

Minutes of WSAQM Area Meeting November 13th, 2021, Taunton Meeting House and on Zoom

Clerks: Anna Mullett, Martin Wall

57/21. Quaker Faith and Practice 26.52 was read in our worship today.

58/21 Local Meeting Representatives:

Bridgwater	unable to appoint
Burnham on Sea	unable to appoint
Ilminster	Hugh Morgan, Margaret Stenhouse
Minehead	Faith Cartwright Lyn Barlow
Spiceland	John Bell
Taunton	John Ainsworth Shelia Harvey
Wellington	Brian Collingridge
Elder for the Meeting	Margaret Stenhouse

59/21 Membership

- i) We record the death of our Friend Irene Murphy of Minehead Meeting on 23rd October 2021. Irene was a much loved member of the meeting. A memorial service will be held at Minehead Meeting House on Wednesday 17th November at 2.30. There will be lunch at 12.30 at the Meeting House, all are welcome. Parking is available outside the URC. If you are parking there, please put a note in your car to indicate that you are at the Meeting House.
- ii) Applications for Membership
 - (1) We have heard the report on a visit to Neil Rushton and are pleased to welcome him into the Society. We appoint Fran Hicks and Charles Henderson to visit Neil and welcome him.
 - (2) We have heard the report on a visit to Elizabeth Copping and are pleased to welcome her into the Society. We appoint John Ainsworth to visit Elizabeth and welcome her.
 - (3) We have received Lynda Stewart's application for Membership and appoint Faith Cartwright and Margaret Stocks to visit her and report to AM on the 22nd of January

60/21 Nominations

- i) We appoint Pat Robertson as Membership Clerk for 3 years beginning 1st January 2022 to 31st December 2024. We thank Judith Blaker for her service.
- ii) Fran Hicks and Valda Dagnell have asked to lay down their roles as Sufferings Representative and Alternate. We ask AM Nominations to find two Friends to replace them.
- iii) Taunton LM have brought the name of John Ainsworth to serve a further triennium as Elder. We appoint John to serve as an Elder from Jan 1st 2022 to Dec 31st, 2024.

61/21 Life of Meetings - Minehead

- i) Friends at Minehead have upheld each other during the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. They have now returned to meeting in person at the Meeting House. Friends continue to support a family of Syrian refugees and assisted them during the year by inviting them to the town and enabling them to attend local events. Friends have also been active in supporting COP26 in various ways and have joined with Friends in other parts of the Area Meeting for different activities. Sadly two long standing Minehead Friends, Michael Sully and Irene Murphy have died this year and will be greatly missed. We have welcomed Lyn Barlow into Membership. Numbers attending our Meeting for Worship are recovering to pre-pandemic levels at between 7 to 10 Friends at Meeting. The full report will appear in the Newsletter.

62/21 Reports

i) Meeting for Suffering:

We have heard a report from Fran Hicks who attended this meeting in person at Friends House. This was a blended meeting that was experienced by both those on site of those online as a truly gathered meeting.

There were two items of substantial business.

A concern from Surrey and Hampshire Area Meeting about the Police Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill - we must be alert to creeping authoritarianism in its curbing of free speech, right of assembly, and the marginalisation of minorities. It was felt that it is our sacred duty to oppose this bill in every way we can and uphold a different vision of life.

The other main item asked Friends to consider - How do we safeguard our Quaker community and the communities we welcome to our meetings? This was in response to the National Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, which criticised Quakers nationally for poor record keeping. This matter is now being addressed centrally and Friends were reminded that safeguarding is a responsibility for us all.

Fran has recommended that AM consider starting a Book Group centred on Equality and Diversity, and she informs us that the Taunton Meeting House Management Committee are considering a radical approach to outreach and welcome.

We ask Fran to take the formation of a Book Group forward.

We thank Fran for her report which will appear in full in the Newsletter

ii) Quaker Life Representative Council

We have heard a report from Margaret Stocks who attended as a substitute representative as both the appointed reps were unable to attend.

The meeting was held over two days with an overall title Living our Beliefs in Troubled Times.

There were three elements to the event.

Firstly, a review of 'Quaker Life Representative Council' considering its interaction with Area Meetings and how this could be improved and enhanced.

Secondly, a reflection on Yearly Meeting Gathering - How do we bring our testimony to equality into action and focus? What kind of Quaker communities do we need to be to live this well? The nature of our welcome to both newcomers and each other was considered crucial. And thirdly, a presentation looking at how we can support each other as we begin to emerge from the pandemic. A framework RESTORE was considered that gives space for friends to share their experiences in a safe place. Area and local Meetings are encouraged to make use of this approach.

We thank Margaret for her report which will appear in the Newsletter.

iii) Earth Action Group

We have heard from John Ainsworth how the EAG has raised awareness of COP26 over the last few months and upheld those meeting in Glasgow. Local activities have included a pilgrimage, a candlelit vigil in Taunton and joining the Day of Action in Bristol. As a community we are asked to reflect and decide on how we wish to plan ahead. Friends are asked to let John know of any activities Friends have or will be involved in. An opportunity in the New Year to meet and discuss the present crisis has been suggested. This would be open to all in our AM. This proposal was agreed by Friends. John Ainsworth will liaise with AM clerks to arrange a date.

iv) Citizens Somerset

In July Citizens lost Hero Austin their part-time organiser due to commitments in London. Since then the group have been getting to know Carina Crawford Kahn their new organiser. Nationally Citizens are using the power of combined alliances to influence government around issues such as poverty and the real living wage. National Living Wage Week will be marked by an afternoon of action at Taunton Meeting House on Friday 19th November from 2.30pm – 3.30pm. We ask Fran to write a report with a list of forthcoming meetings which will appear in the newsletter.

v) Trustees

Due to pandemic restrictions Trustees have continued to meet on Zoom. Various needs of individual Meeting Houses have been addressed. Concerns continue regarding the difficulties of finding Friends to serve as Trustees. This problem is nationwide, and steps are being taken to simplify existing structures which will need discernment and support from our area meeting if implemented. On behalf of the AM, Trustees are examining a new and complex Safeguarding Policy and will continue to inform AM over forthcoming months. The Trustees Annual Report and Accounts have been completed and sent to the Charity Commission and Quaker Stewardship Committee.

63/21 AM Calendar

- i) The draft AM Calendar for 2022 was accepted by the Meeting.

64/21 AM Worshipping Together

- i) We agree to hold AM Worshipping Together Meetings every two months on the first Sunday We ask AM clerks to arrange a schedule and contact LMs for volunteers to host and elder these meetings.

65/21 Any other Business

- i) None

66/21 Notices

- i) Booklets and Leaflets available for Representatives to take to their respective LMs.

67/21 Date of next Meeting

- i) We thank Taunton Meeting for their hospitality and hope to meet again on Saturday January 22nd at Taunton Meeting House. The next Business Team Meeting will be on Monday December 6th.