

WEST SOMERSET AREA QUAKER MEETING NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2021

What did you do in Lockdown, Granny?

I stayed at home and tidied the shelves
and found some things I thought
I'd lost for ever.

What did you do in Lockdown, Granny?

I went for long walks up the Combe
and found new paths I
didn't know existed.

What did you do in Lockdown, Granny?

I chose a poem and sent it round
to many friends and family to
cheer us up and keep us going
Old poems new poems
sad poems love poems
funny poems crazy poems
"Yes" they said, "send us more
for
a poem can unlock a door."

Jenny Gateau

MINUTES of WSAQM Area Meeting July 17th 2021 by Zoom

Clerks: Anna Mullett, Martin Wall

35/21. Quaker Faith and Practice 26.70 was read in our worship today.

36/21 Local Meeting Representatives:

Bridgwater	Phil Parratt
Burnham on Sea	Sue Hammond Lovatt
Iminster	Hugh Morgan
Minehead	Faith Cartwright (prevented)
Spiceland	Sarah Bovey
Taunton	John Ainsworth, Lynda Stewart
Wellington	Avril Silk
Elder for the Meeting	John Bell

37/21 Membership

We record the death of our Friend Michael Sully on July 3rd, 2021. We await further information regarding any funeral arrangements as soon as they are known.

38/21 Nominations

There were no nomination matters to record

39/21 Life of Meetings

(a) Life of Spiceland Meeting

We have received a report on the Life of Spiceland Meeting. At the start of the year the meeting embarked on a spiritual review centred around the concept of a three-legged stool representing worship community and witness they now have a stool in the meeting house as a token of their discernment.

From an operational perspective they have engaged with the technology of blended MfW welcoming friends from near and far. This is supplemented by Circles of Support in which groups of Friends meet on a regular basis and an additional Zoom MfW mid-week every month.

The Heritage Open Day was well supported explaining to visitors the developments in the New Burial Ground.

The Central Group have met on a weekly basis to facilitate the ever-changing pandemic parameters. In the light of these challenges Spiceland friends feel they have been creative in seeking new opportunities whilst also protecting their precious heritage.

The full report will be published in the Newsletter.

(b) Life of Wellington Meeting

We have received a report on the Life of Wellington Meeting.

While it has been a quiet year for Wellington Meeting House members, Green Days have been meeting their clients five days a week every week. For members of Meeting Covid has stopped meetings in person for a good part of the year. However, some Members have joined in the Spiceland Zoom Meetings on Sundays. From early May Meetings have restarted in Wellington Meeting House but with very limited numbers, thought these are beginning to rise as we all seek to return to the normality of the quietness of worshipping together.

40/21 An Area Meeting online Zoom Meeting for Worship.

Friends felt that there should be a blended meeting on 5th September with all Friends invited to join in from their own meetings in person or on zoom. We hope there will be opportunities to socialise before and after the meeting. The co-clerks have agreed to host this first meeting.

41/21 Reports

(a) Sufferings

We have heard that the main focus of Sufferings has been the reorganising of Quaker Life and Quaker Peace and Social Witness through the vision of 'Our Faith in the Future'. Sufferings has received concerns from AM's that some of the work of QL and QPSW was changing or being laid down. However, Friends were reassured by the positive work of QL in particular a desire to work more closely with LM's through the roll-out of Local Development Officers to support local meetings.

The reorganisation of QPSW is ongoing and complicated. New approaches and changes are being adopted. Change has brought about strong feelings amongst Friends and those who are involved in QPSW need our support and prayers as they continue their work.

(b) Quaker Life

We have heard a report from Lynda Stewart on The Quaker Life Rep Council meeting in April on Zoom discussing Race and Gender. On Race Friends were challenged to consider and empathise with ethical and practical considerations concerning refugees and slavery. This was followed by a presentation on Gender with courageous sharing and the understanding that we have to be true to our own natures. Lynda reflected that a way forward could be to make contact with Quakers in the Caribbean over issues of enslavement and reparations, she also experientially felt that the Zoom experience helped focus on the matters in hand.

The full report will be published in the Newsletter.

(c) Earth Action Group - Quaker pilgrimage/relay to COP26.

Friends are invited to join in a Quaker relay pilgrimage in the direction of Glasgow visiting Quaker meeting houses or places of worship along the way.

Our Area Meeting has been asked if they wish to participate as a way of showing our commitment to addressing the climate change emergency. John Ainsworth will set up a zoom meeting for any Friends who may be interested. Today's representatives are asked to take back this invitation to their meetings.

(d) Citizens Somerset and Quakers

Since the last report to AM in April an Accountability Assembly has been held in which the candidates for the role of Police and Crime Commissioner attended all of whom agreed to work with us on the Street Safety Campaign.

Current Campaigns

- The Homelessness campaign to bring modular accommodation on meanwhile sites offered by the council and with their very positive support. This continues well with current issues of central government funding.
- The Street Safety Group have organised an effective Neighbourhood Walk with the new Police and Crime Commissioner.
- Living Wage for Care Workers and Living Wage for Council Workers in progress.
- Mental Health and Cycling Campaign in development.

As more local schools and organisations join Citizens Somerset it is hoped that Friends will see the value of Community Organising in progressing Our Faith in The Future.

