

Summary of small group discussions at Quakers in Yorkshire 27/4/2019, Doncaster

Background Paul Parker began by pointing out our steadily declining membership. He referred to a BYM Trustees meeting at Swarthmoor Hall in 2018 when clearness emerged on our need to become a 'Simple Church supported by a Simple Charity'.

This was taken up by Sufferings, encouraging us to look at how we can simplify our structures so as to free up time and energy for our spiritual life and the Society's future. We broke into small groups to consider two questions:

1. What opportunities can you see for re-invigorating Quakers in Yorkshire? [i.e. generally]
2. What would you keep and what would you lose?

Fourteen groups reported to the plenary session. From one we got *What would Re-invigorated Yorkshire look like? What's the Vision? – More people? More life of the Spirit/vigour? How then? – Do we need a "re-boot"? Or, horticulturally, a "vigorous prune"?*

Key typical points selected from the others on the general theme were as follows.

Structures (Note frequency of paid assistance)

Committees Our committees/roles can be v. burdensome; Do we need all the committees? Paying admin work across L/AMs; Small meeting (Hope Valley): changing team of three do everything. AM does the finance'; Silly rules and inflexibility.

Regional Premises and finance cropped up frequently, as did suggestion of paid assistance.

- *Premises*: Managing QMHs – done on a wider area - + paid. (cf London); Be prepared to make difficult decisions (including about buildings); Old/money draining local MHs sapping our energy; Too much property (esp. Listed Buildings)
- *Treasurers etc* – Identifying what could be done at regional level e.g. safeguarding, treasurer; minimise roles or regionalise them; Restructuring geographically//Paid AM treasurers. AMs. Only need one and one set of trustees; Sharing resources by paying one person to deal with work of several treasurers; an AM having one treasurer and a part-time book-keeper (Bristol AM??); Central England AM?
- *Clerks*: support regionally. Quaker Business Method on clerks (3.20) – too much work?
- *General*: Build on existing structures: QiY, Cober Hill, Summer Hols, Summer School, Summer Shindig etc. QiY Outreach C'ee/NFPB; Positive that we have QiY'.
- *Local/AM level* Pooling small jobs – paid worker.

Outreach and Social Witness Open days at MHs; Quaker Quest still in London; Young people and Extinction Rebellion etc...; Stalls with activities at events you are attending; Talk to people; Social Witness first then "by the way, I'm a Quaker ..."; Sharing on Social Media; Go out to join with active groups; More openness about being Quakers – leafleting?

Young people potential of Quaker schools for future membership largely untapped; Youth worker based in Sheffield; Where does YFGM fit in in Yorkshire; Relevant campaigning (Extinction Rebellion etc); QiY existing activities (see also under 'Structures' above).

Regional/national activities that do something – e.g. musicians, poets etc; More regional meetings.

Local Meetings Different times for meetings; More attention to drawing attenders in – small roles etc.; Larger meetings support smaller ones; 'Apprentice' overseers; Getting to know each other in things spiritual to balance structures and systems; Being open to challenge – work on this as a meeting; Flexibility – allow people to breathe; People like to do smaller jobs; Be aware of what makes us look exclusive ... language, "we're different" etc.

General Use the gifts that we have been given. Re-ignite the joy of the spiritual.

What next? Simplify our internal roles and structures at all levels, to release energies for the contemporary challenge of spiritual and membership re-invigoration.

(Full transcript of flip charts available from Roy Love at roylove439@btinternet.com)