

Simpler Meetings

Fundamentals

- Simplicity is shedding the unnecessary, to focus on what matters most
- Reduce the burden on a few (older) Friends
- Finding new light and new ways
- Already variety in how Quakers do things
- People are so sure their way is the way
- Not one Quaker way: many Quaker principles
- Many possibilities – choose from a menu
- Permission is there in *Quaker faith & practice*
- Practical and spiritual are intertwined

What is ***essential*** to be a local meeting?

- Meeting for worship, open to public
- Being known and found
- Community
- Connected with other Quakers
- Quaker methods
- Clerk *or* a convener

Making role-holding simpler & easier

- Share (like co-clerks)
- Divide (like clerk & correspondence clerk)
- Combine (fewer communications)
- Fewer (14 trustees? 2 Reps? 6 elders?)
- Remove (do we have to? another way?)
- For 1 year and review? (more possible?)
- Not fixed stacks of tasks for each role: match people to tasks not roles?

Sharing across AMs

- Registering officer: 70 AMs, 27 marriages 2018
- Safeguarding Co-ordinator
- Administrator
- Suppliers
- Staff
- Explaining how we do things & problem solving

Area meeting sessions

- Consider what is AM *for*?
- How can we make it so people want to come?
- Is it inclusive? Location, children, rotate days
- Are we excluding by its length? 1.5hr business?
- Travel: central hub, public transport
- Frequency: 9 per year? 5? 6 + 2 learning? 3?
- Combine worship, speaker, social, business, learning together, food
- Eldership in business meeting
- A group between meetings. Small decisions.

Why is it harder nowadays

- Single Quakers in household
- Joining Quakers later, not lifelong
- Fewer Quakers: 14% down in 10 years
- Older, fewer younger, fewer children
- Women busier outside home
- Retiring later and more childcare
- Society around us is more secular
- Living in a more regulated world
- Culture of not joining or belonging
- More diversity of views in meetings

Not ***essential*** to be a local meeting:

- Doing things how a big meeting does
- Doing things how my last meeting did
- Lots of planned business meetings
- Lots of roles
- Having a treasurer (some do without money)
- Having a meeting house: 26% of local meetings in Britain don't have one, see below

Support for role-holders

- Induction, handovers, buddies
- Assistant, helper
- Get together with others (local, area, beyond)
- What do neighbours do? area, local
- Email groups across the country: premises, wardenship, AM clerks, AM treasurers etc
- Relationships between key role-holders

Paid support

BYM Employers Resource at:

- Lettings www.quaker.org.uk/employers
- Administrator
- Bookkeeper
- Maintenance
- Safeguarding
- Children's workers, Youth workers
- Local Development Workers

Area meeting trustees

- Prioritising
- Focus on relationships
- Sub-groups spread the load
- Involve non-trustees (on sub-groups)
- Delegating (small decisions to sub-groups)
- Work with another area meeting
- Adopt model policies, not re-inventing wheel
- Use the same suppliers across meetings

Alternatives to Meeting Houses - Renting

- Some MHs serve us well, others may not
- 126 local meetings in Britain do not have a meeting house = 26%.
- What can we learn from them?
- No maintenance problems, fewer decisions, no premises committee, no management, much less for the treasurer, less for trustees.
- Some cons, outweighed by pros
- Focus on being Quakers, not meeting house

Treasurers

- Dividing the role – much can be by someone else
- Treasurer must oversee, not doing everything
- 14% of local meetings have a paid bookkeeper
- 20% of area accounts by a paid bookkeeper
- Easier to find a treasurer with a bookkeeper !
- Electronic banking, includes dual sign-off
- Online accounts packages, save tasks in long-run
- Small local meetings with accounts inside area or another local meeting's accounts
- Small local meetings avoiding money completely
- Meet to share ideas – with cake!

Using Digital

- Video meetings for committees – saves time, money, carbon, and includes people
- Video meetings for joining worship
- Email lists
- Printing buddies for those without email
- Social media
- Electronic banking. Online accounts.

Area Meetings working together

- Offer each other advice and support
- Do things together – share roles, use same ways
- Use the same suppliers, or staff
- One area meeting does something for the other
- A common property trust across several AMs

Property Management

- Often the absorbs the greatest time and energy
- BYM website: www.quaker.org.uk/property
- Guidance Sheets, Meeting House Handbook
- Email group to get answers across the country
- Sharing suppliers with other meetings/areas
- Property management service
- Extend property trust roles: economies of scale
- Increase income by focusing on some buildings

For Small Meetings

- Focus on the essentials – see above
- Let go of inessentials. Match your size.
- A few books and leaflets instead of a library
- Handle some things with other meetings
- Pair up, alternating Sundays
- Do some things with a larger meeting
- Be flexible with roles - see above.
- A team of 3? Combine some roles?
- Keep business meetings for bigger decisions
- Have your accounts within another meeting's.
- Try new places, times, frequency
- Adjust area meeting expectations
- Visit each other's meetings
- Meet without a meeting house

Grouping meetings differently

- Pair a large and a small meeting
 - A cluster of several local meetings, for learning, co-operating, sharing functions
 - Two worshipping meetings with one business meeting (= 1 local meeting with 2 locations)
- Recognising it is time to join another meeting

Area Meetings coming together

- 1 or 2 local meetings could switch AM
- Merge two AMs
- Disperse an AM
- AM charities have trustees in common
- Have a single charity around a group of AMs which continue to meet for discernment, appointments, learning, social etc.

Want help with simplifying?

www.quaker.org.uk/simplermeetings has documents and videos explaining these ideas.

Discuss your ideas with Jonathan Carmichael, Simpler Meetings Project Manager
JonathanC@quaker.org.uk and discuss with your neighbours.

Please contribute your own ideas and innovations – that is where this sheet came from.