The full report will be published in the Newsletter.

(e) Trustee Annual report for 2020 has been circulated and was received by the Area Meeting.

(f) The Treasurer gave a brief overview of the figures as at June 2021. Overall funds have not suffered significantly as a result of the pandemic and our financial position is healthy. Expenditure this year includes approximately £10,000 on a new heating system for Wellington Meeting House.

(g) There was no Trustees business; a full report will be brought to AM in November.

42/21 A new Area Meeting website and enhanced social media presence.

We heard from Pip Harris (Local Development worker with Quaker Life). She outlined the approaches that Devon and Cornwall Area Meetings are taking to redesign their websites.

Both Area Meetings have formed "Working Groups" to consider the options and have concluded that the services of the Quaker Meeting Network fulfil their criteria.

We are grateful to Devon Friend's offer to make all their information available to us.

We ask AM Nominations to suggest Friends to serve on a West Somerset Website Review Group and to work with Pip to bring a suggestion back to our November AM Meeting.

43/21 Special Topic Area Meeting (STAM) Saturday September 18th

Phil Parratt will convene a group of Friends to meet after Yearly Meeting in order to discern a relevant and contemporary topic for the STAM.

44/21 How Are Our Meetings Faring?

Burnham Meeting is thriving online because those who have problems getting to MfW because of work, family and frailty are able to pick up emails in their own time and with no H&S concerns. We are discussing the situation with everyone again now but personally I do not think we will have the numbers to hold a MfW indoors yet. Outdoors in the summer might be a possibility.

45/21 Any Other Business

None

46/21 Notices

All-age Overnight Camp Saturday 21st August noon to Sunday 22nd August 3pm
Spiceland Friends Meeting House, Uffculme, Cullompton Devon EX15 3AZ

- share games, stories, art & crafts and songs; come and learn some new ones OR simply enjoy the beautiful space together
- come for just a few hours OR bring a tent and camp for the night
- food and drinks provided - donations welcomed
- we hope to arrange lifts from nearby Tiverton Parkway station

It's the first time we've tried this: we are inviting families with Quaker connections from Devon, Cornwall and Somerset. In this instance, it is for accompanied children (i.e. with a responsible adult for them on site).

More details and booking form will be available from the beginning of August.

It would be helpful to know who might be thinking about coming: please contact Pip to register interest, or if you would like to know specific information at this stage.

Pip Harris (Quaker Life Local Worker) : 07422 973 089 piph@quaker.org.uk

47/21 Date of Next Meeting

The clerks thanked Friends for their attendance and support. We hope to meet again for:

- Special Topic Area Meeting on Saturday Sept 18th
- Area Meeting Saturday November 18th
- The next Business Team meeting will be on Monday August 2nd (Provisional)

MICHAEL VICKERY SULLY 02.07.35 – 03.07.21

Michael Sully of Minehead Meeting died on 3rd July 2021 a few hours after the end of his 86th birthday. Michael had been a stalwart and long-standing member of our meeting for many years. He had been at various times clerk, elder and for many years treasurer of the meeting. Always supportive of others in the meeting he was there with words of wisdom, or a gentle reminder of matters of right ordering accompanied by a wry sense of humour.

As well as his involvement with the local meeting he took an active interest in the Area Meeting and was at one time Registrar for marriages prompting the laconic comment of one of our elderly Friends, 'You'll be busy then'. (Bernard Date for those who remember him!)

Born with spina bifida, his mother was at first told he would never walk. He was not only able to walk but went on to become a keen Rambler amongst many other interests. He loved walking and was always ready to arrange a guided walk for the meeting when the occasion arose. He also loved music and was often drafted in to play the piano for musical occasions at the Meeting House. He continued to play trios with friends until a few months before his death.

After leaving school he worked for the local council and became the Registrar for births, marriages and deaths for the district. In earlier years, in Watchet, he was active in setting up the local museum where he was the secretary and treasurer for twenty-five years. He was always interested in history and wrote a short history of Minehead Quaker Meeting in 2016.

Michael was brought up in Watchet as a member of the Salvation Army and it was in the Salvation Army that he and his first wife, Ruth, were married. It was Ruth who first started attending Minehead Friends Meeting; sadly, she died in around 1976. It was not until after her death that Michael, too, started to attend the Friends meeting having come to the view he no longer felt comfortable in the Salvation Army. Michael met his second wife, Margaret, through the Ramblers Association and they were married, here, in Minehead Meeting House in 1984.

Michael continued to be actively involved in the community with Amnesty, and helping in the box office at the Regal (our community theatre) for as long as his health allowed.

It is sometimes said that there are some people who are Quakers long before they ever attend a Quaker meeting. I think Michael was one of those people; he seemed to live out the values of Quakerism in everything that he undertook. Much loved and respected in the Meeting, he will be greatly missed.

His wife, Margaret has long been a friend of the meeting, and at one time looked after the Meeting House for us and we hope she will continue to keep in touch.

A memorial meeting for Michael was held at Minehead Meeting House on 3rd August 2021. About thirty people attended from the meeting and from other connections that he had in Minehead and Watchet

Faith Cartwright

REPORT ON THE QUAKER LIFE REP COUNCIL 16th to 17th APRIL ON ZOOM

The themes for this meeting were Race and Gender. About eighty people attended and we were put into the same home groups of about eight for the two days. On the Friday evening we had a chance to share, in our home groups, on how our local meetings were coping with lockdown. There was a range of experiences.

