeting ID: 846 1990 5950

Passcode: 941883

Topic: Meeting for Worship

Time: Apr 4, 2021 10:30 AM London

Host: John Hall

Join Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82373182149?pwd=UjY4NlEzeGpoRkRFZDk1VWpUSWpiZz09
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82373182149?pwd=UjY4NlEzeGpoRkRFZDk1VWpUSWpiZz09>

Meeting ID: 823 7318 2149

Passcode: 615001

Topic: Area Meeting

Time: Apr 18, 2021 02:00 PM London

Host: John Hall

Clerk: Anne Watkinson

If you are interested in attending contact by email:

info@colchesterquakers.org.uk

A Greek New Testament

Peter Whiteley

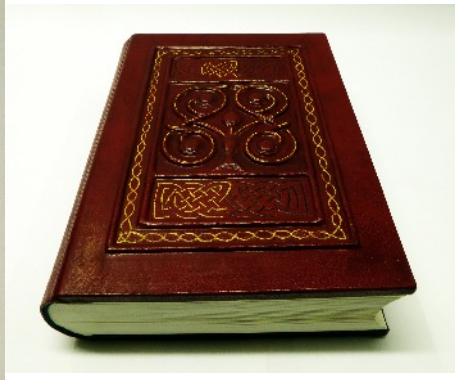
Before Christmas I was approached by one of my u3a bookbinders, asking if I was willing to bind the pages of a Greek and English New Testament for the Greek Orthodox community in Ipswich. I thought it would be an interesting project, but was horrified to find when it arrived that they were all loose pages as if for a paper-back type binding. That binding method wasn't going to lay open nicely or be very durable so I decided to pair up the pages and paste them together in 16 page sections so it could be sewn. 267 sheets;

8mm of the LH page spine margin folded over and the edge sanded to a 'knife edge'; 8mm of the RH sheet cut off; pasted together in pairs to make 134 folds. That took over a week, and the printers in Boston should have been impressed by my resentment of their stupidity.

The Church wanted it bound in the style of the St Cuthbert Gospel (the oldest book in it's original binding in the British Library), so the pages were sewn onto linen tapes and they were anchored into quarter-sawn oak cover boards. The vine motif was fretted out of lime and glued on before final carving to shape. The straight ridges were made of hemp chord glued to the board as in the original. I tracked down a crimson goat skin big enough to cover the book, and spent an afternoon persuading it to paste down and fit tightly around the raised pattern.

The original tooling was coloured with indigo and orpiment (a toxic gold coloured mineral)

I laboriously brushed in modern acrylic paint, and finished in time to deliver it for St Cuthbert"s Day on 20th March. Happily they are delighted with it.



More Lockdown stuff *Formal painting* *John Kay*

Membership

Peter Whiteley

From time to time Quakers have an organisational upheaval. I was on Meeting for Sufferings in the 1990s when "Recast" was adopted which we were told would be the ideal national organisational arrangements, almost for eternity apparently. I wasn't very impressed, and sure enough very soon modifications had to be made. Humans and our activities are dynamic and can be messy, and we need to adapt our organisation to support our needs and witness.

I have fond memories of Friends sometimes meeting in each others houses for lunch after MfW; of well supported Social Sundays (often including non-member family members) perhaps on the beach, or for a walk and a tea in a friends garden; of winter study groups; and of the stimulating speakers and sociability at General Meetings (GM) around the area.

I also remember happy family camps with Friends from Bury St Edmunds at Hengrave Hall.

"Recast" thought that General Meetings didn't fit their blueprint and were disbanded though ours was one of the last to go.

Falling membership now makes the GM idea look like an attractive proposition once more, especially for Charity Trusteeship of our assets, and for engaging stimulating speakers. I remember attending GMs in Billericay, Saffron Walden, Leiston, Diss, and Ipswich to give an idea of the area covered, and of travelling with a car full of enriching conversation. I very much hope this may be resurrected.

I greatly regret the dwindling of this social activity that did so much to enrich our religious life. Even visiting other meetings for worship in our AM has dwindled, as has coming together for Area Meetings. We need to rekindle the Society aspect of our Religious Society of Friends and expanding the geographical area of our togetherness may be a fruitful way to go!

Quaker Funeral Wishes Form

You could consult your partner or spouse, your close relative or friends, or other appropriate people, who will be responsible for making decisions about your funeral. You should share copies of this form with them; and one of the First Contacts for Funeral arrangements of Colchester Meeting:
Charles Bather, Melanie Read, Rod Usher.

Personal details:

Your name: Your Quaker Meeting: ……
……...

Your Address: Your Landline: ……...
…….…… Mobile: ……..
…….. …… Your email address:…….

Next of kin or whoever would be responsible for decisions after your death.

Name: ……
Address: ……. Phone Number: ……..
……
……. Email: ……
Name of executor……
Who is your Solicitor? ……
Address:…….
Phone No: ……
Email……
Where is your Will kept? If not kept by anyone listed above, please provide contact details here:
Name & Address: …… …….
Phone No: …….. E mail:…….
Are you a registered organ donor? Yes No
If you would like to register as an organ donor,
visit: www.organdonation.nhs.uk/register-to-donate.

How would you like your body to be disposed of? Tick to answer:
Cremation Burial Green Burial Medical Research

If you tick Medical research, please tick a second choice as well
Other: Please give details:
……
Would you like a Quaker burial of disposal of Ashes? Yes No
Where would you want a Meeting for worship to be held? (tick choice)
Quaker Meeting House…… Yes No Don't mind
Crematorium or cemetery Chapel……
Elsewhere: Please give details:
……
Should a notice of death be published? Yes No Don't mind
In the Friend ……..
Elsewhere (please give details) ……
……
Do you wish for flowers? YES NO

Do you wish for gifts to charity? (Please give details) YES NO
Would you like a Memorial Meeting to be held later? ……..
If so, where?……..
YOUR SIGNATURE …… DATE ……..

If you would like to discuss any of the above details, any of the First Contacts listed above would be pleased to help.

Revised: March 14th 2021