

Minutes of a meeting of Quakers in Yorkshire

Held at Harrogate Friends Meeting House on 22 April 2017

Brighouse West Yorkshire Area Meeting

Helen Brockley

Central Yorkshire Area Meeting

Helen Meads

Denise Stimson

Ruth McTighe

Craven & Keighley Area Meeting

David Olver

Leeds Area Meeting

Audrey Acton

Pat Gerwat

Robert Keeble

Pauline Leonard

Beryl Milner

Janet Naudin

Pete Redwood

Liz Schweiger

Edward Starkie

Pickering & Hull Area Meeting

Hester Miller

Diana Sandy

Sheffield & Balby Area Meeting

Sue Goodson

York Area Meeting

Fleur Parker

Ruth Rymer

Michael Davis

QiY 17/04/01 Reading

In our opening worship we have heard a reading of paragraph 25.01 of *Quaker Faith & Practice*.

QiY 17/04/02 Testimony

We have heard a testimony to the Grace of God in the life of our Friend Joan Harvey, formerly of Central Yorkshire Area Meeting. We thank our Friends for preparing the testimony and Central Yorkshire AM for forwarding it to us.

QiY 17/04/03 Welcome

We have been given a very warm welcome to Harrogate by Ruth Rymer on behalf of Harrogate Friends.

QiY 17/04/04 Appointment of Elders

We thank Michaela Morris and Mary Meeks for their willingness to serve as Elders for today's meeting. We also thank Liz Collins and Matthew Kirk for serving as doorkeepers at our meeting, and Fleur Parker for offering to write a report on our gathering for The Friend.

QiY 17/04/05 Jonathan Dale: A low carbon Quaker community? Is our faith deep enough?

Jonathan invited us to consider the broad picture in relation to this topic and what we as Quakers should do. He shared with us his view that the most promising way to achieve a low carbon sustainable community is for all of us to work alongside each other. We need to overcome the fears we might have of what other people might think of what we have done.

He considered what had changed in the years since the Canterbury Commitment (2011). Scientific research has identified damage caused in a number of spheres; the political and economic environments are not favourable; in the coming General Election it is likely that only The Green Party will be concerned about the environment. Amongst Quakers, Friends have made some steps, individually or as meetings, but particular challenges which we must face are:

- car use
- travelling by plane
- heating and insulation
- diet.

These are spiritual challenges: to do what is right, not what is easy. Both the prevailing culture which encourages us to seek comfortable life styles and the economic system, with its expectation of economic advantages, make our task difficult.

In looking back on his journey, he has come to recognise the sacramental nature of the whole of life and shared with us how he had changed his lifestyle, emphasising that he has not got it completely right!

Jonathan seeks to encourage Friends to recognise that the economy works to produce more and brings about inequality. Along with minute 36 at Canterbury on climate change, minute 23 focused on an economic system which could be organised on a different, simpler basis, promoting equality. There are people who

are giving thought to how such an economy might operate. Our testimonies need to be part of this.

Jonathan has two proposals for action, in faith.

1. Friends need to develop mutual accountability with open discussions about what has been done or might be done, avoiding individualism. This would lead to freedom from guilt.
2. The sacramental nature of the whole of life is the cornerstone of this. We should ask ourselves questions such as 'What would God have us do?' 'How can I build good relationships?'

Friends contributed from the floor taking up issues such as the need for a change in the economic system, the role of different populations, the impact of Brexit (on trade deals, pollution, the arms industry for instance), air travel, the need for continuous improvement and the challenges at each step of the way. There are real financial deterrents preventing action which might be desired, and difficulties persuading others to change their behaviour. How can we continue to be examples to others outside our meetings? The need for networking with others whose aim is similar was stressed. There is a great thirst for finding what is true and we must recognise the need for plain speaking when necessary.

We thank Jonathan for leading us in such a wide-ranging consideration of this issue, and proposing how in faith, and within a loving and supportive community, we can contribute to a low carbon sustainable community. Jonathan's paper will be distributed and put on the QiY website.

QiY 17/04/06 Testimony – Andrée Hastings

We have heard read part of a testimony to the Grace of God as shown in the life of our Friend Andrée Hastings, 1924-2014. This was accepted by Leeds Area Meeting on 11 December 2016. We endorse the testimony and thank the Friends who prepared it.

QiY 17/04/07 Releases and Appointments

RELEASES

QiY Treasurer and Junior Holidays Committee

George Race has asked to be released as Treasurer of QiY, and as a member of the Junior Holidays Committee. We agree to this and thank George for his dedicated work to these two posts over a number of years.

The Mount School Committee

Gwenan Sykes has asked to be released from the Committee.