Some had returned to their Meeting House, some had not. Lots met on Zoom. Some enjoyed this - some not. Some were meeting in gardens as the weather improved. One meeting had been using the Quaker Tapestry as a source for Meetings for Learning, taking one Tapestry at a time.

Saturday morning; we had a session on Race with Edwina Peart. She looked at two issues

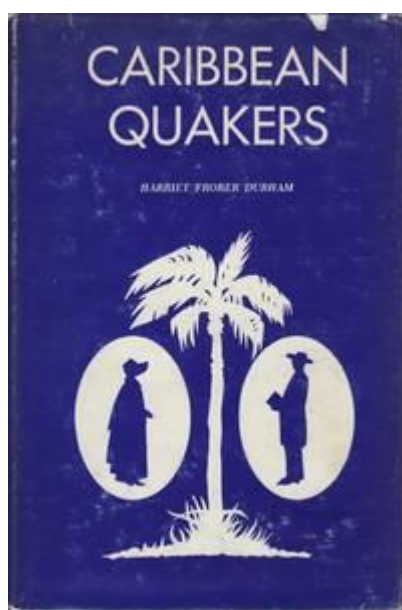
1. The plight of Shamima who with two friends went out to Syria to join Isis and now cannot return to the UK. We looked at ways in which we could empathise with her and discussed this in our small groups. She was only fifteen when she went to Syria. She was given in marriage. Her two friends and three children all died. She is seen as a threat by the British government. Racist? Now in a refugee camp. What next?

2. Slavery and the ten-point Reparation Plan for the Caribbean. We only finished paying off the debt incurred by compensating the slave owners in 2015!! Each home group looked at one of the points. The main concern was to *listen* to what the people of the Caribbean needed and not what we think they should want or need. At one time there were 10,000 Quakers in the Caribbean, now only about 500. Could we make direct contact as an AM perhaps with a written apology and to ask how we might help?

For the afternoon we had a talk by Yvonne Estop-Wood on Gender. She has made the outward journey from man to woman. Inwardly she has always felt herself to be feminine. I did not realise that this did not necessarily involve surgery. We all have to be true to our own natures. I feel that Quakers generally are very open and inclusive of all sexual orientations so this talk did not have the same impact on me as the previous one but I was impressed by her courage in talking so freely about this subject and the prejudice she has encountered along the way.

I very much enjoyed the day and would encourage anyone who would like to take on the mantle of Quaker Life Rep for a spell.

Lynda Stewart



LIFE OF SPICELAND MEETING 2020

Late in 2019, our lovely support worker, Pip Harris, guided us on a Spiritual Review of our Meeting, and we adopted the concept of a three-cornered stool. We managed to fit in the first leg within our Meeting House in February 2020, led by Sheila Harvey, on Worship. But then Covid restrictions came upon us, and we reverted to Zoom. Pip led us on the second leg on the topic of Community, then in April, Fran Hicks led us on the third leg, on the subject of Witness. We have lately acquired a real three-cornered stool which we keep in the Meeting House; we hope this will be a physical reminder of what our Meeting is about.

Beth Rowlands, an Exeter friend, was buried on 29 April; despite restrictions and tricky weather this was a moving occasion for her family.

For a period we employed Zoom for our Sunday MfW, but when the restrictions eased in July our technically-minded friends set up blended meetings. Generally numbers were more on line than at Spiceland itself, around 6 against 12. We welcomed some virtual visitors from far afield including Jasmine Piercy from Slovakia. We also managed an ecumenical Zoom meeting associated with EAPPI - the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. However, we felt that more was needed to enhance our Spiritual Life. We therefore worked to set up 'Circles of Friends', whereby random groups of fours or fives from our overall membership were invited to meet together every month or so on Zoom to pursue their own support agendas. This experiment started in November 2020 and is developing. We have also initiated a virtual meeting on Wednesday evening once per month, particularly for those friends who are unable to join us on a Sunday. Our house-based meetings in Tiverton and Kentisbeare are suspended meantime.

In the September window, we managed to fit in our yearly Heritage Open Day and had a good turnout. We were able to show visitors the work we have been doing on the New Burial Grounds, having sought the advice of The Association of Natural Burial Grounds and the advice of Area Trustees and Business Team.

The shifting restrictions have placed additional demands on our Central Group. We have increased our meetings on Zoom to weekly. Every fortnight we attend to oversight duties; in-between weeks we also meet, mainly to support each other. 'Lead kindly light amid the encircling Zoom' so to speak.

We believe that Spiceland friends have been creative in responding to the challenges of 2020 in seeking out new opportunities for enhancing our lives; but we also know that we should not forget our precious heritage.

John Bell



MINUTES OF THE WSAQM BUSINESS TEAM MEETING HELD 15TH JUNE 2021 ON ZOOM

27/21 In attendance are Phil Parratt (convenor), Anna Mullett, Dawn Hampshire, Sheila Harvey, Martin Wall, Huw Morgan.

Prevented: Brian Collingridge.

