

Minutes of a meeting of Quakers in Yorkshire held at Leeds on 16 January 2016

Representatives

Brighouse West Yorkshire: Doreen Glover, Mike Glover, Jill Mollitt, Catherine Overend, Sylvia Sheard, Hilary Browne, Helen Brockley, George R Race

Central Yorkshire: David Bunney

Craven and Keighley: Michael Elstub, Chris Hart, Chris Petrie, Alison Tyas, Evelyn Shire, Ken Smith, Kathie McClelland

Leeds: Audrey Acton, Diane Exley, Jane Fox, Jonathan Fox, Pat Gerwat, Robert Gibson, Margaret Meara, Brian Meara, Veronica O'Mara, Una Parker, Susan M Robson, Edward Starkie, Toni Villanueva, Barbara Witt, John Witt

Pickering and Hull: Diana Sandy, Annabel May

Sheffield and Balby: Romaine Gayton, Margaret Lawson, Faith Rodger, Sallie Ashe, Denise Cann, Sue Riley

York: Joyce Pickard, Graham Ralph, Eleanor Tew, Nicholas Evens, Barbara Penny

Bamford Quaker Community: Mark Adams, Jenny Sanders

Prevented: Pam Elstub, Pete Redwood

QiY 16/01/01 Reading

In our opening worship we have heard a reading of paragraph 28.09 from *Quaker Faith & Practice*.

QiY 16/01/02 Welcome

We have been welcomed by Robert Keeble to the Leeds Methodist Centre on behalf of Leeds Area Meeting.

QiY 16/01/03 Elders

We thank Robert Keeble of Carlton Hill Local Meeting for offering to serve as Elder for today's meeting.

QiY 16/01/04 Reports – Reaching Out

Kate Marks, Convenor of the Under 19s Co-ordinating Group, has reported on the work of the group and on the Junior Holidays arranged in 2015.

The Co-ordinating Group meets twice a year to review the activities for young people.

A year ago there was no Junior Holiday committee in place, but Kate convened a group of volunteers to make sure the Barmoor weekend happened. But although applications came in late there were finally 17 children present. The children had an excellent time with spooky walks and hot chocolate featuring. With a last minute

staffing crisis it was decided that it was necessary to have a reserve list of volunteer helpers. There are plans for a junior holiday at Barmoor in 2016 and also a junior event at the same time as Holiday School.

Guy Milner has presented a report on the 82nd Yorkshire Friends Holiday School, held in August at Bootham School on the theme Live and Learn. There were 14-15 staff and about 70 young people present: external speakers in the morning, nest groups in the afternoons and social activities in the evenings, and a fancy dress finale on the final evening. He has shared with us two of the role-plays enjoyed by participants, and told us of some of the contributions by visiting speakers.

Chris Petrie and Joyce Latimer have reported to us on Easter Settlement 2015. Finally there were over 60 settlers. The theme in 2015 was Food for Change and the activities were led by Geoff Tansey. Chris has shared with us some organisational difficulties and stressed the importance of booking early.

Joyce has told us of the children's activities at Cober Hill. Thanks to some good weather many of the activities were held out of doors. We have been shown a delightful video showing many of the activities of the weekend, all filmed and edited by the children themselves.

Kate Marks has summarised the reports for us and our speakers have heard and answered some questions from the floor. She has expressed her concern that we need to have safeguarding co-ordinators in place. Without them children's events will not take place.

We have reflected on the issues facing a Society that is ageing and declining in numbers, and heard of some new initiatives, including all-age area meetings that have activities for children. However, we have been encouraged by the richness and variety of the activities in which Friends and their children have been engaged. We thank all those who have helped with this important work and all our speakers for their reports, which will be attached to the minutes and available on the website.

QiY 16/01/05 Outreach Projects Committee

Annabel May of Beverley meeting who has taken over the role of clerk/convenor to the Outreach Projects Committee, has reported to us on the work of the group in 2015. The committee comprises representatives from each area meeting.

They have granted funds for five events including stalls at public gatherings. Two projects are to take place this year in the York Area including a Quaker Quest and a workshop to be presented by the Kindlers on 11 June, Enlivening and Enriching Our Meetings.

