

Minutes of a meeting of Quakers in Yorkshire

Held at The Mount School, York, on 20 October 2018

Representatives

Brighthouse West Yorkshire Area Meeting

George R. Race

Central Yorkshire Area Meeting

Ruth McTighe, David Cook

Craven & Keighley Area Meeting

Chris Petrie, Alison Tyas

Leeds Area Meeting

Sandra Cleaver (prevented), Robert Keeble (prevented), Janet Naudin, Una Parker, Brian Senior, Myra Whitley (prevented)

Pickering & Hull Area Meeting

Diana Sandy

Sheffield & Balby Area Meeting

June Lewis

York Area Meeting

Edith Jayne, Madeleine Kay, Terry Kay, Barbara Penny, Graham Ralph, Barbara Windle

QiY 18/10/01 Elders

We appoint Barbara Webb, Barbara Windle and Margaret Bryan (p.m.) to be our elders today.

QiY 18/10/02 Reading

In our opening worship we heard a reading of paragraph 23.74 of *Quaker Faith & Practice*.

QiY 18/10/03 Testimony (Joyce Pickard)

We have heard part of a testimony to the grace of God as shown in the life of our Friend Joyce Pickard. This testimony was accepted by York Area Meeting on 11 July 2018. We endorse the testimony and thank the Friends who prepared it.

QiY 18/10/04 Welcome

We have been given a very warm welcome to The Mount by the Principal, Adrienne Richmond.

QiY 18/10/05 Students' Presentations

The College Leadership Team gave a snapshot of life at The Mount in the past year. They spoke of their involvement in the PeaceJam project, the LifeBag project, which shipped 400 bags to Greece, and the LearnBag project which supplied over 100 pencil cases. College girls are actively involved in fundraising.

They are also involved with Amnesty International: 33 cards were sent to prisoners. This year students are supporting Pancreatic Cancer UK, a particular concern of young students. As part of Quaker week, each year group was assigned a theme and had to devise a project, such as making the environment free of plastic bags.

Speakers to college have addressed students about a number of causes; their present focus is food banks. Volunteering is a key part of their activities at The Mount. The students described a close-knit community in which boarding is a rewarding experience, with the integration of different year groups. As a Quaker boarding community, they all have a chance to speak out, especially at weekly meetings. The boarders' diversity gives students a chance to learn about different cultures; one example of this would be the celebration of Chinese New Year. Respect for individuals is a key expectation.

In addition to their social and cultural understanding, one of the presenters spoke about being able to attend Junior Yearly Meeting which brought her into contact with many other young people. Being surrounded by so many others emphasised the sense of belonging and she was fascinated by the discernment about whether to revise Quaker Faith and Practice.

The Woodbrooke leadership training weekend was very stimulating in helping students to identify future projects: plans include efforts to make the school more eco friendly. The 1652 weekend was also a memorable experience in what has been an extremely memorable year.

Bootham Reeves Team described an adventurous and liberating year. Reflect 30, which takes place regularly, has grown in numbers and gives a chance to share experiences. Kurt Strauss spoke to students from Bootham and other schools about having come to England during WWII as a refugee and about his active involvement with Refugee Action York. Later in the year, a number of students attended the 'All Our Futures' conference which addressed the issue of how education will or should affect a number of aspects of our lives, not only technical things like the future of artificial intelligence, but also more fundamental aspects like what 'progress' really means. There was real excitement in being able to share ideas with other young people.

Holding a meeting for worship outside was really refreshing. A fund-raising fashion shoe event for Amnesty International raised £1,300 and students participated in the York Pride March in the summer, alongside other students. A presentation on the Dragonfly Schools Foundation in India, which focuses on education for young children, provided much on which to ponder.

In September students held a vigil in York promoting peace. They gleaned ideas from Woodbrooke including the possibility of incorporating some music into

meetings. They joined The Mount students on the 1652 trail which was of great significance to them.

We are truly stimulated by the range of activities and involvement we have heard about today and are most grateful to the students for their very well prepared addresses to us.

QiY 18/10/06 Reports from The Mount

Margaret Bryan, Clerk to the Governors, has explained the composition of the committee and paid tribute to Timothy Phillips who has left and Janet Dean and Joanna Mahler whose service is about to come to an end. The committee is responsible for meeting all the school's charitable objectives and we can be assured of that from the presentations we have heard today. A major plan for this year is to sell some land for housing to help finance a new Performing Arts Centre.