The agenda was approved.

28/21 Minutes of our last BT Meeting 1st March and recent AM 17th April have been circulated.

29/21 Membership Matters

There were no membership matters to attend to.

30/21 Nominations and Appointment Matters

We minute the appointment of Meeting for Sufferings Representatives Fran Hicks and Valda Dagnall to serve the triennium 31st July 2021 to 30th July 2024.

Our Membership Secretary Judith Blaker has asked to lay down her service in this role as soon as an appointment can be made. We ask our Nominations Committee to bring forward a name.

31/21 Continuing Zoom Meetings for Worship.

We discussed the experience of Spiceland Friends (shared by other Local Meetings) that while Zoom and blended meetings have been held there have been people attending who would not attend a Meeting in-person. And that the burden of Eldering such Meetings mean fewer will take place in future. Might Zoom AM Meetings for Worship be continued for such Friends?

We ask that the matter be further discerned at our next AM. Questions we raised included: whether Sunday AM Meetings for Worship might be preferred or avoided, is monthly a suitable frequency for meeting, and how might the burden of Eldering such Meetings be shared within AM?

32/21 Arrangements and agenda for the next Area Meeting July 17.

The arrangement of holding AM at Spiceland is no longer appealing following the extension of social distancing. We agreed that AM should be held over Zoom instead. Our AM clerks will make arrangements known.

Agenda matters:

- AM Zoom Meetings for Worship
- Trustee report for 2020 based on draft accounts
- Treasurers report on WSAQM finances 2021
- Trustee business
- LOM reports from Spiceland and Wellington
- Green Advisory Group – especially in relation to COP26

33/21 Arrangements for STAM September

Phil Parratt has discussed the idea of a STAM themed on Diversity with Pip Harris and others. The topic was explored at the April Quaker Life Conference, with materials including video to be circulated. Pip

suggested these materials form the basis for the STAM. Our Representative at QL Conference was Lynda Stewart. Phil Parratt will contact Lynda and Pip to take matters forward, probably with the help of our Meetings for Sufferings Representatives who will attend Yearly Meeting Gathering where further relevant material may become available. Phi will report progress to BT.

34/21 The meeting closed at 20:40. Our next Area Meeting is Saturday 10:00 July 17th on Zoom. Our next Business Team Meeting is 19:30 Tuesday 2nd August on Zoom.

Philip Parratt

A QUIET YEAR FOR WELLINGTON MEETING

While it has been a quiet year for Wellington Meeting House members, Green Days have been meeting their clients five days a week every week. For members of Meeting Covid has stopped meetings in person for a good part of the year. However, some Members have joined in the Spiceland Zoom Meetings on Sundays. From early May Meetings have restarted in Wellington Meeting House but with very limited numbers, thought these are beginning to rise as we all seek to return to the normality of the quietness of worshipping together.

Brian Collingridge



Find out more about the work of Green Days here: <https://www.greendaysdaycare.co.uk/>

JULY 2021 UPDATE ON SOMERSET CITIZENS AND QUAKERS

Our last report for AM in April, came out just before the Accountability Assembly, which was held, on line, on the 27th.

Although the County Council leader, and the District Council leader, declined to attend (due to purdah rules, which they cited as compromising them in relation to; the June elections of the Police and Crime Commissioner, in the case of the CC, and the by election in Trull, in the case of the DC), the DC was well represented by officers who were able to share a statement from the leader to endorse the agreements we had made with them in July. Also, although we were unable to progress the asks of the CC, we had very good representation from prospective candidates for the role of Police and Crime Commissioner, who all agreed to work with us on the Street Safety campaign.

We were able to showcase some of the work we'd been doing, and the commitment from the organisations in membership. A number of Friends attended, (The overall attendance was in the 90s.) and Martin Wall co-chaired the meeting most ably. (The Liberal Democrat candidate for PCC, said it was the best meeting she'd been to).

Campaigns

The Homelessness group, since the Accountability Assembly, have continued to meet with officers from the Council, representatives from the Salvation Army nationally, and from the Hill construction group. As with all projects, there have been successes (the Council now endorse the Malachi Project as part of their Homelessness draft strategy plan, and have identified a number of potential sites for the housing units), but we have also run into difficulties around release of funds from Homes England. However this has not deterred the council, and also we have just learned that the new lead, from the Hill group, has previous experience not only in working for Cambridge Council - which has units already on sites - but has also worked for Homes England: we are feeling hopeful.

We also took part in a National Citizens launch of the partnership, where the funding point was raised, and has already been taken up with David Jenrick (Minister for Housing and Community).

We are also very hopeful that Open Door, the Homelessness charity in Taunton, will shortly become a member of Citizens: the membership plan, which Hero, and Fran put together with them, is with their Trustees this month.

This would add real legitimacy, having the voices of those working regularly with the homeless, and those who have experienced homelessness themselves. (We are also hoping that Alastair, and our Friend Sue Brownlie, may become trustees, strengthening the links both to the campaign and to Friends.)

Martin Wall and Fran Hicks are involved in this group and would be happy to discuss anything about it with those interested. Other members are from the Methodists, Kings School and the Mavericks group, plus our new members, Alastair, who spoke so powerfully at the Delegates Assembly, and Michelle, a new Maverick, who is a lawyer in housing law.