We agree to this request and thank Gwenan for her work.

APPOINTMENTS

Nominations for appointment are brought to us as follows.

From Area Meetings

QiY Outreach Projects Committee

From Pickering and Hull AM, Janice Every (Malton) to serve from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2019.

From Brighouse West Yorkshire AM, Deryck Hillas (Huddersfield) to serve a second term from 1 January 2017 – 31 December 2019.

From QiY Nominations Committee

Treasurer

Chris Petrie (Settle) to serve as Treasurer from now to 31 December 2019.

These names being acceptable, the Friends are appointed. We thank them for their willingness to serve.

QiY 17/04/08 Ravensworth Lodge

Hester Miller has spoken to us about Ravensworth Lodge, in Scarborough, with which she has been associated for many years. She feels Friends in Yorkshire should be aware of the current consultations with shareholders on changing its governance structure. The committee is concerned about how best to uphold the Quaker ethos, with fewer Quakers than hitherto now serving on the committee. Hester is compiling a list of ideas to achieve this, some taken from other organisations, and invites ideas from those present. She would be very keen for more Friends to be involved in some way. Hester's article appeared in the QiY newsletter; her email is hester@northcliff6.fsnet.co.uk

QiY 17/04/09 Sustainability Issues and workshops

Sheila Kaye from Keighley meeting has set the scene by outlining the work of BYM Sustainability group. The number of recommendations for action by Friends have increased from three to five headings,

- Oversight
- Living Faithfully
- Right Ordering
- Witness
- Eldership

A BYM conference held in March 2016 offered an opportunity for some Yorkshire Friends to gather together and work on these issues. Following the introduction each of our workshop leaders has introduced their workshop:

1. Food

Pete Redwood from Carlton Hill, Leeds has advised that next to energy in homes, food production creates the greatest carbon footprint in the west. Most production is under the control of supermarkets which impose prices and set the various conditions of production. Many insect species suffer because of these practices. Distribution also creates problems. The solution is to avoid imported food that is flown many air miles, and buy locally what is grown locally.

2. Keeping it in the Ground: looking at Fracking and Divestment campaigns.

Chayley Collis of Huddersfield Meeting focused on the various action groups opposed to fracking and advised of two forthcoming meetings: on Friday 28 April 'No Faith in Fracking', Preston New Road, Blackpool and on Saturday 6 May at Pendle Hill an Anti Fracking Meeting for Worship.

Regarding Fossil Free Divestment, Chayley advised that the most important message to convey is that 80% of fossil fuels are not burnable and need to stay in the earth. Friends can take individual actions in relation to divestment through a number of organisations working on the same issue or in their dealings with organisations which invest in fossil fuels. For example they can examine where they bank (Barclays invests in fossil fuels), how their utility services are provided, and whether to avoid certain companies like BP whose sponsorship of arts events helps disguise the global damage of their corporate activity.

3. Non Violent Direct action.

Ian Bray of Huddersfield Meeting outlined how he had become involved in Direct Action such as blocking the M4 to oppose the building of a third runway at Heathrow Airport, which led to a court appearance. He expressed the view that it had become for him necessary to demonstrate that such government decisions were a vast injustice that was threatening the continued existence of the planet. He urged more Friends to get involved with non-violent direct action to protect the lives of millions round the world who face death from the effects of climate change.

4. Using a personal carbon tracker.

Peter Land advised that the Personal Carbon Tracker was being developed to help people to examine their carbon emissions. It has been estimated that the world can only use a finite amount of carbon. The Average UK person uses 10 tonnes a year. For humanity to survive we all need to become carbon neutral by 2050, which means decreasing use by 9% a year. If we wait longer we will have to decrease carbon use much more rapidly. He gave examples: if we are planning a car purchase or new home heating, these if possible should be electric.

Our meeting concluded with a short period of worship sharing.

The papers prepared for this session will be distributed and put on the website.

We thank our speakers for their stimulating and thoughtful presentations and the way in which we have been patiently encouraged to consider what we can do, however small.

QiY 17/04/10 Closing Minute

We have spent the day together focusing on a major concern both to the Religious Society of Friends and to the population in general. We give thanks to all those who have spent time helping us to think what we are able to do.

We also thank Friends in Harrogate meeting for the efforts they have made to help the co-clerks organise all the sessions, and for hosting us. We look forward to our next meeting, at **Malton on Saturday 15 July 2017**, God willing.

Chris Love, Arthur Pritchard

Co-Clerks, Quakers in Yorkshire

Friends wishing to follow up on any of the issues raised at the meeting can contact Pete Redwood at predwood@phonecoop.coop