We thank Annabel for her report.

QiY 16/01/06 Peace Vigil

We record that a number of us from Yorkshire meetings have taken part in a Peace Witness outside Oxford Place, during the lunch break

QiY 16/01/07 Thanks

We are thankful for the service of Barbara Parry as QiY Co-Clerk for the last six

years. Barbara has brought great warmth to her dealings with Friends and has drafted minutes on a variety of subjects with skill and sensitivity. We also appreciate her work in designing the new style Newsletter-cum-Programme for QiY.

Many other Friends have contributed in different ways to our community and we should like to record our thanks to each one of them.

The meeting expresses appreciation for the contribution of the Friends who helped build the website: John Batchelor, Martin Schweiger and David Olver. Special thanks go to Teresa Paskiewicz, an attender at Rochdale who guided the group and without whose intervention this project would not have been completed last year.

QiY 16/01/08 Releases and Appointments

RELEASES

Martin Schweiger has asked to be released as a member of The Retreat, for health reasons. We agree to this and thank Martin for his work, including his involvement with April's meeting at The Retreat.

Eva Pinthus has requested release from her role as a Church Leader on the West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council. We agree to this and thank Eva for her commitment over very many years.

APPOINTMENTS

Nominations for appointment are brought to us as follows.

From Area Meetings

QiY Trustees

From Central Yorkshire Area meeting: Helen Meads (High Flatts) to serve a first term as a Trustee from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018.

From Craven and Keighley Area Meeting: George Penaluna (Skipton) to serve a first term as a QiY Trustee from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018.

QiY Nominations Committee

From Leeds Area Meeting: Audrey Acton (Rawdon) and Liz Schweiger (Roundhay) to serve second terms from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018.

From York Area Meeting: Geof Sewell (Thirsk) to serve a first term from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018.

QiY Outreach Projects Committee

From Leeds Area Meeting: Iona Lions (Carlton Hill) to serve on QiY Outreach Projects Committee (first term) from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018.

From Under 19s Coordinating Group

Stacey Almond (Sheffield Central) to serve as Safeguarding Co-ordinator for Junior Holidays and Yorkshire Friends Holiday School from 1 January to 30 June 2016 (second appointment).

From Yorkshire Friends Holiday School

For the year 2016, we note the names of Mark Rymer as Applications Secretary and Ruth Clark as Treasurer. A number of other volunteers, whose names have been notified to the co clerks, serve on the committee.

From QiY Nominations Committee

Breckenbrough School

Roy Love (Friargate) to serve a first term as a Governor of Breckenbrough School from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2019.

Glenthorne

Christine Wilde (Friargate) to serve a first term on Glenthorne Management Committee from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2019.

Bootham School

Richard Vesey (Keighley) and David Stanton (Westminster) to serve first terms as Governors of Bootham School from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2019.

These names being acceptable our Friends are duly appointed. We thank these Friends for their willingness to serve.

QiY 16/01/09 Breckenbrough School

Graham Ralph, Chair of the Governors of Breckenbrough School, has shown a short film and provided us with an enlightening account about this school.

Graham tried to allay the fears of those who might be approached to be a governor at the school. Friends from a whole range of backgrounds offering many skills and much experience are valued. Interest in doing the best for the children, hard work and a background on committees are all much appreciated.

The only Quaker Foundation Residential Special School in the United Kingdom, Breckenbrough caters for boys of average and above average ability with a range of learning and behavioural difficulties, mostly autism and Asperger syndrome. It is completely state-funded. Entrants generally have the potential to be high academic achievers: the emphasis is on academic achievement but also on social skills. Many go on to further education. Pupils may be admitted at any time of the year; at present there are about 55 boys of whom 15 are boarders.

There are few special schools in the state system; some boys will already have been to a state facility but may have learned to adapt their behaviours in their own way. Each has complex relationship issues. Parents wishing their sons to go to Breckenbrough need to be aware of the long, arduous process to get in.