The Transport group is temporarily halted, due to Covid and the restrictions this has placed on the school engagement, so this didn't come to the Accountability Assembly. John Ainsworth and Charles Henderson are involved with this group, which also has representatives from the URC and the Methodists

The Street Safety group, which was resurrected under a new initiative started, by pupils at Kings School, and headed up by them, featured strongly at the Accountability assembly, and has since run a most successful neighbourhood walk. This introduced the new head of the PCC, a local PC, the lead for the 1 team at Priorswood, Adrian and Hazel Prior- Sankey representing both Street pastors and the DC and others, to the challenges faced by young people, parents, and workers, in the area between the YMCA, and the town centre where, at different points, those impacted, told their stories. It was very powerful and seems to have had an immediate effect on policing in the area. The campaign lead, Sandra, has been told that the public toilets in the park are now open, and areas of drug selling and misuse are

being monitored and a section cordoned off. This is a great start to a campaign that aims not only to make the streets safer, but gives a sense of agency and engagement to those who have felt powerless to do anything.

Kevin Davenport (new attender at Taunton LM), Vicki Ross (from the original group) and Anna Mullett are involved in this group, plus members from the Mavericks, the YMCA, and the Methodists.

The Living Wage for Care Workers

This campaign is awaiting re-engagement with the CC lead.

The Living Wage for Council Workers is being followed up by members of the Anglican Church and the Methodists.

Mental Health This is a concern that was raised by Wellington School, and featured at the Accountability Assembly. It has not, to my knowledge, identified a specific issue to work on as yet, but is likely to be helped by working with other alliances who are more advanced in this area: particularly Tyne and Weir. No Friends are currently represented in this group.

Cycling Campaign. This campaign, will continue to be worked on, to attract a wider range of support from across the alliance, to bring forward to a future Accountability Assembly.

Organisationally

Our big and sad news that, after two years of exceptional support and inspiration, for us, Hero Austin, our Organiser since the launch in 2019, is leaving. She has been doing the impossible of running the organisation Peach, in London, while working with us in Somerset, and she needs a life! However, she has taught us so much, that we feel confident moving forward, and looking forward to working more closely with Carina Crawford-Khan, who joined us recently.

Local Meetings have been online and are likely to alternate with in-person meetings, at the MH and other venues.

National Citizens continues to run weekly on-line trainings, which will probably carry on for the foreseeable future. They have been very helpful, and as recordings, continue to be available to all members.

We are hopeful that within the year, Richard Huish, Kingsmead and Taunton Academy, will have joined, plus Open Door and the Salvation Army, and that other Anglican Churches will also be members, along with St Mary's and St Michaels's Galmington.

Roles and Responsibilities

There is STILL a vacancy for the role of Treasurer for Somerset Citizens!! National Citizens is addressing the job description for this position and will offer support and training. We also need someone to handle communications and publicity.

AM Commitment

As with the other member organisations within the alliance, Citizens is both about what we do but almost more importantly, how we do it. We are a relational organisation, working to build stronger civic organisations, as well as a more connected and caring society, through listening and working together, both within our organisations as well as with others. To this end, each organisation has a Membership Plan, stating our organisation's mission and how this aligns with the aims of Citizens to demonstrate

commitment to act for both organisations on a yearly basis: our contract of accountability for reputation and dues.

We, in the core team, (six from Taunton and one from Ilminster), have put together a plan for this year, which Friends are most welcome to see, which states, as a central aim, to help make Citizens better understood by our AM.

In May, therefore, we invited Friends from Tyne and Weir and London, to share with us, on line, their experiences of the engagement of their local meetings with Citizens, and what this had contributed to both their own, and their meeting's witness: We found it very helpful and affirming, and just wished that more local Friends had been able to join us.

As agreed in this year's plan, Vicki and Martin, (co-Clerks of the group), are offering local meetings the opportunity to learn more about this partnership and what it has to offer.

We hope Friends in Taunton LM, and the AM, will see the value of continuing to support this expression of our Witness, as laid out in "Our Faith in the Future". (Quakers Working Collaboratively) "We are well aware that we can't put the world to rights all by ourselves. We value the important work of others. By engaging with them we are already changing the world. We want to break down barriers; we refuse to prejudge who is or is not an ally".

Fran Hicks



<https://www.citizensuk.org/chapters/Somerset/>

SUFFERINGS REPORT JULY 2021

It's quite a tall order to boil down seventy-two pages of information to an intelligible and useful account of a meeting, so bear with me.

After the usual matters - nominations to central committees, names for the prison and court register, etc. the main focus of this month's Sufferings meeting was mainly on the reorganisation of the two main bodies of Britain Yearly Meeting: Quaker Life and Quaker Peace and Social witness (Worship and Witness).

What was different this time was the greater number of minutes sent by AMs.

They covered three areas: - disquiet about the suggestion to re-name the William Penn room at Friends House; unhappiness at the loss of a staff member to support Prison Chaplains, and fear that they would not be replaced; and a general worry that valuable work undertaken by QPSW would be laid down due to financial constraints.

