

Minutes of a meeting of Quakers in Yorkshire

Held at Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel Leeds 19th January 2019

Representatives

Brighouse West Yorkshire

Helen Brockley, Hilary Browne, John Gaukroger, Jill Mollitt, Calum Woods

Central Yorkshire Area Meeting

David Bunney, Ruth McTighe

Craven & Keighley Area Meeting

David Olver, Chris Petrie, Keith Reeves, Evelyn Shire, Alison Tyas

Leeds Area Meeting

Edwina Beier, Ann Castle, Paul Ellis, Pat Gerwat, Robert Keeble, Pauline Leonard, Margaret Meara, Brian Meara, Janet Naudin, Una Parker (prevented), Barbara Parry, David Robson

Pickering & Hull Area Meeting

Diana Sandy

Sheffield & Balby Area Meeting

Romayne Gayton, Sue Goodson Margaret Lawson, Faith Rodger, Rosie Roberts, Kathleen Wallace

York Area Meeting

Jacque Coule Bleakley, Gilly Charters, David Corry, Ruth Corry, Barbara Penny

QiY 19/01/01 Reading

In our opening worship we have heard a reading of paragraph 20.14 of *Quaker Faith & Practice*.

QiY 19/01/02 Welcome

We have been given a very warm welcome to Mill Hill Chapel by Rev Jo James, the Minister, and by Pat Gerwat, Clerk of Leeds Area Meeting.

QiY 19/01/03 Appointment of Elders

We thank Robert Keeble and Barbara Parry for their willingness to serve as Elders for today's meeting.

QiY 19/01/04 Under 19s Co-ordinating Group

Guy Milner has reported to us from the Under 19s Co-ordinating Group which meets twice a year to oversee the work with young people. He has spoken of a strong spiritual dimension in the 2018 activities for young people; this has nurtured a powerful sense of community. Training is now available for those offering to work as a volunteer with

young people. We thank Guy for his report.

QiY 19/01/05 Junior Holidays

Bronwen Alty has reported to us on the 2018 Junior Holidays, ably assisted by representatives of Junior Holidays: Natasha, Lucie, Daisy, Esme, Alice, Thomas, Micah, Clare, Anne, Alex and Alma.

We have seen a slide show recording some of the theme-based activities. The administrative work of the organisers has been assisted by paid support, and adult and teenage volunteers have found real spiritual nourishment in the work with the children. The epilogue sessions are frequently profound spiritual experiences, and the making of the cosy-glow books has been enjoyed by all who attend. We have greatly appreciated this lively presentation and offer our warm thanks to Bronwen and all the volunteers who have worked to make the holidays a great success.

QiY 19/01/06 Easter Settlement 2017

Pauline Leonard, who co-ordinates the planning committee, has reported to us about Easter Settlement in 2018. The full report will be circulated with the minutes of our meeting and posted on the QiY website. We have also heard of the plans for the 2019 Easter Settlement. Our thanks go to Pauline for her report.

QiY 19/01/07 Youth Development Worker

We have welcomed to our meeting Lee Lester, who has been recently appointed as Youth Development Worker for Yorkshire Friends, based in Sheffield. We have been encouraged by Lee's account of the activities in which young people have been engaged, and it has been very stimulating to learn about the myths relating to young people in the Quaker community. Lee's PowerPoint and email contact details will be placed on the QiY website.

We thank Lee for an exciting, enthusiastic account of current projects, future plans and the real possibilities for the development of young people's activities. As one Friend has said, it was 'a passionate, energising presentation'.

QiY 19/01/08 Outreach Projects Committee and beneficiaries

Annabel May, Clerk of the QiY Outreach Projects Committee (OPC), has presented a report on the committee's work in 2018. Altogether, the sum of £6,500 was distributed to twelve projects, the amounts ranging from £84 to almost £2,000. It was especially heartening for the committee to receive applications from some meetings or groups who had not previously applied for funds. Applications from those who had applied before were also most welcome.

Projects supported are shown in the table 'Spreading the Word', copies of which were made available for Friends to take away and share with others. Themes covered supporting asylum seekers and refugees, outreach and spiritual journeys, social justice and land rights and a number focused on Remembrance Day, peace and the commemorations for the end of World War One.

Robert Keeble (Leeds) displayed his 'Quakers for Peace' tabard which he wears at outreach activities such as the Gildersome Scarecrow Festival which drew 800 people. He focused on projects which were only possible with OPC funding. These included publicity in a local magazine for a Quaker Quest programme which involved taking different sessions to different meeting houses; taking a group of asylum seekers and refugees to Bamford Quaker Community; and the purchase of 1500 white poppies. Finally, publication of a book *Quakers and the First World War: Conscience and Courage from a Leeds perspective* was made possible with OPC funding. This follows collaboration in an exhibition around World War One staged by Leeds Museum some years ago. One copy of the book is available free for each local meeting.

Ros Batchelor (York) summarised the four projects supported by the OPC which relate to the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of World War One. These included the mounting of two exhibitions at the Castle Museum in York, and an event at Bishopthorpe focusing on two local conscientious objectors. A meeting for worship was held at the graveside of Alfred Martlew. The final project involved a conference and workshop which commemorated the end of the war and which were held on separate days in the autumn of 2018.

Annabel's report will be available on the QiY website. We thank Annabel, Robert and Ros, all Friends involved in projects as well as committee members for their contributions to supporting Quaker witness in Yorkshire.

QiY 19/01/09 Testimony

We have heard a testimony to the Grace of God in the Life of our Friend Eileen King of Ackworth Meeting. This was accepted by Central Yorkshire Area Meeting on 10 November 2018. We endorse the testimony and thank the Friends involved in preparing it.

