

West Somerset Area Quaker Meeting

March 19th 2016 at Minehead

Minutes

16/16 Advices and Queries no 41 was read in our Worship

16/17 Representatives

Bridgwater: Rosemary Dagley, Meg Winfield

Burnham: Falcon Bell

Ilminster: John Gray

Minehead: Irene Murphy, Kate Warren

Spiceland: Graham West

Taunton: Peter Burgoine, Gillian Coe

Wellington: Unable to appoint

Elder: Irene Murphy

16/18 Membership

We have heard the report on the visit to Graham West, and are delighted to welcome him into Membership. We appoint Fran Hicks to welcome him on our behalf.

16/19 Life of Spiceland Meeting

It has been a busy year of change for Spiceland Meeting, in which they have celebrated the 200th anniversary of their beloved Meeting House. The Meeting House has been well used, for various outreach events, and most particularly for the moving celebration of Charles Hannam's life, and the Quaker Wedding of a Bridgwater Friend. The Meeting has welcomed couples returning to the place of their marriage, Friends who had attended the Meeting as children, and a children's camp, for whom all age worship was provided.

The Meeting feels increasing connection with AM and BYM through members involvement with Trustees and Sufferings, and work closely with Trustees to help them fulfil their duties as landlords for Spiceland's unique diversity of property.

They do not forget that primarily they are a Faith Community and have held an "At Home" day to nurture this sense.

They have struggled with the fulfilment of all the various roles, without overburdening the few, and are experimenting with new ways of organising themselves. They feel increasingly able to focus on the Vision for Spiceland, perhaps as the rural counterpart to the wonderful new facilities at Taunton.

16/20 Taunton Meeting House Management Committee Report

Lynn Shorthouse has been appointed as the centre manager for Taunton Quaker centre. She took up her role on March 7th, shortly after moving into flat 1 at the Meeting house, and is currently involved in an induction programme devised by herself and her line manager. The management committee feel themselves to be on a sharp learning curve as they set up new systems and policies to cope with the new circumstances.

16/21 Pathways into Membership

We have considered the different pathways (a. to d. as follows) into Membership presented in the report from Elders and Overseers on Membership procedure:-

- a. Some form of group is appointed, possibly by LM, to help the person explore what is meant by membership and to accompany them through the process. The group then produce a report for Area Meeting, who decide.
- b. A meeting for clearness is appointed and this group, after one or more meetings, produce a report for Area Meeting with a clear recommendation.
- c. The Local Meeting or its Elders and Overseers decide to offer membership to an Attender (sometimes referred to as "membership by acclamation"). The Local Meeting would offer a report to Area Meeting explaining why they wish to do this; Area Meeting would still take the decision.
- d. A report could be compiled by companions in (for example) the Becoming Friends (or similar) course, which would be submitted to Area Meeting for consideration.

We reaffirm our current process into membership but recognise that sometimes this may not be appropriate and agree to adopt the following as alternative procedures in order to offer flexibility and the capacity to respond to the needs of the individual:-

A membership application group is appointed, possibly by their Local Meeting, to help the person explore what is meant by membership and to accompany them through the process. The group then produce a report for Area Meeting, who decide.

At the applicants request and under the oversight of elders and overseers a report could be compiled by companions in (for example) the Becoming Friends (or similar) course, which would be submitted to AM for consideration.

It is recognised that it is essential for people from other Local Meetings to be involved in any process to underline the fact that we become a member of an Area Meeting rather than a Local Meeting.

We are reminded that a Meeting for Clearness is available for anyone considering membership and that in the membership process we are giving support to others on their spiritual journey. We encourage elders and overseers to familiarise themselves with the alternative pathways into membership as outlined above.

The clerks will send a copy of this minute to elders and overseers and prepare a leaflet explaining all the pathways into membership as agreed today.

16/22 AM Website proposal

We have considered the three options put before us for a new West Somerset Area Website.

The Rolls Royce option

Somerset Web Services in Taunton.

There is a professional design service fully staffed and with a central Taunton office. They design for parishes and town councils, as well as businesses, and you might like to have a look at what they have produced for Bridgwater town council. They will work with us to set up a good clear website and can manage it for us for three months without charge for the

management bit. They will train one of us to manage thereafter under their guidance.

The cost of the basic package plus hosting and training a Web Friend in the first year would be £954. Hosting the website and training a Web Friend thereafter would be £738 p.a.

A password protected area would initially be £858 and the annual cost would be included in hosting and training cost as above.