Nick Higgins, Director of Business Operations, advised us that The Mount School continues to evolve to meet changing demands. International boarding numbers have fallen. He paid tribute to a new marketing manager whose appointment it is hoped will help in due course raise boarding numbers. He summarised the accounts for the past year, emphasising that all expenditure is being analysed and confirming the commitment to increase fundraising income. The financial outlook is very positive.

Adrienne Richmond, Principal, and Rachel Capper, Head of The Mount Junior School, collaborated to speak about the vision they have for the The Mount. The Quaker Learning Wheel (which was made available last year) has been of great use in driving the Quaker ethos. Rachel said that values were understood by all in the junior school. They illustrated how the theme for Quaker week 'Room for More' had been reflected in various activities. Quaker work is also reflected in charity activities the girls undertake.

The planning application for the Performing Arts Centre has now been submitted to the City of York Council.

Feedback from parents has confirmed their view that there is a place for an all-girls school, which Adrienne and Rachel are concerned to promote. Adrienne reflected on The Mount's history of being able to train teachers and emphasised that there is a place for this in a world where young women are still disadvantaged. She and staff at The Mount endeavour very much to highlight the message of Quakers.

We thank Margaret, Nick, Adrienne and Rachel for their reports which will be circulated and placed on the QiY website.

QiY 18/10/07 Reports from Bootham

Stephen Sayers, Clerk to the Governors, reflected on a busy year, commenting in particular on the adoption of the new Articles of Association between The Mount, Bootham and QiY.

He highlighted the range of efforts being made to focus on safeguarding, mentioning two appointments whose post-holders had responsibilities for safeguarding, of efforts

to understand, avoid and combat bullying and meetings between the various staff, the head, Chris Jeffery, and himself. He acknowledged the dedication of all those responsible.

Gavin Blackstone, the Bursar, reported that last year was financially secure for Bootham but challenges remain as in the case of all independent schools. Bootham has one hundred boarding students; the sources of these boarders are changing and Brexit may have an effect on school finances. Students are involved in the future planning of capital projects. There is optimism about the future, and acknowledgement of the work to be done.

Chris Jeffery, Head and Helen Todd, Head of the Junior School, spoke about the many ways in which the Quaker ethos is being promoted and nurtured with young people of all ages, and the work that had been done over the year to bring Quaker understanding to the forefront. After considerable work and reflection, a Quaker Care and Oversight Committee was established. This will comprise staff, students and governors and will meet regularly to maintain an oversight on this. Helen told us about the various links that had been made with schools in the UK (especially about Quaker week) and overseas. Chris said they were very aware of the community of which Bootham is a part. Bootham is still involved with the York Independent State Schools Partnership, along with The Mount and St Peters.

Chris ended by stating that the 'Quaker heart' is firmly upheld.

We are very grateful to our speakers for their preparation and their presentations to us today. All these reports will be circulated and placed on the Quakers in Yorkshire website.

QiY/18/10/08 Releases and Appointments

RELEASE

Glenthorne Quaker Centre

Peter Coltman (Adel) has asked to be released as a Trustee of Glenthorne from the end of December 2018. We thank Peter for his service.

APPOINTMENTS

Nominations for appointment are brought to us as follows.

From Area Meetings

QiY Trustees

From Central Yorkshire AM: David Bower (Wooldale) to serve a first term from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

From Brighouse West Yorkshire AM: Jane Morris (Hebden Bridge) to serve a first term from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

From Craven and Keighley AM: George Penaluna (Skipton) to serve a second term from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

QiY Nominations Committee

From Craven and Keighley AM: Alison Tyas (Settle) to serve a second term from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

From Leeds AM: Una Parker (Carlton Hill) to serve a first term from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2020 and Robert Keeble (Carlton Hill) to serve a first term from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

(The different periods of service are to avoid them both ending at the same time.)

QiY Outreach Projects Committee

From York AM: Louise Brown (Thirsk) to serve a first term from now until 31 December 2021.

From QiY Nominations Committee

The Mount

Ursula Fuller (East Kent AM) to serve a first term as a Governor of The Mount School from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2022.

Era Gjurgjeala (not in membership) to serve a first term as a Governor of The Mount School representing Old Scholars from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2022.

Breckenbrough

Judith Campbell (New Earswick) to serve a second term as a Governor of Breckenbrough School from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2022.

Margaret Billing (Carlton Hill) to serve a first term as a Governor of Breckenbrough School from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2022.

West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council

Rachel Muers (Carlton Hill) to serve a second term as Quaker representative on the West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

Glenthorne Quaker Centre

Robin Hargreave (Settle) to serve a second term as a Trustee of Glenthorne Quaker Centre from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2022.

Alan Robinson (Balby (Doncaster)) to serve a second term as a Trustee of Glenthorne Quaker Centre from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2022.