QiY 19/01/10 Thanks

We thank all those Friends who have offered service to Quakers in Yorkshire in various ways and came to the end of their appointments in 2018.

QiY 19/01/11 Releases and Appointments

RELEASES

QiY Nominations Committee

Denise Stimson has asked to be released from the committee. We agree to this and thank her for her work.

APPOINTMENTS

Nominations for appointment are brought to us as follows.

From Area Meetings

Outreach Projects Committee

From Craven & Keighley AM: Laurel Phillipson (Airton) to serve on the Outreach Projects Committee from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

From QiY Nominations Committee

Custodian of Yorkshire Quaker Archives

Gil Skidmore (Skipton) to serve as a Custodian of the Yorkshire Quaker Archives from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2022.

Safeguarding Coordinator

Ruth McTighe (Barnsley) to serve as Safeguarding Coordinator from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

Yorkshire Friends Holiday School

For the year 2019, we note the names of Mark Rymer as Applications Secretary until September 2019, Emily Clark from September 2019 and Ruth Clark as Treasurer. A number of other volunteers, whose names have been notified to the co clerks, serve on the committee.

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

QiY 19/01/12 Yorkshire Friends Holiday School (YFHS)

We have heard an exciting and stimulating report on YFHS from Matt Moore and Elisha Cruthers, one of the student helpers. They have shown us a PowerPoint and described in detail activities during the 2018 School, held on the theme, 'Anti-War and Uncle Peace'. The contributors offered interesting presentations and found ways of engaging the group with practical co-operative activities. The school holds a 30-minute meeting for worship to start the day, which has an important place helping create a sense of community. Evening socials are concluded with a programmed epilogue. Nest groups are set up each year to mix up the ages and help people share experiences and personal issues in a safe environment. Dancing and games form an important part of the week.

We thank Elisha and Matt for joining us today and offering their delightful and informative presentation. The PowerPoint will be on the QiY website.

QiY 19/01/13 West Yorkshire Churches Together (WYCT)

We have been pleased to welcome and have a report from Rachel Muers, QiY's representative on the Forum, which is the decision making body of West Yorkshire Churches Together (WYCT). This was formerly the West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council (WYEC) about which she gave us some history. WYEC had an employee and oversaw different types of partnership working between churches. In changing times and with a reduction of funding, a decision was made to lay down the WYEC. West Yorkshire Churches Together came into being in 2016, is smaller than its predecessor, and has no employees. Rachel considers that the Forum is still trying to establish the work it

needs to do. Its intention is to promote common working, communication and fellowship between the member churches, but in the absence of enthusiasm for joint projects, meetings are mostly focused on the exchange of news and views. WYCT does retain some important overall responsibilities, of which the most significant is probably its role in relation to the Leeds Universities Chaplaincy Trust. Rachel has contributed to this because she is also a Chaplaincy trustee.

Rachel asked us to consider the sort of risks we as Quakers are prepared to take working with others. There are questions about the distinction between building community and wanting to retain our identity. These are real challenges which Rachel feels stimulated to engage with.

There were a number of questions. In response to one about Churches Together organisations which have ceased functioning, Rachel said there is a lot of cooperation between groups and churches outside the Churches Together structure. Member numbers are also diminishing. She was asked if Churches Together has contact with young evangelical churches which attract a number of younger people. The Forum does have reports about some of these; and she hoped that Quakers and WYCT could engage with these churches where numbers are growing. In response to a query about any role for campaigning which WYEC would have undertaken, Rachel responded that there is an intention to do so but there is a failure to take the initiative, partly because of capacity, perhaps. She wonders whether the individual commitments of representatives take precedence.

We are very grateful for this update from Rachel and for posing for us some serious issues to consider.

QiY 19/01/14 Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel

Jo James, Minister of Mill Hill Chapel, has spoken to us about his work and the role of the chapel in its difficult city centre location. He often makes the point that the most radical discussions of the Putney debates took place in pews. The original chapel was built in 1674, a plain square, republican building. Unitarians were first known as 'Socinians', and in those days would have been almost indistinguishable from Quakers, and their 17th century tracts would have matched Quaker theological thinking. Bartholomew Legate, an early Socinian, was the last person to be burnt alive for heresy in London in 1612.

Jo outlined the current aims and ongoing spiritual practice of the Unitarian community, which promotes freedom of opinion and celebrates diversity. This small community, part of the Yorkshire Unitarian union, has benefited from the presence of 'refugees' from some of the evangelical churches, but there are tensions between fellowship and identity. Discussions have taken place about the distinction between 'religious atheism' and more traditional 'free Christianity'. This is encouraging more thinking on theological direction comparable to that considered in the recent Quaker publication, 'God, Words and Us'.

Jo outlined the various religious practices which take place in the chapel and identified

the different communities which make use of it. He has told us of the history of the previous meeting house and the present ornately decorated building.

Many of the ideas Jo has raised have resonated with Friends present and we are grateful for his stimulating talk.

QiY 18/01/15 Closing Minute

We thank Leeds Area Meeting Friends for their warm welcome and hospitality today. It has been a pleasure for us to be joined by a good number young people in our opening worship. We are grateful to those Friends who have organised activities for them for the rest of the day.

We would also like to thank Jo James, the Minister, and the congregation of Mill Hill Chapel, for the use of their premises and their welcome today.

We hope to meet again at Balby (Doncaster) Friends Meeting House, on **Saturday 27 April 2019**, God willing.

Chris Love, Arthur Pritchard

Co-Clerks, Quakers in Yorkshire