The decision about the first of these was that, there is no intention to write William Penn out of the Quaker story. Trustees have asked staff to bring proposals for ways in which a full account of Quakers and slavery can be told and hope to enlist the views of a newly-emerging 'Black, Brown and People of Colour' Quaker group.

For the rest, it would be strange if the turbulence of the last eighteen months had left us unscathed: we have all, individually, had to do things differently, which has been very painful for some. We have also learned that there can be real opportunities in the discomfort of change.

In the case of our Centrally managed work, and the role of Trustees, there was already an engagement in a process of simplification, to reflect the aspiration of Trustees: "a Simple church governed by a simple charity, to reinvigorate Quakerism: to reflect the vision of BYM "Our Faith in the Future." (2015)

However, the effects of Covid on our finances accelerated some of the changes, and created others. It also disrupted how we do things both within the staff team (people on furlough and then taking redundancies), and on decision making, (some decisions needing to be taken more swiftly than is usual,) all of which troubled both staff and wider Friends: hence the amount of correspondence in the Friend, and the number of minutes from AMs.

Once the matter of the replacement member of staff for Prison Chaplains, had been shared, and the assistant recording clerk Juliet Prager, had reassured us of the considerable support given to staff through the changes, we were able to note, with appreciation, the positive aspects of the reorganisation of Quaker Life, the largest of which is the ongoing roll out of Local Development workers (three more this time), to support and develop local meetings, in their worship and witness, for greater inclusion and diversity and in being a non-racist church. This they plan to do in collaboration with Woodbrooke, and linking with the Centrally managed work.

One example of a pilot project, to encourage greater diversity at MfS meetings, was the engagement of young Friends. The, report, given by Naomi Major, (the staff member for "engaging Young Adult Quakers") expressed YF's appreciation and enthusiasm about taking part and has encouraged Trustees to continue the work, though with a wider range of ages from 35 to 50.

Also included:

- a) To make clear that the call for nominations to MfS should encourage Area Meetings to appoint younger Friends and to remind them that they can send a younger Friend in place of the existing representative at any time
- b) To ask the MfS Support Group to give consideration to a buddying system for new reps of any age or experience.

Also I really warmed to being told that the new emphasis from the DW's was, rather than focus on roles and role holders within meetings, to ask "what is the work and aim?" while getting role holders together across AMs to share their thoughts and experience.

It was a very upbeat presentation, reminding us that QL's focus is on the first three areas of the vision of Our Faith in the Future. If we get these first three right, like the vessel filling with water, they will flow into the areas of Faith in Action (the QPSW focus), and recycle back again like a fountain.

Less clear was the situation with QPSW, which has a more complicated structure, comprising a range of sub committees supporting a range of work, and which is in the middle of its re-organisation, based on a review of its work. However, I found the graphic depiction of its work very helpful, also, the focus, going forward on Peace and Peacebuilding and Sustainability and Climate Justice.

They hope to inspire fresh thinking on how the work can be community led, both politically and institutionally, creating partnerships and movement building, learning developing skills, and drawing on discernment from the wider body of Friend to strengthening Faith in Action.

Of course there is much overlap between the two areas, and I would hope that the vision of QL and its commitment to re-vitalise meetings, will work alongside the aspiration of QPSW, to work more with local meetings to support Friends in their witness to social, economic and climate justice, working with others.

There is also a desire to support and draw on the experience of Friends in Quaker Recognised bodies, e.g. Purple Fields.

Trustees shared the financial position of the Yearly Meeting. The annual report and accounts, (along with the document Our Faith, Our Work) are available online.

The challenge of reaching a balanced budget by 2023 is great, and the Quaker work of putting Faith into Action needs our financial support more than ever.

There was a brief, interim, report on the five workshops with Meeting for Sufferings representatives held during April and May, and there are plans for further workshops at Yearly Meeting Gathering and roadshows across Britain in the autumn with the intention of involving more Friends in this exploration: I hope we might engage in this last initiative.

Fran Hicks



A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

During both Lockdowns we decided a Poem of the Week would be a good way to be in touch. So every week we sent one round by email, and delivered printed out ones for those without internet.

The poems ranged from fourteenth century (Julian of Norwich) to hot off the press (Harvey Gillman) and many varied voices in between. We tried to keep a balance of poems by female/male, black/white, English /translations, serious/ funny, etc., and I must say it was really enjoyable doing the choosing. Pretty soon other people heard about it and asked to be included in the emails, so that widened our reach way beyond just our Meeting, which was nice.

In all, thirty-nine poems went out, all with a few words of background to the poet and encouragement to dig deeper. Appreciative comments came back, with some favourite poems that people had learnt at school, and others that seemed to fit exactly to the current situations we were all facing. A stressed out doctor responded the weekly poem was "a breath of fresh air", another friend was inspired to start writing her own poetry, so good that one was included in the list. I think we all found something which united, nourished and befriended us at this strange time of isolation.

Jenny Gateau

(See Jenny's cover poem. I've taken the liberty of including one of my favourite poems here: Ed)

The Door

Go and open the door.
Maybe outside there's
a tree, or a wood,
a garden,
or a magic city.

Go and open the door.
Maybe a dog's rummaging.
Maybe you'll see a face,
or an eye,
or the picture
of a picture.

Go and open the door.
If there's a fog
it will clear.