The family saloon option

Richard Robbins is a one-man band operating from his own house in Minehead. He has set up two businesses and designed and run the websites of both. He is now designing websites for other small businesses in and around Minehead.

He can provide the basic package for £240, but the training cost is more difficult to estimate as he charges by the hour at £20 an hour. It would depend on how quickly our Web Friend could pick it up.

He did not quote for the password protected area as he was not sure how secure etc. it would need to be, but says it would not take as much time as the initial set up, i.e. it would be less than £240. Finding a suitable Web Friend, he would be happy to host and operate the website for us at the same hourly rate of £20. This compares to the level of service and cost provided by Robert Colledge.

The annual charge for hosting and running the site would be £100 p. a. plus however many hours taken to post and edit as required.

The Fiat Uno option

Pat Bell, with advice from a friend, set up the Spiceland Website very cheaply. The basic package is £37, and the annual running cost is £30. She finds it not too onerous.

There is no password-protected area.

We appoint Pat Bell and Graham West to further explore website providers within the “family saloon” option (i.e. in the middle price band with a medium level of sophistication) and using the first paragraph of Kathy Gollin’s report as an indication of the website we want.

The paragraph follows:-

“ Each of the designer/managers I contacted is quoting for a basic package of four pages; a home page with a map and pop-ups for each Local Meeting, news and events, an Area Meeting calendar and a “contact us” button. A user would be able to navigate and search within the site , link to other sites and there would be the ability not only to count the number of visitors to the site but also see which bits are most often visited. There is a setting –up charge for this and then an annual charge for running the website. Two have estimated a cost of also having a members- only password protected area.”

We ask Pat and Graham to liase with Outreach Group and to take this matter forward on our behalf.

16/23 Meeting for Sufferings Report/ response to refugee crisis

We have considered Sue Hannam’s report from Meeting for Sufferings, which proved to be a wonderful experience in observing deep listening and discernment in the Quaker process at work.

Sam Sender was placed on the register of Friends before the court, and we were asked to hold him in the light.

QPSW Central Committee requested guidance about involvement in a scheme for private sponsorship of refugees. The complexity of the issues around this were clearly illustrated by others’ experiences, but these did not obscure the compassion felt for those displaced from Syria.

There was cautious support for the idea of private sponsorship, and a suggestion that it was beholden on Quakers to provide a strong counter narrative: that it is war that is causing these horrors. The wave of refugees is a symptom.

More mundanely, Friends are asked to register their intention to go to BYM this year, through Friends House. This is a register of intention , to help with planning, not a firm booking, which is not required at this point.

We have heard from Fran Hicks about the involvement of Citizens UK in welcoming refugees and about an informative meeting she attended in Wales. She told us of Taunton's plans to welcome two Syrian refugee families in the near future.

We have been reminded to think about what could be our special contribution as Quakers, and that our capacity to hold stillness amid chaos may be particularly helpful.

We ask Fran to prepare a report for the Area Meeting newsletter and to continue to update us.

16/24 Nominations

Sarah Beaseley Stone has had to lay down her appointment to the Children and Families Group. We ask Nominations to seek for a replacement.

16/25 Taunton Meeting have raised their concern about militarism in schools, and we agree to ask Izzy Cartwright from the Peace Education Network to come and speak to our Area Meeting.

16/26 Spiritual Preparation for Yearly Meeting

We have spent the afternoon considering the questions offered as spiritual preparation from Britain Yearly Meeting. We have shared, first in pairs, how the Spirit has led us into being or doing and discussed the various ways in which we receive guidance. The afternoon closed with a period of worship sharing.

16/27 Closing Minute

We thank Minehead for their hospitality and separate hoping to meet again on May 21st in Wellington.

NOTICES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Quaker Quest – Kathy Gollin asks for Friends to consider offering to support the Quaker Quest programme to be held in Taunton in the autumn. There will be a meeting after the May AM to take this forward.

Red Flag Over Bermondsey- The play staged by Lynn Morris will be enacted at Taunton Meeting House on June 25th 2016

Miriam Bligh – Gillian Coe (Miriam now lives with family just over Cornish border. She is having her 100th birthday party on April 2nd. Gillian has card for folks to sign and details if they want to go)

David Elliott ex QUNO programme assistant will be speaking at Taunton MH on Sunday April 10th after Meeting for Worship

A new booklet by Michael Sully “Quakers in Minehead” is launched today.

There is to be an exhibition entitled "Quaker work in Wartime" which will be held in Taunton Meeting House from June 1-16 and then in Minehead Meeting House from June 17-20. The exhibition is available for others for the rest of June if wanted.