Junior Holidays

James Hargreave (Settle) to serve a second term on Junior Holidays Committee from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

Clare Wigzell (Carlton Hill) to serve a second term on Junior Holidays Committee from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

Under 19s Coordinating Group

Ruth Rymer (Harrogate) to serve a first term on the Under 19s Coordinating Group from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

Arrangements Committee

David Heslop (Keighley) to serve a first term on the Arrangements Committee from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

These names being acceptable our Friends are duly appointed. We thank these Friends for their willingness to serve and the nominations committees for their work on our behalf.

QiY/18/10/09 Craig Barnett – Quaker Renewal

We have been pleased to welcome Craig Barnett to our meeting. Craig has been reflecting and writing on the subject of Quaker Renewal and he has spoken to us about the important role of shared Quaker stories for understanding and explaining Quaker practices. He has served on the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group, where in a series of discussions it became clear that some Friends are concerned about whether their beliefs are acceptable to others. There seems to have been a culture of self-censorship, among people who imagine their beliefs may not be acceptable. Perhaps if the underlying experiences are the same the words may not matter.

Craig heard from people with widely differing personal religious experiences, including direct personal encounters with God, or mystical experiences or visions; others have found they had a shared discovery of core values. To identify all of us as either 'theist' or 'non-theist' is clearly an over-simplification of the diversity of our religious experience.

Historically Quakers used their knowledge of stories from scripture to reinterpret their faith. The Quaker movement in its early years identified its experience as 'Primitive Christianity revived'. Today, we don't have a shared set of stories, in that there is no standard practice or a shared language, to describe, for example, what we do in meeting for worship. So meetings become neutral spaces to which we bring individual experience, with our own interpretation. This tends to take us away from knowing each other at a deeper level. We don't have a set of shared stories, and we cannot assume that anyone else knows the same stories.

As part of the Revision Preparation Group's work, it has been necessary to find ways to say why we do what we do, to have a story about it. We probably cannot return to Bible stories alone but we could find stories from other traditions – Buddhism, mysticism, paganism, Jung. We have been reticent about this in the past, because it makes us vulnerable to each other, but also because the stories don't always work in a Quaker context – so we need to find stories that fit together, that complement each other. Our present confusion about what we are doing seems to stem from a lack of a reservoir of such stories.

Craig has asked Friends to share with a neighbour a short account of an experience meaningful to them in shaping their understanding of their life as Quakers. We may thus be enabled to accept that we can learn from stories from other traditions, even when they do not speak to us directly.

We thank Craig for his careful and sensitive analysis of where we are as Quakers at this time and of possible ways ahead.

QiY/18/10/10

Evelyn Shire - Quaker Cottage, Belfast

Evelyn Shire has spoken to us about the work of Quaker Cottage in Belfast, one of three projects run by Irish Quaker Service. Evelyn lived in Ireland working with the Fellowship of Reconciliation in the 1970s. Evelyn is at present concerned about Northern Ireland's situation in the context of Brexit and the need to retain open access between Northern Ireland and the Republic. Earlier this year Evelyn arranged a visit to Belfast and stayed with a Quaker family. On this visit she was able to learn about the history of Quaker Cottage. As a response to imprisonments during the Troubles of 1970s, a Portakabin was set up at the Maze prison in which Friends offered 'tea and sympathy' to prisoners' visitors. The Maze is now closed.

Described as 'love made visible' Quaker Cottage now is quite a big house, overlooking the very deprived housing estates of north and west Belfast, a centre in which people who have been left behind in the now thriving city can come together and benefit from mutual support.

The people who attend at Quaker Cottage are referred by Social Services, usually the mums with a group of children of different ages. School age children will come after school. There can be 36 families using the facility at any time. When they enter the building they read 'Welcome to Quakers' – and though they may never have attended meeting, they identify themselves as 'Quakers'. There, without realising it, they may meet and get to know people who come from the other side of the religious divide. These meetings enable them to address such issues as drugs, domestic violence, mental health and gang culture.

Quaker Service still has a programme of work in prisons, but some of this work is now to be outsourced to be done at a lower cost. It also operates Quaker Care, which is concerned with fund-raising and running the Quaker Service charity shop. There is a current search for additional sources of funding for this important work.

We thank Evelyn for her most interesting talk.

QiY/18/10/11

Closing Minute

We thank our Friends at The Mount for their very warm welcome and hospitality today. We hope to meet again at Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel, Leeds on Saturday 19th January 2019, God willing.

Chris Love
Arthur Pritchard
Co-Clerks, Quakers in Yorkshire