

Minutes of a meeting of Quakers in Yorkshire

Held at Hull Friends Meeting House on 21 April 2018

Representatives

Brighthouse West Yorkshire Area Meeting

George R. Race

Central Yorkshire Area Meeting

Ruth McTighe (prevented), Denise Stimson

Craven & Keighley Area Meeting

David Olver, Chris Petrie, Evelyn Shire

Leeds Area Meeting

Ann Castle, Pat Gerwat (prevented), Robert Keeble, Janet Naudin, Veronica O'Mara, Una Parker, Martin Schweiger

Pickering & Hull Area Meeting

Michelle Fisher, Hester Miller, Sally Pickstone, Diana Sandy

Sheffield & Balby Area Meeting

Sallie Ashe, Sue Goodson

York Area Meeting

Hilary Buswell, Hilary Evens, Nicholas Evens Ann Holt, Roswitha Jarman, Roy Love, David Rubinstein, Eleanor Tew

QiY 18/04/01 Reading

In our opening worship we have heard paragraph 9.02 of Quaker Faith and Practice.

QiY 18/04/02 Testimony

We have heard part of a testimony to the Grace of God as shown in the lives of our Friends Bill and Phyllis Bolton of Pickering and Hull Area Meeting. We thank the Friends who prepared the testimony and Pickering and Hull AM for forwarding it to us.

QiY 18/04/03 Welcome

We have been given a warm welcome to Hull by Bryan Bayley on behalf of Hull Friends.

QiY 18/04/04 Appointment of Elders

We thank Bryan Bayley and Michelle Fisher for their willingness to serve as Elders for today's meeting.

QiY 18/04/05 Simon Lamb

Today we have welcomed Simon Lamb of Ireland Yearly Meeting and Clerk of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) as our principal speaker. He has described his experience travelling by jeep in Burundi, arriving after many potholes in a village where 300 people were there to greet their visitors. Their church was packed with over 500 people. There they saw a Quaker school, and an agricultural scheme – projects which had happened because of Whatsapp, ‘a wonderful tool for theological discussion.’ They were later shown a medical centre that had been closed. As a consequence of the FWCC Plenary gathering at Pisac in Peru, a youth conference was organised, and subsequently funds were raised by IYM to reopen the health centre.

Simon has described FWCC as a body that aims to keep yearly meetings across the world in communication with each other. Kenya is by far the most numerous Quaker church, with many yearly meetings, and may have as many as a million worshippers on a Sunday morning. During the visit, they attended a pastor-led Quaker church which held two meetings on Sundays, each attended by about 1200 people. In Africa and Bolivia, many Friends are affected by the problem that many young people aspire to be American.

One difficulty that faces FWCC is the problem of the different understanding of religious experience, and the language our differing groups use. The challenge of meeting the poorest people in the world in Burundi, can be the most moving, as they often show great generosity in spite of their meagre resources. This shows us how difficult it can be to understand the views of others within the worldwide family.

Because a large number of people have died in Rwanda as a result of a lightning strike, FWCC appealed for funds to provide lightning rods and raised £14,000 in 10 days. A previous appeal also raised funds in response to hurricane damage in the Philippines.

In his highly stimulating talk Simon has shown us pictures from world gatherings of Friends in Kabarak, Kenya and Pisac, Peru. He shared with us some of his experiences making contact with the worldwide Quaker community. We need to ask ourselves where we stand on important religious matters with such diversity in our Society. How can FWCC engage the Quaker groups who are not affiliated to FWCC? Can we accept Quakers who have choirs, baby blessing services and who call out ‘hallelujah’ and ‘praise the Lord’? We thank Simon for his wonderful contribution to our gathering.

QiY 18/04/06 Liz Scurfield

Liz Scurfield of the Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC) advised us that its main purpose is to enrich understanding between Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) and Friends worldwide and to engage Quakers in Britain in issues around the globe.

She acknowledged that Quakerism has spread, especially in Africa and the Middle East. Many Friends' groups are strongly evangelical. QWRC tries to understand the different types of witness and to communicate our witness to them. QWRC maintains contact with groupings in the world and with formal organisations. This BYM committee is part of the Europe and Middle East Section and comprises eight members.

Liz gave us a summary of the many ways in which QWRC tries to achieve its aim. These include drafting letters and greetings to yearly meetings whose testimonies and epistles it receives; providing 'buddying' for new appointees as representatives to European yearly meetings and encouraging inter-visitation in order to enhance mutual understanding. The committee hopes more young Friends can be encouraged to represent BYM at yearly meetings overseas.

QWRC hosts international visitors and would like to encourage those Friends here who are willing to host visitors to the UK. She specifically mentioned two visitors from overseas who would be running special interest groups at BYM in May: Melinda Wenner Bradley and Robin Mohr.