Amongst the school staff there are two attenders but no Quaker pupils at present. However, committee members are Quakers and Graham informed us how they uphold Quaker principles. Conflicts are approached through a conflict management approach, using restorative justice which involves both the perpetrator and the victim; there are few set punishments and sanctions; 'that of God in everyone' is a principle that staff uphold in their dealings with pupils; equality is talked about and promoted and each young person is valued; first-name terms are used throughout

the school. There are a lot of non-academic activities which develop social skills.

Building young people's confidence and encouraging them to feel valued are major aims as well as gaining academic achievements. Opportunities are being sought for occupational therapy to be part of the educational process at Breckenbrough to enhance this approach. Funding will be needed for this. There is a demand now for more places for day pupils and for the school to cater for a wider range of behavioural difficulties. Both these require some adjustments in provision.

The short video 'Breckenbrough a World of Difference' focused on a range of activities that are offered, and featured a number of men who had been pupils at Breckenbrough, having come from very problematic backgrounds, including the very first. "It does work," they said. All reflected on the positive memories they have.

There were several questions from the floor. We thank Graham for this excellent and stimulating presentation which enhances our understanding of this worthwhile institution.

<http://www.breckenbrough.org.uk>

QiY 16/01/10 Circles of Support and Accountability

We have welcomed Tammy Banks, Chief Executive Officer and Denise Cann, Trustee and Circle Volunteer, who have spoken to us of the work of Yorkshire, Humberside and Lincolnshire Circles of Support and Accountability (YHLCOSA). Tammy has shown a PowerPoint presentation incorporating a short video.

In cooperation with prisons, police and the probation service, Circles of Support recruit volunteers who form Circles around 'core members' who have been released from prison. The aim is to substantially reduce the risk of future offending by supporting offenders ('core members') who are committed to not reoffending and to assist them reintegrate into the community. The Circles offer practical support, a space to talk about their past and an opportunity for them to be held to account for their current behaviour. They make the community safer. All volunteers come from the 'No More Victims' angle.

The Circles idea originated in Canada in 1994 amongst Mennonites and attracted the interest of Quakers. Following a series of pilot projects in the UK, YHLCOSA (originally just Yorkshire and Humberside) started in 2011. Statistics from Canada indicate that there was a 70-83% reduction in recidivism (5 year study). Since it started, YHLCOSA have had 64 circles and only one sexual re-offence.

Risk factors for core members are emotional loneliness and social isolation. Circles give men a chance to form stable relationships with adults. A key concept is that a core member is part of the Circle community, which gives him the confidence to feel he can be part of the general community. Training of volunteers (of whom there are currently 142) is very rigorous and is on-going. In 2015 there were 30 Circles. Trustees include a large number of Quakers.

Amongst achievements in 2015, YHLCOSA was approached by the Catholic Church to set up some Circles; they are running some Deniers' programmes and have a partnership with another similar organisation.

YHLCOSA has grown steadily, covers a very big geographical area and is one of 15 Circles projects throughout the country. It is operating on its reserves at present. There is a potential discrepancy because some communities are approaching the organisation to work with them, and while the trustees and staff wish to respond, the current funding is dictated by statutory agencies. Locating funding which will enable the organisation to maintain its autonomy and adhere to its principles is paramount. Another aim is to diversify the volunteer base.

Denise Cann has been a volunteer for 3 years. As a prison visitor, she had heard about Circles at a conference addressed by Helen Drewery of QPSW and was instantly interested in becoming a volunteer for Circles. The core members with whom Denise has been in contact come from a great diversity of backgrounds – but their needs are very similar. She took us through the process of establishing a Circle with the great challenges that that involves for the core member. She also told us of some success stories. Frustration and fun are regular components for Circle members!

We thank these Friends for their most comprehensive and engaging reports and for illustrating to us the way in which the original Quaker principles which gave rise to Circles are upheld in this difficult area.

<http://yhlcosa.org.uk>

QiY 16/01/11 Concluding Minute

Our meeting has been enriched greatly by the presence of a number of children for whom activities have been organised by Friends in Leeds. We thank those Friends and all Leeds Friends for their hospitality today. We look forward to meeting again at Huddersfield Meeting House, on Saturday 16 April 2016, God willing.

Chris Love

Arthur Pritchard

January 2016