Go and open the door.
Even if there's only
the darkness ticking,
even if there's only
the hollow wind,
even if
nothing
is there,
go and open the door.

At least
there'll be
a draught.

Miroslav Holub

UPDATE ON QUAKER COP26 RELAY PILGRIMAGE

Overview

The plan for a relay pilgrimage between different Meeting Houses within (and perhaps linking to neighbouring) Area meetings was initiated by Peter Belton of Norwich Meeting.

It is not a sequential pilgrimage throughout to Glasgow but each Area meeting can choose their own dates and either walk, cycle or use public transport between meeting houses. The original one in Norfolk will be multi faith as they have good relationships with the local Anglican diocese and it is open to each area to do this too.

It is hoped that letters will be carried to send to local leaders and/or post to politicians as well as publicising the urgent need for action on the climate emergency. 4 suggested versions are on the website www.multifaithpilgrimage.org



Somerset

Locally, North Somerset Area Meeting are now well advanced on their route in mid-September to coincide with the Big Green Week (18th to 26th September) - including presence at Clevedon Market on 18th and at Sidcot School on 25th (they will have an exhibition all week previously). They hope to travel from Weston super Mare to Sidcot for 25th and on to Claverham and then Portishead from 25th and perhaps join up with Bristol after that.

Mid Somerset (Street) have expressed interest too but have no definite plans and I will be in touch with them. I am not aware that Devon Friends plan to take part.

West Somerset

At Area Meeting on 17th July there was a little interest mostly from Taunton but Spiceland may also be interested. (See update below. Ed.)

I will contact other churches in Taunton via Tell the Church (and had a couple of interested parties for the recent Young Christian Climate Network). If you have contacts with other faith groups in your area please keep them informed.

UPDATE: At an initial meeting on 5th August several Friends from five of our local meetings made a provisional plan to go from Spiceland to Wellington to Taunton on Friday 17th September either walking, cycling or by bus. (On Friday evening Taunton are arranging a meeting for faith groups to meet the Taunton Deane MP, Rebecca Pow at 6.00 about the climate emergency.) We are suggesting that on Saturday afternoon, 18th September, following the Special Area Meeting, Friends continue to Bridgwater and Burnham.

Please contact John Ainsworth (ainsworth.john@yahoo.com) if you would like to join for all or parts of the route and for updates on plans.

We are also keen that Friends may like to make banners or sashes with a message to attract the public about why we are doing this. Use whatever words speak to you or maybe something like "Live in right relationship with creation", "A just transition to zero carbon" or "Action for climate justice".

DEFENCE AND SECURITY EQUIPMENT INTERNATIONAL ARMS FAIR IN EAST LONDON

Quakers and other faith groups will be holding a peace vigil on the eve of the arms fair which is held every two years at the Excel Centre in East London in September. The vigil will take place on Monday 13th September from 6.15 to 8.00 p.m.

As it is unlikely that many West Somerset Friends will be there, we hope that we might do what we did in Taunton in 2019 and hold our own vigil to coincide with that and uphold those in London either on line or at Taunton. Expressions of interest and support welcome. (John is happy to coordinate this)

John Ainsworth



EPISTLE FROM BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING GATHERING

We send loving greetings to Friends everywhere

We have no time but this present time

Friends in Britain have gathered online at this time of great upheaval, amid the pandemic, climate and environmental breakdown, and increasing social inequality and division. We are grateful for technology, and the hard work of Britain Yearly Meeting staff, Agenda and Arrangements Committees, the Woodbrooke team, and others in bringing us together.

At this Yearly Meeting Gathering Friends have considered the theme '*For our comfort and discomfort: living equality and truth in a time of crisis*'. We have been wrestling with what it will mean to be truly committed to anti-racism and faith-based action for climate justice. We have thought about how to better affirm gender diversity in our meetings. We have discovered the challenges of attempting to make statements as a unified 'we' in a way that acknowledges the different experiences among us. We have greatly missed the opportunities of being together as an all-age community that we would have had in a face-to-face Gathering. We held a worship session during which the children and young people shared their exploration of community, climate, equality and truth. Junior Yearly Meeting asked how we could centre justice and equity in our antiracism and climate justice work. Only when all are listened to equally, may all be treated equally.

As in the days of early Friends, we sense this is a time of prophecy and want to uphold the prophets in our midst and in the wider world. We must heed the Spirit's call to urgent action. Prophets are visionaries, calling out those in power, and reconcilers stand in the middle of conflict: in this both run great risk.

A Friend of Colour spoke in ministry:

All I have ever wanted for the longest time is to feel equal, and again, here in this room, I don't. I hear people talk all week about George Floyd but we are here now, in the UK, in your meetings, feeling like outsiders every day. This is not the experience I was promised.

Racism is systemic. To most white people – including white Quakers – it is largely invisible, like the air they breathe. As long as it stays unrecognised, systems and institutions that perpetuate white power are left unchallenged. Racism and oppression are often daily realities for those without the advantages conferred by white skin.

As a Yearly Meeting in session we have declared our commitment to becoming an actively anti-racist faith community. Our theologians and historians are helping us to root our action in our faith, reminding us of the examples of Friends of the past who have listened to the voice of the Spirit and followed the inward Light. They challenge the complacency of some white Friends' perception of themselves as 'good' people.