Liz also gave us details of the meeting times, to whom the committee reports and the ways in which we can help. One such way is visiting local meetings abroad and letting QWRC know so that the committee can get to understand those local meetings' concerns.

QiY 18/04/07 Liam Brighton

We have welcomed Liam Brighton of European and Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF). The recent annual meeting at Moyallon was attended by 39 Friends aged 18-30. Amongst the speakers was Simon Lamb and a speaker on prison work in Northern Ireland. Sessions concentrated on the meaning of integrity and community building. There are plans for the next meeting to take place in Moscow.

There were questions about environmental sustainability in relation to travelling such long distances, which our speakers acknowledged was an issue. A tension exists between keeping a sense of the world community of Friends and the costs of travelling so far. Skype is used in certain circumstances.

There was a question about same sex relationships, an issue which has proved very divisive, even within yearly meetings of the same type and the relationships (including perceived fears) between evangelical and liberal Quakers.

We thank our speakers for such wide ranging and stimulating presentations.

QiY 18/04/08 Roy Love

Roy Love has spoken to us about the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) initiated by Friends in Namibia Allowed Meeting in 2005. Its focus has included the high level of gender-based violence in the country, and specifically work in prisons.

It is now legally registered as a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Namibia. Facilitators have been trained, including men serving prison sentences, and in 2016 the first workshops led by inmate-facilitators took place. Local Quakers are still involved, as are Quakers in other projects in Africa with which AVP Namibia has links.

We thank Roy for telling us about this important work.

QiY 18/04/09 Appointments

Nominations for appointment are brought to us as follows.

From Area Meetings

QiY Trustees

From Leeds Area Meeting: Gavin Burnell (Carlton Hill) to serve a second term from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2020 (confirmation of appointment made between meetings).

QiY Nominations Committee

From Brighouse West Yorkshire Area Meeting: Helen Brockley (Huddersfield) to serve a second term from 1 January 2018 – 31 December 2020 (confirmation of appointment made between meetings).

From York Area Meeting: Barbara Penny (Harrogate) to serve a second term from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2020 (confirmation of appointment made between meetings).

QiY Outreach Projects Committee

From Central Yorkshire Area Meeting: David Cook to serve a second term from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2020.

From QiY Nominations Committee

Breckenbrough School

Margaret Nunnerly (Ilkley) to serve as a Governor from now until 31st December 2021.

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

We also thank both AM and QiY Nominations Committees for their work on our behalf.

QiY 18/04/10 Martin Schweiger

Martin Schweiger has spoken to us on the work of Quaker South Asia Interest Group. QSAIG provides a focus and a resource for Quakers in Britain interested in South Asian countries. The group meets to share news and information and to

explore particular topics at least once a year, the next meeting will be at Selly Oak Quaker Meeting House in October. The group produces a newsletter and has a website (www.qsaig.co.uk) and is seeking to become a Recognised Quaker Body.

QiY 18/04/11 Catherine Putz, David Murden and John McConnell

We have heard short introductory talks from David Murden on Ghana, from Catherine Putz on the Quaker Congo Partnership and from John McConnell on Scholarships for Street Kids in Myanmar.

David has told us about his divine calling to work in Africa and how he eventually came to work on the old slave route in Ghana, opening up major rivers for the commercial development of inland villages. A very robust medical boat launched in Hull now serves the Volta rivers and lake.

Catherine described how poor the facilities for normal living are in the Democratic Republic of Congo. With few metalled roads, poor housing, inadequate healthcare, barely functioning electronic communications and on-going civil conflict the country's needs are great. We have heard about the three projects supported by the Partnership of which Catherine is a trustee.

John McConnell has told us about Hope for Shining Stars in Myanmar. The scholarships can range from a grant to help a child from a very poor family to go to school to compensating the parents for the loss of income when the children go to school instead of work. He described his experience while teaching in Myanmar, of meeting a young woman who was ill with leprosy. He became involved with work in extremely poor communities, where many children are wage earners for their families.

Friends have divided into three groups to hear more about each project and a member of each group has shared with us all the work of the projects. We have been asked to consider ways in which we can support the work of Friends in other parts of the world. A small amount of money makes a vast difference. The engagement of women in projects, via literacy and microfinance initiatives is also crucial. In transforming slave trade routes for the economic benefit of rural communities, David Murden gained the support of John Prescott and Kofi Annan.

We have been encouraged to sit in the gutter with the people who live there: don't just give money. Recognise the reality of the youngsters who have to go to school before they begin earning money to support their families.

We record our thanks to all our speakers for their contributions to a very productive day.

QiY 18/04/12 Closing Minute

We conclude our meeting by offering our thanks to Hull Friends for their work in arranging the day for us.

Our business being completed we part to meet again at Ackworth School on 21 July, if the Lord permit.

Chris Love, Arthur Pritchard

Co-Clerks, Quakers in Yorkshire