We have heard trans and non-binary Friends and their loved ones talk about their gender journeys and of being in Quaker community. Acknowledging trans or non-binary identity can be compounded by unfamiliarity, ignorance and prejudice. Providing support can lead to greater self-acceptance, enabling Friends to flourish and contribute. Belonging is being accepted as one's true self. Who are we to resist what God has created and continues to create in all their glory? As a Yearly Meeting in session we lovingly acknowledged and affirmed the trans, nonbinary and gender non-conforming Friends in our communities.

It is ten years since Britain Yearly Meeting in session committed to becoming a low carbon, sustainable faith community. Friends across the world have long held a concern for us to live in right relationship with creation. We grieve for the planet we love – our home – but we have no time to despair. We must act with urgency and imagination – the consequences of inaction are upon us. For those experiencing injustice, the need for transformation is urgent. We know those who have contributed least to climate and ecological breakdown are the most affected: the poor, the global majority, and vulnerable

communities everywhere. We recognise and abhor the legion of violent, deadly impacts of economic and exploitative systems on both the people, other species and lifeforms, and the body of our Earth. The climate crisis is fuelled by a system based on growth, consumption and systemic inequalities. If life on earth is to survive we must push for a more democratic, compassionate and equitable world.

Britain Yearly Meeting has asked its central committees to emphasise the urgency of work on climate and ecological justice and to cooperate with others across the world in this task.

Our individual tasks are our Quaker spiritual discipline: loving our neighbour – on our street and across oceans; and caring, cherishing and protecting our natural world. Let's not be self-conscious about speaking of the Quaker faith that underpins our action.

Friends have talked about the need to let go of stories we tell ourselves about our shared near-400-year history and hold fast to the essence of the Quaker way. Is it time to look afresh at systems, structures, processes and procedures – and possessions like meeting houses that might hold us back? We're already starting to address this by agreeing to change some committee responsibilities next year, and through our Simpler Meetings project.

Our Quaker forebears were wild about their faith. And they challenged the establishment. Suggesting that anyone could have a direct, unmediated relationship with the Divine, and that our relationship with God should not be confined to the steeple house, was revolutionary and upended the status quo. Is it time to rewild our Quakerism?

We will often get things wrong. But we have been comforted by the reminder that Jesus' disciples often did not understand, they argued with him about who he was and what he should do. When Jesus said, 'Feed these five thousand', they said, 'you must be joking?!' When it got to the really difficult stuff, they ran away.

Faithfulness is not about always getting it right, it is about committing ourselves to carefully seeing and listening. We need to walk together in the Light, so we can see what we are meant to do and find the strength to do it.

We have been heartened to hear through their epistles that other Yearly Meetings and faith bodies are grappling with the same issues. It is vital we work alongside and be led by Friends and others across the world. We do not have to do things on our own and have learned the value of sharing our skills, resources and insights with each other. We have enjoyed welcoming international and ecumenical visitors, exploring with them common areas of concern. One of the things we have gained through the pandemic is new ways to meet with one another, so that we are no longer limited by geography. We can meet one another on kinder ground, in our personal relationships, meetings, wider communities, and on social media. We can help create listening spaces using our skills and resources. We can help create a climate where the pursuit of truth is not about becoming dug into our rigid positions. We need to quietly listen, and tenderly explore difference, disagreement and areas of discomfort, and thereby avoid a false peace. A commitment to truth requires us to be open to new experiences with a readiness to learn, while weighing up what we hear and see through the light of our faith.

There is so much to do but we have been inspired by the prophetic voices we have heard throughout our Gathering. We have pledged ourselves to continue to be a 'gentle, angry' people who dare to live for truth and justice in such a time of crisis.

Our Salter Lecturer told us 'I didn't choose politics; politics chose me'. She asked us: *what work is choosing us at this time?*

Friends, we have no time but this present time. We should now do what love requires of us.

Signed in and on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting
Clare Scott Booth, Clerk

NEWS FROM PURPLE FIELD PRODUCTIONS

Projects



Sierra Leone

We have wonderful news to share from Sierra Leone, where our Safe Motherhood film, in partnership with FVMC 'Di Kombra Di Krai' (Cry of a Mother) is now ready to watch

Sierra Leone has the highest rate of maternal mortality in the world, with 1,360 mothers dying per 100,000 live births (by comparison, the UK figure is 3.25 per 100,000). This shocking number of deaths is due to a shortage of hospitals, trained staff and ambulances. Lack of education also plays an important part, and this is where film can help to spread safe practices.

DI KOMBRA DI KRAI
'CRY OF A MOTHER'

There is a very important role which is the backbone to saving the lives of the mother and the baby which we can contribute to; that is, informing the people who lack knowledge about what to do from the first day of the pregnancy, to the last. We believe a film like this will save a lot of lives for generations to come.

- Tyson Conteh (FVMC Director)



PFP have also worked closely with the Marc Bolan School of Music (MBSM) on one-minute video training, which has gone very well. The students have now completed their interview training programme and have now moved onto a three minute documentary stage.



View the entire Spring 21 Newsletter here:

<https://www.purplefieldproductions.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/MOVING-IMAGES-SPRING-2021-1.pdf>